



JICA project coordinator Shu Nishimaru (left) listens intently to reports from the six AICCEP industry cluster teams together with ARMM DTI Asst. Regional Secretary Abubacar Datanong (center) and ARMM DTI Regional Secretary Sakiran Hajan (right) during a recent Davao meeting.

## Malaysia eyeing ARMM for big investments

MALAYSIA is looking keenly at Mindanao as one of its investment destinations here in the Asia-Pacific region in the coming years.

Nyae Ayup, Malaysian Trade Commissioner of the Malaysia External Trade Development Corp, one of the delegates of this year's Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-Eaga) Strategic Plan-

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# ARMM industry clusters "very grateful" to JICA

COTABATO CITY -- Industry cluster teams of the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project all came out in full force to express their gratitude to Japan International Cooperation Agency for its unwavering support to industrial growth in the region during a recent cluster meeting in Davao.

"We're very thankful to JICA for this industry cluster project, for bringing us along on this journey to promote the growth of the abaca industry, how to deal with the government

sector and guiding us to become stronger as an industry" says abaca cluster chair Pundato Alug.

Alug said all the team members are wishing that this project could be extended and even expanded to include other industries such as coconut and cacao, because land in Lanao del Sur "is very fertile for many industrial crops".

The palm oil cluster team was "very grateful" to JICA for supporting the oil palm growers and farmers in Maguindanao by guiding and funding all their

projects and activities to promote the growth of the palm oil industry, according to the cluster chairman Suharto Ibay. "Since we're still in the early stages of production, we're all hoping JICA could extend the project," Ibay said.

Coconut cluster chairman Tanggote Panganda said coconut farmers need to know more about earning additional income from the coconut by-products since most of the farmers in Maguindanao belong to the "poorest of the poor"

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## Hajan cites impact of AICCEP on ARMM economy, farmers

COTABATO CITY -- Regional Secretary Sakiran Hajan of the ARMM Department of Trade and Industry cited the strong impact of the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project or AICCEP on the lives of farmers in the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao.

"I'm so impressed by how the AICCEP is improving the lives of farmers and improving the economy in the ARMM region. I'm so thankful to all those who contributed to the success of this project," Hajan told a gathering of industry cluster teams, provincial directors of ARMM- DTI

and consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency during a meeting in Davao recently.

Hajan attributed the success of the AICCEP these past months to "all the hardworking DTI provincial directors" in the ARMM who coordinated all the projects and activities of pilot industry clusters in their provinces covering Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur. "I've seen how hard they worked to make this project succeed all these months and I'm so thankful for what they've done to

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## Laguna trade mission sees vast US export potentials

STA ROSA, LAGUNA --- A recent trade delegation here who arrived recently after weeklong trade and study mission to California, USA, revealed that vast export opportunities are waiting for small and medium-scale enterprises (SME) in the US West Coast.

The mission delegation composed of entrepre-

neurs, industry stakeholders and officers of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) had one goal in mind: to test the USA as a potential market for Calabarzon products. (Calabarzon stands for Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon economic zone)

DTI Calabarzon Regional Director Marilou Quinco-Toledo disclosed that the "Pistahan sa Yerba Buena Gardens" at Howard Street in downtown San Francisco was the best site for test selling several Calabarzon products since the trade fair coincided with the 21st Annual Pistahan Festival, an event organized by the Filipino American Arts Exposition that drew over 60,000 people daily.

Food items (coffee, banana chips), health and wellness preparations (turmeric, lemon grass tea) as well as fashion accessories, footwear, and rice bran-based beauty products were brought to the fair

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PHILIPPINES

# JICA extends AICCEP for one more year

## Govt eyeing 1-million hectares palm oil nationwide

PALM OIL plantations all over the country are expected to reach one million hectares in the years ahead once government plans for this commodity are set into motion.

Francisco "Kiko" Pangilinan, head of the government's food security program said, one of the keys to reducing poverty in the Philippines is the mass employment and livelihood programs that come out of a growing, robust palm oil industry.

The government is expected to add some P50 million budget for palm oil industry development this year, which is fifty-times more than the previous year's budget at only P1 million. This budget, according to Pangilinan, will be utilized as assistance to farmers, for fertilizers, seedlings, research and development.

"This will be beneficial to our country because presently, the Philippines is importing a total of 350,000 to 400,000 metric tons (MT) of palm oil amounting to P35 billion annually. If we can produce our own big supply of palm oil, we don't have to import anymore and spending such

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DAVAO CITY --- A one year extension for the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project (AICCEP) has been approved recently by the Tokyo headquarters of Japan International Cooperation Agency.

A JICA high official who reviewed the project early this year said he had been "amazed and impressed" by the early outcome of the AICCEP program after observing how the government, private sector, academe, coops, had been working closely together on various projects and activities to boost the growth and development of the six pilot industries in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

AICCEP is the joint project of JICA and the ARMM-Department of Trade and Industry that

handles and supports the six pilot industries -- seaweed, coffee, rubber, palm oil, coconut and abaca. The three-year program is one of the components under the Comprehensive Capacity Development Project (CCDP) for the ARMM region.

"We're so impressed by how the various industry clusters were able to gather together representatives from government, private sector, coops, academe to actively work together to develop their local industries," says the deputy assistant director

Mr. Mishima Kenji of JICA's Private Sector Development Group and Industrial Development and Public Policy Department.

Kenji said he was concerned by the "sustainability" of the project so that the industry clusters could reduce their dependence on JICA over time and rely on local and national resources that are available among national government offices and local governments.

"I'm convinced there's a real need to continue this industry cluster approach to get maximum impact on the economy of your region," Kenji told members and officers of cluster teams and officers of cluster teams of the six AICCEP industry clusters gathered at a hotel

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MAGUINDANAO PALM OIL NURSERY. This one-hectare oil palm nursery (above) at Brgy. Sarmiento, Parang, Maguindanao was launched last March by the palm oil cluster team supported by JICA executives and officials of ARMM Department of Trade and Industry. The nursery will provide quality oil palm seedlings to Maguindanao farmers.



## PROJECTS



**SEAWEEDES TURNOVER.** Seaweed seedlings (cultivars) were turned over recently by the seaweed cluster team to a seaweed farmers federation group in Buan, Sulu in a wide-ranging effort to improve the quality of seaweeds produced in the southernmost province.

## Abaca cluster now moving five industry projects

MARAWI CITY --- This city is expected to see the steady growth and development of the abaca industry in the years ahead as the abaca industry cluster team set into motion all five of its cluster projects these past months.

"We're moving ahead with our five cluster projects which are helping our abaca farmers and their families here in Lanao boost their income and brighten their future," abaca cluster chairman Pundato Alug said.

In his recent report to consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency, Alug said three of their cluster projects had been completed already while the other two significant industry cluster projects are still "ongoing" with tangible results to be seen and felt several months from now this year.

One of these two big projects is the setting up of three pilot abaca nurseries in the farming towns of Madamba, Calanogas and Malabang here in Lanao del Sur under the supervision of abaca cluster members Ibrahim Casobedan, Bamer Disimban and Cosain Malawan, according to Alug.

The other abaca cluster project still ongoing is the setting up of a one-fourth hectare techno-demonstration farm or a "model abaca farm" in the three strategic areas as a showcase of a well-run, model farm that grows the best high-quality abaca plants in Lanao del Sur for local farmers to copy and replicate in their farmlands.

"Farmers here want to see a model abaca farm where they can visit and learn the proper methods and procedures of planting, growing and harvesting the abaca plant," says Dr Amer Comadug, who handled the project.

Three abaca industry projects that were already completed, according to Alug, include the local benchmarking visit to Zamboanga province, handled by

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## Seaweed cluster wants to expand project areas

TAWI-TAWI --- Expansion of the seaweed industry projects to other seaweed-producing areas of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao such as Sulu and Basilan islands, was stressed by members of the seaweed cluster team during a recent meeting in Davao with consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency.

"Our seaweed industry projects should not only end here in Tawi-Tawi but also extended to Sulu and Basilan so more seaweed farmers in the ARMM will benefit from our activities and projects," co-chairman Dr. Filemon Romero told JICA consultants.

High yielding seaweed seedlings that were cultivated and developed by cluster member Dr. Jumelita Romero in the laboratory of Mindanao State University have already been distributed to different farmer-caretakers of seaweed nurseries in Sitangkai, Sibutu and Panglima Sugala coastal towns these past few months. All these farmers were trained on how to operate the sea-based nurseries by the seaweed cluster team.

Batches in 100 kilos to

200 kilos of the seedlings were received by the caretakers in the three coastal towns which have the largest concentration of seaweed farmers. "We've provided them with floaters and twines for free as these farmers propagate the seedlings in their seaweed farm," Dr Romero said.

To continue and sustain this seaweed industry cluster project, it was necessary to expand the AICCEP to other Tawi-Tawi towns all over the island and repli-

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JICA senior adviser Tetsuo Inooka (left) and ARMM-DTI Asst. Trade Secretary Abubacar Datumanong (second from left) are shown discussing the "sustainability plans" of the six AICCEP industry clusters during a recent Davao meeting.

## Rubber cluster to expand projects in Basilan island

LAMITAN CITY --- New teams of rubber industry clusters are expected to be formed and organized in other towns of Basilan island in the following months to expand the reach of the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project, according to co-chairman Doming Narsico.

"It's easier now to expand after we've succeeded with our own rubber industry cluster team here in Lamitan," Narsico told consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency during a recent meeting in Davao.

Narsico said thirty-nine barangays or villages had benefited from the various projects and activities of the Lamitan-based pilot rubber industry cluster which included a series of training in tapping techniques, farm management and rubber processing. "There's so much to do yet to make a significant

impact on the rubber industry here--we need to expand and extend our project by replicating our success with all the other towns in Basilan," Narsico said.

Rubber has been one of the major sources of income for Lamitan City, as well as the entire province of Basilan, according to the rubber industry chair person Mayor Rose Furigay. "Rubber, in fact, has paved the way for Basilan to become a first-class city in the 1950's-- a vision that this city of Lamitan is once again, aspiring for," Furigay said.

The Lamitan city mayor expressed her "deepest gratitude" to JICA, the ARMM Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and other rubber industry stakeholders who contributed to the success of the rubber industry cluster in the region.

## Coco cluster sees need to put up coconut mill

COTABATO CITY --- Coconut farmers in Maguindanao, after undergoing a series of training programs in farm management, production and quality control, are thinking of the possibility of putting up their own village-type coconut mill plant and get some units of decorticating machines in the province.

"This is what we have in mind when thinking of ways to sustain the growth and development of the coconut industry in this province in the coming years even after the end of the clustering project of JICA and the DTI," coconut cluster chairman Tanggote Panganda said.

The coconut cluster team is mulling over plans to have a number of decorticating machines in Maguindanao to help coconut farmer turn all their big piles of coconut husks into two profitable by-products which can earn them more money than copra itself-- coco fiber and coco peat, according to Panganda.

Coco fibers can be processed by hand into twines which are used to weave into anti-erosion nets called "geonets" which has a huge demand among engineering projects worldwide to prevent erosion in highways, rivers, bridges, etc.

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## Palm oil seedlings to be available to farmers

COTABATO CITY --- Oil palm seedlings will soon be made available to farmers in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, starting with the members of the palm oil cluster in the Maguindanao province.

Cluster chairman Su-

harto Ibay said the two-hectare oil palm nursery now being developed in barangay Sarmiento, Parang, Maguindanao, will ensure that supply of oil palm seedlings will always be available to farmers in the province at a lower cost.

"We have finalized our arrangements with the Univanich Company to buy high quality oil palm seedlings which will be imported by the firm from a nearby country," Ibay reported to consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency during a recent meeting in Davao.

Partial funds for setting up this oil palm nursery project had already been released to the cluster team led by Ibay who recently inspected the land area and the preparation work on the nursery site.

Ibay said the cluster team had to move the working schedule of this nursery project from December-January to January-February 2016 to allow more time for land preparation and the procurement of materials and supplies.

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## Coco cluster to set up solar dryer, warehouse

COTABATO CITY --- Despite the huge tracts of farmland planted to coconuts, farmers in the province of Maguindanao are still producing low-quality copra and getting lower buying prices for them from traders.

"It's time for coconut farmers in Maguindanao to earn more income from their copra output and that is to improve the quality of their copra production," coconut cluster chairman Tanggote Panganda told consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency during a recent Davao meeting.

Most farmers in Mindanao including Maguindanao province, are still using the old traditional method of drying copra-- using crude oven and burning farm wastes like coconut husk and shell and allow the heat and smoke to dry the white coconut meat, turning it into dried copra. This old method, according to experts from the Philippine Coconut Authority, is not good for copra which produces a cancer-causing substance and commands much lower buying prices from copra export traders as well as coconut oil mills which turn the copra into coconut oil for export.

"We want our coconut farmers in Maguindanao to earn more from copra, that's why we need to get a modern drying facility for drying copra properly," Panganda said.

This modern post-harvest facility, according to Panganda, is a solar dryer facility where the fresh co-

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**TIRE MANUFACTURING.** Demand for high quality rubber is rising among tire manufacturing in Asia which buy their quality processed rubber from Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines which has the smallest share among rubber producers.

## SPOTLIGHTS

## Bicol eyes more outputs on geonets, coir, cacao, pineapple

LEGAZPI CITY—Each of the six Bicol provinces has identified their own “signature crops” that homegrown farmers can tap and develop in their agricultural ventures this year, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

DA regional executive director Abelardo Bragas of Albay province suggested coconut and cacao; pineapple for Camarines Norte; papaya, tomato and high-value fruits and vegetables for Camarines Sur; abaca and mushroom for Catanduanes; cassava for Masbate; and pili for Sorsogon.

Bragas made the suggestion during the recent

Entrepreneurship/Salesmanship and Pricing Seminar conducted here by the agency’s regional Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division (AMAD) for farmers, barangay food terminal operators, food processors, officers and members of Rural Improvement Clubs and agricultural extension workers.

He said Albay is Bicol’s leading coconut producer as 95,794 hectares of its 158,262-hectare agricultural land are planted to this crop that “should not be good only for copra but also for other processed or manufactured commodities such as industrial coir, virgin oil and natural vinegar”.

Coconut coir or geonet,

which is manufactured from coconut husk, has an existing total market value of P5 billion and a market potential of P12 billion per year—“an earning opportunity that the province’s agricultural sector should take advantage of, because its raw materials come only from coconut husks which are thrown away or burnt as farm wastes”, according to Bragas.

There are now several factories, farmers’ groups and their families in the province now involved in this venture, according to Bragas. “It has been turning out very profitable for coconut farmers and their families. All that is needed to nurture this industry are more hands that are determined to earn more”, he said.

Virgin coconut oil, which is processed from pure coconut milk and natural coconut vinegar or “sukang niyog” that is made from coconut water or from sap or tuba through a fermentation process—are both products that could be produced at home by the farmer’s family members—wife and children—and supplied to fast-growing. (DA/Bicol News)

## Palawan won award in MIMAROPA tourism fair

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY — Palawan won a national cultural award in the recently held “MIMAROPA Naturally: Agri-Trade and Tourism Fair” at the Mega Trade Hall, SM Megamall organized by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Region 4B to promote the MIMAROPA region.

(MIMAROPA stands for Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan provinces).

Maribel Buñi, head of Palawan’s Provincial Tourism Office (PTO) expressed her gratitude for the opportunity, disclosing that they were delightfully surprised for winning an award in the “Island Pavilion Category” after it presented Palawan’s culture through its exotic and colorful native dances at the trade and tourism fair.

The Palawan tourism officer said their cultural presentation won for Palawan an award in the Island Pavilion Category among all other exhibitors.

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**SEAWEEDES MEETING.** AICCEP seaweeds cluster team had a lively discussion with top officials of CP Keleo Carrageenan plant in Quezon, Palawan during a recent benchmarking visit. The team from Tawi-Tawi noted the high standards of quality for raw dried seaweeds required by the foreign-run plant.

## Industry players pushing for passage of Halal Bill

HALAL INDUSTRY players are pushing for the passage of Senate Bill No. 2831, or the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Act of 2015, which was seen to fuel the growth of the industry in the Philippines.

Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Davao director Anthony C. Sales told reporters that they are seeking for the passage and signing of the bill to establish a comprehensive program for the development and promotion of halal export products.

“We hope to put in place the Senate Bill No. 2831 for the development of the country’s halal industry,” Sales said, pointing out that as of February 1, the bill’s legislative status was passed by both Congress and the Senate.

He stressed that there has to be an “enabling policy” to be enacted to support the Halal industry that will ultimately tap the global market estimated to be around \$3.2

trillion US dollar.

The bill, which was authored by Senator Cynthia Villar, was filed together with senators Antonio Trillanes, Miriam Defensor-Santiago, and Ramon Revilla Jr. in early June last year.

Described as “an act instituting the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Program, creating for the purpose the Philippine halal export development and promotion board” the bill is expected to increase investments and job opportunities in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao.

Villar pointed out that it will give the Philippines a “very good position to excel in the Halal trade industry with the economic integration of the Southeast Asian Nations.”

Sales on the other hand, said harmonization and integration in the Philippines’ halal products and services must be aligned with the global standards. (SUN STAR DAVAO)

## Bananas, coconut still top Davao exports in 2015

DAVAO Region’s exports reached \$1.27 billion US dollars during the first eight months of last year showing banana as the top exported commodity in the southern Philippines.

Data from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) 11 revealed Davao exported a total of US\$ 666.79 million fresh Cavendish banana from January to August 2015 comprising 53 percent of the region’s total exported commodity.

Banana was followed by coconut oil which include refined, organic, crude, virgin and cochin as the second top most exported commodity of Davao Region racking up US\$ 209.83 million or 17 percent of region’s share in the total export, DTI 11 regional director Maria Belenda Q. Ambi said in a recent presentation

of the “Preliminary Annual Performance for 2015” at a local Davao hotel.

Other top exported commodities of the region during the first eight months of 2015 were fresh pineapple, desiccated coconut, banana chips, gold and silver, activated carbon, nickel and nickel laterite and ore, wet and dry cup lump and natural rubber, and coconut water. (Trade statistics from various government agencies are usually released three to four months late due to data processing.)

The DTI 11 data showed that the top export destination of the region’s export commodities were Japan, Australia, China, Thailand and The Netherlands.

The top five exporters in the region were DOLE

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**REGULAR CLUSTER meetings to track the performances of the six AICCEP industry clusters kept projects and activities moving forward in the ARMM these past months. Photo shows ARMM DTI Maguindanao provincial director Khalikuzaman Baraguir (right), MSU Professor Amer Comadug (second from left) and other cluster members.**

## Luzon trade fair has new “coffee wine”

TABUK, KALINGA – A new Kalinga “coffee wine” took center stage during the 2016 Ullalim agro-industrial trade fair in early February this year.

Virgie Lapuz, producer of the newest Kalinga coffee wine, said the wine came in two tastes, a strong mix for men and a sweet mix for ladies.

This Kalinga coffee producer said the wine is a fermented extract from Arabica coffee, one of the three major coffee varieties produced in the northern Luzon province. The other two are Excelsa and Robusta.

Benita Mangadap, a provincial officer of the Department of Trade and Industry here in Kalinga said a free-tasting session of the new product set at 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. daily drew a large crowd of coffee drinkers during the trade fair.

Coffee wine is the latest by-product from coffee, the province’s “One Town One Product” being promoted by DTI under its product development program.

This year, 110 product exhibitors participated in the agro-industrial fair with 19 guest-exhibitors from Ifugao, Benguet and other towns here in northern Luzon.

Organizers of the traditional fair led by the Trade and Industry provincial office encouraged participant-exhibitors to bring their product innovations to the annual event that highlights the province’s Foundation Day celebration. (SUN STAR BAGUIO)

## High demand for ginger seen in world markets

PHILIPPINE food exporters are considering adding ginger products to their export lists as reports show how global markets are rediscovering ginger and finding new ways to use and eat the common “luy-a”.

The rhizome or root of this Asian tropical plant is currently experiencing a revival in the ingredient and flavor world, according to a newly published article in a Canada food magazine.

The report noted that new and innovative uses for this aromatic root crop “have been showing up in a variety of food products with increasing frequency the past couple of years.”

Among the reasons cited for the rising popularity of ginger overseas, particularly in North America,

is that people are becoming more adventurous in their eating habits as a result of cooking shows featuring exotic cuisines.

Other contributing factors to the growing demand for the crop is the current trend toward clean eating using simple ingredients, and the growing awareness of the many health and medicinal properties of the plant.

More than this, though, is the increasing recognition of ginger’s unique flavor, especially the spicy bite it gives to a food or beverage.

It is now being added to beverages such as craft sodas, which are carbonated drinks touted as healthier alternatives to traditional soft drinks, as they use extracts from natural ingredients like ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon, clove, and star

anise.

Ginger is also finding its way into alcoholic beverages, included in craft beers and cocktails. It is likewise being added to teas, including herbal teas and green teas.

Another growing application is in snack foods. The plant is being used to make ginger candy and ginger-laced fruit and nut bars, to garnish gourmet craft ice creams and sorbets, and to create fusion mixtures, like Korean tacos or Mexican ice cream.

In the Philippines, the top regional producers of ginger are Central Luzon, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) area, Northern Mindanao, and Ilocos Region. (SUN STAR DAVAO)



**CLUSTER TEAM members are shown reviewing their respective monitoring reports (above) during a recent Davao meeting with JICA consultants reviewing the progress of their projects and activities to boost industry growth in Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, Lanang del Sur and Maguindanao provinces.**

## ACTIVITIES



**AWARD OF RECOGNITION** to all the industry cluster teams, top ARMM-DTI officials, JICA officials and stakeholders coming from the ARMM Governor Mujiv Hataman, highlighted a recent Davao meeting where all the clusters expressed their gratitude for the successful AICCEP. Photo shows ARMM-DTI Asst. Secretary Abubacar Datumanong (left) JICA executive Mishima Kenji (second from left), ARMM DTI Regional Secretary Sakiran Hajan (third from left) and cluster members.

## Lanao cluster sees more output of abaca crafts

MARAWI CITY --- More production of native handicrafts is expected here in Lanao del Sur province in the months ahead as more people are learning to make different kinds of products using abaca fibers.

In a recent report to consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency, abaca cluster chairman Pundato Alug said their recent "Skills Training on Abaca Handicrafts" here in Marawi stirred up so much interest that more participants showed up and registered for training, beyond the original target they planned for the training workshop.

"We targeted for 45 participants, but 50 registered for the training workshop on abaca handicrafts, we were surprised at the big attendance," Alug said.

Four handicraft-making experts from Cebu were hired to conduct the week-long training workshop

## Coco farmers learn new methods from Zamboanga

COTABATO CITY --- Sixteen farmers were able to join the "educational benchmarking" visit to the Zamboanga Research Center of the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) in Zamboanga City last June 4-5 last year.

The Zamboanga visit gave the farmers from Maguindanao the chance to see the various new modern technology which help coconut farmers boost their harvest output, improve the quality of copra, and pro-

duce a whole range of new products from coconut, most especially coco products that are made from the coconut white meat, coconut shell, coconut water and coconut husks.

One machine that caught the attention of the participants was the Decorticating Machine which processes dried coconut husks and turns them into coco fiber and coco peat-- two simultaneous products with very profit-

which gathered not only the beginners but also other participants who had some skills in weaving abaca fibers into different products and selling them in the local markets.

"Some of our cluster members have already been making handicrafts from abaca, that's why the training also gave them ideas how to do it commercially to market them in domestic and global markets," says Mautante Marohombsar, a trade and industry specialist at the provincial office of Department of Trade and Industry.

The training with experts from the Fiber Industry Development Authority also taught the participants the weaving of abaca handicrafts by hand, using no machines, according to Alug, and turned out such products like twines, ropes, scrunch bags and hand bags. (Philpress News)

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## Field school trains farmers to increase coconut output

COTABATO CITY --- Focusing only on producing copra year after year all their lives, coconut farmers here now want to learn what to do to increase their harvest output, improve the quality of their copra and produce other coco products that can be made from the coconut.

This was what the recent Farmer's Field School of the Philippine Coconut Authority want to introduce to coconut farmers-- new methods, new system and new technology of producing copra and a diversify into other coco products made from the coconut.

"All they know is how to make copra from the coconut and they're not earning enough from copra, that's why we have to show them what they can do with their coconut farms and be like other successful coconut farmers," cluster chairman Tanggote Panganda said.

Although this is the same dilemma faced by other provinces in Mindanao, the coconut cluster team here was determined to change all that and opened new opportunities for ARMM coconut farmers to turn coconut husks into coco twines, geonets, handicrafts, or coconut water into fresh buko, and coconut meat into virgin coconut oil, etc, etc

"Many of these farmers still don't know the whole value chain of the coconut. We need to help them by benchmarking and meeting with successful coconut farmers here in Mindanao," Panganda said.

This farmer's field school or FFS, according to Panganda, focused on "Diversified Coconut-based Farming System" which taught coconut farmers how to use their farm's "by-products" --like husks, shells, etc-- to turn them into a variety of different coco products that can also earn

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# Palm oil cluster submits "sustainability" plans

COTABATO CITY --- Several plans and ideas to continue the projects and activities of the palm oil industry even after the end of the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project (AICCEP) in May this year, were discussed with consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency during a recent meeting in Davao.

"We have to continue

what we've started in this industry cluster," says cluster chairman Suharto Ibay. "Developing the oil palm industry to benefit the small farmers in the region takes time."

At the top of the cluster team's list is to register their industry group as a cooperative or as an association with either the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) or the Securities

and Exchange Commission (SEC), an important move necessary to "acquire legal identity" for the industry cluster. "We can't deal with government agencies and seek support for our industry projects and activities without a legal identity," Ibay said.

The cluster chairman said the industry team must be able to tap the ser-

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**NURSERY LUNCHING.** Marking the formal launching of a one-hectare oil palm nursery in Maguindanao, cluster team officers stood proudly in front of the nursery site together with top ARMM-DTI officials and JICA executives.

## Radio program promotes palm oil farming in ARMM

COTABATO CITY --- Venturing into the business of palm oil farming and supplying oil mills with the oil palm harvest got a lot of radio publicity and exposure the past three months here in the province of Maguindanao with the launching of radio broadcast program "Puno ng Kabuhayan at Kapayapaan" over DXMS Radyo Bida.

"It's really an advocacy program to boost more awareness in palm oil farming and promoting the industry to attract more farmers to go into oil palm farming here in the province," industry cluster chairman Suharto Ibay said.

Aired one hour weekly over DXMS of Notre Dame Broadcasting Company in this city, the regular weekly program is produced and anchored by radio broadcaster Mohammad Mustapha, who works closely with the palm oil industry cluster team in covering their meetings, seminars, projects and activities and share the information with his radio audience all over Maguindanao, targeting specially the farmers in farflung towns, sitios and barangays.

"It's a popular program among farmers in the province. We've been getting many calls and inquiries from our listeners asking how they could start planting oil palms," says Mustapha.

Due to the popularity of the program among farmers, the industry cluster team has discussed the

possibility of extending the radio program way beyond its original schedule during a recent meeting in Davao with consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Demand for more harvests of oil palm fresh fruit bunches-- the raw material used for processing palm oil has been growing steadily from the nearby palm oil mills of Buluan Palm Oil Mill in Buluan, Maguindanao, Kenram Industries Palm Oil Mill in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat and Aberdi Palm Oil Mill in the town of Impasugong, Bukidnon province.

This demand for more

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## Farmers undergo training on farm management

COTABATO CITY --- Nine farmers from two districts each in the provinces of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat underwent recently two-day intensive training sessions in Oil Palm Farm Management in September 16-17 and 22-23 last year.

The training modules used for these management training sessions were the lessons learned by the palm oil cluster team from their benchmarking visit to Agumil Palm Oil Mill, a big, well-established palm oil plantation in Palawan last year, according to cluster chairman Suharto Ibay.

"We've learned so many things during that visit to Agumil-- how to set up a good nursery, how to plant and harvest and especially how to run and manage a palm oil farm," Ibay said.

Farm management experts from palm oil firms and the government sector were tapped to conduct the training sessions which covered topics like planning, organizing, quality control, supervision, systems, methods and proce-

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**PLANTING NEW SEEDLINGS** under the sea by seaweed farmers in Tundon, Panglima Sugala, Tawi-Tawi took place after new cultivars were turned over by the seaweed cluster team determined to set up several nurseries in the island province.



**CLUSTER BULLETIN.** Coffee cluster team members mill around a copy of a Cluster Bulletin issue read by Princess Kumala Elardo, a trustee of the International Women's Coffee Alliance and AICCEP cluster member in her office in Sulu, Jolo after their cluster meeting.

## SIDELIGHTS



**TRAVEL BY SEA** on a fast motor banca took several days around Tawi-Tawi island's choppy sea waters by the seaweed cluster team whose seaweed nursery project brought them to far-off shores of nearby islets and islands, to make sure seaweed farmers have their own nurseries.

## Clusters cite challenges in organizing cooperatives

TAWI-TAWI --- Industry clusters have a very hard time organizing themselves formally into cooperatives in many areas of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao mainly due to slow internet connections as well as intermittent power failures.

This was disclosed by an official of Cooperative Development Authority during a meeting with ARMM industry clusters in Davao recently.

"Normally, it doesn't take long to register a new cooperative after all requirements are submitted as long as we have a fast internet connection," the CDA official told the cluster teams after complaints started to surface from the teams trying to register their cluster teams into cooperatives.

There are four levels in a new cooperative registration, according to the CDA official, but the electronic processing of the registration could hit a snag when the computer goes off-line or when the internet is too slow for the website to operate normally.

The Philippines has one of the slowest internet connections in the world, affecting not only the far-flung areas of Mindanao but also the whole country, a bigger challenge faced by national government agency offices

that handle communications and information technology.

Some of these challenges came from Tawi-Tawi where seaweed farmers' groups that are still trying to register their new cooperative with the CDA. "Our cluster team is still not organized formally--while seaweed farmers from Sitangkai are still having a hard time trying to register their new cooperative with the CDA for a long time," says seaweed cluster co-chairman Dr. Filemon Romero.

The ARMM Department of Trade and Industry is now coordinating closely with the CDA office to thresh out this challenge of registering new cooperatives among the cluster teams under the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project, a joint project of ARMM-DTI and Japan International Cooperation Agency.

A good, strong cluster organization, according to senior JICA consultant Tetsuo Inooka, is a established, well-organized organization registered either with the Securities Exchange Commission (as an association or corporation) or the Cooperative Development Authority (as a cooperative). (Philpress News)

## Rubber cluster puts out booklet on production

LAMITAN CITY --- A 42-page information booklet for rubber farmers and growers released recently by the ARMM rubber industry cluster team is expected to improve the output and quality of raw rubber and processed rubber here in Lamitan.

"We want this booklet to serve as a guide for our rubber growers and tappers to improve the quality of their rubber yield and increase their income" says rubber chairman Mayor Rose Uy-Furigay of Lamitan City.

Rubber growers and tappers who underwent the series of training workshops on tapping techniques and rubber production were given copies each of this booklet titled "Nursery Management, Production Technology and Integrated Farming System".

"We have to make sure everything they need



**A rubber tapper gathers latex dripping from a section of a rubber tree in Mindanao.**

to learn is covered in this booklet. From selecting seedlings, setting up nurseries, budding, preparing the land, planting the budded seedling, fertilizing, and all the way to tapping and rubber processing--" rubber cluster co-chairman Doming Narsico said.

One of the toughest challenges faced by the rubber industry in the southern Philippines is to boost the quality of its raw and processed rubber to meet high global standards to get ac-

turn to page 7

## Mindanao seen as Ph new rubber manufacturing hub

MINDANAO is now being positioned as the country's rubber product manufacturing hub since the southern island is currently supplying 99% of the country's national rubber production.

National coordinator for rubber industry cluster Dr Sitti Amina M Jain says it is time for rubber producers in Mindanao to venture into manufacturing. "We are now positioning Mindanao as the manufacturing hub for rubber products. All the

six regions in Mindanao are rubber-producing regions, so we are offering this chance first to local business men to go into rubber manufacturing," says Jain, who is also the regional director of the Department of Trade and Industry in this region.

According to Jain, Zamboanga Peninsula is the country's number one rubber-producing region translating into almost 40% of the total natural rubber production. Zamboanga Ecozone is seen by the DTI as a good destination for rubber product manufacturing, owing to the incentives that it can present

potential investors with. "We are promoting Zamboanga Sibugay as the biggest rubber producer in Region 9," Jain said.

"Last year, we were a net importer of rubber products, which means we are importing more rubber products than we produce. For example, the country imports 100% of surgical and household gloves. We don't produce them. If we can only have it produced it here, it would benefit us more in terms of employment and taxes that will, in turn, provide additional funds for infrastructure and social services," she added. (Engineering News)

## Four coco nurseries to boost supply of seedlings

COTABATO CITY --- Low production of coconut trees had always been a perennial problem of coconut farmers in the province of Maguindanao and other provinces as well, in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

"Besides getting too little output from their coconut trees, the quality of the coconuts is not so good, we need to find a way to change all that," coconut cluster chairman Tanggote Panganda told consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency during a recent meeting in Davao.

Panganda said almost sixty-percent (60%) of all coconut plantations in Maguindanao are "low bearing in production" possibly because of the variety of coconut trees that has grown in most coconut plantation of the province for many years. "We decided it was best to come up with a new variety of good quality coconut seedlings that can produce more coconuts," Panganda said.

With the full support of the Philippine Coconut Authority, four nurseries for high-quality coconut seedlings are now being planned by the coconut cluster team in the areas of Barira, Sultan

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## Abaca primer in Maranao helping farmers in Lanao

MARAWI CITY --- Abaca farmers who wanted to improve the quality and output of their abaca fiber production here in Lanao del Sur, expressed their gratitude to the abaca industry cluster team after getting copies of a Maranao information brochure that teaches them ten steps to improve their abaca production.

Titled "Sapolo A Okita Kapamola Ago Kapakargon Sa Waka sa Lanao del Sur" (Ten Steps to Plant and Harvest Abaca in Lanao del Sur), the three-fold information brochure was written and produced by

Professor Amer Comadug, a Ph D professor of the College of Agriculture at the Mindanao State University and supported by Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Department of Trade and Industry.

"For a long time, farmers here needed information on how to plant and harvest abaca properly written in their own Maranao dialect that they can easily understand," says Comadug, who is also an active member of the abaca industry cluster team.

Comadug said some

turn to page 7



**JICA SECRETARIAT.** Taking care of coordination, accommodations, fund releases, cluster reports, etc., JICA secretariat staffers (left to right) Tomo-san, Mori-san and Jun-san all make it easy and comfortable for AICCEP cluster members to attend the meetings in Davao.

# AICCEP PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICES

### ARMM PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE

**DTI Asst. Trade Secretary Abubacar M. Datumanong**  
ARMM Department of Trade and Industry  
ORG Complex, Cotabato City, Maguindanao  
Telephone : (064) 421 - 3442  
Fax Nos. : (064) 421 - 7729  
Email add : baxpeace@yahoo.com

**Maguindanao Satellite Project Management Office**  
Satellite Project Director: Datu Khalikuzaman Baraguir  
ARMM Department of Trade and Industry  
Door 1-2 Alonto-Biruar Bldg.  
Mabini St., Cotabato City  
Telephone: (064) 421 7775  
Email add : kaye1b@yahoo.com

**Lanao del Sur Satellite Project Management Office**  
Satellite Project Director : Mohammed Aquil A. Mamainte  
ARMM Department of Trade and Industry  
3F, RLM Bldg., Amal Pakpak Avenue  
Barrio Green, Marawi City  
Cellphone: 0917 707 8636

**Basilan Satellite Project Management Office**  
Satellite Project Director : Nonito Manuel  
ARMM Department of Trade and Industry  
Valderosa Street, Isabela City, Basilan  
Cellphone: 0875 2205738  
Email add : nitongsm8@yahoo.com

**Sulu Satellite Project Management Office**  
Satellite Project Director : Harrison Haron  
ARMM Department of Trade and Industry  
Sulu Provincial Office

7400 Jolo, Sulu  
Cellphone: 0915 8059221  
Email add : harrison236@yahoo.com

**Tawi-tawi Satellite Project Management Office**  
Satellite Project Director : Nazrullah Masahud  
ARMM Department of Trade and Industry  
Bongao, Tawi-Tawi  
Cellphone: 0998 551 0932  
Email address: nazmashud@yahoo.com.ph

**SENIOR ADVISERS :**  
ARMM DTI Secretary Sakiran Hajan

## FEATURE

*‘We’ve always wanted to see how this coconut farmer in Bansalan became so successful in producing other coco products besides copra, like coco sugar and virgin coconut oil for export to global markets.’*

## An inspiring trip to a Bansalan coco farm

**B**ANSALAN, DAVAO DEL SUR --- Several by-products from coconut trees earning revenues more than copra were shown to the members of the ARMM coconut industry cluster by Ben Lao, president and chief executive officer of Lao Integrated Farms, Inc during a benchmarking visit here in early December last year.

“We’ve always wanted to see how this coconut farmer in Bansalan became so successful in producing other coco products besides copra, like coco sugar and virgin coconut oil for export to global markets,” says coconut cluster chairman Tanggote Panganda.

The Maguindanao-based coconut industry

cluster team was given the opportunity to listen to Ben Lao himself in a short lecture forum at his Bansalan farm where he explained how he converted a useless grassland into the most productive coconut farmland in the province, using organic farming and producing coco sugar from coco sap and virgin coconut oil from the coconut tree. Lao told them that when one coconut tree is used for producing coco sugar, “the profit is almost three times compared when the tree is used for making copra.”

The Lao coconut farm also produces its own organic fertilizer using big African earthworms for vermin-culture that churns out a very rich organic fertil-

izer that the farm used in fertilizing the coconut variety that produces the coco sap that makes coco sugar, according to Panganda.

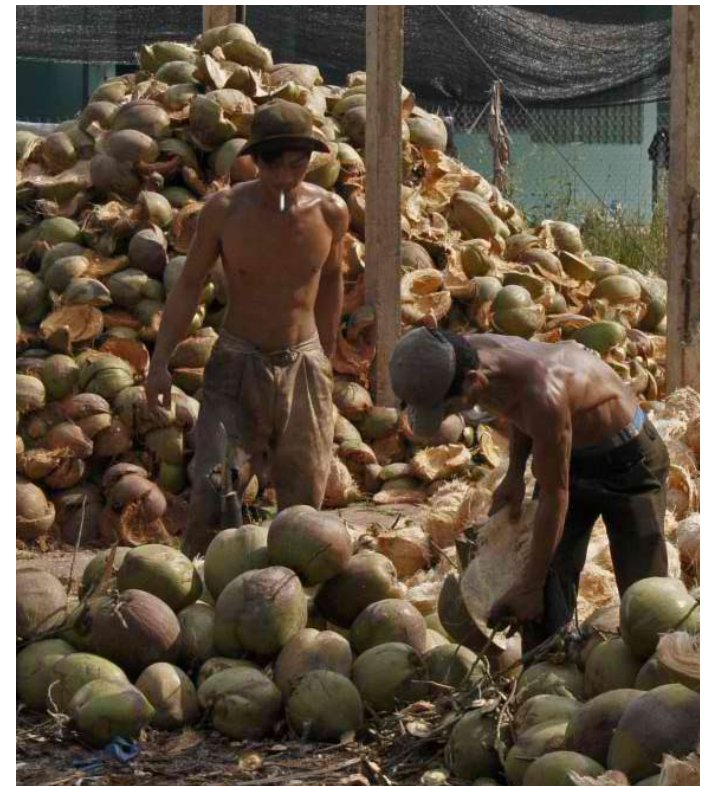
Inspired by the Lao benchmarking visit in Bansalan, some members of the ARMM industry coconut cluster team are now mulling plans of replicating what they saw there for Maguindanao province, especially in producing virgin coconut oil and coconut sugar.

“We have lots of fertile lands in Maguindanao to set up similar farmlands to come up with projects to make coco sugar or virgin coconut oil,” Panganda said.

To increase the production of coco sap for making coco sugar, the

cluster team is also planning to apply the method of using vermicast

as well as common salt to fertilize their coconut trees. (Philpress News)



Besides copra, coconut farmers can earn bigger income from coco sugar, coco coir, geonets, virgin coco oil., etc.

### Malaysia eyeing...

ning Meeting (SPM) 2016 stressed that investment talks in the business sector between the two countries must be strengthened, especially about Mindanao investments.

“Our Malaysian government and the private sector are looking at opportunities for big investments in Mindanao. We’ve already talked about ICT, internet linkage, shipping links, sea port projects, palm oil investments, among others,” she told business reporters.

She added that some of the factors being looked by an investor before venturing into business in a specific area are “government policies that help stimulate investment, right business partners, availability of facilities, cost of production, and ease of doing business”.

“A country’s investment climate is important. We want to see how friendly a country is, to investors. Without a good investment

climate, it’s difficult for investors to come in,” Ayup said.

When asked on the imminent problems and issues on Mindanao’s power situation and peace and conflict issues, Ayup was quick to add that they look at Mindanao as a huge area where foreign investors can find several “investment friendly areas” like Davao City, Cagayan de Oro, Caraga region and others.”

“Power is a crucial thing to a good business climate especially for manufacturing companies. For conflict concerns, not the entire Mindanao, as we see, have peace and order problems. In fact Davao is one of the safest cities in the world. Peace is also as important as power in doing business,” she said.

According to Malaysia’s data, last year’s trade reached a total of US\$ 5 billion, that included exports to Philippines at US\$ 3.3 billion and imports at US\$1.7 billion,” Ayup said. (SUN STAR DAVAO)

### Laguna trade...

and booked sales orders valued at USD 17,262.

With the help of Philippine Trade and Investments Center (PTIC), the delegation was able to conduct business matching with a number of US-based companies, gain insights on how to access the US market and get information on the latest trends in handicraft, fashion and food.

A business matching event held at the lobby of the Philippine Trade and Investment Center and attended by wholesalers and distributors prompted the negotiation between PINEX Trading-USA and Makiling Organics to supply 100 cases of turmeric tea per month, according to LA-based Philippine Trade representative Laura Jara-plasan.

There was also a marketing and packaging seminar attended by the delega-

tion that provided a chain of knowledge on the basics of exporting to the US.

The delegation, made product presentations to five US wholesalers/distributors which resulted in the following agreements: the use of the brands of US-based firms by Calabarzon manufacturers; compliance to regulations on the use of food coloring media, and PINEX Trading-USA to buy all the shipments made by the Calabarzon group as well as the MBC American Business Consultants which explored the use of exhibited teas.

Toledo expressed confidence that there is a market for Filipino products particularly those from the small and medium enterprises in Calabarzon. “Our products have easily captured the interest of the wholesalers which are comparable to those of other US-exporting countries” Toledo said. (PNA)

### Hajan cites...

improve the economy of the region,” Hajan said.

The AICCEP is a success story by itself, according to Hajan, that can be “carried forward to the next phase” as a model for all the industries and provinces in the ARMM to replicate in the next two to three years to keep the momentum of growth going strong in the region in this part of the country.

The AICCEP is a joint

project of ARMM-DTI and JICA together with national government agencies, local government units, the academe, cooperatives and the private sector. JICA’s first pilot industry cluster project was the Davao Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project or DICCEP in 2008, followed later in 2011 by the National Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project or NICCEP. (Philpress News)

### JICA now considering...

conference room in Davao recently.

Based on the AICCEP timetable, the project will exit by the end of May 2016 and the one-year extension of the project will run from April 25, 2016 up to June 2017, according to senior JICA consultant Tetsuo Inooka who started the pilot cluster project called DICCEP in 2008-2010 followed later by the nationwide project called NICCEP in 2012-2014.

This extension is expected to expand the industry coverage of the AICCEP that will add new pilot industries—aside from the six pilot industries. “Planning for the 2016 – 2017 project extension of industry clusters in ARMM will include the expansion of the industry cluster coverage,” Inooka said. Senior Program Officer

Judie Ann Militar of the Human Security Group of JICA Philippine Office said it was important for the cluster project “to continue what was already set into motion” and cited the necessity and significance of extending the AICCEP.

“We want you to know that we have your best interest in mind. JICA has filled in the gaps what other organizations aren’t doing. We saw the need of extending this project,” Militar told cluster members.

Inooka has started accepting new plans and proposals from the six AICCEP clusters last April for follow-thru activities and discussed plans and programs on continuing and extending the project for another year. (Philpress News)

### Bananas, coconut...

Philippines Inc with 17 percent share amounting to US\$212 million.

DOLE Philippines Inc was followed by Sumifru Corporation, Davao bay Coconut Oil Mills Inc, New Davao Oil Mill Inc, and Tagum Agricultural Development Co., Inc. (Tadeco).

Ambi also said the emerging export winners under the DTI 11’s priority industry cluster were banana which include fresh Cavendish banana, banana

chips, banana seedlings, banana puree, frozen saba banana, banana turon with ube, banana packaging, banana slice and banana powder; cacao beans; sliced and dried mango; and coconut-based products like coconut oil, desiccated coconut, coconut water, coco peat, coco coir and coco powder, coco shell charcoal, coco fiber, coconut milk, organic coco sugar, coconut shell brique, fresh and young coconut, and coco fatty acid. (EDGE DAVAO.NET)

### Radio program...

oil palm harvests is also felt by the newly-opened Univanich Palm Oil Mill in Carmen, North Cotabato and Consunji in Zamboanga del Norte and the older mills of Agumil Palm Oil in Trento, Agusan del Sur and the Filipinas PPI Palm Oil Mill in Rosario, Agusan del Sur.

More plantations of oil palm are needed in Maguindanao to meet this growing demand for oil palm fresh fruit bunches by the eight palm oil mills in Mindanao. “That’s why we’re wooing more farmers to venture into oil palm growing with our radio advocacy program,” Ibay said. (Philpress News)

## PHILIPPINE CLUSTER BULLETIN

The Philippine Cluster Bulletin is the monthly publication of the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project (AICCEP) a joint project of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Department of Trade and Industry of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. (DTI-ARMM).

AURELIO A. PENA  
Editor in Chief

YUMI BALSE  
MIWAKO OIKAWA  
MARY MAYLENE AQUINO  
Associates

MARY MINA F. REMIS  
Production and Circulation Manager

### ARMM CORRESPONDENTS

HARRISON HARON *Sulu*  
FILEMON ROMERO *Tawi-tawi*  
DOMENG NARSICO *Basilan*  
KHALIKUZAMAN BARAGUIR *Maguindanao*  
MAUTANTE MAROHOMBSAR *Lanao del Sur*

### ADVISERS

ABUBACAR DATUMANONG  
DTI-ARMM Assistant Regional Secretary  
Department of Trade and Industry  
ORG Complex, Cotabato City, Maguindanao

TETSUO INOOKA  
JICA Senior Consultant

JICA PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM  
TETSUO INOOKA, *chief adviser for industrial development*

YUMI BALSE, *project coordinator*  
MIWAKO OIKAWA, *sub-chief for business planning*

### DISCLAIMER

Editorial responsibility for every issue of the Philippine Cluster Bulletin lies solely on the Editor in Chief. Although every effort is made in validating and proofreading this issue under the time pressure of press deadline, we still anticipate some avoidable but unintentional errors, omissions and factual oversights. Being the sole responsibility of the chief editor, it is understood that NO member of the AICCEP project teams from either DTI or JICA is liable for any errors, omissions and oversights in every issue of the Philippine Cluster Bulletin.

## MONITOR

## ARMM industry...

and needed more guidance in learning new skills in making coco by-products, especially from coconut husks. "There's really a need to extend this project" Panganda said.

Rubber industry cluster co-chairman Doming Narsico, on the other hand, said there is a clamor in the industry that the cluster project should cover all towns all over the island of Basilan, not just in Lamitan City. "We're all hoping that JICA will seriously consider continuing the AICCEP project till next year, so we can replicate our success with the rubber industry cluster to all the other towns in Basilan," Narsico said.

The rubber cluster chairman also revealed to JICA consultants during the Davao meeting that the quality of rubber has "actually improved" in Basilan due to their series of training and workshop activities last year. "Quality of our rubber has improved a lot in Basilan. Growers and processors are now getting better prices for their rubber. That's why we want this AICCEP project to continue. There's still more to be done," Narsico said.

Seaweed industry projects like the nursery farms and developing new species of high quality seaweeds need "more time" to develop over several months that will keep cluster members busy even beyond the end of the AICCEP project. "We're praying for the AICCEP project to continue and expand the project. We want the seaweed farmers in the neighboring islands of Sulu and Basilan to benefit from our seaweed cluster projects and activities," says seaweed cluster co-chairman Dr. Filemon Romero, a consultant of World Wildlife Fund.

Members of the coffee cluster in Sulu also expressed their gratitude to JICA for its full support in guiding the industry to make sure small coffee farmers benefit from the cluster's training activities and nurseries, making them better farmers and supplying them quality seedlings to produce high quality and better tasting Sulu coffee. "There's so much more to do with the coffee industry in Sulu and we need more time to work on them. We're hoping JICA will extend this project," says coffee cluster chairman Abdusali Ahalul. (Philpress News)

## Govt eyeing...

big amount," the food czar said.

The country is importing palm oil from neighboring Asean countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, etc.

At present, the Philippines has a total area of only 75,000 hectares planted to palm oil, with around 69,000 in Mindanao, and the rest in Palawan and Bohol. (SUN STAR DAVAO)

## Palawan won...

Buñi said the first-ever agri-trade and tourism fair in Region 4B was a huge success for the province as it was also participated by several exhibitors and traders from the private sector led by the Palawan Tourism Council (PTC).

Among the products that were showcased during the five-day event were those made of cashew, pearls, handicrafts, including derivatives of other fruits that can be harvested in the province.

"We are thankful for this opportunity, and we continue to promote not only Palawan's best destinations but also the products that are truly unique to the province," Buñi said.

The regional fair was aimed at promoting agriculture, trade and tourism industries offered by all provinces in the MIMAROPA Region.

The DTI planned and organized the event in together with the Department of Agriculture 4B, Department of Tourism 4B, and the MIMAROPA provincial governments attracting the participation of some 80 trade and industry exhibitors in the event.

This group was also part of the MIMAROPA Tourism Industry Cluster under the NICCEP or National Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project, a joint DTI-JICA project. (PNA/ Celeste Anna Formosa)

## Abaca primer...

600 copies of the information brochure were already distributed to abaca farmers this year. Printing 5,000 copies of the information brochure, they were ready for distribution when the abaca cluster team set into motion the techno-demo abaca farms and the three abaca nursery farms in the province late last year.

Abaca farmers who joined the benchmarking visit to the Abaca Research Center of the Fiber Industry Development Authority in Zamboanga province last year benefited from their experiences in seeing how abaca farmers plant and harvest abaca fiber in their commercially successful abaca plantations. "This abaca information brochure in Maranao will boost what they've seen and learned over there in Zamboanga on the proper ways to plant and harvest abaca," Comadug said.

The newly-published abaca information brochure is backed by the solid credentials of Dr. Comadug who is a well-respected authority in abaca production here in Marawi, after earning a doctorate degree in Crop Science, major in Agronomy and minor in Rural Development at the Central Luzon State University in Nueva Ecija. Considered an agriculture expert in Marawi, the MSU professor earned his Master's Degree in Agriculture at the Araneta University in Metro Manila. (Philpress News)

## Abaca cluster...

Catambay Balangue, where 20 participants, mostly abaca farmers, from Lanao del Sur visited two places last January 18-22 this year to see how abaca plantations are run by successful abaca farmers as well as how abaca fibers are processed and made into different products.

Another completed project of the cluster was the "Skills Training on Abaca Handicrafts Weaving" handled by cluster member Peparasan Macapodi, where farmers' families, relatives and barangay folks were taught by handicraft experts how to use abaca fiber and turn them into different abaca products like table mats, ladies' bags, slippers, home decors, etc to earn additional income from abaca fibers.

For farmers who want to learn the proper way of growing and harvesting abaca, a primer or information leaflet in the Maranao dialect had been prepared and produced by Dr. Comadug, that contains all the basic information and techniques for planting, growing and harvesting abaca. (Philpress News)

## Farmers undergo...

dures, accounting, quality standards, etc. that can turn farmer-participants into professional farm managers.

Oil palm farmers who underwent this management training are expected to be well-prepared to run and manage their own plantations in Maguindanao from planting, growing, farm maintenance, right up to harvest, according to Ibay.

The palm oil industry has a target of 30,000 hectares planted with oil palm per year or a total of 300,000 hectares by the year 2023, plus an additional 50,000 hectares targeted for the Bangsamoro areas in Mindanao, according to the Philippine Palm Oil Industry Roadmap 2014-2023. (Philpress News)

## Coco farmers...

able usage worldwide and high market demand in the world market, according to Panganda.

Many old traditional coconut farmers, according to Panganda, have this mindset that all they can produce out of their coconut farms is copra and nothing else. "They keep following their old methods of drying copra with fire using burning husks, which produce low quality copra that commands low prices from copra traders and buyers" Panganda said.

After the benchmarking visit to Zamboanga PCA Research Center, coconut farmers from Maguindanao broadened their thinking by what they saw -- many coco products that were made from coco husks and shell which they throw away as farm wastes in their coconut farms.

"They have finally realized that copra is not the only source of income they can get from their coconut trees," Ibay said. (Philpress News)

## Coco cluster...

Currently, geonets have a huge demand in US, China, Middle East as well as the DPWH for its highway construction projects all over the country.

Coco peat, on the other hand, is used by organic farmers and vegetable gardeners in US, Australia, Japan, Korea, Canada, etc, as a soil medium mixed with organic fertilizer to grow big organic vegetables, herbs, ornamental flowers and plants. Local

## Palm oil...

In his report to JICA consultants, Ibay said the memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the cluster team and Sarmiento Industries had already been notarized and ready for implementation anytime this year.

Ibay also reported that the nursery site of this oil palm nursery project had been transferred to an adjacent land area which has available water source, power lines for electricity and security-- which are considered "pre-requisites" of this

## Palm oil cluster...

vices and the budgets of such government agencies like the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Agriculture and the Philippine Coconut Authority to be able to keep all their projects and activities going continuously over the coming years.

Ibay said the cluster team is also looking at the possibility of partnering with farmers in the province who have land areas available for oil palm farming and come up with a "partnership scheme" like a grower agreement similar to large corporate farms which plant commercial crops on farmer's land and buying the harvest at a guar-

## Field school...

them more income than copra alone.

Some 100 farmers participated in the FFS in October and November last year with 50 farmers joining the field school at Mamapasano town and another 50 farmers joining the field school in Barira town of Maguindanao province.

## Rubber cluster puts...

Industry. Sources and references of the rubber information booklet include the TESDA (Technical Educational Skills Development Authority) module of Angelito Aballe, input contribution of Bennet Santander of Sibugay AgriVenture Enterprise, Power Point presentations of the rubber industry, Romulo Cena of Industrial Crops Research of Kabacan, North Cotabato; Anita and Rogelio Testado of University of Southern Mindanao (USM); Narbon Agri-Nursery, Malaysin Rubber Board, Indonesian Rubber Research, Bridgestone Sumatra Indonesia Rubber Plantation and the Lamitan City Rubber Industry Cluster. (Philpress News)

cepted by foreign rubber manufacturers in the country and rubber importers in foreign countries, all of them willing to pay much higher prices for the commodity.

The Lamitan-based rubber cluster team led by Furigay and Narsico is closely coordinating its projects and activities under the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project (AICCEP) with the other rubber growers, processors and cooperatives in Zamboanga Sibugay, North Cotabato and elsewhere in Mindanao. AICCEP is the joint project of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the ARMM Department of Trade and

factories can be found in Davao Region that manufacture export-quality Coco Peat as well as Geonets for world export markets, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Panganda said the village-type coconut mill can process copra into coconut oil for the domestic market in Mindanao and provide the opportunity for coconut farmers to get better buying prices for their quality copra from traders and the coconut oil mill. (Philpress News)

project.

A total of 12 registered oil palm nurseries are operating in the country as of December 2012, according to the Philippine Palm Oil Industry 2014 Road Map. Most of these nurseries are owned by big palm oil plantation companies located in Region 12 and Caraga Region. These companies have imported oil palm seedlings from Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Costa Rica and multiplied them for distribution to growers and farmers in Mindanao. (Philpress News)

anteed price.

Also being considered as their "sustainability plan", according to Ibay, is to continue and strengthen the cluster team's partnerships with the provincial government, local government of Parang and other stakeholders who support the ARMM industry cluster team as a vital part of their own development plans.

"We're also encouraging other oil palm farmers to join our industry cluster team as new members of the cluster even after the end of this AICCEP project. Expanding our cluster membership is one way of strengthening this industry group," Ibay said. (Philpress News)

This FFS training is expected to improve the ways and methods of planting, growing, harvesting and drying copra and boost the overall coconut output of Maguindanao, according to Panganda. "This will also inspire the farmers to produce new coco products from farm wastes for extra income. (Philpress News)

Industry.

Sources and references of the rubber information booklet include the TESDA (Technical Educational Skills Development Authority) module of Angelito Aballe, input contribution of Bennet Santander of Sibugay AgriVenture Enterprise, Power Point presentations of the rubber industry, Romulo Cena of Industrial Crops Research of Kabacan, North Cotabato; Anita and Rogelio Testado of University of Southern Mindanao (USM); Narbon Agri-Nursery, Malaysin Rubber Board, Indonesian Rubber Research, Bridgestone Sumatra Indonesia Rubber Plantation and the Lamitan City Rubber Industry Cluster. (Philpress News)

## Seaweed cluster...

cate what they have done to expand its reach to other seaweed-producing islands of Sulu and Basilan in the ARMM, according to Dr. Romero.

With full support from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the seaweed industry cluster has been giving technical support, tools, materials, training and equipment to many seaweed farmers in Tawi-Tawi during the past several months. (Philpress News)

## Four coco...

Kudarat, Upi and Gen SKP and expected to start nursery operations by February this year.

Seen as a long-term program of the coconut cluster team, this coconut nursery project is expected to sustain the growth and development of the ARMM coconut industry even after the scheduled termination of the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project of JICA and the ARMM-Department of Trade and Industry this coming May 2016.

Panganda said the cluster team had also discussed the many problems faced by coconut farmers in Maguindanao including the lack of post-harvest facilities, lack of technical know-how in growing and harvesting quality coconuts and the threat of various farm pests that affect both the quality and the output of the coconut harvests. "We're so thankful that the Philippine Coconut Authority, THE Department of Trade and Industry, and the Department of Agriculture are also members of our cluster team which make it so effective and convenient to find solutions to our problems in the coconut industry," Panganda said. (Philpress News)

## Coco cluster to set...

conut meat is dried on a concrete floor inside a big spacious structure covered with special thick plastic sheet which allows the hot sun to dry the copra and protect it from the rain, pests and insects. With this facility fully supported by JICA, ARMM-Department of Trade and Industry and the Philippine Coconut Authority, the quality of copra from Maguindanao is expected to improve and command much higher buying prices from coconut traders.

Panganda said besides the post-harvest drying facility, the industry cluster will also put up a warehouse for dried copra after it undergoes solar drying at the facility. Both the solar drying facility and the warehouse will be set up in Barangay Gadong in Barira town, Maguindanao. Sometime in February this year, according to Panganda. (Philpress News)

**AICCEP PROJECT MAP**

# Industry Cluster Project Map



## Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project

