

JICA, DTI boost ARMM six industry clusters

COTABATO CITY --- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is working closely with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) - Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in strengthening six model industry clusters composed of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to boost economic growth in Mindanao.

JICA and DTI identified rubber, seaweeds,

palm oil, abaca, coffee, and coconut industry clusters in conflict areas namely Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi Tawi as model industries where the region can succeed through investments in technology transfer.

Stakeholders of the project recently held a monitoring visit to the coconut and palm oil clusters in Maguindanao to discuss further the industrialization plans for

the SME clusters.

The ARMM Industry Clustering Capacity Enhancement Project or AICCEP is an offshoot from an earlier technical assistance from JICA, the National Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project (NICCEP) in 2012 that set up and supported 24 SME industry clusters nationwide. NICCEP on the other hand, was the offshoot of the successful pioneering pilot project DICCEP, or

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Seaweed output surges 500% in Tawi-Tawi farms

GROWTH yield and output of seaweed seedlings surged as high as 500% in two coastal villages of Karaha and Buan in Panglima Sugala town in the island province of Tawi-Tawi, according to seaweed cluster chair Anabel Sahali.

Although two methods were recommended as "good aquaculture practices" in the planting of high quality seaweed

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SEAWEED SNACK. Tawi-Tawi women show off samples of a snack food they processed out of dried seaweeds during a training workshop on seaweed value-adding and food processing.

ARMM-DTI draws up industry roadmaps

COTABATO CITY --- An industry roadmap for the growth and development of ARMM or Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has been drawn up by the Board of Investments (BOI) and its regional BOI office in the ARMM, gathering various stakeholders and industries from different regions in a recent conference here.

The conference sought to discuss the economic opportunities and potentials for local industries and sectors in ARMM and how they can take advantage of the many opportunities with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) already

in place.

RBOI-ARMM chairman Ishak Mastura stressed the importance of crafting their own industry roadmaps for the region considering the ever-growing and fast changing developments in business and industries in Mindanao.

"In an age where there are no more borders in trade, our industries in the region should shape and move up. Though we are independent from the rest of the regions in the country, it is important to link and align our strategies with that from the national level," Mastura said. (NDBC Economic News)

ARMM clusters to adopt ideas learned from Japan

ONE THING that stands out for industry cluster teams, from the things they learned from their two-week training mission in Japan last October was the basic necessity of an "Agriculture Cooperative" as the key organization for farmers.

For most of the 18 cluster members who joined that Japan training mission, they now realized that they have to strengthen the small cooperatives of farmers and activate idle coops by merging them with other active cooperatives in such industries as coconut, seaweed, coffee, abaca, rubber, palm oil under the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project.

Industry cluster leaders are discussing ways to strengthen weak, inactive cooperatives through training programs and plan ways to federate these big and small groups of cooperatives at the provincial level, according to Department of Trade and Industry provincial director Nazrulhah Masahud who works closely with the seaweed cluster team in Tawi-Tawi.

"We're adopting those ideas we learned from Ja-

pan. We saw how it worked in Japan. I'm sure it will also work here," Masahud said

DTI provincial director Harrison Haron was particularly impressed by the Antenna Shops in Japan and how Japanese farmers and producers are benefiting from the shops by providing an outlet for their products that are sold directly to the consumer. "It's a good idea that could be adopted by our industry clusters" Haron said.

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PHILIPPINES

AICCEP perks up income in ARMM

COTABATO CITY --- People living in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao are expected to enjoy higher income in the coming years as different industries are seen to grow and expand into bigger operations resulting into higher production output.

DTI ARMM Regional Secretary Atty Anwar Malang cited the currently ongoing project called ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project, a joint undertaking of the ARMM Department of Trade and Industry and Japan International Cooperation (JICA).

DTI ARMM Secretary

Atty. Anwar Malang expressed his gratitude to BOI and the DTI national office for introducing the Industry Road Map Program to the region.

"At least our region, though independent of the national, is not neglected at all. Here in ARMM, we can craft our own industry localized roadmaps," he said.

The ARMM DTI Secretary told the participants in the conference about ARMM's project called the Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Program (AICCEP), a partnership with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Anwar said the AICCEP aims to boost the capacity of industry stakeholders of the region on clustering their various industries and provide industry mapping for various industries: Maguindanao for coconut and palm oil, Lanao del Sur for

cassava and abaca, Tawi-Tawi for seaweeds, Basilan for rubber, Sulu for coffee and cacao, among others.

"Our vision is for our industries to be competitive and to improve the lives of our people in the region. I do hope there will come a time when we will no longer need the 4Ps and that we will have freedom from hunger by providing better incomes for our people through livelihood and business programs," he said. (NDBC Economic News)



DTI-ARMM Regional Secretary Atty. Anwar A. Malang and ASec. Dr. Abubacar M. Datumanong visited Dari K chocolate company in Kita-ku, Kyoto, Japan with its President and CEO Mr. Keiichi Yoshino during their study trip in Japan on October 17-28, 2017. The company proposes a "Bangsamoro Style" cacao production in Mindanao Visit to Saraya Co. Ltd. (standing from l-r: Koji Dimezu, Sakiko Yushinami, Sec. Atty. Anwar Malang, Keiichi Yoshino, staff of Dari K, Asec. Abubacar Datumanong, Tetsuo Inooka)



PROJECTS

High quality seaweeds coming out of Tawi-Tawi

HIGHER output and better quality seaweeds are expected to come out of several seaweed farms in coastal areas of Tawi Tawi island as well-trained sea farmers began using their newly-acquired skills learned from the various seminars and trainings conducted by the seaweed industry cluster under the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project (AICCEP).

"We're confident the seaweed farmers we trained during our seminars, lectures and workshops have begun using their new skills in the planting, growing, harvesting and drying of seaweeds," says Dr Jumelita Romero, project team leader and scientist from the Min-

danao State University.

Coastal towns being monitored by the seaweed cluster include Sitangkai with 34, 196 hectares of seaweed farm areas, Sibutu with 5,562 hectares and Panglima Sugala with 8049 hectares. More volumes (in metric tons) are expected to come out of Sitangkai which produced 561mt two years ago, followed by Sibutu with 2560mt and Panglima Sugala with 1918mt.

Over the past few months, the seaweed cluster team had been moving around these coastal areas around the province on motor boats in the high seas, monitoring the seaweed nurseries planted with high quality seaweed seedlings

and distributing them to the sea farmers thru their cooperatives.

"It's often risky going around in motor boats because of the big waves, the weather and security conditions in the island, but we went anyway to keep in touch with the seaweed farmers we trained in this project," says provincial director Nazrullah Masahud of the Department of Trade and Industry which coordinates with other government agencies helping under the AICCEP, a joint project of the DTI and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). (Philippine News)

Agreement boosts more cacao output in Mindanao

DAVAO CITY – Cacao production is expected to keep rising in the coming years as government and private stakeholders finalized and signed a Memorandum of Agreement recently for a program aimed to boost the cacao industry which has set a target output of 200,000 metric tons by the year 2020.

The program, an initiative of MinDA, will cover the whole value chain from production to processing and marketing. To jump-start the project, MinDA is initially spending a P1 billion in 2016 to, among other things, provide farmers with seedlings for intercropping with coconut

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More Sulu farmers join coffee cluster

JOLO, SULU --- More and more farmers, landowners, growers, and cooperatives from all over this island province are approaching the Sulu-based coffee industry cluster team and expressing their deep interest to join the coffee industry cluster.

"Our continuing projects and activities in the coffee cluster team are attracting more and more people here in Sulu to join us in the cluster to produce more coffee here," says coffee cluster chairman Abdusali Ahalul.

Expanding the membership in the coffee industry cluster has been part of the long term plans of the cluster since the team was organized two years ago. Growing interest in coffee farming is being triggered by the growing market demand

for high quality coffee beans by multinational food companies based in Manila seeking more supply from local coffee farmers and growers thru their cooperatives.

Coffee industry cluster members, according to Ahalul, had been helping coffee farmers and growers the last few months as big and small landowners, cooperatives and federation groups had been visiting the headquarters of the coffee cluster, seeking help from team members to start coffee farming in Sulu. "We set up training for their farmers, we teach them the proper way to plant and grow coffee and we supply them quality seedlings," says Ahalul.

Department of Trade and Industry provincial director Harrison Haron

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TAWI-TAWI SEAWEED farmer pulls up a long line of floating seaweeds off the coast of the island province, showing off robust growth after months of waiting. Growth rate of quality seedlings planted the previous months, show growth hitting 400 to 500% performance.

Abaca exports up 33% as output rises 3.6%

LEGASPI CITY --- Production of abaca continued to grow in the nine months from January to September 2016, increasing by 3.6 percent to 46.1 million kilos, according to the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (FIDA).

The Bicol Region remained the country's top producer with 38 percent of total output or 17.6 million kilos. Fiber production from Bicol saw a 7.9-percent year-on-year increase from 16.3 million kilos in the same period of 2015.

Growth in volume

were most pronounced in the regions of Western Visayas and Soccsargen but lower outputs were also seen in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Caraga.

Production from Western Visayas jumped 77 percent to 1.6 million kilos and Soccsargen by 50 percent to 1.4 million kilos. On the other hand, output in ARMM fell by 17 percent to 3.6 million kilos and Caraga by 9 percent to 4.2 million kilos. FIDA blamed the decline on the long drought in the area early last year.

Helping keep an overall increase in output was a 3-percent rise in Davao region (7.8 million kilos) and a 4-percent rise in Eastern Visayas (6.7 million kilos).

Exports of abaca-based products revved up by 33 percent year-on-year in January to August to \$77.5 million, FIDA data show. These include pulp, cordage, fabrics, fiber-craft and raw fiber. For fiber alone, the value of outbound shipments increased by 18 percent to \$13.6 million. — (Ronnel Domingo /PD INQUIRER).

Swamp turns into tilapia fishpond in Maguindanao

MASTURA, Maguindanao—Residents of a former guerrilla base outside this city turned an unproductive grass-filled swamp into a profitable fish pond, currently supplying fingerlings to other towns in Mindanao.

Beneficiaries of tilapia-production ponds in Sultan Mastura town in Maguindanao are also being tapped to train other starting groups in freshwater fish-pond production in the region.

Adan Phari, president of the Lake Tumingay United Aqua Farmers Association of Barangay Tapayan; and Tinga A. Panansaran, president of the Tereken Aquaculture Producer Cooperative in Barangay Tambo in Sultan Mastura, said their members not only earn from selling adult tilapia but also from fingerlings.

Panansaran, for instance, was recently paid

P21,000 after supplying 21,000 fingerlings to one cultivator, and has a current order for another 10,000 fingerlings from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Central Mindanao. Tilapia cultivators here sell each fingerling at P1.

Phari said his group sold 387 kg of adult tilapia at P141.20 per kg in April. Each of the 15 member-families took home an additional income of P1,000.

Before the project took off in 2013, local residents here used to an average of P2,500, but many have to make do with a much smaller amount from gathering coconuts and fishing tilapia at the swamp.

The tilapia-production initiative involving 20 member-families was piloted in Panansaran's barangay Tambo. Prior to the rollout of the project, the two groups usually bought fingerlings from the Uni-

versity of Southern Mindanao in Kabacan, North Cotabato.

Supply is not available all the time, and especially when we need them. So we decided to cultivate our own fingerlings," Phari said.

Many barangays in Sultan Mastura are known bailiwicks of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which entered into peace negotiation with the government in 1997.

While the MILF signed a peace settlement with the government, its combatants and families continue to live below the poverty line. Conflict-ridden provinces in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) are some of the poorest provinces in the country.

Jamaludin Sampulna, a Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) volunteer for

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COCONUT FARMERS at the Datu Odin Sinsuat Nursery pose beside new coconut seedlings being prepared by the coconut industry cluster in Maguindanao province to boost the growth and development of the industry in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

SPOTLIGHTS

Mindanao climate best for coffee

MINDANAO farmers are being encouraged to plant more coffee because the climate in the region is best for coffee production which has been declining the past several months.

Pacita Juan, chair of the Philippine Coffee Board, Inc. (PCBI), said the robusta coffee variety can be planted at the foothills of Mt. Apo in Davao, Mt. Matutum in South Cotabato and

Mt. Kitanglad in Bukidnon, all known for their cooler climate.

Arabica, which is suited for planting in high altitude places, can be planted at the top of these mountains. Both robusta and arabica can be planted anytime of the year. "That is why the PCBI has been encouraging farmers in Mindanao, including the ARMM, to plant more coffee," said

Juan.

According to Juan, the long dry spell that hit Cavite and Benguet is likely to pull down the country's coffee output this year. She said the Philippines would be lucky if it would be able to produce the same amount last year which is at the range of 25,000 metric tons.

Juan said PCBI is also pushing the production of

premium Grade A specialty coffee which command a higher price." A multinational company is presently buying coffee at high prices while graded coffee can command much higher prices" she said.

The PCIB chair said there used to be some 40,000 hectares of land planted to coffee in the country. But in recent years, the area planted to coffee in Cavite dwindled to page 7



QUALITY COFFEE. Dr. Jodi Isahac shows to the coffee cluster members how good quality coffee beans is processed, pointing out the difference between ripe (red) coffee beans and unripe beans and how it affects the price of coffee in the wholesale market. To get higher prices for coffee, Isahac urged farmers to "pick red" only.



COFFEE FARMERS in Jolo, Sulu, are joining the industry cluster in increasing numbers as the growth of the industry gathers more momentum in the ARMM region. Photo shows Sulu farmers availing themselves of quality coffee seedlings provided by the cluster team.

Zamboanga region has highest rubber output

PAGADIAN CITY

Rubber trees produce a milky white sap known as latex and modern processing of the latex sap produced has been generating income for local rubber farmers and traders in Zamboanga Peninsula.

This region in western Mindanao have the highest production of natural rubber in the country, producing 171,126 tons in 2010 and 188,934 tons 2011. With this flourishing rubber industry, a major challenge is to make sure that the quality of rubber and rubber products comply with industry regulations and market requirements.

Philippine Rubber Industry Association (PRIA) has identified the need for a rubber testing facility in the country to examine and test the quality of raw rubber using modern testing equipment.

To address this challenge, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) provided funds to the region's rubber industry through its so-called Grants-in-Aid program to set up a laboratory testing facility that will analyze the quality of natural rubber crumbs. Quality of natural rubber grown and produced in this country is still very low compared to rubber produced by neighboring Asian countries.

Today, the rubber testing laboratory located at the DOST in Zamboanga City has the capability to test seven parameters: Dirt content, Nitrogen content, Ash, Volatile Matter, Plasticity Retention Index, Mooney Viscosity and Color.

The new DOST rubber testing facility is equipped with major equipment namely, Plastimeter, Mooney Viscometer, Kjeld-

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Abaca industry gets P5 billion gov't budget

QUEZON CITY -- Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol vowed to boost production support of the country's abaca industry by allocating P5 billion (B) budget for the next five years.

During a recent abaca farmers forum held in southern Leyte, Piñol said an initial funding of P100 million had been downloaded to Sogod town through its Mayor Imelda U. Tan.

Piñol revealed his plan to expand abaca plantation in the region and disclosed that he already informed President Rodrigo Duterte that he will spearhead the revival of abaca industry in Leyte province. Incidentally, the president was born in the town of Maasin, Southern Leyte.

Piñol said about 90,000 hectares of abaca plantation has been targeted not only in Southern Leyte, but throughout the country.

"There is a great demand for abaca all over the

world and there are only three countries producing it: Philippines, Ecuador, and Costa Rica. We really have to exploit these new opportunities, as far as abaca is concerned," Sec. Piñol said.

The abaca program is a five-year program with an expected budget of P4B for planting materials, fertilizers, modern technology, stripping machines, and for the improvement of the industry, Piñol said.

Piñol initially committed P100 million (M) explaining that the amount had to be used by the end of the year, because it is part of DA's P2 billion budget left over from 2015 that needs to be spent by the end of 2016 or else it will be reverted back to the national treasury.

Piñol said that out of the P100M, P50M will be used for the immediate purchase of planting materials covering about 1,500 hectares. (PD Inquirer)

More growth ahead seen by ARMM coconut industry

COTABATO CITY -- More growth is seen in the coming months for the coconut industry in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao as coconut seeds from the six coconut nurseries that were established last year are expected to germinate and ready for distribution to coconut farmers.

Coconut seedlings, totaling around 7,565 tall variety seed nuts and 4,675 dwarf variety seed nuts were planted late last year by the ARMM coconut industry cluster team in four coconut nursery sites at Barira, Sultan Mastura, SK Pendatun and Upi, according to coconut cluster chair Tanggote Panganda.

"Coconut farmers can now use the tall variety seedlings to replace their old and senile tall coconut

trees," says Panganda.

Dwarf variety coconut seedlings, on the other hand, will be planted and grown in various farm areas to produce the type of coconuts needed to produce a variety of value-adding products for farmers' wives and children for livelihood programs, according to Panganda.

"We're going to conduct a series of livelihood training seminar workshops for them soon teaching them how to prepare and produce various products from coconuts like buko pie, coconut syrup, coconut sugar and coconut bar candies," says Panganda.

Anticipating an extension of the project, the coconut cluster team has submitted to consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency a proposal

to set up two dwarf coconut nurseries in the towns of Sultan Kudarat and Datu Odin Sinsuat. This time, 250 dwarf variety seed nuts will be added to each of the four previously established nurseries while 2,250 dwarf variety seeds will be bought for each of the two new nurseries, according to Panganda.

Priority for the sale of the coconut seedlings from the nurseries will go to member farmers belonging to the coconut industry cluster group before being offered to farmers who are not members of the cluster. "After all the nut seedlings are sold, we'll use the sales proceeds to buy more nuts to continue and sustain our nursery projects," Panganda said. (Philpress News)



AICCEP Industry Cluster Team head by its Cluster Head, DTI-ARMM Assistant Regional Secretary Dr. Abubacar M. Datumanong and Mr. Tetsuo Inooka of Unico International Corp. visited the processing area of Saraya Co. Ltd. in Higashisumiyoshi, Osaka, Japan. The company manufactures environment friendly products, such as antibacterial liquid soap and plant-based dish detergent. (standing from l-r: Kaori Mori, Tetsuo Inooka, Magno Gonzales, Dr. Abubacar Datumanong, Kamarudin Omar, Mautante Marohombsar, PD Nonito Manuel)

Tawi-Tawi women turn seaweeds into snacks

TAWI-TAWI ---Housewives and daughters of seaweed farmers as well as other women in the two coastal villages of Panglima Sugala and Tongsibalo, Sibutu, in this island province, are turning seaweeds into highly sellable snack foods like pickles, chips, crackers, flan, jelly roll, squash candy and other products.

Two seminar workshops for the women were held on two separate occasions in the two areas in September and late October last year gathering a total of 104 participants to train on "Good Manufacturing Practices and Sanitary Standard Procedures".

The seminars were conducted by a culinary expert

and resource person Evangeline Villarin who helped organize and strengthen the women's organizations in the two areas together with Evelyn Martinez from BFAR and project team leader and barangay chairman Abdulmajid Julaid.

These are food products that can be processed from carrageenan powder which comes from dried seaweeds that go thru a manufacturing process. This seaweed-based carrageenan powder is then mixed with other food ingredients to produce snack foods and other products.

"This is a big help to the families of seaweed farm-

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ACTIVITIES



PRODUCT PACKAGING. Coffee packaging materials like label designs, stickers and coffee bags were turned over to members of the KanKitap Consumer Coop and Sulu Coffee Marketing Coop by the coffee industry cluster team recently to begin marketing their local coffee brand Kahawa Sug in coffee shops, grocery stores and trade fairs. Also provided were packaging machines like sealers and weighing scales for coffee growers to do their own packaging.

More import-exports to boost ARMM economy

MARAWI CITY -- More and more imports and exports are expected to boost the economy of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao as the region moves to revive barter trading with neighboring east Asian countries of Malaysia and Indonesia.

Various government agencies, along with Chamber of Commerce officials attended a whole day forum on import-export oper-

ations set up by the Bureau of Customs at the Bajau Hall, ORG Compound in this city.

The forum, organized by the ARMM Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) along with the Regional Economic Zone Authority (REZA) and Polloc Free Port, was aimed at re-orienting ARMM traders on the business of import and export.

ARMM DTI is encour-

aging big and small business traders to legalize all their importing transactions "to erase the rampant misconceptions of illegal smuggling especially for products coming in from nearby Malaysia and Indonesia".

Fernando de Dios, DTI senior trade and industry development specialist said barter trading played a big part in the economic growth of the ARMM. "This is why DTI is looking seriously to revive the industry", De Dios said.

The DTI trade specialist said the agency is working on reviving the "real barter trading" as it is, and not just the one-way system that it is today. "The barter that we're talking about today is no longer the barter that we knew early on in history when Sulu was still the barter trading center in the country," he adds. (PIA)

ARMM port now ready for global trade

COTABATO CITY -- Free Polloc Port and the ARMM Regional Economic Zone Authority are all set and ready for global exports and imports as the Bureau of Customs cleared the way for the quicker processing of shipping documents with industry stakeholders and various government agencies.

Polloc Port had earlier been limiting its operations only to imports of cement, corn, and equipment for renewable energy, coming from such countries as Vietnam, Singapore, South Korea, and India.

ARMM-REZA assured importers and exporters that it is ready for both imports and exports

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Sulu launches promo campaign for coffee

INTENSIVE promotions and marketing campaigns launched by the coffee industry cluster in Sulu province these past months, are pushing the sales of "Kahawa Sug" quality coffee higher, thus boosting the incomes of coffee farmers and producers in the province.

In a local coffee shop in downtown Jolo where the "Kahawa Sug" coffee is served, members of the coffee industry cluster sat recently for a meeting to discuss promotions and

marketing plans to push for more sales of the quality Sulu coffee produced by two farmers' cooperatives.

"Where else can we talk seriously about the coffee business, except in a coffee shop? This place is becoming more popular because of the coffee" says provincial director Harrison Haron of the ARMM Department of Trade and Industry.

Haron discussed and agreed with the coffee cluster during the coffee shop meeting that other neigh-

boring towns next to Jolo had to be included as part of the areas to be included in the cluster team's promotional activities. These towns include Parang, Indanan, Talipao and Patikul as well as the island towns of Siasi and Pangutaran. "We need to include as

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Sulu farmers learning to grow coffee at demo center

JOLO, SULU -- Surrounded by over a thousand coffee seedlings, small nipa-bamboo hut serving as a "learning center" for Sulu farmers who want to plant, grow and produce good quality coffee has been drawing scores of farmers at Bangkal village, Patikul town here in Sulu since late last year.

For all these Sulu farmers eager to learn to plant and grow coffee, it looks much easier for them to understand the on-the-spot lectures by a coffee farming expert from the Sulu Provincial Agriculture Office since the learning process takes place right beside a "coffee demonstration farm" set up by the ARMM coffee industry cluster team.

A report from the coffee cluster to consultants of Japan International Cooperation Agency revealed that despite the military operations launched against a bandit group here, the cluster team headed by Department of Trade and Industry provincial director Harrison Haron and coffee cluster chairman Abdusali Ahalul

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JICA, LandBank sign ¥5-B for relending in Mindanao

COTABATO CITY -- Land Bank of the Philippines and the Japanese government signed recently a ¥4.93-billion loan agreement to finance a five-year project that aims to jumpstart agribusiness investments in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and other conflict-affected areas in the south.

Department of Finance (DOF) said the soft loan valued at P1.76 billion was signed by LandBank President CEO Alex Buenaventura and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Chief Representative-Philippines, Susumu Ito.

The money will be used to fund the Harnessing Agribusiness Opportunities through Robust and Vibrant Entrepreneurship Supportive of Peaceful Transformation (HARVEST) Project.

President Rodrigo Duterte and Prime Min-

ister Shinzo Abe witnessed the signing of the loan agreement in Malacañang during the state visit of the Japanese premiere. The guarantee letter for the deal was also signed by Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III.

"The HARVEST project will help create a good investment environment in the ARMM and other conflict-affected areas in Southern Philippines to help perk up the economy and raise incomes in these communities," Dominguez said.

The loan deal was among the agreements signed between Manila and Tokyo during Prime Minister Abe's two-day state visit to the Philippines. Abe is first head of government to officially visit the Philippines under the Duterte administration.

The ¥4.93 billion loan from JICA matures in 25

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ABACA SEEDLINGS in this farm nursery in Lanao del Sur are growing robust and healthy to be ready for planting in the months ahead, as more and more Lanao farmers are expressing keen interest to start farming abaca full time in various farm villages in the province.



OIL PALM farmers and industry cluster officers show off a healthy oil palm tree to Japanese consultants headed by Koji Demizu of the JICA Cotabato office under the Comprehensive Capacity Development Project which is supporting the growth and development of the palm oil industry in the ARMM.

SIDELIGHTS

ARMM to resume border trade with Malaysia

DAVAO CITY— Cross border trade between the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and Malaysia is expected to resume anytime soon as official delegations from the Philippines and Malaysia finalize their plans for trade and commerce between traders of both countries.

ARMM sent late last year a delegation to a meeting of top officials of the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-Eaga) in Jakarta to pitch for the resumption of cross-border trade with Malaysia.

The ARMM delegation was part of the Philippine contingent with ARMM Regional Board of Investments Chairman Ishak V. Mastura heading the delegation during the Jakarta meeting.

The Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) said Malaysia suspended last year the cross-border trade between Sabah and ARMM's southwestern island provinces "due to security problems in the Sulu Sea, where piracy and kidnap-for-ransom groups are widespread."

But MinDA today believed that security mea-

sures have been improving, and "authorities are convinced that a holistic approach is necessary. "A way to solve this problem was to provide livelihood opportunities "to dissuade the youth from engaging in piracy as a way out of poverty."

"Most of our cross-border trade is with Sabah, but the ARMM is committed to promote cross-border trade not just with Sabah but with all BIMP-EAGA countries, particularly Indonesia and Brunei," Mastura said. (Manuel Cayon / Business Mirror)

Well trained sea farmers to boost ARMM seaweeds

TAWI-TAWI --- Well-trained sea farmers who underwent series of training workshops in farming methods, techniques and post-harvesting of seaweeds from top experts these past months are expected to boost the output and quality of seaweeds in this part of the country.

"This seaweed industry here is in good hands and on its way to higher growth. I'm very confident the output and quality of the seaweeds here will be much better," says Dr. Jumelita Romero, project team leader.

Romero is a seaweed scientist from the Mindanao State University who conducted lectures and training workshops together with Evelyn Martinez of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources late last year covering topics "Seaweed Farming and Farm Management" and "Post Harvest Management of Seaweeds" under

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Coffee cluster now sharing Japan ideas

JOLO, SULU --- Some good ideas and experiences from the recent training visit to Japan were shared and "re-echoed" recently to fellow coffee cluster members here by the team members who successfully made the trip.

Florencia Castorico, an officer of the Department of Agriculture and provincial director Harrison Haron of the Department of Trade and Industry cited especially adopting the concept of "Antenna Shops" in the province of Sulu as well as the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao to promote and market specific products like Sulu coffee.

"It's really one interesting learning experience seeing how these antenna shops operate in Japan. It's worth replicating here by our coffee cluster," says Haron, one of the 18 cluster officers and members who took the two-week training program in Japan in October last year.

Haron said the concept of an "Antenna Shop" in Sulu province can be a good way to promote and market the quality coffee produced by the coffee farmers in the province who are fully supported by the coffee cluster

team under the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project or AICCEP.

AICCEP is the joint project of the Department of Trade and Industry and Japan International Cooperation Agency, supported by government agencies like the Department of Agriculture, Department of Science and Technology and local government units.

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JICA CONSULTANTS conducted an on-site inspection of the oil palm nursery project of the AICCEP palm oil industry cluster on a village site in Maguindanao, led by JICA senior adviser Tetsuo Inooka (fifth from left) and Asst. Secretary Dr. Abubacar Datumanong (second from right), along with cluster officers.



MARKET MISSION. A visit to a Korean rubber manufacturer CTK Asia Rubber in Zamboanga City gave the ARMM rubber industry cluster a good idea of the high market demand for raw rubber and its high quality requirements. Photo shows the rubber industry cluster members posing with the general manager and staff of the manufacturing firm.

Rubber firm seeking high quality rubber

ZAMBOANGA CITY --- Anticipating higher demand for rubber products this year, a Korean rubber company based here for several years has expressed interest to buy more raw rubber from various rubber plantations and farms in Mindanao, especially from areas with established plantations like Basilan, North Cotabato and Zamboanga Sibugay provinces.

"Worldwide demand for rubber products is making it imperative for us to

look for more raw rubber supply in Mindanao so we can produce more rubber, especially high quality rubber material," says General Manager Ban Hwan Choi of CTK Rubber Asia at the Ecozone processing area in Zamboanga City.

Meeting with five members of the ARMM rubber cluster team at the CTK headquarter office, Ban Hwan Choi said it was important for raw rubber growers and producers to keep in mind the impor-

tance of producing and delivering only high quality rubber to manufacturing plants using raw rubber as material for producing rubber products.

Participants of the benchmarking mission in late September last year were rubber growers, rubber traders, cooperative members, and rubber cluster members from the Department of Trade and Industry and local government units in Basilan province.

For the rubber cluster team members, it was basically a "market mission" to find out what a big rubber buyer like CTK Rubber Asia is looking for in raw rubber to buy it for their manufacturing plant. "Like all other rubber manufacturers, CTK is also very strict when it comes to quality rubber, because they will only buy if you offer them high quality raw rubber" one cluster member said.

CTK Rubber Asia also expressed its eagerness to help rubber growers, farmers and rubber plantations in improving the quality of rubber from the growing and harvesting stages to the processing stage. "That visit to CTK was very useful and productive for us in the cluster team" the cluster member said. (Philpress News)

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FEATURE

JICA OKAYS 26 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR Mindanao peace & growth

“Regardless of the outcome of the peace process, JICA vowed strong support and commitment towards achieving peace and development in the Mindanao region.”

COTABATO CITY --- A total of 26 anchor projects had been drawn up by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) for peace and development in Mindanao.

The BDA development plan is among the components of JICA's Comprehensive Capacity Development Project (CCDP) for the Bangsamoro and will be used as guide for future undertakings not just in the proposed Bangsam-

oro area but also in other Mindanao regions.

Officers of the BDA and the JICA study team presented the final draft proposal to local and international stakeholders during a recent seminar in Manila.

Regardless of the outcome of the peace process, JICA vowed strong support and commitment towards achieving peace and development in the Mindanao region, according to JICA Chief Representative Noriaki Niwa. (PNA)



EVERYONE in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao are expected to benefit from the various anchor projects of Japan International Cooperation Agency under the development plan of the Bangsamoro Development Agency, assuring peace and development in Mindanao. Photo shows ARMM women participating in a food processing training workshop conducted by one of the six ARMM industry clusters.

Seaweed output...

seedlings, only the “floating line” method worked best in Karaha and Buan instead of the “submerged” method which is adopted in other areas, according to Sahali.

“It’s amazing to see the seaweed seedlings showing triple to quadruple growth in our project areas in Sibutu and Panglima Sugala,” Sahali said.

Data gathered in the village of Tongsibalo in the coastal town of Sibutu, the seaweed farms run by the farmers of Sheuk Makhdum and Tandubanak villages, showed growth rates of 354% to 471% of their seaweeds that had grown from seedlings provided by the seaweed industry cluster team.

Both the “floating long line” and the “submerged line” methods were used in Tongsibalo

farm areas, closely following the recommendations made by Dr. Filemon Romero, project team leader and consultant of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Seaweed areas where the “submerged” method failed to grow healthier, robust seaweeds, were blamed on the “low salinity” of the sea water with seaweed farms lying near the mouths of river banks, according to Romero.

Monitoring and evaluation of seaweed seedlings are still continuing in selected farm areas of Tawi-Tawi where the high quality seaweed species were distributed to seaweed farmers participating in the projects of the ARMM seaweed industry cluster team under the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project. (Philpress News)

JICA, Landbank...

years, including a seven-year grace period and carries an interest rate of 1.4 percent, the DOF said.

JICA also plans to provide a technical assistance grant of \$6 million or P290 million to support the capacity building of HARVEST beneficiaries and LandBank's project management.

HARVEST will be implemented by the LandBank from 2017 to 2022. It aims to open a lending window for agribusiness ventures and related investments in the ARMM and other conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

According to the DOF, loans under the HARVEST project will be made available to large agribusiness enterprises, farmers' organizations or cooperatives, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as well as “corporatives” or corporation-managed farms supported by the LandBank.

Projects that source or obtain products or goods from the ARMM and other covered areas as part of a value chain are also qualified to borrow from the HARVEST facility. — (Ted Cordero, GMA News)

Well trained...

the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project.

Many of the sea farmers were veteran seaweed growers in Tawi-Tawi, according to Romero, who were familiar with how to plant seaweeds, how to take care of them, how to harvest them and how to dry them. “They could even point out the malpractices and the best practices of drying and storing the seaweeds which made it easier for us to train them in farm management,” Romero said.

To test the salinity and temperature of the water in the seaweed farm site, the sea farmers were also trained on how to use instruments as the “Refractometer” and “Thermometer” as part of the training program for the sea farmers. “We want to make sure they can monitor their own seaweed farms as salinity and temperature can affect the quality of the seaweeds growing in their area,” Romero said.

Specific problems in the seaweed farm sites like “slow water movement”, “low salinity”, “high water temperature or extreme sunlight” were given suggested solutions and practical tips on what to do, during the training. The training workshops were conducted to cooperative seaweed farmers in the villages of Tongsibalo, Sibutu, Sheik Makhdum and Tandubanak.

The most successful seaweed farmers, according to Romero, are the ones “with skills and diligence who regularly visit their farm areas to look at how their seaweeds are growing and check each plant if there are any disease and making sure the seaweeds are healthy.” (Philpress News)

JICA-DTI boost...

Davao Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project that started in Davao City in 2008.

“The industry clustering project in ARMM is our way of developing the region's value chain, enhance MSME competitiveness, and create quality jobs and sustainable economic returns. This way, the people of ARMM will also be able to realize the dividends of peace and improve their lives,” says JICA Senior Representative Yuko Tanaka.

The ARMM industries selected were also identified under JICA Development Study on Local Industry Promotion in ARMM in consultation with government, academe, and stakeholders in Mindanao way back in 2010 to 2012.

“The value of industry clustering, based on the success of DICCEP in Davao and NICCEP, is the increased linkages

and collaboration among different players in the value chain (producers, processors, research institutes, buyers) to strengthen their industry's competitive advantage,” added Tanaka.

ARMM depends heavily on the primary sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, employing 66% of the region's work force. Only 13% of ARMM economy is engaged in secondary sector or business enterprises and 6.7% in manufacturing, according to the JICA study.

The industry clus-

tering approach, added JICA, could then provide opportunities for ARMM to access technical support, and marketing channels so their MSMEs could grow.

AICCEP, which began in 2014 and is currently ongoing, is also part of JICA's Comprehensive Capacity Development Project (CCDP) for the Autonomous Regional Government that aims to support Mindanao's peace building process and sustainable, inclusive development. (JICA 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).

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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

Zamboanga...

dahl Block Digestion and Distillation System, Furnace, Laboratory Mill, Aging Chamber, Analytical Balance, Ultrasonic Bath, and Hydraulic Press.

In a move to boost the rubber industry in Zamboanga, DOST extended an P8.3M assistance to Philippine Pioneer Rubber Product Corp. (PPRPC) in Naga town in Zamboanga Sibugay province through its "Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program" (SETUP) ---which provides funding, training and technology upgrade to micro, small and medium enterprises. (DOST News)

ARMM clusters...

RECALLING their overall objective in the "fishbone analysis" of the seaweed industry during the early days of the ARMM Industry Cluster Capacity Enhancement Project (AICCEP), the seaweed industry cluster based in Tawi-Tawi may be nearer their goal "to produce the world's best seaweeds".

"As we look back to all the projects and activities we've conducted and implemented here for all our seaweed farmers and their cooperatives since last year, we're confident it's possible to produce the world's best seaweeds," says cluster chair Annnabel Sahali

Various programs that were lined up to achieve this objective were: institutional development, sustainable financing scheme, high quality production, product diversification, investment promotion and establishing a seaweed research and training center in Tawi-Tawi.

Sahali said their "priority action project" during Phase 2 included the production of good quality seaweed seedlings, training on good agronomy and post-harvest practices, benchmarking and monitoring of seaweed seedlings turned over to sea farmers which is currently being done by the cluster team.

Department of Trade and Industry provincial director Nazrullah Masahud said the good coordination between government agencies under the AICCEP helped the seaweed industry cluster achieved most of its objectives, citing the various assistance of Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Agriculture, Mindanao State

Mindanao...

dled from 14,000 hectares to only 5,000 hectares. Philippine market demand for coffee stands at 120,000 metric tons annually, according to Juan.

More coffee production is needed to meet the current market demand, according to the PCIB chair. "We like to see more exotic varieties of coffee produced by coffee farmers. The robusta variety is produced in Tagaytay while arabica is produced in Benguet. Batangas on the other hand, produces the strong variety called Liberica or Barako." (Manila Bulletin)

Sulu farmers...

kept visiting the demo farm site to monitor its construction and preparation work to be able to receive farmers and visitors.

"Many farmers are excited to learn the proper methods of coffee farming, that was why it was important for us to hasten the completion of this demo farm site," Haron said.

Growing support from local residents in the village, as well as barangay and town officials including various government agencies, has given hope to the coffee cluster that this demo farm project could be sustained and replicated in other towns of the island province.

With the thousand Robusta coffee seedlings growing at the demo farm site the last seven months, more Sulu farmers are learning to grow coffee, intercropped with fruit trees, coconuts and bananas, using the new farming methods from coffee farm experts which include provincial agriculturists and veteran coffee growers from the ARMM coffee industry cluster team. (Philpress News)

Agreement...

and the development of new cacao farm areas in the southern island. The budget will also cover support services, training, monitoring, tracking, and other overhead costs.

Undersecretary Janet M. Lopez, MinDA executive director, said succeeding budgets will depend on the implementation of the first phase of the program. She said the program focuses on Mindanao, which has the biggest cacao yield in the country at 4,900 MT in 2014, representing 90% of the national total at 5,428 MT, based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority. (MMDA News)

ARMM port...

after it entered into a Joint Memorandum Order with the Bureau of Customs last October 2015, on the implementation of the "mandatory electronic processing of transshipments of REZA locators to REZA Zones and other procedures through the E2M system".

E2M (electronic-to-mobile) is an internet-based technology that allows Customs Officers and traders to handle most of their transactions online. It makes use of advanced technology including electronic signatures to provide government officials with new tools to enable them to make dramatic improvements in security, trade efficiency, and to fight against corruption.

One of those that will benefit from this innovation is the Bangsamoro Oil and Fuels Corporation, which is waiting for its import permit as it looks forward to building a four million peso oil depot in Polloc under a joint-venture agreement with a Malaysian company. (PIA)

Tawi Tawi

ers whose wives can now earn additional income for the family by making these snack food products that are sold easily in the market," Martinez said.

Besides snack food products, seaweeds are also used to make commercial foliar fertilizer which is in big demand by many organic farms in the country. This by-product from seaweeds is currently being produced by seaweed farmers' cooperatives in Davao del Sur, Samal Island, Cagayan de Oro and Zamboanga del Sur. (Philpress News)

ARMM clusters...

Faced by environment issues, the palm oil industry cluster found the program on "product diversification and market strategy" relevant to their projects in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, specially in Maguindanao province where their palm oil nursery projects are gaining official recognition and lots of attention from farmers, landowners and cooperatives attracted by the economic benefits of the palm oil business.

"It has already been proven that the palm oil industry can be made sustainable even amidst all these environment issues by coming out with environment-friendly policies that can co-exist with nature," says industry senior specialist Fernando de Dios of DTI-ARMM regional office who works closely with the palm oil industry cluster as one of its members.

De Dio cited the strong Japanese value of

Sulu launches...

many places as possible in the province because people everywhere always look for good coffee," Haron said.

Coffee cluster chairman Abdusali Ahalul said it was agreed during the meeting that the Sulu coffee industry cluster will also participate in all local, regional and national trade fairs as part of the overall promotional campaign for the Sulu coffee brand "Kahawa Sug". "We're using posters, streamers, brochures, billboards as well as regular radio interviews in our sales promotions," Ahalul said.

The business of coffee shops has become more and more popular in Sulu, Basilan, Zamboanga as well as many towns and cities in Mindanao, according to Ahalul, as the coffee cluster stepped up their promotional campaign to go along with this growing trend.

In one big trade fair in Zamboanga called "ZAMPEX-Plus", samples of Sulu coffee "Kahawa Sug" were displayed in the ARMM-Sulu booth along with brochures explaining the origins of the exotic coffee from Sulu. Hundreds of products from Zamboanga peninsula, General Santos, Davao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Bohol, Cebu, etc took part in the week-long trade fair which drew thousands of visitors, including buyers.

Reviewing the sales of "Kahawa Sug" by Sulu Coffee Marketing Cooperative, records showed that the coop racked up sales of P127,000 and P132,000 for the months of August and September, compared to the combined sales of P80,000 three to six months ago, according to coffee cluster spokesman Salem Tayong. (Philpress News)

"self-reliance" and "strong unity" in times of crisis that helped propelled Japan into what it is today—one of the world's biggest economic power--- which was something to emulate in the ARMM whose economic growth will soon be propelled by the various industries in the entire region. (Philpress News)

Coffee clusters...

Under the "Antenna" concept, coffee farmers will have their own outlet and sell directly to market buyers thru their cooperatives or associations, develop their own brands, improve the quality of coffee thru research and development and set up regular trade fairs and exhibitions, according to Haron.

Coffee cluster chairman Abdusali Ahalul said the industry cluster is now working closely with the local and provincial government to adopt and apply this "antenna shop"

Marawi seminar...

cana, chief of operations of the Philippine Fiber Industry Authority in Region IX based in Pagadian City.

Jaducana gave the participants a good idea how big the abaca industry is today, where these plantations are located all over the country, how big their production output, and the growth of abaca production and exports that supply a huge demand in the world markets. Presently, the Philippines is the number one exporter of abaca to the world market.

The big growing demand for abaca fiber was also explained in detail by Engr Daniel Baluran, agricultural engineer of the New Tech Pulp Inc, the sole Mindanao pulp company and marketing outlet of all abaca growers, farmers and traders in Lanao del Sur. "We're buying all abaca production here in Lanao del Sur. While we're getting a good supply of quality abaca from several other abaca farms in Mindanao and the Visayas, I have high hopes that Lanao can produce high quality abaca fiber in bigger quantity in the months ahead," Baluran told the seminar participants.

Several questions, issues and concerns were raised by a number of participants during the open forum, some of them included how they can avail of funding to be able to buy planting materials or abaca seedlings that are ready for planting at their farms. Directed at officials and resource speakers from the DTI, FIDA and New Tech "they were immediately

concept in the province, as plans are being drawn up to push for a region-wide promotion and marketing of Sulu coffee. "We're getting good support from local and provincial officials in promoting Sulu coffee. This will be good for our coffee farmers," Ahalul said.

Haron cited the importance of sustaining the high quality of Sulu coffee to keep the trust and confidence of consumers and "coffee lovers" who have tasted the unique blend of Sulu coffee beans compared to other coffee. (Philpress News)

given attention with specific suggestions for them on what to do next, where to get assistance, to make sure they would be able to plant abaca with our help" Marohombsar said.

A ceremony marking the formal turn-over of 10 sets of rope-making devices to several beneficiaries was held shortly after the seminar forum. These devices were given to those who finished their skills training program on rope/twine making, scrunch and abaca bag making sometime ago as part of the livelihood program for abaca farmers' wives and children in Lanao del Sur.

Marohombsar said he is recommending to JICA that similar activities like this should be held in Lanao del Sur to fast track the growth of the abaca industry in the province. "This should be replicated in every abaca growing town here to show them the advantages and benefits of growing abaca in commercial quantity and quality for export to the global market," he said. (Philpress News)

Swamp turns...

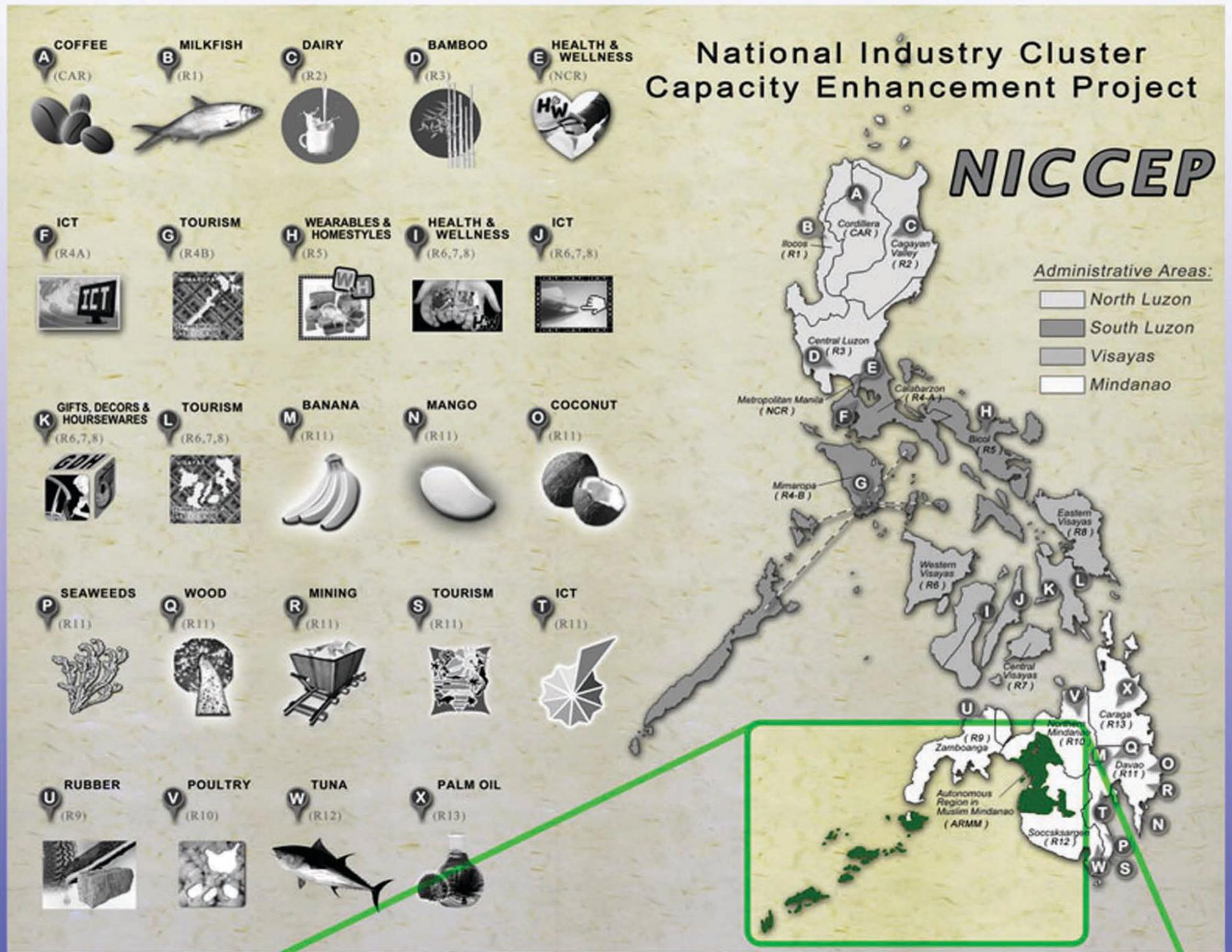
fisheries, said the BDA has a lot of capacity building and values re-education trainings to conduct to change the mindsets of residents in these areas.

In 2012 the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) linked up with the BDA to seek out projects worth cultivating for residents in conflict-affected areas in central Mindanao. (Manuel Cayon / BUSINESS MIRROR)



COFFEE CLUSTER team holds meeting in a coffee shop in downtown Jolo, discussing ways to promote their local coffee brand "Kahawa Sug" produced by two farmers' coops in the island province. Trade fairs participation and expanding areas of promotion campaign were agreed.

Industry Cluster Project Map



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

- ABACA
- COCONUT
- COFFEE
- PALM OIL
- RUBBER
- SEAWEEDS

