



Hibla

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PhilFIDA conducts First National Fiber Industry Stakeholders Summit

The Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA) conducted for the first time the National Fiber Industry Stakeholders Summit last 8-9 June 2016 at the Fernando H. Lopez Hall, Bureau of Soils and Water Management, Quezon City.

The national summit brought together key representatives from local government units, non-government organizations, private sector, academe and farmer cooperatives. Representatives from all sectors of the industry were able to share information about fiber production and utilization and exchange views on how to address the future challenges of the highly demanding and expanding market of natural fibers.

In his message, Deputy

Executive Director Petronilo Jabay emphasized that "everyone must harmonize all activities and prepare a common plan of work intended to push further the development of the Philippine fiber industry, sustainable enough to cater the world requirement for natural fibers."

Director Jabay stressed the need for strong collaboration among all stakeholders to face future challenges. He expressed confidence that through the concerted efforts of all fiber sectors, the Philippines will continue to dominate global abaca trade.

PhilFIDA OIC-Executive Dir. Clarito M. Barron delivered the message of Secretary Proceso J. Alcala during the event. It was highlighted in the message that

the needed developmental interventions must focus on disease-resistant and high-yielding planting materials; sustainable disease management program; efficient fiber extraction machines; & the acquisition of sustainability certification for the production of superior quality fibers.

Representatives from the government and private sectors provided presentations on the fiber industry situation, abaca roadmap, financing program for fibercrops, opportunities/potentials/breakthroughs for the abaca industry, and natural fibers in high value and high technology applications.

Inspirational stories were also shared by successful cooperatives engaged in the

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F2F cotton project receives P20M support

Senator Loren Legarda has initiated a government support in the amount of P20M to revitalize the Philippine cotton industry, primarily focusing on small-scale stakeholders. This initiative will be fully implemented by the PhilFIDA project "Revitalizing Philippine Cotton: From Fiber to Fabric".

The project, abridged as "The F2F Project", aims to revitalize the cotton industry in order to sustain the production of cotton fibers for small-scale cotton users such as local loom weavers and knitters and eventually for commercial-size cotton production and utilization.

At least for crop year 2016-2017, the project seeks to initiate the establishment of Cotton Production Bases (CPBs) in the country as sources of locally-produced cotton fibers for the needed production and processing support, training and technical assistance, timely input and service delivery and higher farm productivity. It will also identify and accredit growers for the production of high quality agricultural cotton seeds as planting materials in the CPBs. This will assist in setting up a loom weavers-knitters-spinners-growers linkage in order to utilize locally-produced cotton fibers and help local loom weavers and knitters access resources and technologies for the production of high quality fabrics.

The project is expected to be completed by the year 2020 of which the P20M initiative is intended to be expended for the first year alone of its implementation. 🌱

BAR releases funds for abaca virus detection and micropropagation

The DA-BIOTECH Program thru the Bureau of Agricultural Research has released an amount of P5.23M to finance the PhilFIDA's project "Enhancing PhilFIDA's capability on virus detection and abaca micropropagation".

The project seeks to enhance

PhilFIDA XIII tackles fiber trading malpractices through Abaca Stakeholders Forum in Agusan del Sur



L-R: Mr. Nicolas Postrero, Engr. Ramon Branzuela, OIC Deputy Executive Director Petronilo Jabay and PhilFIDA XIII Acting Director Roel Durens served as resource persons during the Abaca Stakeholders Forum in Rosario, Agusan del Sur.

The PhilFIDA Regional Office XIII conducted an Abaca Stakeholders Forum on 28 June 2016 in Rosario, Agusan del Sur. The forum was attended by participants consisting of farmers, traders, classifiers, GBEs and LGU representatives. As explained by Acting Director Roel Durens, the forum sought to address the present problems affecting fiber quality in the region by soliciting the commitment of all the industry sectors to stop the malpractices in the production and trading of abaca fiber.

Such malpractices include, among others, the production of low fiber quality, mass production of *laguras* and the insertion of spurious fibers. OIC Deputy Executive Director Petronilo Jabay discussed that this condition

inevitably leads end users in shifting to substitute raw materials. According to Mr. Nicolas Postrero of the PhilFIDA Regulatory Division, "the uncontrolled production of *laguras* will result to poor quality produce and high disease incidence that could wipe out abaca plantations."

At the end of the forum, the participants signed a Stakeholders' Commitment in support to the agency's efforts in improving the quality of fiber. Contained in the commitment are the following: discourage insertion of spurious fiber, licensing of abaca buyers, good price for good quality fiber, display of different fiber grades with corresponding price, farmers to be taught to recognize different fiber grades and assistance of the LGU in farmers training. 🌱

the capability of PhilFIDA to effectively and efficiently undertake virus detection and *in vitro* micropropagation of virus-free abaca plantlets. It is in line with the agency's efforts to provide virus-detection services and distribute virus-free abaca planting materials to industry beneficiaries and clientele. This could be achieved by upgrading the 9 Immunology, Diagnostic and Tissue Culture Laboratories of the agency located in selected parts of the country. More than P3M worth of equipment shall be purchased and 3 protected nurseries/screen houses shall be rehabilitated for

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production of abaca, piña, silk and in weaving activities. The cooperatives who participated were United Maligang Farmers Multi Purpose Cooperative (UMFMPC), Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Multi-Purpose Cooperative (ARBEMCO), Labo Progressive Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LPMPC), Negros Silk Producers' Association, and Handicraft of Aklan Multi-Purpose Cooperative (HAMPCO).

The participants were informed with new applications of natural fibers through the special presentations of Mr. Ryan Thomas Cloe, Managing Director of Nanoware, Inc. and Ms. Carmen Hijosa, Founder of Ananas Anam and Piñatex.

Mr. Cloe discussed that his company is focused on the manufacturing and distribution of nano materials (nanocellulose) which they produce by using Philippine local fibers. They obtain nanocellulose from abaca, coir and other fiber producing plants including sisal, ramie, pineapple and bagasse. The applications are vast for nano materials. They have the potential to impact many industries

including automotive, aerospace, cosmetics, pharmaceutical, medical devices, military, electronics, food additives, chemicals, water and air filtration, packaging, oil and gas and energy production and storage.

Ms. Hijosa presented a newly-developed pineapple textile material called "Piñatex" that can serve as an alternative material to leather. This material is made from fibers extracted from pineapple leaves. It is very versatile and strong which can be used in making leather bags, shoes, coats and car interiors. Piñatex is now very much known worldwide and supplies textile to multinational companies like Samsung, Puma, Porsche, BMW, Mercedes Benz.

Issues, concerns and problems and their corresponding recommendations and interventions were identified during the summit workshop. Focus of discussion were given to Abaca, Pina, Cotton, Silk and other fibers (Sisal, Coir, Buri, Salago in relation to the value chain segment - production, processing and marketing of all

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Nurseries (AAPN). The Circular aims to prescribe the general guidelines on the AAPN for the production and distribution of quality abaca planting materials essential in the growth and development of the abaca industry. This shall serve as guidelines for abaca farmers and industry stakeholders/players who intend to commercialize the production and distribution of quality and disease-free abaca planting materials.

A field work was arranged for the participants to visit one of the biggest pulp processing plant in the country, the Specialty Pulp Manufacturing, Inc. (SPMI) located at Hilapnitan, Baybay, Leyte. The participants were also able to undertake actual identification of different commercial abaca varieties in the VSU-NARC Genebank. They were exposed to the actual harvesting of abaca, activities inside a tissue culture laboratory and were also able to visit the IPB-Abaca Hybrid National Trial within the VSU compound.

Farmers Field School opens in Tudela

The regional office of PhilFIDA X organized the Abaca Farmers Field School (FFS) for the farmers of Barangay Buenavista, Tudela, Misamis Occidental. This is a six (6) month training course conducted in collaboration with the Local Government Unit of Tudela.

Thirty one (31) interested farmers enrolled in the Abaca FFS which started last 20 April 2016 and will conclude on September 2016. The said training aims to enable the farmers to learn more about abaca production through practical experiences and will let them get involved into abaca farming during its entire cropping season. The course also aims to increase farmers' production through better management of abaca farms and the adoption of effective disease management strategies.

Tudela Mayor Stella Ubot

Estano and PhilFIDA X Acting Director Aida M. Robas headed the program for the opening of the course and gave their full support to the project.

The event's facilitator, Mr. Rutilio M. Salinas of PhilFIDA, made an appeal to all enrollees of the program to diligently attend and complete the training course in order to be fully knowledgeable of the production technologies needed for the improvement of their abaca farming techniques and to help them sustain their farm productivity. The participants were then organized into six (6) groups for the actual farm activities to be undertaken in the succeeding sessions. The participants were given a pre-evaluation test to check the level of knowledge of each farmer in order for the trainer to come up with the most effective



Farmers of Tudela participating in the FFS opening program.

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From 5 to 9,146 members: a story of how piña production of the Labo Progressive Multi-Purpose Cooperative became a success

The Labo Progressive Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LPMPC) in Labo, Camarines Sur boasts of how its piña production turned into a success after starting with just 5 members and P5,000 capital.

This cooperative provides assistance to members in order to establish their own pineapple farm through contract-growing, partnership and financing where the coop acts as market consolidator of the farmers' produce. As of 31 December 2015, its members grew to 9,146 composing of farmers, fisher-folks, small & medium entrepreneurs and public & private employees. Presently, the cooperative takes pride in its total assets of P96,973,935. The members of the LPMPC mentioned that PhilFIDA provided them encouragement and help to start their cooperative's business.

Mr. Mario M. Espeso, the general manager of LPMPC, shared that it all started in 2006 when the handwoven piña cloth and handmade paper project was established through the support of PhilFIDA and other government agencies. This project generated household enterprise and employment among family farmers and students including jail inmates.

The machine decortication of pineapple leaves also started in 2006 with the objective of providing pineapple farmers additional income from the fiber derived from pineapple leaves. Family farmers were formed into group or cluster and underwent skills training and served as contract supplier of pineapple fiber to the cooperative.

One breakthrough happened to LPMPC was when it was visited in the year 2012 by Ananas Annam,

a company that developed a non-woven material called "Piñatex" produced from the fibers of pineapple leaves. This material is being produced into leather which serves as a better alternative to leather made from animals. With this, the demand for pineapple fiber increased with a forecast of 12,884 kilos for the year 2016 that are to be supplied by the cooperative.

The total production area for pineapple in the whole of Camarines Norte is 2,630 hectares with 2,701 farmers working in them. Added to this, there are still 6,303 hectares for expansion with potential annual fiber production of 638,540 kilos. At the end of 2015, there were 3,758 kilos of deco-pineapple fiber sold by the cooperative.

Mr. Espeso reported that at present, there are 164 farmer members of the cooperative who are engaged in pineapple production ranging from 0.5 to 5 hectares. 122 hectares are owned by its members while 13 hectares are owned by the cooperative. Three key production areas are the municipalities of Basud, Labo and San Vicente. The cooperative's existing fleet are 14 single decortivating machines and 1 double tandem machine which are provided by DTI and PhilFIDA. 8 machines are already deployed in different areas but only 4 are in full operation. The cooperative is conducting series of basic skills training on the decortication of pineapple leaves in different municipalities.

The LPMPC continues to meet with pineapple growers and other stakeholders to inform them of the coop's projects and encourage them to become partners as suppliers of pineapple leaves or fibers. It also intends to increase the coop buying price on pineapple leaves to attract farm owners to sell their leaves and more contract suppliers to the cooperative. The present incentive and financial assistance being extended to contract workers and suppliers are also being reevaluated for possible increase to encourage them further to produce more fibers.



Catanduanes holds 1st Abaca Festival

Anchored on the theme, "Banwaan, Turismo, Asenso!", the Provincial Government of Catanduanes in cooperation with the Department of Tourism staged the first ever Abaca Festival in the province on May 23 to 27, 2016. The weeklong festivity was aimed at boosting tourism as well as promoting and elevating the abaca industry which the province boasts of, being dubbed as the "abaca country". It also aims to celebrate the enduring spirit of Catandungan people.

OIC-Executive Director Clarito M. Barron was guest of honor during the opening program held on May 23, 2016 at the Capitol Grounds in Virac.

Jobs fair, trade fair and travel expo, street dance/abaca dance showdown, float parade, skills olympics and *laro ng lahi* were among the highlights of the festival.

PhilFIDA was tapped to facilitate the conduct of *pag hag-ot* (abaca fiber stripping), *paharalabaan nin bandala* (longest abaca fiber), *paglubid* (twining) and *sug-ot* (knotting) contests. The office also created the abaca showcase booth at the lobby of the provincial capitol, a space for display of abaca products.

An investment forum was held in Rakdel Inn, Virac on May 24 which focused on the agenda: *Potentials and Prospects of Abaca Pulp Factory in the Province of Catanduanes*. Mr. Wellington Flores, Planning Officer II of the PhilFIDA Regional Office V was one of the resource speakers.

Technology demonstrations were also carried out on mushroom culture, handmade paper, scrunch, crazy mats and crochet making, cacao propagation and use of *Mychorriza* at the capitol grounds for farmers, women and youth.

The festival culminated on the 5th day with *Gubing Abaca sa Santacruz* featuring abaca gowns by local designers which was followed by the gala



Catanduanes Governor Cely Wong and PhilFIDA OIC-Executive Director Clarito Barron led the opening program of the Abaca Festival at the Provincial Capitol Grounds.



presentation, live performance of the winning entries in songwriting competition and fellowship night.

Piñatex: a sustainable textile material

A newly-developed natural and sustainable textile material called "Piñatex" is now being used as an alternative to leather.

This material is made from pineapple leaf fibers, a by-product of pineapple harvest. It is a very versatile material which can be used in making leather bags, shoes, furniture, car interiors and aeronautic materials.

Ms. Carmen Hijosa, a Spanish citizen, has been working in the design and manufacturing of leather goods for almost 15 years. She was sent to the Philippines years ago to work with the Design Center of the Philippines and help develop the leather industry. Her intense research on pineapple fibers led to the development of this new material and the creation of the company Ananas Anam.

When she started working with pineapple farmers, weavers and dyers in the Philippines, she discovered a wealth of skills and natural fibers. "I understood for the first time what design really is. Design is a connecting tool between people, skills, natural resources and economics – and out of these communion something comes about that is real and meaningful," Hijosa said.

Her close and intense work with pineapple hand weavers made her realize that pineapple fibers are very soft and pliable and doing something like that of a leather was possible. With the qualities of flexibility and strength of the pineapple fiber, she was able to develop Piñatex.

Piñatex was successfully launched in London at the Royal College of Art on 12 December 2014. From there, the company started selling in September 2015 and today they

have attracted a lot of interested clients because people are looking for sustainable, plant-based and innovative products.

Ananas Anam has been working with the Labo Progressive Multi Purpose Cooperative (LPMPC) since 2014. This undertaking has brought new income opportunities for pineapple farmers in the province of Camarines Sur.

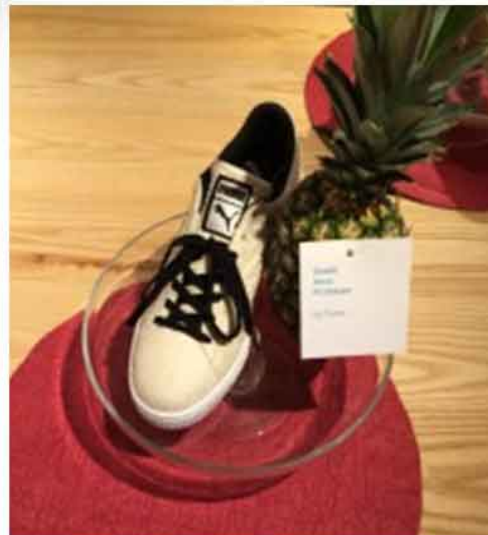
Ms. Hijosa emphasized that Piñatex has much more advantage over the leather derived from live animals because it only comes from the skin so there is 30% waste. The fibers for Piñatex, however, are extracted entirely from the leaves of pineapple so there is much less waste. It looks, acts and performs like leather. It is also



Ms. Carmen Hijosa, the founder of Piñatex and the company Ananas Anam

natural, renewable and eco-friendly. Their clients include Samsung, Puma, Porsche, BMW, Mercedes Benz, to name a few. The Ananas Anam started to sell only 9 months ago and now they have already more than 500 clients in their list.

With leather becoming more scarce and expensive and the continuous search by textile manufacturers for sustainable alternative material, Ms. Hijosa believes she landed in the right place - the Philippines, being the third largest supplier of pineapple in the world. 🌿



L-R: Puma's suede shoe prototype, coat and clutch bag by designer Mayya Saliba, and car seat cover made from Piñatex textile

Training on Macrame Bag-Making for PWDs conducted in CDO

The PhilFIDA Regional Office X ventured in a challenging project by conducting a skill training on Macrame Bag-Making for some Persons-with-Disabilities (PWDs) in Cagayan de Oro City. The training was held at the regional office last 11-15 April 2016.

The training stemmed from the request of the Federation of Persons with Disabilities Association or CAFEDPA to initiate a livelihood project for the PWDs in the City.

The livelihood training aimed not only to provide additional source of income but also to enhance the personality and social skills of the participants and for them improve their levels of knowledge on entrepreneurship.

The 32 participants were persons with hearing and speech impairment, poor vision/blind, polio victims, limp and other physical disabilities.

Director Aida M. Robas in her speech encouraged the participants to explore their potentials and to continue to seek

BAR releases...from page 2

this purpose. Added to this, various trainings shall be conducted to enhance the skills of the agency's research staff on abaca germplasm characterization, virus detection, tissue culture techniques and technical report writing.

The project is expected to be completed in October of this year.

PhilFIDA conducts...from page 3

fibercrops. The event ended with presentations of break-out session results wherein each group presented their plans and prospects for the fiber industry.

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for livelihood opportunities. She advised them not to let their physical disability be a hindrance in achieving their goals. Ms. Robas expressed full support and assured the group that PhilFIDA is always open to assist them in whatever abaca undertaking they will pursue.

Staff from the Fiber Utilization and Technology Division, namely Ms. Cristina A. Panganiban, Mr. Camilo Jr. J. del Prado and Mr. Ernesto Jr. L. Acero, were invited to serve as resource persons for the activity.



PhilFIDA enhances capability on abaca virus detection and micropropagation



The Research Division started implementing the project "Enhancing PhilFIDA's Capability on Virus Detection and Abaca Micropropagation" by conducting 3 successive trainings which were all held in the Bicol Region.

The first training was entitled "Training on Disease Indexing of Abaca Viruses" held at the Albay Diagnostic Laboratory on 15-18 May 2016. A total of 15 participants from the different regions attended.

The second training was conducted on 19-21 May 2016 with the title "In Vitro Micropropagation of Abaca Using Shoot Tip and Female Inflorescence". This time,

it was held at the Albay Tissue Culture Laboratory with 25 participants.

The last leg of the series had 35 participants for the "Training on Abaca Characterization, Gene Banking and Plant Genetic Resource (PGR) Documentation" done at the Sorsogon Fiber Experiment Station and Seedbank on 22-25 May 2016.

The 3 trainings are in pursuance of the project's aim to enhance the technical skills and competencies of laboratory staff of the Immunology, Diagnostic and Tissue Culture Laboratories especially on abaca germplasm characterization, virus detection and tissue culture techniques.

The PhilFIDA Participates in the Kabisig Philippine Government Expo 2016



The PhilFIDA, together with around 26 agencies, participated in the Kabisig Philippine Government Expo 2016 at the 5F Bridgeway area of SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City on 27-29 June 2016. Exhibit and information materials were brought for display to showcase products made of different fiber crops. These products are results of the agency's efforts in promoting the growth and development of the whole fiber industry, not only the conventional commercial fibers (e.g. abaca and cotton) but also the other native plant fibers such as buntal, jute, raffia, sisal and kenaf.

This project is organized by the Kabisig People's Movement which was established under Proclamation No. 650 on 05 October 1990. It aims to be a partner in information dissemination on government office profiles, service facilities, projects, programs and accomplishments. Through this, the public will be informed of opportunities for investment, tourism potentials, small business and jobs.

Farmers Field School...from page 3



PhilFIDA's Rutilio Salinas discussing the activities involved in the FFS.

approach in transferring the recommended abaca farming practices to the farmer-students. The course will focus on activities to help increase farmers' yield in the most economical way by providing strategies in maintaining abaca areas, eradicating insects & pests, converting farm waste to fertilizers through composting and many other techniques that could amply improve their abaca production activities.

PhilFIDA and NARC conduct training on the identification of abaca varieties

A training on the Identification of Commercial Abaca Varieties, Hybrids and other Musa Species was organized by the Technical Assistance Division (TAD) through the PhilFIDA Region VIII and in collaboration with the National Abaca Research Center (NARC) last 4-8 April 2016 at the Center for Continuing Education, Visayas State University (VSU), Baybay City, Leyte.

The training aims to equip PhilFIDA technical personnel with the skills on identifying all the different commercial abaca varieties, hybrids and other Musa species. The participants were selected personnel under the PhilFIDA TAD and Research Divisions nationwide.

Dr. Luz Moreno served as the main resource person of the training. She is

an Associate Professor at the VSU and the head of the Crop Improvement Section and Germplasm & Tissue Culture Laboratory of NARC. Dr. Moreno discussed the botanical description, morphology of abaca and provided clear comparisons between an abaca plant, banana and other Musa species. She also presented the characteristics of ideal abaca cultivars/varieties and how to identify a particular variety, hybrid and strain; characteristics of abaca that can be used for pulp, cordage and handicrafts; & recommended abaca varieties for cultivation in Mindanao, Bicol, Visayas and Southern Tagalog.

VSU Professor, Dr. Ruben Gapasin, also shared his expertise and gave an overview of the current situation of the abaca industry and a lecture on the pests and diseases of abaca and their prevention and control. He highlighted the contributions of abaca to the country's economy, its uses, new applications and its role in the shifting global market trend. Dr. Gapasin discussed the major pests and diseases affecting abaca farms and how to effectively identify and manage them. He gave a comprehensive discussion on the abaca bunchy top virus (ABTV) and the protocol for its management by spraying, cutting, digging the mat, burning and applying herbicide.

PhilFIDA Fiber Utilization and Technology Division (FUTD) Chief, Dr. Remedios Abgona presented the physical, morphological and chemical properties of different fibers from some commercial abaca varieties, hybrids and other Musa species.

Mr. Nicolas Postrero, head of PhilFIDA's Standards Section, was tasked to present the official grading system of hand-stripped, spindle-stripped and decorticated abaca fibers.

The Chief of PhilFIDA Regulatory Division, Mr. Romeo Bordeos, presented the Department Circular No. 01 – the General Guidelines for the Accreditation of Abaca Plant

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