

With a projected bumper harvest of 7.09 million tons of corn for the entire 2009, roughly 2.3% than last year's output of 6.93 million tons, the Department of Agriculture through the National Food Authority will intensify its procurement to benefit as many farmers as possible.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said the DA-NFA will buy a total of 12 million (M) 50-kilo bags of corn, and 1.3 M bags of white corn, until December this year.

For the third quarter (July to September), corn harvest would total 2.47 M tons, 9.5% more than last year's yield of 2.26 M tons, according to estimates of the DA's Bureau of Agricultural Statistics based on standing crop.

In particular, surplus production is expected this second semester from major corn-producing regions such as Cagayan Valley (Region 2), where harvest is expected to reach more than 800,000 tons.

With the bumper harvest, prevailing market prices have gone down, ranging from P6.50 to P7.00 per kilo.

Consultations

Thus, immediately Sec. Yap led consultations with farmers in

Isabela and Pangasinan, third week of August to forge an agreement.

Farmers were amenable to the proposal that NFA will buy corn at P10.00 per kilo.

"This may be lower than the prevailing buying price of P13 per kilo, but at this price we will be able to buy more, and give reasonable returns to farmers," Sec. Yap said.

Procured Volume

NFA administrator Jessup Navarro reported that as of end of August, the NFA has already bought 588,300 bags or 24,415 tons.

The government through the Department of Finance has authorized an additional standby guaranteed credit line of

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NFA to buy more corn



Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap (in brown shirt) congratulates Mayor Florante Raspado of Jones, Isabela, as he receives a four-wheel drive tractor during the inauguration of a P38.5-million corn processing center in Jones, Isabela, one of the major corn-producing towns in Cagayan Valley region. Others in photo (from left to right) are DA Assistant Secretary Dennis Araullo, Isabela Congressman Edwin Uy and Vice Governor Ramon Reyes.

This was the challenge tossed by Agriculture

Secretary Arthur C. Yap to the Department of Agriculture's GMA-Rice Program regional coordinators and focal persons to exert efforts to attaining a 10.1-million ton harvest for the second semester of 2009, during their 3rd quarter national assessment and planning workshop held recently in Davao City.

If achieved, the country's palay yield would total 17.48 million tons, the biggest in the country's history. First semes-

ter output amounted to 7.38 million tons.

'Give me 10.1'

The BA's Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) has estimated based on standing crop that palay production for the third quarter (July-September) may reach 3.59 million tons, 3.65% more than last year's level of 3.47 million tons.

For the 4th quarter projection, based on farmers' planting intentions, the BAS said palay harvest may reach 6.48 million tons, 4% more than last year's 6.23 million tons. Area harvested

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New corn facility up in Isabela

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap inaugurated on August 26 another corn postharvest processing and trading center in Jones, Isabela.

"We have 15 of these already established in other major corn-producing provinces, and we will continue to put up more to be able to support our farmers," Sec. Yap said.

The post harvest processing and trading center, worth P38.5 million, is a joint venture between the Municipal Government of Jones, Isabela, and the Department of Agriculture through the National Agribusiness Corporation (NABCOR), Agricultural Competi-

tiveness Enhancement Fund (ACEF) and GMA Corn Program.

Of the total cost, the Municipality of Jones shared one-third or P13 M as counterpart, while the DA-NABCOR and ACEF has invested P20 M, and the remaining P5.5 M from the DA's GMA corn program.

"To further boost the corn sector, while increasing production and income of local farmers, we are launching a drying central here in Jones," Sec Yap said during the inauguration ceremony.

Located at Barangay Payac, the facility will ensure steady supply of premium quality dried corn

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Thank you, President Cory!

On behalf of Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and the Department of Agriculture family, we pay tribute to President Corazon "Cory" Aquino (Jan. 25, 1933 - Aug. 1, 2009) — who has earned reverent titles as "God's gift to the Filipino people" bestowed by the late Jaime Cardinal Sin, and more recently as "The Saint of Democracy" by *Time Magazine*.

While much has been written and said about President Cory, for the agriculture and fishery sector she is best remembered for streamlining the overlapping agencies under the then Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF), and renaming it into Ministry of Agriculture and later as Department of Agriculture, under Executive Order No. 116.

EO 116 was part of a series of major policies implemented by the Cory administration to undertake the gargantuan and painstaking process of overhauling and streamlining the country's bloated bureaucracy. It could be said that said policy has served as the firm platform from where dozens of agro-fishery productivity and modernization programs of succeeding administrations would be launched.

Under her six-year term, from February 1986 to June 1992, President Cory appointed three prominent individuals as the country's agriculture czars.

The first was the late Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ramon V. Mitra, Jr., who served for

barely a year as Minister of Agriculture and Food (MAF). He initiated the dismantling agricultural monopolies and agricultural taxes that had long impeded the progress of small farmers, fisherfolk and entrepreneurs. He also started phasing out several agricultural direct lending schemes, which would become the first of numerous efforts aimed at enhancing the country's previously limited and unresponsive farm credit system.

In January 1987, he was succeeded by Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez, who took the cudgels of the painstaking process of implementing EO116 that reconfigured and streamlined the huge agriculture bureaucracy. During his term, the DA was grouped into seven clusters: Production; Research, Training and Extension; Agribusiness; Planning and Monitoring; Support; Regional Offices; and Attached Units, Corporations, Agencies and Councils. He also expanded and strengthened the role of Agricultural and Fishery Councils, from the regional down to municipal levels.

Under the stewardship of Secretary Senen C. Bacani in 1990, the country achieved two milestones, as it once again exported rice, and achieved self-sufficiency in corn. These were the fruits of the previous efforts of Secretary Dominguez and the successful implementation of the Rice Action Program (RAP) and Corn Production Enhancement Program (CPEP).

Secretary Bacani also created the pioneering Peasants' Forum, where small farmers' and fishers' groups

were given greater involvement in major policy and decision-making, planning, and monitoring of regional projects of the DA. In all, President Cory's legacies — the EO 116 and the cornerstones laid by Minister Mitra, and Secretaries Dominguez and Bacani — have firmly stood the test of time, paving the way to a more efficient and effective delivery of agri-fishery services, especially for smallholders, implementation of food productivity and rural income-enhancing programs, establishment of much-needed countryside infrastructure.

Indeed, there are a thousand and one ways to celebrate the well-lived life and contributions to nation-building of the 76-year old former charismatic leader, and the three DA chiefs who ably served during her six-year stint.

Even in her retirement, however, President Cory found time to give Secretary Arthur Yap a call or a note — which he deeply acknowledged as "very encouraging and humbling."

President Cory now belongs to the ages.

May her legacies of freedom and good governance founded on deep faith in God inspire us all Filipinos, here and abroad, to working harder toward attaining the vision of a free, just and economically-empowered Philippines, and ensuring a sustainable future for our children and children's children.

Muli, maraming salamat po, Pangulong Cory!

DA-NFA to buy ... (from p1)

P5.75 B to augment NFA's corn procurement budget.

Quality Specs Relaxed

Meanwhile, the NFA has relaxed some quality specifications for yellow corn to enable more farmers to sell their produce. These include:

- *Purity - from 97% to 96%;
- *Presence of other colored kernels - from 4% to 5%;
- *Presence of 'foreign matters' or impurities - from 3% to 4%;
- *Moisture content - 14%;
- *Damaged kernels - 5%; and
- *Shriveled and immature kernels - up to 3%.

Other Incentives

On top of the P10-kilo buying price, Navarro said farmers get additional incentives of P0.20 per kg for drying and P0.20 per kg for delivery giving them an effective buying price at P10.40 per kg.

For farmers' organizations, the NFA grants a 30-centavo per kg Cooperative Development Incentive Fee (CDIF) on top of the drying and delivery incentives for a total buying price of P10.70 per kg.

For white corn, the NFA will buy it at P13 per kg, with 14% moisture content and 97% purity.

Other support services

To further help farmers, the NFA will buy corn on the cobs, particularly in Ifugao and Wao, Lanao del Sur, where NFA corn centers are located.

For other provinces and areas without NFA corn centers, procurement shall be limited to shelled corn.

The NFA also lends its drying facilities to farmers. Farmers are charged a subsidized drying fee of P12 per 50-kg bag.

Exports eyed

Meanwhile, for the first time in the country's history, the NFA is gearing up for the commercial export of yellow corn.

NFA Administrator Navarro said the agency has gotten in touch with its counterparts in Vietnam who are interested to buy Philippine corn.

"The government is ready to export 50,000 to 150,000 metric tons of corn. This will come from Isabela, Pangasinan, Mindoro, Bukidnon, among other provinces," he said. (EJS/NFA Public Affairs)

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USDA-led agribiz mission to visit in October

An agribusiness and trade delegation led by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is scheduled to arrive in the country in October, 2009.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said it will be led by his counterpart USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. He met with Vilsack at the sidelines of President Arroyo's recent working visit to the US.

The group is keen on possible investments in the biofuels sector, and will be "using the Philippines as a staging ground for exports to the region for food and bio-technology," Sec. Yap said.

For her part, DA Assistant Secretary Josyline Javelosa said USDA Sec. Vilsack also expressed interest in food distribution and logistics.

During their meeting in Washington, Sec. Yap showed a map of the Philippines, noting areas where current improvements in transport routes and food distribution network are needed.

Also present during the meeting were DA Undersecretary for Special Concerns Berna Romulo-Puyat, Philippine Agricultural De-

velopment and Commercial Corp. (PADCC) president Marriz Agbon, and agriculture attache Vic Leviste.

In particular, Sec. Yap proposed two projects tapping the recently launched G-8 \$20-billion food production fund.

First is a \$120-million joint program to be implemented by the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) on developing modern sturdy, high-yielding, saline-tolerant, and drought-tolerant rice varieties.

The second is a joint RP-US Geographic Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing Project, which will allow production planners a smarter way to implement food production, coastal and municipal fisheries and climate change adaptation programs. The project is estimated to cost \$20 million.

During the meeting, Sec Yap also thanked Vilsack for the USDA's efforts in processing phytosanitary protocols for Philippine food products, such as bananas, mangoes and asparagus.

"Secretary Vilsack has given his commitment to make sure there are no disruptions to this process," Yap said.

In response to Vilsack's concern for other countries, Yap said that the US and the Philippines can be partners in providing technical assistance to developing economies like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Africa, similar to what they are now doing for Brunei and Papua New Guinea.

"I also took the opportunity to bring Secretary Vilsack's interest towards developing agribusiness in Mindanao to address poverty and terrorism," Yap said.

He also discussed a multi-lateral initiative to set up a food reserve to insulate the poor from global food price shocks.

Sec. Yap first presented said proposal during the food security summit organized by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome last 2008.

The 'food reserve' involves maintaining a price band, which at the low end, would serve to protect

producers in exporting countries from falling food prices, and which at the high end, would serve to shield consumers of importing countries from the impact of soaring prices. While in the US,

Sec. Yap also got the support of the Global Environment Facility to protect the Coral Triangle and ensure food security for the Philippines amid the challenges posed by climate change.



Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap (in purple shirt) and Congressman Edgar Chatto of Bohol (2nd from left) lead the ceremonial seeding of bangus fingerlings at the Calape Mariculture Zone Park Project in Mantatao Island. The mariculture park, which currently has 9 fish cages, covers a total of 146 hectares. With them (from left) are Calape Mayor Sulpicio Yu, DA-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Dir. Malcolm Sarmiento and DA-Region 7 Executive Dir. Ricardo Oblena. (Cheryl Dela Victoria/DA-RAFID 7)

1st Semester 2009

Agri grows by 1.5%

Continued expansion of the palay, fisheries and poultry sub-sectors, plus the rebound of the livestock sub-sector have enabled Philippine agriculture to grow by 1.5% during the first semester, valued at P591.8 billion at current prices.

In a report to Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, Director Romeo Recide of the DA's Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) said palay production rose by 3.6%, producing 7.38 million tons.

This was partly as a result of the DA's intervention programs that include sufficient irrigation water; extensive use of hybrid and certified seeds; and an increase in the use of fertilizers.

(Pls turn to p11)

DA to tap US agri tech to improve farm yields

The Arroyo government is exploring the possible applications of mature agricultural technologies developed by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to further increase farm production and raise incomes in the Philippines.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said such possibility surfaced during his visit to the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS).

One common area of interest where the Philippines and the United States can team up is biofuels research, he said.

Yap said the ARS and the DA's Philippine Agricultural Development and Commercial Corp. (PADCC) have agreed to collaborate on the development of three biofuels feedstock: sugar, sweet sorghum, and cellulosic materials.

Another area is on biocontrol of diseases in cacao, a crop being

eyed for intercropping with coconut in the Philippines, which was discussed by Lyndel Meinhardt, USDA research leader for sustainable perennial crops in Beltsville.

During his visit, Yap also discussed with Dr. Dennis Timlin, soil scientist at the USDA-ARS crop systems global change laboratory, the various crop simulation models that can be applied in the Philippines.

Dr. Robert Griesback, the technology transfer coordinator of USDA-ARS in Beltsville, also briefed Sec. Yap on the ways to transform waste into biofuels using shipping containers.

Yap lauded the USDA model of involving the private sector in disseminating agricultural research and technology to farmers and agribusiness stakeholders.

Agri creates 2.18M jobs

The Philippine agriculture sector generated a total of 2.18 million jobs, from 2005 up to the first quarter of 2009, as farm productivity expanded by an annual average of 3.9%.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said of the total jobs generated, 2.09 million was achieved from 2005 to 2008 -- under the joint convergence initiative of the DA, and Departments of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The three agencies were tasked to generate two million out of the 10 million jobs targeted in 2010, under the Meidum-Term Philippine Development Plan.

"Of this, 509,206 jobs were generated in 2008, which contributed to the 3.2% growth in agriculture for the year," said Yap, citing a DA report on its accomplishments as part of the State-of-the-Nation Address (SONA) commitments of President Arroyo.

For the first quarter of 2009, 96,616 jobs were generated, representing 93% of the 104,352 number of jobs targeted for the period.

For the rest of 2009, the government is targeting the creation of 313,055 jobs and another 263,238 jobs for 2010.

"From 2001-2008, the overall annual productivity of the agriculture sector increased at an average of 3.9%," he said.

A reduction in growth was noted in 2005, owing to the El Niño and typhoons that adversely affected the agricultural production.

"A steady annual growth has been observed in 2006 and 2007 with a growth rate of about 3.9% and 4.6%, respectively," the DA's SONA report stated.

"The slowdown in the 2008 growth performance was brought about by the effects of typhoons and high cost of fertilizers.

RP seeks support for marine fishery initiatives

The Philippines is seeking global support for three initiatives to protect the 'coral triangle' from the devastating effects of climate change.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap made the appeal during the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) meeting at the National Geographic Office, in Washington DC, USA.

The coral triangle is a 5.7-million-square-kilometer area in the Indo-Pacific Ocean, spanning over six countries: the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste.

The area contains 67% of the world's marine resources, and directly sustains over 120 million lives, mostly small fisherfolk and their families.

Secretary Yap spoke before international stakeholders that include Global Environment Facility (GEF) Program Manager for Biodiversity Nicole Glineur, World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF) officials, Francisco Laurel of the Philippines' Frabelle

Fishing Corporation, John Fahey, president and CEO of The National Geographic Society, Dr. Enric Sala, also of National Geographic, Margot Ellis, USAID Acting Assistant Administrator for Asia.

President Arroyo and other cabinet members were also present during the meeting.

The CTI is a multilateral partnership of the six member-countries and private stakeholders, to safeguard the marine and coastal resources of the Coral Triangle for future generations.

Yap said the proposed CTI initiatives will beef up the Philippines' National Plan of Action (NPOA) to preserve the Coral Triangle. It focuses particularly on two critical resource rich areas—the Tubbataha Reefs in the Sulu Sea and the Verde Island Passage in Batangas.

He added that it will also boost the wide gamut of NPOA programs that the Philippines has been implementing to protect the Coral Triangle, ranging



Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap (2nd from right) and Director Nicomedes Eleazar (right) of the DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research Dir. Nicomedes P. Eleazar lead guests at the ceremonial ribbon-cutting to open the 5th Agriculture and Fisheries Technology Forum and Product Exhibits, showcasing viable and commerciable technologies developed by state universities and colleges, national and regional offices of the DA and other R&D partners, at SM Mega Trade Hall, Mandaluyong City, August 27, 2009.

DA-BAR unveils R&D Tech Center

The Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Agriculture (DA-BAR) has unveiled a Research and Development Technology Commercialization Center (R&D TechCom Center) that serves as a showcase of innovative, profitable and market-oriented agricultural technologies.

The launch of the R&D TechCom Center — one of the highlights of the DA-BAR's 22nd anniversary celebration last 7 August 2009 — was led by DA Assistant Secretary Clayton A. Olalia, who represented Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap. He was joined by BAR Director Nicomedes P. Eleazar and Asst. Dir. Teodoro S. Solsoloy.

With the TechCom Center — situated at the lobby of the BAR building, along Visayas Avenue in Quezon City — the DA-BAR aims to encourage more hobbyists, entrepreneurs and investors to engage in viable and profitable agri-fishery enterprises.

"We will give them a chance to shop for the best and profitable technologies to commercialize," Ass.t Sec. Olalia said in his speech, on behalf of Sec. Yap.

He commended BAR for its continuing efforts to help researchers and technology generators showcase their researches

for the benefit of clients, most particularly small farmers and fisherfolk.

He said generating yield-improving technologies and translating them into viable agribusiness enterprises will create job and income opportunities for the rural sector.

The BAR serves as the national coordinator of various agriculture and fisheries conducted by the different DA regional field units, bureaus, attached agencies and corporations.

The Center will feature mature technologies generated by the DA-BAR through its two flagship programs: Community-based Participatory Action Research (CPAR) and the National Technology Commercialization Program.

For his part, BAR Dir. Eleazar said the TechCom Center will not be limited to BAR-supported projects, but will also include high-impact technologies that will boost entrepreneurship in the agriculture sector.

"This endeavor would not have been possible without the initiatives of Secretary Yap, who always stressed the importance of bringing the technologies where they are needed the most," said Dir. (Rita T. dela Cruz, DA-BAR)

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DA-NIA to complete 21 major irrigation projects

The Department of Agriculture through the National Irrigation Administration (DA-NIA) is completing 21 priority irrigation projects (IPs) to sustain the Arroyo administration's goal of attaining food security and sufficiency, and raising farmers' incomes by further expanding irrigated lands.

In a report to Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, NIA administrator Carlos Salazar said of the 21 IPs, seven are in Luzon, six in the Visayas, seven in Mindanao, and the 21st involves the construction of small reservoirs nationwide. These are in:

Luzon: Banaoang Pump IP in Ilocos Sur; Agno River Integrated IP, Pangasinan; Casecan Multipurpose Irrigation and Power Project, Nueva Ecija; Aulo Small Reservoir IP, Nueva Ecija; Addalam River IP, Quirino; Balog-Balog multipurpose project in Tarlac; Libmanan-Cabusao IP, Camarines Sur;

Visayas: Bago River Irrigation System and Rehabilitation and Improvement Project, Negros Occidental; Bohol 2 IP, Bohol; Catubig Agricultural Advancement Project, Northern Samar; Southern Philippines Irrigation Sector Project, Regions 6, 7 and 13;

Dolores IP, Eastern Samar; Basey IP, Western Samar; and Mindanao: Balingasag IP, Misamis Oriental; Talakag IP, Bukidnon; Sta. Josefa Pump IP, Agusan del Sur; Malaig River IP, Lanao del Sur; Rugnan River IP, Lanao del Sur; Kabulnan II Multipurpose Irrigation and Power Project, Sultan Kudarat; and Malitubog-Maridagao IP Stage 2, Maguindanao.

Salazar said their rehabilitation and restoration works have enabled farmers to plant an additional 69,000 hectares of farmlands last year.

He said such gains were the result of the Arroyo administration's increased public spending on agriculture, specifically the DA's yearly budget, from P25.36 billion in 2007, P36.55 billion in 2008, to P46.86 billion this year.

A major chunk of the DA's annual budget is earmarked for irrigation.

Thus since 2006, with funds totalling P7.27 billion, the NIA has rehabilitated 103,568 hectares of existing communal and national irrigation systems, and restored 122,909 hectares.

For 2009, with an P8-billion budget it targets to restore 133,000 hectares and rehabilitate 68,000 hectares.

Catanduanes is top abaca producer

Reinforcing its distinction as the "abaca capital of the Philippines," Catanduanes bested other provinces in terms of production from January to May 2009, at 8,646 tons, 22% more than last year's output at 7,084 tons, according to the DA's Fiber Industry Development Authority (FIDA).

Catanduanes has the largest abaca area and the biggest number of abaca farmers in the Philippines. In 2008, the total number of abaca farmers in the country was 16,231, FIDA said.

In her report to Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, FIDA Administrator Cecilia Gloria J. Soriano said the agency continues to implement various programs toward increasing farmers' productivity and income, and improving fiber quality. The initiatives include: disease control and

management, farm expansion and rehabilitation, production of healthy seedlings through tissue culture and conventional means, provision of marketing assistance, extension support, education and training, livelihood and cooperative strengthening, regulatory and advocacy.

In Catanduanes, FIDA implements the *Unlad AbakaMASA*, funded by the provincial government. It involves the rehabilitation and expansion of abaca plantations, production of planting materials by tissue culture, and nursery establishment.

The agency also implements a foreign-assisted project in Bicol and Caraga regions, funded jointly by the Spanish Government through AECID and the DA. It focuses on the mechanization of abaca fiber extraction and value



Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap (right), along with local officials and farmers, inspects an irrigation system in Pangasinan.

Biotechnology, anyone?

To boost biotechnology education and awareness in the country, the Department of Agriculture through its Biotechnology Program — in cooperation with the National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (NIMBB) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) — has developed a general education biotechnology course that will be included in the college curriculum, initially in 16 selected state universities and colleges (SUCs).

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said it is one of our initiatives to vigorously promote the safe and responsible use of biotechnology.

"Our aim is to equip Filipino teachers, students and other interested individuals with the basic knowledge, and enable them to make informed decisions on biotechnology products, latest breakthroughs, developments, and related issues on human health, the environment, and ethical concerns.

"Further, we hope to encourage more Filipino youth to pursue a career in biotechnology, either as researchers and scientists or entrepreneurs," Sec. Yap added.

For his part, DA Undersecretary for Policy and Planning Segfredo R. Serrano, and chair of the DA Biotechnology Program Steering

Committee, said "the integration of the biotechnology course in college curriculum will hopefully help sustain our efforts in educating the people about biotechnology, and win back the trust and confidence of the general public to realize the full economic potentials science and technology offer.

"This will help educate students, and prepare them for their future roles as leaders, journalists, entrepreneurs, scientists, or even as private citizens with adequate knowledge or better understanding of this specialized field of science," Serrano concluded.

For her part, NIMBB Dir. Cynthia R. Hedreyda, who spearheaded the course project in 2008, said the course syllabus contains 10 topics/subjects, namely:

1. An overview and introduction to Biotechnology, both traditional and modern;
2. Overview of Processes & Products of Traditional Biotechnology;
3. Modern Biotechnology;
4. Modern Agricultural Biotechnology, including genetically-modified corn, cotton and papaya;
5. Biotechnology for Health;
6. Biotechnology for the Environment;
7. Industrial Biotechnology;
8. Biotechnology in Promoting Law & Order;
9. Current Trends in Biotechnology; and
10. Legal, Ethical & Social Concerns in Biotechnology.

The course syllabus was completed with the support of other agencies like the Int'l. Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications, Biotechnology Coalition of the Phils., SEARCA, Univ. of the Phils. — Diliman, and the 16 SUC collaborators. (*Biolife News Service*)

adding of abaca products in six selected LGUs and cooperatives (Viga, Baras, Bato, Gigmoto, San Andres and Pandan). This project will seek to establish processing facilities, strengthen institutional capability and to render marketing assistance. (*FIDA*)

Feed the soil, and it will in turn feed the plants

This is the guiding principle of successful Ilocano farmer and current Chairman of the Ilocos Norte Provincial Agriculture and Fishery Council (PAFC) to produce his own organic fertilizer.

Sixty-nine year old *Manong* Angel Padron firmly believes that the use of organic fertilizer does not only preserve the natural nutrients in soil but it also provides benefits that can improve its water and nutrient holding capacity. Moreover, organic fertilizer contains macro and micro elements that help in the physical and biological components of the soil.

Farming Early

A farmer since his teen years, *Manong* Angel has already planted an assortment of crops including rice and organic white corn. He has also produced various high value commercial crops such as tomato, egg-plant, cucumber, papaya, and dragon fruit on his 3-hectare farm lot at Brgy. Libtong, Bacarra, Ilocos Norte.

Prior to his success, he was always faced with dilemmas concerning production such as the high cost of farm inputs including fertilizer. This aroused his attention which motivated him to develop organic fertilizer using farm wastes, residues and plants. As compost fungus activator, he utilizes *Tricho* to hasten the decomposition of the organic materials he collects from his farm.

In 2005, *Manong* Angel was able to kick-start his organic fertilizer venture.

When he expanded, he studied other methods and procedures and used Effective Microorganism (EM1) - - - a combination of useful regenerative microorganisms that exist freely in nature while improving the quality and fertility of soil as well as the growth and quality of crops.

Going Organic

Manong Angel mixes one liter of EM1 concentrate with 28 liters of water and a kilo of molasses. Then, he ferments the mixture for three days. Next, he mixes the fermented solution

with with 1,000 liters of water. This will produce 100 bags of organic fertilizer at 50 bags per kilogram.

Eventually, *Manong* Angel was able to build his own mixing plant and storage area.

Here, he mixes collected waste materials like chicken and cow manure, ipil-ipil leaves, sawdust, rice straw, and carbonized rice hull which he sprinkles with EM1 mix.

In two weeks, he thoroughly mixes the compost heap, from

top to bottom, to be able to facilitate and induce uniform decomposition. After four more weeks, the compost is ready for use and the organic fertilizer produced is placed in a sack and stored for future use.

Manong Angel also produces Bokashi, another organic fertilizer, which he ferments with EM, molasses, and water under anaerobic conditions.

According to him, this

product can improve the soil structure and create a disease-suppressing soil.

As an organic farming enthusiast, *Manong* Angel is able to sell his own produce at a higher price. In 2007, he started producing in large volumes which he is able to sell at P220.00/sack at 50kg each on a less than P10,000.00 production cost for 100 bags.

Not bad for something made out of waste.

At present, his steady mar-



Photos courtesy of DA-RAFID I



Mang Angel Padron proudly shows some of his organically-grown products: white corn and papaya.

kets include a Dragon Fruit Farm in Burgos, Ilocos Norte and a coconut plantation in Pagudpod. In the future, the successful organic farming advocate aims to make a patent for his organic fertilizer and hopes to make it known commercially in his province.

Indeed, *Mang* Angel has discovered better ways to preserve the soil which he considers his greatest possession. It gave him better life that was once beyond his reach. And as he takes better care of the fertile ground where his crops grow in abundance, the soil gives him back blessings in manifold. (RAFID1/adr)

From the Regions

Selected news and developments on agriculture, fisheries, agribusiness and related sectors, as reported by the DA-Regional Field Units, and those published in national and provincial publications.

DA, IFAD jumpstart \$60-M Cordillera agri project

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) recently signed an *aide memoire*, signaling the start of the Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project Phase 2 (CHARM 2), worth \$66 million (roughly P3.05 billion).

The project documents were signed by Undersecretary for Operations Jesus Emmanuel M. Paras, on behalf of Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, and IFAD country Program Manager Sana F.K. Jatta.

The project will cover 170 barangays in 37 towns in six provinces in the Cordilleras.

The project will help upland villages improve their own community development plans, identify specific projects to realize those plans and then pursue those projects using IFAD and DA funds.

Projects will focus on reforestation, agricultural productivity and rural infrastructure.

The infrastructure component will be devoted to building farm to market roads, community-based irrigation systems, and development of village-level potable water system.

To get the project on full gear, Paras said a Special Release Order for the P170.8 million DA

Counterpart Fund and Loan Proceeds has been approved.

Meanwhile, the IFAD has released US\$1.5 million working fund or roughly P72 million.

The IFAD fund is a soft loan to the Philippine government.

Since the IFAD mission last March this year, the project implementers reported that the machinery to implement the project from the DA-RFU-CAR to the village levels has been set.

Agreements with the governors of the six covered provinces have been signed while agreements with 18 out of the 37 covered towns were entered into.

A separate agreement has been reached between the DA and the National Commission for Indigenous People (NCIP) for the latter to issue ancestral land titles to private properties of the covered barangays and domain titles for communal lands.

Since 97 of the targeted barangays were newly-organized, the project will give those new local government units a fresh start at charting their own development with financial and technical backing from the IFAD-DA partners, Paras concluded. (DA-SPCMAD)



Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap swears into office full-pledged DA Regional Exec. Directors Larry P. Nacionales of Region 6 (middle) and Tommy Ala of Region 12.

DA-Ilocos endorses 2 ACEF projects

The Department of Agriculture-Ilocos Region (RFU1) is set to endorse two projects, pending minor revisions — establishment of a bangus processing facility and a feedmill — for possible funding under the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (ACEF).

The bangus project, worth P14.7 million, is proposed by R-J-5 Trading. It entails the initial production of 250 to 280 metric tons of frozen deboned bangus for the first two years, and would be increased over the next five years.

The feedmill project, worth P14.5 million, is proposed by the Biba Diwa Multi-Purpose Cooperative of Malasiqui, Pangasinan. It aims to put up a feedmill capable to produce five metric tons (or 60 50-kilo bags) of feed per hour.

ACEF is a pool of fund collected from tariff revenues of imported farm and fishery products. It is lent to organized farmers' and fisherfolk's groups to finance their respective agricultural and fishery projects, and enhance their competitiveness.

DA-Region 1 ACEF Technical Secretariat (RTS) chairperson Erlinda F. Manipon advised the proponents to incorporate minor revisions to ensure final approval and endorsement.

For instance, the bangus project should include a waste management system, while feedmill should define if it would engage in dealership, how to ensure supply of raw material and prospective markets.

The other ACEF-RTS members who evaluated the two projects are: Ms. Marina Dumon, representing Region 1 Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Nestor Domenden; Ilocos Regional Agriculture and Fishery Council (RAFC) Chair Vincent A. Adorna; and Regional Fishery and Aquatic Resources Management Council (FARMC) chair Ricardo C. Dulay. (DA-RAFID 1)

ARMM conducts halal forum

The Muslim Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Kutawato, Inc. (MCCIKI) has conducted a "Forum on Halal Assurance System," August 13, at Sardonyx Plaza, in Cotabato City.

MCCIKI President Ustadz Esmael W. Ebrahim said the forum featured lecture/discussion on the Historical Perspective of Halal, Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board, Inc. Certification Process, Halal & Food Safety and Actual Application for Halal Certification by halal experts.

Department of Agriculture & Fisheries-ARMM Halal Regional Coordinator Dr. Norodin A. Kuit said that the ARMM Halal Industry had formulated the ARMM Halal Food Industry Development Master Plan 2009-2010 which endorsed the realization of other halal programs/projects such as operationalizing of three (3) slaughterhouses in Lanao del Sur, Basilan and Datu Odin Sinsuat; Commercialization of halal compliant feedmill; Contract Growing on Broiler; enactment of the Halal

Fraud Bill by the Regional Legislative Assembly among others.

He also said that recently Kuwaiti investors led by His Excellency Sheik Ahmad Dawood Al Sabah expressed their interest to put-up a Cattle Production cum Meat Processing in the ARMM—a sign that the halal industry in the region starts to get attention from foreign countries.

Helpful mechanisms to improve the industry were discussed like the proposed mergence between the City Licensing Office under Ms. Aurea Yu on the inclusion of halal certification to establishments during the processing of business permits and related documents.

On the otherhand, the Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board, Inc. (MMHCBI) will do the same, a two-way process helping halal establish a strong niche in the region.

DAF-ARMM Secretary Keise T. Usman commends the efforts of the halal industry prime movers in the region in doing a great job in its development. (RAFID-ARMM)

DA to integrate corn with livestock sector

The Department of Agriculture is pushing for the integration of the corn industry with the livestock and poultry sectors as part of ongoing initiatives attain corn self sufficiency.

Agriculture Undersecretary Bernie Fondevilla said in a recent forum that on top of implementing measures to ensure rice self-sufficiency, the DA is also pursuing measures to increase the production of corn, considering that this crop is the main feed ingredient in the poultry and livestock sectors.

"We are continuing efforts aimed at integrating the (livestock and poultry) sector with corn, being its main feed ingredient," Fondevilla said.

The DA is also intensifying its postharvest support program for the corn industry to increase yields, bring down production and marketing costs and reduce post harvest losses.

For his part, Assistant Secretary Dennis Araullo, who is concurrent national coordinator of the Ginintuang Masaganang Ani (GMA) corn program, said the DA

is aiming to complete the construction of 50 corn postharvest processing and trading centers and 44 village-type corn cob dryers in strategic corn-growing areas across the country.

One such facility was recently inaugurated in Isabela, making it the 10th corn processing and trading center operating in the country.

The others are in Kabacan, North Cotabato; Banga, South Cotabato; Malungon, Sarangani; Sergio Osmeña, Zamboanga del Norte;

Sagay, Negros Occidental; Ramon Magsaysay, Zamboanga del Sur; Rosales, Pangasinan; Bantay, Ilocos Sur; and Talacag, Bukidnon.

These facilities provide drying and marketing services to thousands of corn farmers.

The DA is also encouraging more feedmilling and hog- and chicken-growing ventures in corn-producing areas; and, inversely, corn-planting activities around hog and chicken areas to realize the integration of these co-dependent industries.

MRDP benefits initial 150 Mindanao towns

Thousands of ruralfolk in about 150 towns in Mindanao are now benefiting from the antipoverty initiatives under the Department of Agriculture's Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP), barely eight months after program implementation.

The MRDP is an \$83-million poverty alleviation program, implemented in 225 towns in Mindanao, funded by the World Bank, with counterpart funds from the national and local government units (LGUs).

In his report during a recent three-week World Bank review mission, MRDP Deputy Director Arnel V. De Mesa said that at least 146 towns have reaped initial gains in their investment.

These include construction of farm-to-market roads (FMRs), irrigation and potable water systems, and post harvest facilities, and establishment of agri-based livelihood projects.

"Some have completed the projects, other projects are nearing completion, others are at procurement level, and some more are waiting for notices to proceed," he said.

To date, De Mesa said of the P1.2 billion on the pipeline for infrastructure projects, P25 million has been completed and many of the on-going projects are within 70 to 85% complete.

Secondly, out of the P127-million worth of livelihood projects earmarked for the Community Fund for Agricultural Development (CFAD) component, P47million has been completed, close to P22 million are ongoing, while the remaining amount is on the procurement process.

Of the six MRDP covered regions, Region 10 leads in project implementation, P270 million worth of infrastructure projects on the pipeline. Of this amount, over P17-million of FMRs in Linamon



Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap shows corn cobs at the recently-inaugurated corn postharvest processing and trading center in Jones, Isabela. Behind him are DA Ass't. Sec. Dennis Araullo and NABCOR President Allan Javellana.

New corn ... (from p1)

grains, reduce postharvest losses and processing costs, and serve as a direct market for farmers.

50 Centers, 44 Village Dryers

Meanwhile, DA Assistant Secretary and GMA Corn Program National Coordinator Dennis Araullo said the DA targets to construct 50 such facilities and 44 village-type corn cob dryers in major corn-growing areas.

With the facility, Jones farmers are expected to earn an average

additional income of P8,600 per hectare per year.

In all, the processing center will directly benefit at least 1,000 farmers and their families, from 11 'corn clusters' in Isabela, namely: Arubub, Disimpit, Palagao, San Jose, Diarao, Abulan, Bantay, Linomot, Papan Este, Papan Weste and Dibulan.

Corn Center Equipment

The Jones facility features a 1,200-square meter warehouse, a corn cob dryer with four bins, each with a 50-metric ton holding capacity, one sheller, with 16 to 20-ton capacity per; two grain dryers, each with a 12 to 15-ton capacity; three cob furnaces with boiler heat exchanger; a 30-ton holding bin; and a conveyor system.

The center will sell the dried corn grains to feed processors and end-users in Isabela and nearby areas. It will directly employ 14 workers, and provide indirect employment to 250 others.

The Center will also provide support services such as: two storage facilities with 100-ton capacity for dried corn grains and corn on the cobs; one 4-wheel drive tractor for "plow now, pay later" scheme; establishment of techno-demo farms; and seed assistance to farmer-clients.

and Salvador towns in Lanao del Norte and Manolo Fortich in Bukidnon have been completed.

Caraga region follows closely with P215 million worth of infrastructure projects. The towns of Esperanza, Agusan del Sur and Carmen in Surigao del Sur had finished their FRM projects.

Further, the top five performing provinces in terms of project implementation are Agusan del Sur, Sultan Kudarat, Zamboanga del Sur, Lanao del Norte and Sarangani Province.

The other MRDP covered towns are yet to benefit from the program as they are still on the process of completing their respective requisites, while others are preparing their financial counterpart. (Sherwin B. Manual/DA-MRDP)

Global experts warn of Asian water, food crisis

Scientists have warned that Asia must urgently reform its water management to avert devastating food shortages as populations increase.

Water experts said recently that demand for food on the continent will double by 2050 and force countries to import more than a quarter of their grain, unless they start supplying water to farms more efficiently.

"If we don't manage to do that there will be increases in malnutrition, increases in poverty, increases in social unrest," said Colin Chartres, director general of the International Water Management Institute.

Chartres cautioned that the problem will spill into Asian neighbors, based on the experi-

ences of the food crisis of 2007-2008.

"I expect we will see more of these kind of crises as we move forward and it will be increasingly hard for the exporting countries to provide enough food," he told *The Associated Press* as his institute jointly published a report on water management with the United Nations.

The report published at the start of the Stockholm World Water Week, said South Asia could satisfy all of its additional demand for food by improving performance of crop irrigation, while Asia as a whole could meet three quarters of the extra demand.

The report proposes modernizing old Asian irrigation systems built in the 1970s and 1980s, and

expanding the use of rainwater in farming. It also says private companies and governments should support local initiatives among farmers.

Chartres said the proposed reforms require billions of dollars of investment in Asian water infrastructure during the next 30 to 40 years. (*philstar.com*)

China is world's top aquatic producer

China has produced the most aquatic products in the world for 20 consecutive years, accounting for 70 percent of the world's total output of aquatic products.

In 1990, China became the first country in the world to have a higher cultivated aquatic product output than caught aquatic product output.

In 1986, China promulgated and implemented the "Fisheries Law," legally established the "cultivation first" development guideline, and formed a series of administrative systems including the Provisions on the Administration of Fishery Licensing.

All these measures promoted the sustained and rapid development of the fishery industry.

At present, China's cultivated aquatic product output is 70 percent of its total aquatic product output.

Water-saving, efficient, ecological and healthy cultivation modes have become China's mainstream aquaculture.

In 2008, there were 9,971 various aquatic product processing enterprises in China



with a total processing capacity of 21.97 million tons.

Data issued by the Ministry of Agriculture shows that in 2008, China's per capita amount of aquatic products stood at 36 kg, 1.6 times higher than the world average.

China's 2008 fishery output value accounted for about 10 percent of its total farming output value, there were 14.54 million personnel engaged in fishery, and the per capita income of fishermen stood at 7,575 yuan, over 2,000 yuan higher than that of farmers. (*www.allaboutfeed.net*)

New treaty to stamp out illegal fishers

The final text of a new treaty that aims to close fishing ports to vessels involved in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing has been agreed upon by a group of 91 countries during talks brokered by UN Food Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The "Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing" will be the first ever global treaty focused specifically on the problem of IUU fishing. It is hoped that the agreement will help block IUU-caught fish from entering international markets, thereby removing an important incentive for some fishermen to engage in illicit fishing.

In the Agreement, countries agree to take a number of steps to harden their ports against IUU fishers. Key points of the treaty include:

- Foreign fishing vessels wishing to dock will be required to request permission from specially designated ports ahead of time, transmitting information on their activities and the fish they have on board.

- The treaty commits countries to regular inspections and outlines a set of standards that will be used during those inspections. Reviews of ship papers, surveys of fishing gear, examin-

ing catches and checking a ship's records can often reveal if it has engaged in IUU fishing.

- Signatories must ensure that ports and inspectors are adequately equipped and trained;

- When a vessel is denied access, port states must communicate that information publicly and national authorities from the country whose flag the vessel is flying must take follow-up action;

- The treaty calls for the creation of information-sharing networks to let countries share details on IUU-associated vessels, and also contains provisions intended to assist resource-strapped developing countries meet their treaty obligations.

These measures apply to foreign fishing vessels not flying the flag of port states. However, countries can apply them to their own fishing fleets as well should they choose.

"By frustrating responsible management, IUU fishing damages the productivity of fisheries — or leads to their collapse. That's a serious problem for the people who depend on them for food and income," said FAO Assistant-Director General for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Ichiro Nomura.

"This treaty represents a real, palpable advance in the ongoing effort to stamp it out."

Ratification process

The Agreement falls under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, with FAO's Director-General acting as legal depository for countries' ratifications.

As such, it next will be reviewed by FAO's Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters at its next meeting (23-25 September 2009) and from there it will go to FAO's Council in September and the FAO Conference in November for final review and formal adoption. The substantive work on the treaty may be considered as having been finalized, however.

In order to enter into force the Agreement must then be approved at the national level. Once 25

States have done so, it will enter into force after 30 days.

Regular monitoring of compliance will take place, with a major review scheduled to occur four years after the Agreement takes effect.

Strategic bottleneck

So-called "Port state measures" like those prescribed in the new treaty are widely considered as one of the most effective and cost-effective weapons in the fight against illicit fishing.

"Of course, the effectiveness of port state measures depends in large part on how well countries implement them," said David Douman, an expert on the issue at FAO. (*FAO website*)

Gov't crafts 'El Niño' mitigation plan

The Department of Agriculture is set to formulate an 'El Niño' plan to mitigate the adverse of the weather phenomenon, which the Philippine weather bureau (PAGASA) said would commence third quarter this year and would persist up to second quarter of 2010.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap has thus instructed the creation of "climate change adaptation teams," one each for crops, fisheries, and on research and development. The teams are to formulate respective El Niño mitigation plans.

The DA is still awaiting a progress report from PAGASA as to the severity and extent, particularly the list of vulnerable provinces that would be severely affected by the impending drought.

The Philippines was cited by the United Nations and other global development agencies as one of the pilot areas for long-term and planned climate change response systems because of its

vulnerability to natural disasters that include 20 typhoons a year.

In a recent briefing, UN consultant Lourdes V. Tibig, a retired PAGASA official, said the warming up of the climate in the Philippines would pour more rains in provinces that experience the southeast monsoon from June to October.

This would mean more floods

'Green Industry' int'l. confab on

The Philippines--spearheaded by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) along with the DA and five other national agencies--will host the "International Conference on Green Industry in Asia," on September 9-11, 2009, with the theme, "Managing the Transition to Resource Efficient and Low-Carbon Industries."

The three-day event seeks to raise awareness, knowledge and expertise in managing transition to resource-efficient and low-carbon industries, as well as iden-

and landslides in wide swats of Luzon and the Visayas; the dry season in monsoon season-affected provinces would be longer; and more drought in Mindanao.

In all, climate change would hit the agriculture and fishery sector hardest with adverse effects on productivity, including the spread of plant and animal diseases.

Without adequate preparations, she warned that countries like the Philippines may see their farm and fishery productivity drastically go down. (*DA-Field Operations Service*)

tify development paths to resource-efficient and low-carbon production which will include policies, strategies, programs, technologies and institutional support.

The conference aims to identify business opportunities arising from the shift.

The other member-agencies of the National Organizing Committee are the Departments of Energy, Foreign Affairs, Science and Technology, Trade, the Office of the Executive Secretary and the National Economic and Development Authority.

DA market, agribiz center soon to rise

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap spearheaded a simple groundbreaking ceremony to commence the construction of a Food Market and Agribusiness Center (FMAC) at the DA compound, in Quezon City, August 18.

The center will cater to the needs of DA employees, other government and private office workers, and households, along Elliptical Road, in Diliman and adjoining communities.

When completed, the facility will showcase and sell export-quality food, farm, and fishery products at cheaper prices. It will also serve as a direct market outlet or Bagsakan Center for farmers' and fishers' groups.

Secretary Yap said that the food market will also serve as the new home of the Agricultural Export Promotion Showroom, which was set up in 2007 and has already sold more than P3.5-million worth of various products.

With the construction of the FMAC, fledgling agribusiness entrepreneurs will have a venue to showcase their exportable products.

The center will also house a canteen and a café at the second floor, while the original convenience store will serve as the transaction area for the food suppliers.

"We need a place for us to use as a service provider for our guests and for own people that's why we are coming up with this building," Sec. Yap said.

He added that the project is a way of presenting a new face of Philippine agriculture, one that is based on processing, value adding and world-class products.

The FMAC is a collaborative project of the DA-Agribusiness and Marketing Services (AMAS), Philippine Agricultural Development and Commercial Corporation (PADCC), and the DA Multi-Purpose Cooperative (DAMC).

"This facility is not for PADCC nor for DAMC to make money. This is dedicated to the Filipino farmers, fisherfolk and consumers." Sec. Yap concluded.



Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap (left) leads the groundbreaking ceremony to commence the construction of a DA Food Market and Agribusiness Center (architect's design shown at the background) in Quezon City. Also in photo (from left to right) are: Ms. Soledad Agbayani of Console Farms, DA Assistant Secretary Clayton Olalia, Efren Chato of King Louie Farms, and other guests.

Bt corn, GM crops are better

Scientists have confirmed the advantages of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) corn and genetically modified (GM) crops over traditional strains.

Dr. Violeta Villegas, an expert in plant pathology, said Bt corn has been genetically modified to resist the Asiatic corn borer, a pest that has ravaged corn plantations in the past.

Apart from the improved quality of harvest, she added that Bt corn reduces the use of pesticides, which also slashes the production cost of farmers.

"One farmer lost his cow because it fed on corn newly treated with pesticide," she revealed.

Assessments made by agencies and experts in the United States, Canada, Japan, Europe, South America and Asia have shown that Bt corn is "as safe as conventional corn for humans, animals and the environment."

Dr. Vic Alpuerto of Monsanto, for his part, said that the current trend is for farmers to adopt corn varieties that are herbicide-tolerant.

RP seeks ... (from p4)

from the establishment of mariculture parks and protection of threatened species to better tuna resource management and a tougher drive against destructive fishing practices.

Tubbataha Reefs has been declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, while the Verde Island Passage is known as the "center of the center of marine shore fish diversity."

The GEF provides funding for projects to safeguard the Coral Triangle.

"We are living in perilous times. And now without immediate and urgent climate change adaptation and mitigation programs in place, the survival of our underwater food chain is threatened," Yap stressed,

The three initiatives focus on:

*Preparing Filipino fisherfolk for the effects of climate change through an information and education campaign that will encourage a shift from fish hunting to fish farming in mariculture parks established by the Philippine in collaboration with local government units;

He added that as of last year, approved biotech products have been planted in 400,000 hectares of land by 145,000 farmers.

Alpuerto emphasized that planting herbicide-tolerant corn reduces the current levels of loss at 22 during the dry planting season and 46 percent for the wet planting season.

Dr. Saturnina Halos, chairwoman of the Biotechnology Advisory Team of the Department of Agriculture (DA-BAT) summed it up by saying that farmers are the ones who really stand to benefit from the use of genetically modified crops.

"Farmers are the biggest beneficiaries of the Bt and GM technologies," she said.

"There are countries which ban GM technology. But they import GM crops. This is unfair to the farmers," she told seminar participants.

After the seminar, local and foreign delegates left for Nueva Ecija and proceed later to Quirino on exposure trips. (*Biolife news service*)

*Establishing a coastal resource management plan in the Verde Island Passage, which is considered as the center of the Coral Triangle; and

*Assessing the vulnerabilities brought about by climate change through a rapid alert system for coastal areas.

The "rapid alert system" will enable the network of coastal communities to develop monitoring plans and provide feedback mechanisms, while the national government investigates and analyzes the phenomenon and disseminates information to enable coastal communities to cope with climate change.

On top of these priority initiatives, Yap said a Remote Sensing and Geographic Information System also need to be put in place as tools to investigate and profile hot spots and areas with high vulnerability among the CTI coastal communities.

For 2010, President Arroyo announced in her State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July 27, the allocation of at least \$25 million (about P1.2 billion) for mariculture development.



Sec. Yap leads consultation with corn farmers in Carmen, Pangasinan, who agreed on a P10 per kilo buying price.

Give me ... (from p1)

may expand by 2.4%, from 1.63 million to 1.67 million hectares, and average yield per hectare may improve by 1.6%, from 3.8 metric tons to 3.9 metric tons.

The BAS said more areas planted to rice, extensive use of hybrid and certified seeds and fertilizers would all contribute to the expected increase in total harvest.

It noted that average yield of hybrid rice has increased to 7.9 tons per hectare, or double the national average yield for all types of rice.

"The Philippines is internationally recognized as a trailblazer in the field of Marine Protected Area Management, initially in integrated coastal resource management, fish sanctuaries and artificial reefs, promotion of the use of environment-friendly fishing gears, awareness programs and habitat-restoration projects," Yap noted.

"Just recently, President Arroyo also signed EO 553, which mandates the adoption of an integrated coastal management strategy to ensure sustainable development of fisheries and aquatic resources, which has led local government executives to start including the conservation and protection of coastal resources in their respective development plans," he added.

As a result of these policy initiatives, the Philippines now has at least 150 coastal municipalities with coastal resources management programs, covering 4,000 kilometers of coastline; 500 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), most of which have been established through local community initiatives.

Agri grows ... (from p3)

Banana, along with coconut, peanut and cassava, also registered production increases.

Corn production amounted to 3.22 million tons, 2.3% lower compared to last year's record.

The poultry and hog industries grew by 4.3% and 2.7%, respectively, improving the overall livestock sub-sector growth, at 2.4%.

The fisheries sub-sector expanded by 4.9%, primarily due to the growth in commercial fisheries, up by 10.4%. Municipal fisheries inched up by 1%, while aquaculture expanded by 4.3%.

The Philippines has also begun the process of implementing a comprehensive management plan for small pelagic fishes in addition to an ongoing development and conservation program for tuna.

It also launched a collaborative project with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to ensure a sustainable future for the live reef fish trade in Palawan.

To develop its tuna resources, the Philippines has also secured funds for the West Pacific East Asia Oceanic Fisheries Management Project (with Indonesia and Vietnam); Tuna Fisheries Research and Management Program in the Philippines; Sulu-Celebes Sea Sustainable Fisheries Management Project; and a separate program focusing on the preliminary assessment of handline fisheries in the country.

Moreover, Filipino fisherfolk, especially women, are trained on other income generating activities such as seaweed farming, sea ranching, and an assortment of fish drying, processing and value-adding enterprises.

Coconut industry is back on its feet

Despite a series of typhoons and disease attacks, the coconut industry is now back on its feet and is firmly moving along a path of higher rate of growth and employment.

Thus said Department of Agriculture undersecretary Jesus Emmanuel Paras, during the joint celebrations of the 23rd anniversary of the DA's Philippine Coconut Authority (DA-PCA) and national coconut week, at the SM Mega Trade Hall, Mandaluyong City, August 14, with the theme, "Niyog – Natatangi Itong Yaman Oil Na Ginto Pa."

Representing Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, Paras said that coconut products remain as the country's major agriculture export commodities.

Secondly, with its first semester production of 3.6 million tons worth P26.1 billion, the industry is indeed back on its feet.

However, he said there is still vigorous need for the PCA and industry stakeholders to intensify current efforts to further boost production on at least three vital areas, namely:

- *Planting and replanting programs;

- *Establishment of national standard on products to enhance competitiveness; and

- *Expansion of harvests through yield improvement.

Moreover, with the growing demand for palm oil, which is expected to reach 134,500 tons by 2010 and 171,700 tons by 2015, the DA-PCA is stepping up efforts to develop new hectareage for oil palm, mostly in Mindanao.

The PCA, in tandem with oil palm growers, have identified some 200,000 new hectares for planting by 2010.

Aside from these, the DA continues to wage war against major coconut pests in partnership with the UPLB-National Crop Protection Center, DOST-PCCARD, BPI, LGUs, coconut farmers' groups and the private sector.

The 23rd PCA anniversary and Coconut festival was also graced by Batangas Governor Vilma Santos Recto.



Agriculture Undersecretary Jesus Emmanuel M. Paras (2nd from right) and Batangas Governor Vilma Santos Recto lead the opening of the coconut week celebration, in conjunction with the 23rd anniversary of the DA's Philippine Coconut Authority, at the SM Megatrade Hall, Mandaluyong City. Flanking them are PCA Deputy Administrators Carlos Carpio (left) and Roel Rosales.

The three-day affair featured a trade fair and exhibit showcasing various coconut products and by-

products; information-sharing and trading activities, showcasing business opportunities.

DA-Region 6 inaugurates model housing project

Three hundred officials and employees of the Department of Agriculture in Western visayas (Region 6) are proud these days, as they are among the first

recipients of the agency's housing project.

Each of them will receive a free 100-square meter lot at the five-hectare housing project, at

the Western Visayas Integrated Agricultural Research Center (Wesviarc) in Hamungaya, Jaro, Iloilo City.

Assistant Secretary Clayton Olalia, representing Sec. Arthur Yap, graced the recent groundbreaking ceremony.

Of the total area, three hectares are allocated for the home lots, while the remaining two hectares are allotted for road networks, sewerage system, parks, lighting system, among others.

The five-hectare unproductive portion of the WESVIARC was transformed into a housing project by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 1801 signed by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on June 10, 2009.

Asst. Sec. Olalia said the realization of the project is a manifestation of the successful collective effort of the DA-Region 6 officials and employees.

The region is the first recipient of the housing project, ahead of the DA-Central Office and other DA regions, Olalia added.

The DA-Region 6 housing committee is currently negotiating with concerned agencies such as the PAG-IBIG, GSIS and Land Bank to help employees avail of housing loans.

Olalia also requested DA-RFU 6 Regional Executive Director Larry Nacionales to allocate an additional five hectares at the WESVIARC compound for the establishment of food production and livelihood projects, including a *bagsakan* center.

He encouraged the officials and employees to transform their association into a multi-purpose cooperative.

In so doing, the community will serve as a show window or a model viable residential cum farming community, where modern agricultural technologies are employed, added Olalia.



Agriculture Assistant Secretary Clayton Olalia (2nd from left) lower a capsule, during the groundbreaking ceremony of a five-hectare housing project for the officials and employees of the Department of Agriculture-Region 6 (Western Visayas), at the Western Visayas Integrated Agricultural Research Center (WESVIARC), Barangay Hamungaya, Jaro, Iloilo City. Also in photo are DA-RFU6 Regional Executive Director Larry P. Nacionales (left) and OIC-RTD for Policy, Planning, Research and Support Services and Chairman of the DA-RFU-VI Housing Committee Dr. Joyce S. Wendam (right).