



# Hibla

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## ***The HAMPCO as Outstanding Aklanon Entrepreneur for 2016***

What was once a thriving industry, weaving suffered a letdown in the market due to the arrival of cheap, factory-manufactured textiles. To promote and develop hand-woven traditional textiles, public-private partnerships were initiated to revive the weaving industry and the Philippine indigenous fabrics.

Ms. Emelly Lanson, the manager of Handicraft of Aklan Multi-Purpose Cooperative (HAMPCO), talked of how the HAMPCO started with just 410 members in December 1989 which, by the end of December 2015, has already recorded some soaring sales of P9.8 million. This cooperative produces handloom-woven products like piña cloth, piña barong, abaca cloth, shawl, bags and placemats. It is supportive of women empowerment by providing livelihood and other services that promote women welfare and well-being. It also supports the loom weaving industry in Aklan by sharing orders to other Small &

Medium Enterprises (SMEs) involved in weaving activities in the province.

Ms. Lanson was proud that the members of the cooperative were able to position HAMPCO in the export market for 12 years and they are now concentrating on abaca silk fabric for its Japan market. They are working double-time to comply with the required delivery and meet the monthly demand of their clients in Japan.

To promote welfare and provide support among its members, the cooperative gives incentives to its weavers to motivate them to produce quality and competitive products. Household monitoring of weavers is being done to check on the needs and improvement of its members. It also continues to develop new product lines as part of its product development efforts. All the outputs of the weavers and members are purchased by the organization.

HAMPCO acknowledges that the success of the cooperative could not

be reached without the help of agencies like Phil-Australian Community Assistance Program, the Sales Service Facility Program of the DTI and the PhilFIDA. Through these agencies, handlooms were distributed to different municipalities and SMEs in Aklan. New knotters and other members were trained on Quality Control & Standardization of Fabrics through the Enhanced Production Capacity Care Philippines. PhilFIDA, together with Non-Timber Forest Product, has also helped in reviving the damaged plantation in their area. With these, the cooperative is thankful for the PhilFIDA's full support especially in providing the needed abaca knotting fibers and in conducting trainings on fiber classification and handloom weaving.

With all these efforts and achievements, the HAMPCO is honored to have earned the Outstanding Aklanon Entrepreneur Award for 2016.



## RO X Hosts Abaca Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting for Northern Mindanao

An abaca stakeholders consultative meeting was hosted by the PhilFIDA Regional Office X on 12 July 2016 at the Chali Beach Resort, Cugman, Cagayan de Oro City. The meeting was attended by about 86 stakeholders of the abaca industry from the northern mindanao region consisting of farmer-leaders of cooperatives, pulp manufacturers, fibercraft manufacturer (PUYO Handicraft), Non-Government Organizations, national government agencies (NGAs) which include National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), & Department of Agriculture (DA), LGUs, class - A traders, machine fabricators and private individuals who are interested in abaca.

The event, themed "Culture on Quality Towards Fiber Industry Sustainability", aimed to provide updates on the fiber industry performance and the programs and projects undertaken by the PhilFIDA. Engr. Ramon M. Branzuela, Chief of PhilFIDA Planning Division, talked about the current trends, prospects and opportunities of abaca. Engr. Pepito S. Roque, of PhilFIDA X also discussed the abaca industry of region X and encouraged the abaca producers to engage in the development of plantation-type or corporate abaca farms through a responsible service-provider scheme to ensure sustainable abaca production.

A new progress worth citing is the newly developed decorticating machine for abaca designed by Engr. Joie Caesar M. Gaid, a private individual from Bukidnon. He showcased a machine that is fast, easy to use and with improved fiber recovery.

Mr. Romeo Jr. O. Bordeos, Chief of the PhilFIDA Regulatory Division, stressed that the production of spurious and wide-stripped fibers through serrated knives and deco machines is the sure cause for the deterioration of the quality of abaca fibers. These include pacol, amokid, alinsangay, agutay, banana and other musa species which oftentimes are utilized by producers to take advantage of the high demand for abaca fiber by the pulp processors.

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## DA Secretary Attends Abaca Farmers' Forum in Sogod

As part of his "Byaheng Bukid" tour, the new Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) Emmanuel F. Piñol attended the Abaca Farmers' Forum conducted by the PhilFIDA Region VIII Office at the Sogod Gymnasium in Southern Leyte last 14 July 2016.

Secretary Piñol presented his directives to boost the output of the abaca industry in region 8 and revealed his plan to expand the abaca plantation in the region.

"There is a great demand for abaca all over the world and there are only three countries producing it: Philippines, Ecuador, and Costa Rica," said Piñol. "We really have to exploit new opportunities in front of us, as far as abaca is concerned," he added.

For the lack of planting materials, the Secretary proposed a plant now, pay later scheme (a package of planting materials, fertilizers and insurance) for which the LGUs, DA, PhilFIDA and the Abaca Coalition all agreed to implement. Under the program the DA will buy the abaca seedlings from the farmers and would provide the fertilizers needed for them to start anew.

The highlight of Secretary Piñol's visit was his promise of P100M to finance the project "Reviving the Abaca Industry in Eastern Visayas for Global Competitiveness." He said half of the 100-million will be allocated for the immediate procurement of enough planting materials to cover about 1,500 hectares.

"The plan is to immediately assist the farmers by buying planting materials from them using the local abaca variety called "inosa," which is performing very well in the area," Piñol said. He further mentioned that he had secured President Duterte's permission to spearhead the rehabilitation of the abaca industry in the island adding that the President was born in Southern Leyte.

In her message, Mayor Imelda U. Tan of Sogod, Southern Leyte explained



that the virus that caused the decline of the abaca production in Sogod started in 2009 up to 2010. She thanked PhilFIDA for eradicating the disease covering about 5,476 hectares of treated areas through its Abaca Disease Management Project (ADMP). "The task of rehabilitating our abaca industry strongly challenges us, but with the abaca coalition, closely working together, with great determination in accomplishing the objectives, I believe we can do it," Mayor Tan said.

Engr. Wilardo O. Sinahon, Acting Director II of PhilFIDA VIII, presented the abaca profile and the status of the major programs and interventions for the abaca industry in region 8. Director Sinahon cited issues and concerns that caused the low productivity of abaca farms in the region and has initiated strategies to address the said problem in accordance with the priorities of President Duterte. He also proposed strategies for the improvement of abaca rehabilitation program in the region. Director Sinahon recalled that the region was the top major producer of abaca before it was struck by the virus in the early 2000s.

The forum concluded with the awarding of tissue-cultured plantlets from EVIRFES laboratory to Maac Farmers' Association, which was led by Secretary Piñol, together with DA OIC-RED Wilson A. Cerbito, PhilFIDA-Executive Director Victor B. Prodigio, PhilFIDA RO 8 Acting Director II Wilardo O. Sinahon and Mayor Imelda U. Tan.

## PhilFIDA, GIZ conclude Abaca Sustainability Project

The Abaca Sustainability Initiative (ASI) Project has just concluded through a program dubbed as National Culminating Event held on 12 August 2016 at the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of the DA-PCAF Building of the Department of Agriculture (DA). U-Nichols A. Manalo, the OIC-Chief, Special Project Coordination and Management Assistance Division (SPCMAD) under the Field Operations Service, represented Engr. Ariel T. Cayan (DA Undersecretary for Operations) in giving a message and response about the closing of the ASI Project. Representatives from different government agencies like the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS), Forest Management Bureau (FMB), DA operating units and Regional Directors of the PhilFIDA and also from the private sector which include the New Tech Pulp, Inc., Glatfelter and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) came to witness and participate in the affair.

The event presented the results of the project to various stakeholders, showcased key lessons learned, recommendations to sustain the supply and quality of abaca fibers and

increase income of smallholder farmers. Experiences and insights were shared by Rubenie Castellanes of the KAPAWA Farmers' Cooperative, Jing Gener from New Tech Pulp, Inc. and Maria Lucia V. Javellana from PhilFIDA Iloilo.

Featured in the event was the KAPAWA, a farmers' cooperative in Iloilo, which has successfully met the terms in complying with the criteria set for certification of sustainable farming. Two more cooperatives in Region VI are in their final stage nearing completion of the basic conditions for certification.

Highlighting the occasion was the ceremonial turn-over of the Abaca Sustainability Manual handed by Mr. Matthias Radek, Chief Advisor for Rural Development and Agriculture of the GIZ, to Mr. Victor

B. Prodigio, in-coming Executive Director of PhilFIDA and Mr. Petronilo B. Jabay, OIC of the PhilFIDA.

The ASI is a collaborative effort of the PhilFIDA, GIZ and Glatfelter with the vision to contribute in increasing farmers' income while at the same time securing ecological sustainability of abaca fiber production. It is a three-year project that started in September 2013 and ended in August 2016.

The necessity for ensuring a long-term supply of raw materials that is compliant with global sustainability standards led to the crafting of the project which resulted to improved production systems, access to markets and extension services and adoption of sustainability standards in selected municipalities in the provinces of Aklan and Iloilo.



Above: Ceremonial turn-over of the Abaca Sustainability Manual during the ASI project culminating event.

## The Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Multi-Purpose Cooperative (ARBEMCO)

Members of ARBEMCO were beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) in 1996. The rubber plantation estate and other properties of Don Jose Marcelo, a wealthy businessman, were redistributed to them, the farmers and farm workers of the plantation.

In 1998, the cooperative focused on rubber production as the main crop and source of livelihood of its members. The cooperative struggled to sustain their income with them having to maintain old and senile rubber plantation that are over 40 years old coupled with unstable market price for raw rubber.

In 2006, The Philippine Fiber

Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA) introduced the abaca as an agricultural investment for the cooperative. A trial planting of 25 hectares was initiated by PhilFIDA wherein abaca was intercropped with rubber. A kutay-kutay abaca variety was supplied by PhilFIDA-ZFRESS in Kalawit, Zamboanga del Norte and later on gradually expanded into a 70 hectare plantation. Harvesting of abaca began in 2009.

PhilFIDA's interventions include access to stripping machines and trainings on fiber production technology. Also, in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the cooperative acquired six (6) units decorticating machines.

Since then the plantation became a source of encouragement and show window to other farmers, investors, students, researchers who visited the site during Lakbay Aral Program field trips of LGUs and SCUs. ARBEMCO's plantation became the venue for trainings/seminars for Good Agricultural Practices on abaca farm establishment, cultural management, and on the operation and maintenance of different fiber extraction machines.

The ARBEMCO is now one of the successful cooperatives in Mindanao and because of its success, farmers from neighboring barangays of Marcelo in the municipality of Kalawit showed interest and many started planting abaca.

Director Aida M. Robas of PHILFIDA 10 discussed that the Rainforest Alliance Certification is a way to secure sustainability of abaca fiber production. Rainforest Alliance is a third party certifying body commissioned by end-users abroad, particularly tea bag manufacturers, to certify sources and producers of fibers complying with sustainable agriculture standards.

Issues acknowledged during the open forum were: (1) need for coordination among NGAs for effective development approach as urged by Ecosystem Works for Essential Benefits, Inc. (ECOWEB) Director Regina S. Antequisa; (2) sustainable supply of quality planting materials; & (3) additional manpower for technical assistance units in the region and for the issuance of permit to transport fibers (PTFs) by PhilFIDA.

The consultative meeting was a success that the farmers even suggested to repeat the event and convene periodically so that the concerns relative to abaca development shall be addressed right away. They also committed to develop more areas for abaca planting and requested for more support from the government in terms of planting materials, fertilizers and post-harvest equipment and facilities.

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Front Picture: various products made from abaca



*Demonstration of the abaca decortivating machine during the Abaca Stakeholder's Consultative Meeting in Cagayan de Oro.*

## **PhilFIDA conducts training on technical writing and research planning workshop**

As part of the implementation of the BAR-funded project "Enhancing PhilFIDA's capability on virus detection and abaca micropropagation", the Research Division initiated a Training on Technical Writing at the PhilFIDA Regional Office I, Batac, Ilocos Norte on 26-31 July 2016. This training was attended by 39 technical research personnel from all the regional offices of the PhilFIDA.

Dr. Frederick F. Rodrigo, professor of MMSU, Batac, Ilocos Norte, lectured on various aspects of technical writing and research methods. A series of workshops was then held to connect the lessons learned during the lecture.

The DA-Biotech Program Office (DA-BPO) was represented by Ms. Marcellas Anonia Ynalvez in presenting the Biotech agenda that included abaca as one of its priority crops. Ms. Ynalvez also discussed the process in the application for project funding.

Dr. Edison C. Riñen, the PhilFIDA Director of Regional Office I, was tasked to give a talk on Experimental Design and Statistical Analysis, giving each group different data for the hands-on practice using a built-in data analysis program. Different statistical tools were discussed including NCSS and CropStat. These are open source software that can be

downloaded from the internet. Single site, Multi-site and Regression Analyses were also introduced and the subsequent proper interpretation of results.

In another development, the Research Division staff took the opportunity of the time that all the research personnel are convened in one place and held a Research Planning Workshop. This was held right after the training on 1-2 August 2016 at the same venue with a larger number of participants of 43.

The planning workshop focused on the protocol on establishing gene banks all over the country. It involves dynamic and aggressive collection, characterization and evaluation as well as multiplication of various fiber-crops especially abaca, cotton, kenaf, salago, pineapple and sericulture (silkworms and mulberry). Collection of commercial varieties as well as of indigenous varieties will be undertaken for the gene banks.

A presentation about the cotton plant and its production was made followed by a workshop on regional research and development plans.

