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# grains

Volume 47 No.1

January - June 2019



## SPECIAL FEATURE

### The NFA Management



## INSIDE

- Restructuring the NFA
- Procurement Activities Nationwide
- How RA 11203 Transformed NFA

A period of transition is sure to happen with the passage of Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law. This is a delicate process where there will be a great change or transformation from the old to the new NFA as envisioned by the new law that dictates operational and manpower adjustment, relinquishing and realignment of jobs and positions, transfer of resources and accountabilities – so much conversion and adaptation in the offing – a passage that is hoped to lay upon a new beginning for everyone in the NFA and in the industry as a whole.

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# grainsinside

Vol. 47 No.1

January - June 2019

3

Editorial:  
Always for a Reason

4

Grainsnotes:  
Second Best

5

Restructuring the NFA

6

Forum:  
-Where to NFA?  
-Personal thoughts on RA 11203  
or the Rice Liberalization Law

11

NEWS

26

Transfer of Leadership

28

How RA 11203 transformed NFA

30

Judy Carol Layus Dansal  
Back for a Mission

33

Tomas Raymundo Escarez  
A Legacy of Leadership

36

Maria Mercedes Guerra Yacapin  
People's Person

39

Rex C. Estoperez  
A Total Package

40

Gerry J. Ambrosio  
Rising to the Top

42

Gender and Development:  
Coming Closer to Gender Equality

45

NFA to become debt-free in five years

45

They make NFA proud

50

Turning A New Leaf

55

Ganito kami noon, Ganito kami ngayon

56

Gallery

**Field Correspondents:** REGION I - Sonny Rey R. Rivera LA UNION P.O. -Febrose S. Nillo ABRA - Marc Gil C. Tierra BENGUET - Jennifer C. Paraton ILOCOS NORTE - Ruby Jean C. Pambid ILOCOS SUR - Jacquelyn R. Madalipay E. PAN-GASINAN - Maezle M. Ferrer W. PANGASINAN - Jean Ann T. Ticman REGION II - Fe E. Salim SANTIAGO P.O. - Ma. Luisa L. Luluquisen CAGAYAN - Angelica S. Simeon NUEVA VIZCAYA - Ofeline Grace I. Reyes QUIRINO - Dianne April Pangan IFUGAO - Romeo T. Gomez KALINGA - Venus Bagvan NORTH WESTERN CAGAYAN-APAYAO (N.C.A.) - Zhanel Diorelli C. Picaña MT.PROVINCE - Elma Joyce M. Faniswa REGION III - Josephine C. Bacungan NUEVA ECIJA P.O. - Ma. Elena V. Puno AURORA - Jessary S. Go BATAAN - Romalyn Villar BULACAN -Romulo V. Libunao PAMPANGA - Myra E. Bernardo TARLAC - Mia Kristel P. Chico ZAMBALES - Ronilo C. Salvador REGION IV - Asela P. Infantado BATANGAS P.O. - Joy Patria Canuel INFANTA - Quirino C. Decena MAMBURAO - Florencia Isla MARINDUQUE - Ma. Filipina M. Logmao OR.MINDORO - Raybelle Joy Encarnacion OCC.MINDORO - Nida Novio PALAWAN - Bezahe Sotto QUEZON - Bernadette Ocampo ROMBLON - Czarina Quinio LAGUNA - Leni Reynaldo REGION V - Jaharah Shyrre Revilla ALBAY P.O. - Christina Alcantara CAMARINES NORTE - Angelyn S. Parco CAMARINES SUR - Caren S. Arriola CATANDUANES - Jasmin Jay M. Buenavides MASBATE - Danna Jean S. Esguerra SORSOGON - Gladys L. Caubang REGION VI - Lalaine D. Doronila ILOILO P.O. - Patrick Paul Misajon AKLAN - Christine B. Pennela ANTIQUE - Lorelyn A. Bayog CAPIZ - Mary Christie M. Hari-On NEGROS OCC. - Maverick D. Misajon REGION VII - Olma Marie M. Bayno BOHOL - Jhoel J. Lim NEGROS OR. - Camilo C. Kebite Jr. SIKUJOR - Carmencietia M. Enriquez REGION VIII - Ella Vircelle E. Eguillos N. LEYTE - Sheilabelle F. Sembrano S. LEYTE - Eliza E. Almacin N. SAMAR - Roger E. Geriane E. SAMAR - Christine Mae U. Chn BILIRAN - Ceazar Jude R. Dar-antinao W. SAMAR - Marilyn B. Cui REGION IX - Margarette Ridad ZAMBO CITY P.O. - Joann B. Bernardo IPIL SIBUGAY - Rosemarie S. Miro PAGADIAN - Ares Eve S. Lawangon DIPOLOG ZDN - Joy Nina L. Bernido REGION X - Hazel B. Belacho MISAMIS OR. P.O. - Darius Anthony Megalbio BUKIDNON - Ma. Socorro S. Mellomida CAMIGUIN - Mary Rosmil N. Realista LANA O DEL NORTE - Lenona Lenette M. Tabupis MISAMIS OCC - Jeremy M. Caballero REGION XI - Maria Celia D. Prestoza GEN. SANTOS P.O. - Gisela Marie Roberto DAVAO CITY - Vicky G. Arriate DIGOS - Richel O. Danb MATI - Meiko D. Barril TAGUM - Jefferson D. Caliao COMVAL - Genelyn Q. Rapal REGION XII - Marissa O. Nuñez SULTAN KUDARAT - Kryzel S. Garma NORTH COTABATO - Sherryl V. Polo KORONADAL (SO.COT) - Wilma T. Chio REGION XIII/NCR - Joseline Marfil CDO - Samaira Datu EDO - Ronald Paul Garcia NDO - Rolando M. Belando CAVITE - Carolina B. Manzano SDO - Mirael D. Hernandez Batanes - Catherine P. Castillo REGION XIV - MAGUINDANAO - Meriam O. Kadatnan LANA O DEL SUR - Saima Bandrang TAWI-TAWI - Babylin A. Sali SULU - Maria Susan V. Panah BASILAN - Samerah M. Victor CARAGA - Amielou Jane A. Galos AGUSAN NORTE - Gaye S. Pia AGUSAN DEL SUR - Richelynn A. Tanoy SURIGAO DEL NORTE - Girlie D. Enoya SURIGAO DEL SUR - Dimple Diane C. Fino



# Always for a Reason

LETTING GO of someone or something precious is, perhaps, the hardest decision in anyone's life. It is never easy parting ways with loved ones, friends, memories and things. It is never easy forgetting the good times and, even the bad. And it is never easy being positive all the time, especially when the going gets rough – and tough.

It is really not a simple decision to let go of NFA, not only for any sentimental or personal reasons but mainly for the fact that here's an agency that was created for the right reasons, nay, noble intentions - that here's an agency that represents RICE, the symbol of every Filipino's desire for food security – that here's an agency that strikes a good balance between opposing forces in the grains or food industry.

But now it's time to let go of NFA, albeit not the whole, but a great part of it. Maybe the good reason just lies underneath, only to be revealed in the coming days. Or maybe there's something in RA 11203, or the Rice Liberalization Law that will better the agency, also to be unraveled at the proper time and place.

They say everything happens for a reason. Everything is part of a grand plan. At this stage in NFA's life, every employee is finding every reason possible why parts of the agency have to go as to cause pain and sow unease and instability – and why must it suffer from certain political and economic decisions that affect the totality of its operations as well as its workforce.

It's wrong to construe that today's happening is the repeat of what happened before – not at all, or maybe a semblance of it

– but definitely a far cry from even the distant past. The effect of RA 11203 is very different since the very core of NFA's structure has been emasculated, if this is the right word. Nothing of this sort had ever been experienced by the agency in previous reorganizations. As Greek philosopher Heraclitus says, "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." And so every dip into the river is a new experience, a new journey and it's like giving oneself another chance, another opportunity to be a new and better person.

Many times before, NFA employees had stepped into rivers that seem to stay constant yet are actually continually changing, flowing freely to different directions, searching for the new horizon. The NFA is again into this situation of not just testing the waters but getting a deeper dip into raging waters that impact on not just its corporate identity but on the grains industry as well.

A great change definitely looms. And the people involved in the changing process have a tall order to act with wisdom, care and caution as the future of NFA, its people and the industry is certainly at stake.

If at all, the best defense is for employees to stay positive, committed, united with even greater hope and faith. Behind the dark corners lurking in the NFA, there's always the promise of better things to come for the agency and everyone inside it. For there will always be a good reason behind everything -- always a good reason to start anew.



# SECOND BEST

I was never the favourite child. I don't get warm embrace nor get to be cooked my desired meal. I get the sour face instead of the sweet smile. Sometimes I would go to my preferred corner to cry out until my eyes can no longer squeeze tears. Other times, I just brush it aside and ball it in. Of course I wished for better days. But they don't come as often.

You say parents don't play favorites. They do. The favorite children always get the choicest seat, the meatiest part, the flashiest clothes, the brand new shoes, or the generous allowance. While we, the least favorites, get the hand-me-downs. Don't get me wrong though. While we're not the favorites, it doesn't mean we are not loved. Of course we are! It's just probably not the love we demand or feel we deserved.

Ironically, the least favorite child in me is more loving, more caring and more affectionate. I don't know if there's a science behind this but I just feel the desire to give more than what is given me. I'm generous beyond measure to people closest to me because we're supposed to be like that. When we love, we have to love with our whole hearts, no reservations. You may agree or disagree with me on this but then, when will you start loving wholeheartedly? Oh, ok you're afraid to love because you'll get hurt eventually? But that's the thing! That's the essence to loving. You may not be their favorite but you can love them regardless.

oOo

February is a love month. In the Philippines, Valentine's Day becomes a little overboard. Well, of course everything in this country goes a little overboard but Valentine's Day is like the 'big boss' of all the occasions we celebrate. Flowers and chocolates are in great demand on Valentine's Day while restaurants are fully booked teeming with lovers and the likes.

But this year, February 14 will have a totally different meaning at least for us in the NFA and the entire rice industry. It's the day the President signed the Rice Tariffication/Liberalization Law. Republic Act 11203 is the last nail that sealed the coffin, so to speak. Nothing wrong with tariffing rice imports but the law talks about liberalization like it's the end of the world. We've fought long and hard for the President to veto it but then again sometimes you don't always get what you want. The least we can do now is pray and hope that things will take a complete turnaround. But that's like wishing for the moon.

But let's wait when the going gets tough. When the much talked-about, 'cheap', least favorite NFA rice is out of the market and the public will no longer find such rice of good quality at an affordable price.

Lina"



# RESTRUCTURING THE NFA

By LINA G. REYES

Edwin, not his real name, has been working at the National Food Authority for barely a year. Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Trade Liberalization Law is about to change Edwin's future and his growing family. The law, which liberalizes the importation, exportation and trading of rice, has led the agency to undergo a restructuring of its organizational structure, staffing pattern and its mandate. Edwin's position is considered redundant or abolished. This means that it's no longer included in the so-called Rationalized Personnel Complement (RPC) because 'its function is already repealed under the new law.'

There are hundreds more who will likely suffer the same fate as Edwin.

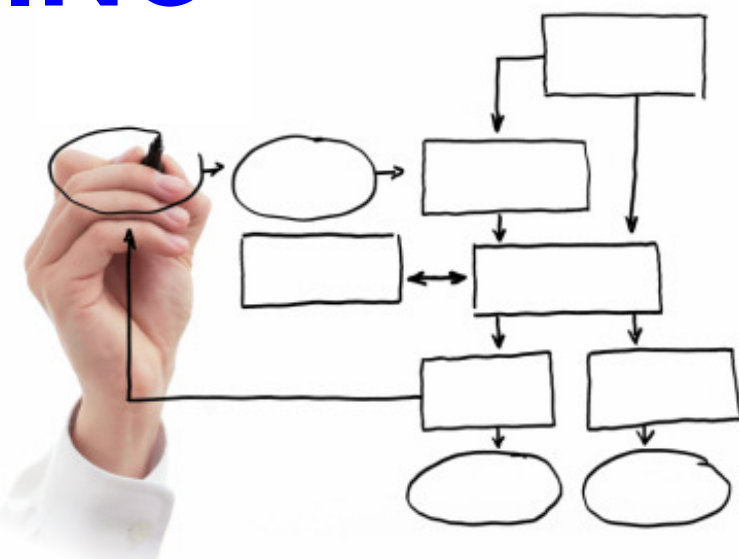
Until recently, NFA's mandate is to make sure there's enough supply of affordable rice at any given time. Here's an agency that buys palay at a high price and sells it to the market cheap enough so ordinary Filipinos can afford it. This buy-high, sell-low policy of the NFA has crippled the agency's finances which led economic managers to think of ways to restructure the agency in an attempt to invigorate its existence.

In 1989, fresh from the People Power uprising three years prior, a salary standardization law was introduced as an offshoot of Republic Act 6758 which prescribes a revised compensation and position classification system in the government. In effect, the NFA was one of the agencies that opted to trim its workforce and offered early retirement package to those who decided to leave the government service early.

Years later, another restructuring of the government workforce was held after the adoption of Executive Order number 366 in 2008 directing a strategic review of the operations of the executive branch and organizations of the executive branch and providing options and incentives for government employees who may be affected.

When EO 366 was put in place, the NFA's plantilla positions went down from 6,381 to 4,442. Records show that there was a reduction of personnel complement of more than 53% in the central office and another 24% in the field offices. As a result of this restructuring, some departments in the central office were merged. The research and statistics functions of the abolished Business Development and Promotion Department (BDPD) were transferred to the Grains Marketing Operations Department (GMOD) while the Extension Department (EXD) was changed to the Industry Services Department (ISD) composed of two divisions – one from the former EXD and another from the abolished Business Regulations Department (BRD). The EO also led to the creation of the Caraga Regional Office and the Compostela Provincial Office. The organizational structures in the field offices were patterned after the central office structure.

In 2012, Executive Order 77 was introduced. It



amended the basis of the computation of the incentives of personnel affected by the implementation of the rationalization program under EO 366. With this new order, a better compensation package was offered since computation was based on the new salary rate. Another set of NFA employees availed and opted to retire from the service bringing the total employees to its current figure of 4,136.

With RA 11203, a new restructuring is underway. As of June 14, the Governance Commission on GOCCs (GCG) is yet to release the final approval of the NFA's restructuring. GCG will focus on the NFA's organizational structure while staffing/filling up of positions will be left with NFA. Based on updates provided by the CMT, the Human Resource Management Department (HRMD) and the General Services Department (GSD) will become Administrative and General Services Department with only two divisions namely human resources and general services. The departments of Budget, Treasury, Finance Management (BTFMD) and Accounting Services (ASD) will be transformed into Finance Department cutting four divisions to two, the accounting and budget divisions. On the other hand, the Technical Research Services Department (TRSD) will merge with the Buffer Stocks Management - a new title of the Grains Marketing Operations Department (GMOD), and will be named Operations Coordination Department.

The Internal Audit Services Department will have two divisions namely, Operations Audit and Financial Audit. There will be three divisions in the Legal Affairs Department to be named Documentation and Legal Research, Litigation and Prosecution Division and the Adjudication Division.

Regional Offices shall be headed by SG level 26 with two divisions, the Finance and Administrative Division and the Regional Operations Coordination Division which will both hold SG level 24.

Under this new restructuring, the number of provincial offices will be reduced from 86 to 45 and will be renamed branch offices. Employees affected by the merging of provincial offices deemed abolished will have the option to apply for any position in the new NFA structure, subject to CSC qualification standards (QS); be



matched with any of the retained positions in the branch/ Central Office of his/her choice, based on the CSC-QS; or to avail of the compensation package.

According to Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, about 869 NFA employees will be directly affected by the restructuring. The exact number is yet to be determined once a review and approval from the GCG is issued. Affected employees like Edwin will have the option to apply for vacant positions under the new structure; be matched with another employee who is not affected based on the qualification standards (QS) of the Civil Service Commission (CSC); or avail of the compensation package.

The NFA management, thru the Change Management Team (CMT), has proposed two sets of compensation package to GCG. The first is a maximum of 1.5 month's

salary for every year of service, as stated in the IRR of RA 11203. The second proposal is a maximum of two months' salary for every year of service patterned after the compensation package given to former employees of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) displaced with the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) Law.

Right now, people in the NFA, whether affected or not of the proposed restructuring, are looking forward to the approved guidelines. No one is absolutely certain yet as to when the final word is issued. Until then, employees like Edwin should weigh their options well. In the meantime, we should continue to pray and hope for what's best for an agency that will now only focus in buffer stocking for emergencies and calamities.

## WHERE TO NFA? By TERESA P. GALVEZ

The sad truth is finally happening. Policymakers have signed the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Rice Tariffication Law or the Republic Act 11203, threshing out details on the effective rollout of the new law liberalizing the importation, exportation and trading of rice. The law also lifts the quantitative import restrictions on rice.

While the socio economic managers are celebrating what they call the "milestone in the agriculture sector" with the approval of RA 11203, NFA employees have mixed emotions and concerns. The young and new employees have so much apprehensions and misgivings. Alarmed that the agency is stripped of its licensing, importation and security functions, they are worried what will happen next. Employees between the ages of 35 to 50s are more concerned because according to them they are "too young to retire and too old to find a new job."

NFA, which has been our home for the last 46 years, is on the brink of extinction. It has been our bread and butter. For most of us, our employment with NFA provided decent and comfortable lives for our families. Our children graduated from college and universities. Some of them even chose to work with NFA after graduation.

Personally, I have been serving and loving this agency for 41 years, like this is my second home. I spent most of my adult life working here. Public Affairs Department is my family. Although I am almost at the end of my service with my retirement coming, I am saddened by this new law. Somehow, the implementation of these rules and regulations gives me a feeling of discomfort and anxiety.

The management has been constantly updating and ensuring the employees of their security as far as their tenure with the agency is concerned. Employees are given the option of staying or availing of the well-laid compensation package, should they decide to leave or retire from the service. OIC Administrator Tomas R. Escarez and the Excom members are confident that the outcome of the restructuring and/or reorganization will be a win-win solution for all employees. Still, we do not know what's in store for most of us.

I have gathered some thoughts and comments from our co-employees about the impending NFA reorganization. Let's hear what they have to say.



### MONDAY MENDOZA

Human Resource Management Officer  
HRMD

I agree with the opinion of the field office employees that merging of the provincial branches could hamper the operations of rice procurement and distribution. Because of the geographical limitations the merging would cause, the constituents of the provinces where the NFA branch would be dissolved could suffer from delayed delivery and response from the agency especially during calamities. Island provinces without an NFA branch/warehouse would be the most affected when a typhoon hits the region. There would be little to no chance that the rice could be transported through the rough seas, and the tendency would be, if the typhoon stays for many days, the rice could be sent only after the storm. The same thing goes to those areas stricken by deep flood and other great destructions. If there would be an absence of NFA supply,

the private traders in the area could take the opportunity and sell their rice at a high price. It would be to the greater suffering of the people, much now that NFA has been ripped off the power to regulate price.

Moreover, if the merging would continue, the tendency of the farmers would be to just sell their palay to the nearby trader. It would be costly, hence discouraging for them to transact with an agency so far away when the incentive they could get would just be similar with what they'd get from the buying price of traders.

I suggest that if they want to reduce the number of NFA employees, just reduce the number per branch but don't reduce the number of the branches. Keeping all the branches would still be beneficial for NFA operations.

On the other hand, as an HRM officer who would be the grinding machinery of the restructuring, it would be our natural bias to be against the reorganization because we are the ones who will face the gruesome bloodshed of changing the entire plantilla of the agency. For me it is retrogressive because we could have been advancing now on our projects like the electronic document management



system (EDMS) and the NFA web-HURIS, but then because of the reorganization we need to halt everything.

I just pray that this reorganization and the whole rice tariffication plot would bring the country to a brighter future. I have this current stance that the rice liberalization would lead to the death of our rice industry and would make consumers suffer in the long term, but I still sincerely hope they prove us all wrong.



### RENE L. PAMILAR

Medical Technologist I  
HRMD

The impending restructuring of NFA has brought me fear and anxiety in the last few months. As one of the affected employees, I now face the possibility of losing my job that is the sole source of my income for almost 23 years. Thus, my family will suffer a big blow in the event that I get laid off. My children are still young and none of them has reached college yet. It's definitely a long way to go for me as a breadwinner. Likewise, it would be difficult for me to look for a new job considering my present age. Nevertheless, I am optimistic about our agency's future amid all the uncertainties. I am hoping and praying for the best outcome that will benefit every NFA employee.



### CHRISTIAN V. BAUTISTA

Accounts Analyst  
Accounting Services Department

Bilang isang kawani ng NFA at mamamayan ng Pilipinas, hindi ko maiwasan na mapag-isip ukol sa pagsasaayos ng pamamahala ng NFA. Ito ay dahil iniisip namin ang magiging mandato ng ahensya o ang "buffer stocking" at kung paanong mas makakatulong ito sa ating kapwa Pilipino; at maging epektibo ang bawat empleyado para sa kaunlaran ng ating bansa.



### DR. MARIA LUISA D. QUIROZ

Senior Grains Operations Officer  
IRD-ISD

When I joined the NFA 22 years ago, not once did I ever think that I will have to worry about my security of tenure. Unfortunately, I am now faced, rather we are now faced with removal from office. To employees like me who belong to the category "too young to retire, too old to look for another job", this impending reorganization is giving us much agony and sleepless nights. They say I shouldn't worry because I have something to fall back on, if I will be thinking only of myself that would be partly true. Even then, since I am a solo parent, a part time job would not be enough to see my son through College. But more than my apprehensions for myself, I also worry for my co workers in the Regulation Division, our Regional and Provincial Industry Service Officers, as well as the other personnel who will be affected by this reorganization. For now, all we can do is to trust the process and hope for a silver lining amidst all these uncertainties.



### DANIKKA JOYCE VALINO

GOO I  
GMOD

The NFA lost its importing and regulatory functions under the Rice Tariffication Law, and many of us in the operations were affected of the restructuring. *Nakakatakot dahil hindi ka man affected ngayon baka paggising mo isang araw ikaw naman ang babalitaan na mawawalan ng trabaho.* This is my bread and butter, and I can't afford to lose my job.



### ATTY. MARY GRACE PADAPAT

Sr. Enforcement and Investigation Officer  
SSID

The passage of RA 11203 effectively paralyzed the National Food Authority's function on rice supply and price stabilization and prompted the ongoing re-organization process.

While I understand the need for the passage of a Tariffication Law and the lifting of the Quantitative Restriction on rice import to comply with our commitment to WTO, I completely disagree on the provisions removing the agency's licensing and regulatory powers, leaving the rice industry fully deregulated.

The NFA reorganization created anxiety for many employees who keep guessing whether or not their positions will be retained. Considering the fear of losing their jobs anytime soon and all the uncertainties, it wouldn't be a surprise if many potential human capitals would decide to leave soon.

Personally, it pains me to witness the downfall of my beloved agency which has been the partner of our stakeholders for several decades. I just hope that higher authorities would remain true to their word from the start that "no one will be displaced".



### JUDITH TINDOG

Retired Provincial Operations Officer  
NFA Linabuan Sur, Banga, Aklan

Tayong mga empleyado kahit may security of tenure sa ating work ay subject lagi sa pagbabago ng panahon, national direction/leadership at needs of the time. Ang mahalaga po, nagkakaisa ang opisina at tulong tulong sa sitwasyon para sa kabutihan ng lahat. More changes are coming hindi lang siguro for NFA. Nakakalungkot din po at magpapaalam ng maaga ang iba. Yong iba naman po siguro ay masaya at sa tamang panahon nangyari ang impending reorg. Kung hindi na maiiwasan, be positive pa rin po and still be grateful sa buhay (apektado man o hindi) and welcome with shining hope and trust to the Lord the new beginning of life after NFA devoted services in decades. All the best for the few who will be staying in the agency with a heart for the farmers and grains consumers. God bless NFA, the agency we look up to with honor and respect for decades and still standing the test of time to the present. Mabuhay!

**ENGR. KRYZL S. GARMA**

Engineer III  
Sultan Kudarat Provincial Office

I believe NFA's reorganization will open more opportunities and growth to our NFA officials and my co-employees.

As this transition will move forward, NFA will continue to provide best public service to our countrymen. Mabuhay ang NFA!

**VIA KATHERINE PANGANIBAN**

Statistician I  
GMOD

Various hearsays, different calculations, and things to do once they receive their package plans—these are just a few things you'll hear from the discussions of NFA employees after the implementation of Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law.

With the impending restructuring, we can't help but ask what now? Sure, retirees/retireables have the biggest advantage, but what about the "too young to retire, too old to find a job?" The millennials who are just starting to build their careers, and all those in between?

Furthermore, what will happen now to our Agency? The very agency that helped us build ourselves and our families.

NFA takes a huge part not only in the food that we eat, but also in our household. It's a long and winding process before a palay turned into rice to consume it, if that is the case, then what we are now experiencing is just another phase in the process.

**FAITH CATUBAG**

Accounts Analyst  
NFA Cebu Regional Office

I am in favor of NFA's restructuring for NFA to fit to our new mandate. But I'm hoping that GCG will come up with a win-win solution. Those who are willing to retire/avail of the package even if their positions are not affected can do so and those who opt to stay will still have a place in NFA.

It was said that affected employees can apply for the vacated positions after the restructuring but what if they're not qualified? Maybe, it's best that there will be CTIs for them..or should I say for us?

Abolition of NFA Regional Office? Naku ang harsh naman! Abolition talaga? Pwede bang bawasan lang ang number of employees? Nasa Region po ako na assign, ang hirap na kaya maghanap ng trabaho-lalo na sa age ko.

**JUVEE ANN GREMIO**

SGOO (Warehouse Supervisor)  
GID Rawis & GID Catubig  
Northern Samar PO

With the passage of the Rice Tariffication Bill into law that will impact directly on the entire NFA community bears indifferent reactions. With this inevitable reorganization of NFA as mandated by the aforementioned law, I personally trust and in full confidence, our executives to take the necessary actions and sound decisions for the welfare of employees and the entire NFA community. Though uncertainty may creep in, my hopes are high that everything will be fine. We then encourage everyone to be positive with this impending change. God speed and mabuhay NFA!

**BUENSOCELITA A. NATIVIDAD**

Executive Assistant II  
AO

When the news about the reorganization plan circulated, I got mixed feelings. My first reaction was that of fear, fear of the unknown, what to come, what to expect. Will I be affected? Will it affect my forthcoming retirement?

Since I am in the executive office, particularly the Office of the Administrator, we are lucky to have first hand information with regard to the status of the impending reorganization. We are assured that all information shared to us are true and correct. I have no doubt in my mind and in my heart that the welfare of each and every employee is prime and foremost in the minds of our executives, especially with the return of our former Deputy Administrator for Marketing Operations and now our new NFA Administrator, Atty. Judy Carol L. Dansal. I can now relax and just wait for new developments until the restructuring is implemented.

**JELLA MAE L. SALVADOR**

Grains Operations Officer I  
NFA Basilan

Here in Basilan, most of us are in the stage of "too early to retire". With the current issue on Reorganization and Restructuring, we are all sad and at the same time afraid that we might lose our jobs. But we are still with high hopes and trust that the management will do what is best for all of us. And while waiting for the final results, it's business as usual. We continue to do our mandates for the Filipino consumers. God bless us all in NFA!

"I will prepare and someday my chance will come."

Abraham Lincoln



# Personal thoughts on RA 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law

By MILAGROS F. LOPEZ

## Are we happy or sad, affected or not by RA 11203?

Prior to the approval of the law, successive rallies were conducted by rice industry stakeholders. Associations of rice retailers, millers, irrigators, farmers, rice cooperatives, and NFA rice consumers trooped to the Senate, the House of Representatives and Mendiola Bridge near Malacañang to express their sentiments and reasons why Republic Act 11203 should not be passed and approved into law. They were joined by NFA employees led by the NFA Employees Association (NFAEA).

Aside from the rallies, several one page advertisements were also published in national newspapers, particularly the Philippine Daily Inquirer and Philippine Star. These ads were paid from the pooled personal contributions of rank and file employees and members of employees associations; and from the officers and members of the rice industry stakeholders.

From the approval of RA 11203 on February 14, 2019, we can hear the restless reactions of rank and file employees not only here in the central office but also from the field offices. Some middle aged employees think they will be removed from their present job, their only source of income to support their families.

The effects of the removal of NFA's important functions like rice importation, licensing and regulations are yet to be seen but this early, several rank and file employees of the central office departments and in the field offices are worried that this will eventually cause discomforts especially among rice farmers and consumers.

I am personally worried and sad because our department, the Public Affairs Department (PAD) which I have considered my family, will be dissolved and converted to just a section/unit attached to the Office of the Administrator (AO) with only seven (7) positions retained.

Tasked to invite agri beat reporters during press briefings and conferences, rallies, and other occasions when our agency needs the presence of mediamen, I gathered their thoughts and personal views on the current state of the food agency. I'm sharing their reactions below:

"Rice Liberalization Law has its pros and cons. So let's wait and see what would be the outcome of this law. It is too early to say it is good or bad for the farmers and for the rice industry."



**EDEN SUAREZ-SANTOS**  
Reporter, NET 25

My coverage of the passage of the Rice Liberalization Law has been a challenging task. While it was clear that there were two conflicting sides on the story, various groups and individuals also opted to chime in the issue, making it hard for us reporters to filter the information (on a daily basis) that we will use in our articles. And though most of the information presented to us looked valid, we still had to ask ourselves: will this bring us get closer to the truth?

Another thing about this rice coverage that I find challenging is to present it in an informative way that will not agitate the public. It was supposed to be really simple: that the government will now allow the entry of more imported rice to bring down the prices. But then you also have to explain why the government is doing it; what will happen to farmers; what will happen to National Food Authority; and how and when it all started. There are just a lot of things to contemplate upon and as reporters, we didn't want to give the wrong information, especially on a sensitive topic like this.



**MADELAINE MIRAFIOR**  
Manila Bulletin

Malinaw na ang RA 11203 o Rice Liberalization Law ay paraan o short cut solution para hindi maubusan ng supply ng bigas ang ating bansa, ito ay tinatawag ding palliative solution ng gobyerno pero hindi naman talaga makakalutas sa pangkalahatang problema sa hanay ng magsasaka.

Ako ay against sa RA 11203 Law sapagkat ito ay hindi nakakatulong sa ating lokal na mga magsasaka lalo na yaong mga maliliit nating magsasaka ng palay na naiwanan ng suporta na dapat ang focus ay suportahan ang mga magsasaka so that they can produce sufficiently for the good of the Filipino people.

Dapat din na noon pa man ay tinutukan at sinuportahan na ni Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol ang mga lokal nating magsasaka, nakakatakot na baka darating ang araw na tayo ang magiging consumer na lamang ng bigas mula sa ibang bansa at hindi na magiging producer kailanman.

Masama man sa pandinig pero malinaw na ang kumikita sa nasabing batas ay ang mga tinatawag na middlemen, mga kasabwat na nagkunwaring mga magsasaka kuno pero sila ay mga tinatawag na komisyoner. Isa lang ang pangarap ng mga lokal nating magsasaka ng palay, ang pakinggan sila at ipagkaloob ng pamahalaan buong suporta sa kanila.

Thank you very much.

**BERNARD S. MIÑOZA**  
Bagong Saksi/Bomba  
Founder/President  
Philippine Investigative Media  
Alliance Incorporated (PIMAI)



# NFA Platforms for Feedback Mechanism

By LORETA B. UMALI

“Ang concern ko ay tungkol sa National Food Authority (NFA) rice dito sa Barangay 17, Rizal Street, Legazpi, Albay. Ang ina-announce sa news na marami pang supply ng NFA Rice, pero kapag bumibili ako sa tindahan ang binibigay lang sakín ay dalawang (2) kilo lang. Wala daw kasi sila masyadong tinda, isang sako lang daw ang binibigay sa kanila para itinda. Hindi ito kakasya sa aming pamilya kaya gusto ko sanang mapa-imbestigahan ito ng gobyerno.” This was the complaint filed by Ms. Eden Ariste of Brgy. 17 Rizal St., Legazpi City through the Hotline 8888 last August 14, 2018.

Upon receipt of the emailed complaint, NFA-Albay immediately contacted Ms. Ariste for verification. It was explained to her that due to the limited rice allocation of NFA accredited outlets, the sale of NFA rice is limited only to two (2) kilograms per consumer/buyer so that more consumers can be served. This was during a lean month period.

The following day, a commendation ticket from the Office of the President was received by NFA-Albay because of their swift action regarding the complaint of Ms. Ariste. “Magpapasalamat ako dahil sa mabilis na pagakasyon ng 8888 tungkol sa aking reklamo. Salamat,” said Ms. Ariste in her call to the 8888 Hotline.

Ms. Ariste was one of the 383 complainants who lodged their complaints and other concerns against NFA through the 8888 Hotline since it became operational on November 9, 2017. All of these complaints/tickets were closed or resolved within the 72-hour timeframe for resolution of complaints.

HOTLINE 8888 is a public hotline facility that receives feedbacks or concerns on government services. The hotline is currently being serviced by the Civil Service Commission Contact Center ng Bayan 16565 and coordinated by the Office of the Cabinet Secretary.

Once a concern is received by Hotline 8888, the complaint is forwarded to the concerned agency for immediate action through a Ticket Reference Number. The concerned agency has to act on said complaint within 72 hours. A ticket is considered closed or resolved once the agency acted on the complaint and informed the complainant on the action taken through a written report submitted to the Hotline 8888.

NFA Albay, Baguio and East District Office were the three NFA Offices that received Commendation Ticket from the Office of the President in 2018 as appreciation from satisfied callers. Among the top three complaints recorded by the food agency during the 3rd quarter of 2018 were : (1) unavailability of NFA rice; (2) rice overpricing and (3) restricted selling of NFA rice.

Aside from Hotline 8888, another feedback mechanism used by NFA is the Customer Assistance Unit (CAU). For the year 2018, a total of 36,946 customers contacted the CAU thru short messaging system (SMS). The CAU replaced the NFA Complaints Action Center (CAC) to receive and act on complaints, requests and inquiries about rice prices and supply and other concerns about the rice industry throughout the country. The Industry Services Department (ISD) is the lead department that receives messages and monitors actions taken by concerned departments and field offices. Regional and Provincial Registration and Licensing Officers manned the CAU.

Meanwhile, the NFA stopped the operations of Kontra Abuso, another platform used by the agency to act on complaints lodged by the public against violators of grains trading regulations, following the passage of Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law. Under RA 11203, the regulatory power of the NFA was removed.

From July 11, 2018 since it was created up to its cessation on April 8, 2019, a total of 925 complaints were received and 895 complaints were resolved under the Kontra Abuso Hotline.

## NFA KONTRA ABUSO



**HOTLINE: 0927-8715921 and 8888**





# Massive Procurement Activities Nationwide

By LINA REYES

The implementation of RA 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law has changed NFA's focus to buffer stocking and has shifted its procurement only from local farmers. This drove our office to conduct intensified palay procurement nationwide.

From accounts contributed by our information officers, we bring you the procurement activities in various NFA locations.

**NFA Eastern Pangasinan** surpassed its 40,000 bags procurement target for the month of May by procuring a total of 87,222 bags from various individual farmers/farmer cooperatives, the highest volume procured in the whole Region I for the month.



**Western Pangasinan** intensified its advocacy campaign on palay procurement in support of the government's buffer stocking with a total of 6,632 bags procured as of June 30, 2019.

NFA buys palay from farmer associations and individual farmers at P17.00/kg with additional incentives of P3.00/kg Buffer Stocking, P0.20/kg Drying Fee, P0.20/kg Delivery Fee and P0.30/kg Cooperative Development Incentive Fee (CDIF) or a total of P20.70 for FAs/FCs and P20.40 for individual farmers.



**Laguna** opened several buying stations in strategic locations including GID I and II at the Laguna Provincial office in Bgy. San Ignacio, San Pablo City. The branch also accepts palay at the Villmill Warehouse, Bgy. Masiit, Calauan, Laguna (service area for District 3 & 4) and Siniloan Rice Facility Center, Brgy. Halayhayin, Siniloan, Laguna (service area for Dist. 4).



**Albay** Provincial Office embarked on an intensive procurement campaign. Meetings were held with various farmer organizations and individuals, as well as with Local Government Units to boost the Agency's local palay procurement.

During these meetings, Albay Provincial Manager Alexander C. Parrera discussed procurement strategies, standards, and logistics -- from palay classification and sack provision to payment to farmers -- as well as the dispatch of staff during Saturdays and Sundays to continuously provide public service to farmers.



**Catanduanes** Provincial Office conducted procurement campaign in barangays of Rizal, Ogbong, San Jose (Oco) and Peñafrancia of Viga, Catanduanes by the Palay Procurement Team composed of SEIO Marites A. Bernardo, SGOO (IS) Charmaine T. Tato and Acting IO Jasmin Jay M. Benavidez

**Capiz** deployed two mobile procurement teams. Capiz is classified as one of the surplus areas in terms of palay production in the country. It targets to buy 287,960 bags of palay (unhusked rice) and the government will provide an estimated amount of P298 million.

NFA Capiz still buys palay in its three regular buying stations/warehouses in Bolo, Sigma and Dumalag Warehouses.

In **Eastern Visayas**, harvest and procurement activities commenced last week of February, specifically in Abuyog and Matag-ob towns of Leyte and continues up to the present, to include provinces of varying harvest schedules.

NFA Region 8 has a total of 26 buying stations with Leyte having seven, including three NFA-owned warehouses (Port Area, Alangalang and San Pablo) and four temporary buying stations (Abuyog, Matag-ob, San Miguel



and Dagami), **Southern Leyte** with five (four NFA-owned: Maasin, Baybay, FLGC St. Bernard and JICA warehouses and one temporary station MLGC Hinunangan, Samar with two NFA-owned warehouses Catbalogan and Calbayog and one temporary (FLGC Pinabacdao). NFA **Eastern Samar** has three NFA-owned buying stations (Borongan, Oras and Guiuan), NFA **Northern Samar** has five, three NFA-owned (Dancalan, Rawis and Catubig) and two temporary MLGC Mapanas and San Roque and **Biliran** with three, NFA GID Naval and two buying stations located at Leyte-Leyte and Caibiran.



As of June 30, 2019, the region already procured a total of 71,202 bags with NFA Leyte having the highest number at 36,755 bags, NFA Northern Samar with 10,229 bags, NFA Southern Leyte with 9,255 bags, NFA Biliran with 6,082 bags, NFA Samar with 4,471 bags, and NFA Eastern Samar with 4,410 bags.

The region already attained 95.96% of its palay procurement target for the year (under medium estimate) and is hoping to surpass its target by the end of the first cropping season.

**Southern Leyte** already surpassed its procurement target for the year with 6,600 bags. As of June 30, 2019, the total palay procured reached 11,415 bags or 571% accomplishment rate. OIC Redentor E. Arciaga is very determined and focused in the province's palay procurement activities.



Horses are still important today as some farmers from far-reaching communities ride them to haul and sell their farm produce to the market. Photo shows farmers from Lower Usugan, Bonifacio, Misamis Occidental ride horses to deliver palay from their farms to the NFA pick up points.



Local farmers from the far-flung community of Purok 7, Sitio Liki, Barangay Lincunan, Bonifacio, **Misamis Occidental** had to bring their produce to benefit from NFA's higher buying price, transporting their palay through a flat-bottom boat.



The NFA in **Tacurong City** was on a massive palay procurement following the sudden drop of farm gate prices of rice paddy in the region.

The Department of Agriculture's all-out-support gave the NFA the opportunity to buy more from the farmers. **Region XII** remained positive to hit its procurement target for the year. A total of 349,994 bags were already procured as of June 30, 2019 only. NFA **Sultan Kudarat** bought 22,392 bags followed by NFA **North Cotabato** with 20,034 bags and 2,192 bags from NFA **South Cotabato**.

NFA R-XII Regional Director Dianne A. Silva received the certificate representing five (5) hauling trucks from DA Sec. Emmanuel "Manny" F. Piñol last January 14, 2019 at the NFA Baguer Buying Station, Libungan, Cotabato. The hauling trucks will be used to step up its rice procurement operations in the region.

The Secretary assured farmers of additional incentives if they deliver their produce to NFA. For every 80 bags delivered to NFA, one (1) bag of rice seeds will be given to the farmer. Cash Advance Centers through the DA, Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) and the NFA will be created to allow farmers to avail of advance payment for their deliveries. Farm equipment and machineries will also be given as incentives to cooperatives/associations based on volume delivered. To fully serve the farmers' sectors, DA will also turn over mechanical dryers to NFA's buying stations so they will be able to continuously procure and dry wet/fresh palay.

*Correspondents:* **Christina D. Alcantara, Jasmin Jay M. Benavidez, Judie Ann D. Bongawan, Ella Vircelle E. Eguillos, Maezle M. Ferrer, Mary Christie M. Hari-On, Camilo C. Kebite Jr., Sherryl V. Polo, and Jean Ann Ticman.**



## Farmers encouraged to sell harvests to NFA

In an effort to encourage more farmers to sell their produce to the National Food Authority, Ugnayan activities are being undertaken nationwide.



Provincial Manager Cecilia A. Concubierto of **Benguet** speaks before NFA accredited rice retailers during their regular Ugnayan held at the NFA Training Center, Loakan, Baguio City last Feb. 12. She discussed the status of NFA amid controversies relative to the RA 11203. Concubierto emphasized that NFA is still doing their job to serve and implement what is mandated to the agency.



PISO Lourdes Cervantes of **Eastern Pangasinan** discussed NFA's flagship programs particularly the Institutionalized Procurement Program during an Ugnayan with farmers at Pinmaludpod, Urdaneta City together with OIC City Agriculturist Felix Vitales last May 17.

NFA **Western Pangasinan**, headed by Provincial Manager Ramon B. Cuaresma, met with GRECON municipal presidents on the commencement of distribution activities.

Cuaresma reminded the GRECON presidents as partner of the Agency to make sure that NFA rice is always available, affordable and accessible especially to the marginalized sector.



In **Abra** province, an Ugnayan with farmers was held in Nagbalitangan, Bucay on February 27, 2019. Amidst uncertainties and doubts brought about by the signing of the Rice Tarrification Bill, NFA Abra has intensified its palay procurement program. The undertaking was presided by Acting Provincial Industry Services Officer (PISO) Criselda Bersamin and PECON Roelito Valeros.



Last February 27, NFA **Camarines Norte** conducted a province-wide Ugnayan with farmer-leaders at the Little Theater of Camarines Norte Agro Sports Center in Daet, Camarines Norte.

A total of 113 participants attended the forum, consisting of representatives from the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPAG) of the Camarines Norte Provincial Government, the Municipal Agricultural Officers (MAOs) and farmers/farmer-leaders from the 12 municipalities of the province.

Provincial Manager Remedios V. Dumawal welcomed the participants and expressed appreciation to the local government of Camarines Norte and to the MAOs and farmers for their positive response to NFA's invitation to the forum.

PISO Felisa M. Pobre discussed the highlights of Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Import Liberalization Law where NFA will only focus on palay procurement from local rice farmers for buffer stocking.



A total of 19 ugnayan activities were conducted in **Ilocos Norte** during the semester. The branch met with various farmer groups and organizations, with 680 attendees. During the said ugnayans, the NFA discussed its Institutionalized Palay Procurement Program (IPP).



Economist III Ma. Fatima R. Bacuño gave updates on NFA's palay procurement program.

Provincial Standards and Quality Assurance Officer (PSQAO) Engr. Maria Antonina Essler discussed palay quality management and NFA's palay procurement standards while Mechanical Plant Operator (MPO) Romeo A. Sarcedo discussed NFA's available drying services.

The resource speakers from the LGU-OPAG discussed the draft guidelines pertinent to the grant of non-monetary incentives by the Department of Agriculture, in order to encourage FOs to deliver their palay to NFA. Their program on Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) and Survival and Recovery Loan (SURE) was also discussed.



OIC Regional Director Bobot Alojado Jr. of **Region VII, Cebu** Provincial Manager Ma. Belen B. Barbanida and Regional Industry Services Officer (RISO) Anselma A. Buaya encouraged local farmers in Toledo City, Cebu to sell their harvests to NFA and take advantage of NFA's buying price and additional incentives.

Alojado presented and explained NFA's total buying price which now stands at P20.70/kg for clean and dry palay. OIC Alojado discussed the Equivalent Net Weight Factor (ENWF) for moisture content and purity levels of palay.



NFA **Iloilo**, together with GRECON, represented by its president Ms. Annie Cabaes Tobias and some officers, conducted Ugnayan and rolling store at Barangay Dagami, Maasin, and Iloilo.

Provincial Manager Oliver Cambas led the team and braved a challenging journey just to bring NFA rice to the Bukidnon Tribe of Maasin. PM Cambas discussed the procurement program of the agency and the possible opening of an NFA outlet in the area. The indigenous people of Maasin expressed joy after receiving grocery items and pre-loved clothes donated by the employees of NFA Iloilo.

Brgy. Dagami sits on top of the mountainous part of Maasin. The barangay is roughly 12 kilometers away from the town proper. It costs about P50 to hire a motorcycle going there.



NFA **Capiz** Provincial Manager Jose Mario Adan Pacificador and PISO Edna Artates awarded a check containing the CDIF claim of Consolacion Farmers & Irrigators MPC in Dumalag, Capiz with farmer leader Angel Funtinilla during the conduct of Ugnayan. The cooperative has the biggest volume of palay sold to NFA Capiz in 2018. The cooperative's CDIF claim will be used to purchase fertilizer for the next cropping season.

NFA Capiz conducted Ugnayan to farmer cooperatives in Tapulang, Maayon, Gibato, Dumarao, Agcabugao, Cuartero, Tumalalud, Mambusao, Lacaron, Dao, Quios, Panit-an and Baye-Baye, Jamindan in Capiz.



In **Negros Oriental**, Provincial Manager Hilaria Ganzon discussed NFA's procurement activities with the farmers of Bgy. Malabugas, Bayawan City during an Ugnayan. Provincial Operations Officer (POO) Emily Diputado presented the overview of the Ugnayan activity with the farmers of Zamboanguita, Negros Oriental. These farmers are the beneficiaries of the Department of Agriculture's model farm program where the DA provides them with certified seeds and fertilizers.





NFA **Zamboanga Sibugay** PISO Marietta O. Sampang speaks before stakeholders during the Ugnayan with the officers of DA, Department of Trade and Industry, grains retailers, wholesalers, and millers.



**National Capital Region-Central District Office** (NCR-CDO) headed by Manager Evelyn T. Medalla (second from left) conducted an Ugnayan with NFA-accredited retailers on March 11, 2019 held at J. Dela Cruz Hall. The meeting was called to clarify issues regarding the current situation of NFA in connection with the approval of RA 11203. The NFA assured them that NFA is here to stay and will continue to sell NFA rice at P27/kilo. The meeting was attended by NCR Director Carlito G. Co, NCR-ARD Felimon Cangrejo and the NFA accredited retailers from Manila, Quezon City and San Juan.



In **Zamboanga Del Norte**, three Ugnayans were held in a row. The Ugnayans with grains businessmen were held in the Municipalities of Labason, Liloy and Sindangan in Zamboanga Del Norte (ZDN) with SEIO Jonathan R. Redillas, PSQAO Lloyd Q. Son, and GOO I Joy Niña L. Bernido with the truck driver Jun Escorea.



An Ugnayan with farmers of Lamitan City was conducted by NFA **Basilan** in partnership with Lamitan City's agriculture office on April 8, 2019 at Barangay Limook, Lamitan City. Provincial Manager Marylene Lojera discussed the new role of the agency. The NFA visited a farm in Barangay Tabiawan and Barangay Buracan on April 5, 2019. During the visit, Ugnayan was held to discuss the procurement services of NFA and its buying price.



**NFA-NCR-South District Office** held its first Ugnayan with accredited retailers. The retailers were apprised on the various policies of the food agency. The meeting was presided by Assistant Provincial Manager Alfredo Ocampo on behalf of Provincial Manager Armando Ray Villacorta, PISO Gil Jaurigue, Chief of Distribution Section Jess Manesca, and SEIO Dennis Lucman.

*Correspondents:* **Pat Espinosa Alejandria, Olma Marie M. Bayno, Joy Niña L. Bernido, Criselda P. Bersamin, Maezle M. Ferrer, Mary Christie M. Hari-on, Miraquel D. Hernandez, Camilo Kebite Jr., Rayhana M. Mambuay, Ruby Jean C. Pambid, Jennifer C. Paraton, Jella Mae L. Salvador, Lenona Lenette M. Tahupis, Jean Ann Ticman, Martha Trujillo, and Rex Francis G. Zantua.**



**Lanao del Norte** Officer-in-Charge Sambitory O. Dimaporo and Provincial Standards and Quality Assurance Officer Roliedan T. Paulo appealed to 46 farmers at Bgy. Raw-an, Lala, Lanao del Norte last February 27, 2019 to deliver their palay produce to NFA during an Ugnayan with them.



# NFA supports DepEd's Brigada Eskwela

The NFA supported and joined this year's Brigada Eskwela of the Department of Education (DepEd). With the theme *"Matatag na Bayan para sa Maunlad na Paaralan"*, Brigada Eskwela aims to bring together all education stakeholders to participate and contribute their time, effort, and resources to prepare public school facilities for the opening of the school year in June. The activities were held on May 20 - 25 in various schools nationwide. Here's a look at NFA's participation in the program.

NFA **Region I** Regional Director Jaime Hadlocon, Assistant Regional Director Chona Brijuaga and Regional Administrative Officer (RAO) Frederick Dulay visited Bacnotan Central Elementary School headed by Principal III Cristeta A. Badua. The group handed over cash donation to the school in support of Brigada Eskwela. Employees of **Ilocos Sur** contributed their time and effort for the said activity at the Bantay East Central School.



Provincial Manager Cecilia A. Concubierto of NFA **Benguet** together with GRECON stakeholders headed by Mr. Nicolas Medrano Jr. joined forces to support the 2019 Brigada Eskwela in three Baguio City schools, namely: Mil-An National High School, Loakan Elementary School, and Quezon Hill Elementary School. Last January 8, Manager Concubierto received a plaque of appreciation from Mr. Whitney A. Dawayen, the school principal of Mil-An National High School during their 9th founding anniversary celebration after NFA's participation during last year's Brigada Eskwela.



**Bulacan** employees, led by Provincial Manager Elvira Obaña and Assistant Provincial Manager Ed Camua, helped in cleaning the surroundings of Malolos Marine Fishery School and Tikay Elementary School.



The employees of NFA **Marinduque** headed by Provincial Manager Gerard V. Lim handed over cleaning and painting materials to the teaching personnel of Boac South Central School in Laylay, Boac, Marinduque on May 22, 2019. The donation served as the agency's commitment to the program in promoting better education through a conducive learning environment.



**Albay** provincial and regional office employees helped in preparing the surroundings of Anislag National High School.



Regional Director Procopio B. Trabajo II and staff helped in cleaning the classrooms and surroundings of San Roque Elementary School, a campus within Barangay San Roque, **Zamboanga City** where the NFA office is situated. Out of the voluntary contribution from the employees, the NFA was able to turnover dust pans, trash bins and brooms to the school. RD Trabajo handed to teacher-in-charge, Rorie L. Fernando cash for their other needs.



NFA **Zamboanga Sibugay** joined the kick off activity at Titay Elementary School followed with clean-up activities. PM Umisalam D. Sarip of NFA **Zamboanga del Norte** and staff participated at the Gulayon Elementary School last May 24.

NFA **Zamboanga City** Provincial Manager Elimar C. Regindin and staff were also active during the school maintenance week and shared financial assistance to another six schools in the city namely: Upper Pasonanca Elementary School (ES), Taluksangay ES, Ayala National High School (NHS), Sinunuc NHS and Don Pablo NHS. At San Roque NHS, they donated floor wax and rags after the community service.



NFA **Regional Office XII** headed by Assistant Regional Director Arthur A. Aller and NFA Cotabato Provincial Office headed by Provincial Manager Teresa V. Herrera participated in the Brigada Eskwela kick off activities held in **Tacurong City** and **Kidapawan City** last May 24 and 29, 2019, respectively.

Employees set aside their usual work and allotted one day to help in cleaning the surroundings of Tacurong Pilot Elementary School and Singao Integrated School in Kidapawan City on separate occasions as their way of carrying out NFA's corporate social responsibility.

Prior to the Brigada Eskwela activities, some NFA employees and off duty guards worked in cleaning the canals along Del Pilar Street (fronting SPCG compound) as early as 5:00 in the morning during the simultaneous "Balik Skwela Limpyo Kalog 2019" of the City Government of Tacurong to ensure a clean, safe and mosquito-free environment.



NFA **Tawi-Tawi** chose MSU - CHILDS as the recipient school for this year's Brigada Eskwela. Aside from participating in the beautification and cleaning activities, the Provincial Office headed by Provincial Manager Lydia Arsad, pooled their resources and donated ceiling fans and linoleum carpet for the prayer rooms of the school, and two bags of NFA rice for their charity drive for the observance of Ramadhan. These were handed over to school principal Almira A. Hadji.



The volunteers of NFA **Basilan** Provincial Office actively joined the different activities held at Baluno National High School by cleaning the school ground and painting of school walls that will help beautify the school.

Joining DepEd's Brigada Eskwela every year has been one of NFA's regular activities at the start of the school year.



*Correspondents:* Jennifer C. Paraton, Sherryl Polo, Margarette F. Ridad, Sonny Rey Rivera, and Facebook posts of Manager Elvira Obaña, NFA Albay, Basilan, Marinduque, and Tawi-Tawi.



# Refresher course for classifiers

The NFA regularly conducts refresher course to prepare its pool of classifiers on palay classification, quality assurance and quality control particularly during procurement season.

**Region I**, in coordination with Technical Research Services Department (TRSD) Central Office, conducted Quality Assurance Officer's Pool Training and Refresher Course on Grains Classification, Quality Assurance and Control on April 22-24, 2019 for the first batch and April 25-27, 2019 for the second batch. The training was conducted since most of the members of the QA Pool in the region have been promoted, transferred and some were already separated from the service. This is also in anticipation of an influx of paddy deliveries as a result of the passing of RA 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law. Mr. Rolando



B. Gomez, Division Chief of TRSD-QAD was the trainer for the duration of the training program. A total of 75 participants successfully passed

the training which was determined through the administration of post-test and practical examination.



**Eastern Pangasinan.** Provincial Standard Quality Assurance Officer (PSQAO) Shoreen Manglinong (2nd from right) shows classifiers how palay are classified during a refresher course held last February 21.

**San Jose, Occidental Mindoro.** PSQAO Celna M. Valera (standing, 1st row, second from right) conducted Refresher Course on grains classification and quality assurance last March 6, 2019 among classifiers of Occidental Mindoro. As per instruction of NFA Batangas, Regional office, all PSQAOs were required to hold a refresher course in the region.







**Negros Oriental.** Cash Clerk Kim Prestin (right, in black shirt) taking samples from the palay being dried at the drying area in Bayawan City as she does an actual job as classifier at the procurement area. Currently, there are eight pool members and four are constantly utilized. They are: Truck Driver Russell Ozoa, Accounts Analyst Mario Echin, Cash Clerk Kim Prestin, and Clerk III Lilibeth Bohol. All of them expressed their gratitude for the field exposures because they said there is a huge difference between classifying a few grams of palay during the trainings and classifying several bags of it at the procurement area.

**Region 8.** Mr. Rolando B. Gomez from the NFA Central Office (in black t-shirt), imparting his expertise during a field visit at the NFA Alangalang Warehouse right before the closing ceremony of the NFA Classifiers' Pool Training and Refresher Course held at the NFA RO8 Training Center, Pawing, Palo, Leyte.



**Region XI.** Regional Director Dianne A. Silva (middle, wearing green polo shirt) and participants composed of Quality Assurance Officers, Warehouse Supervisors/Handlers and other accountable officers of the 2-day Refresher Course during the actual demonstration of staircase piling in Magdum Warehouse, NFA Tagum.

The course was participated in by warehouse supervisors, quality assurance officers and warehouse handlers from NFA **Davao City, Davao del Norte, Compostela Valley** and **Davao Oriental** provincial offices.

**Region XII.** Participants of the Classifier's Pool in Region XII pose with Regional Director Dianne A. Silva (center) together with (1st row, L-R) PSQAO Edgar Fuentebella, Provincial Manager Jasmin Lintag of South Cotabato, Provincial Manager Lucille P. Taypin of Sultan Kudarat, RSQAO Yvonne A. Cahucom, PSQAO Cherrybeth B. Gevero and ROO Richard L. Balbin.



**Correspondents:** Cheryl Anya C. Bughao, Maezle M. Ferrer, Camilo C. Kebite Jr., Jerome Osano, Sherryl V. Polo, Sonny Rey Rivera, Sheilabelle F. Sembrano, and Jean Ann Ticman.



## Pamulinawen Festival

Employees from NFA Laoag participated in the traditional Civic-Military Parade during the Laoag City's Pamulinawen Festival held last February 1. The festival is celebrated in honor of the feast day of St. William the Hermit, the patron Saint of Laoag City. The Pamulinawen Festival features parades, beauty pageants, dances, sports competitions, stage plays, zarzuela, among others. **(RUBY JEAN C. PAMBID, correspondent)**



## National Simultaneous Earthquake Drill (NSED)

The NFA Ilocos Norte, in coordination with the Laoag City Bureau of Fire Protection, participated in the 2nd Quarter National Simultaneous Earthquake Drill (NSED) held last June 20, 2019. The drill was spearheaded by the City Fire Marshall Insp. Roxanne S. Parado. **(RUBY JEAN C. PAMBID)**



## NFA Rolling Store rolls to Buhi

With the onslaught of Tropical Depression Usman before the year 2018 ended, the municipality of Buhi was one of the municipalities in Camarines Sur which was severely affected by flooding. The continuous heavy rains triggered the Buhi Lake to overflow causing floodwater to reach at least three feet deep to as high as some rooftops in the barangays of San Buena, San Pedro and San Pascual. Many residents were caught offguard as flooding was not usual in the municipality.

To aid in their rehabilitation efforts, the NFA Camarines Sur deployed its Rolling Store in Buhi last January 4, 2019. It was manned by TD Edilberto G. Magno, TD Ariel Joel V. Nuñez and UW Rogelio B. Bolo. At least 50 bags of quality and affordable NFA rice were sold to the residents who patiently lined up under the scorching heat of the midday sun. **(CAREN S. ARRIOLA, correspondent)**



## NFA Capiz recognized

The NFA Capiz Provincial Office, represented by Asst. Provincial Manager Aurelio Villasis and Provincial Industry Services Officer (PISO) Edna Artates, was recognized by the Pontevedra People's MPC (PVDCI) in Capiz during the 29th Annual General Assembly last March 16, 2019 at Pontevedra, Capiz.

The PVDCI, with more than 1,800 members, was organized by prominent stakeholders to respond to many business opportunities to help the public and its members. In 2015, the PVDCI engaged in grains business and sold palay to NFA Capiz Bolo Warehouse. Mr. Kenneth Cortes, chairman of the Board and Ms. Rowena dela Cruz, manager of the Cooperative are grateful for NFA's existence in giving support to farmers particularly NFA's Cooperative Development Incentive Fee (CDIF) offered to cooperatives. They also recognized NFA's efforts of buying palay higher so rice farmers can get a good return of their investment. **(Mary Christie Hari-on, correspondent)**





## DA's launching of Mani Program in Western Visayas

NFA Capiz Provincial Manager Jose Mario Adan Pacificador and PISO Edna Artates brought 10 farmer-leaders from Capiz to witness the launching of Machinery for Agricultural Needs Incentive (MANI) Program at Western Visayas Agricultural Center in Iloilo City last April 25, 2019.

MANI Program is a partnership between National Food Authority and Department of Agriculture. This program aims to encourage farmer associations to sell their palay produce to NFA, to enhance their income by using the machineries provided, to increase the rice buffer stock intended for calamities and emergencies and ensure food security within the region.

DA Secretary Emmanuel Piñol encouraged farmers to continue planting rice where the government's grant of farm machineries under the MANI program depends on the volume of palay sold to NFA.



Incentive machineries included in the grant are granule applicator, floating tiller, hand tractor, pump and engine set, rice reaper, rice transplanter (walk-behind and riding type), rice mill, combine harvester and solar-powered irrigation system. **(Mary Christie M. Hari-on, correspondent)**

## NFA Iloilo donates goods to IP community

Provincial Information Officer Pat Espinosa Alejandria and Grains Operations Assistant (GOA) II Florence Robinson went to Brgy. Trangka, Maasin as representatives of NFA Iloilo during the relief distribution project of an international organization last February 09, 2019.



The team set out another challenging journey as they headed to the farthest barangay of Maasin together with Mayor Mariano Malones and the rest of the SB Members. The team distributed the remaining goods and clothes donated by Iloilo Employees. IO Espinosa had a dialogue with Mayor Malones and the indigenous peoples (IP) representative Venjie Medianero about plans to set up an NFA outlet at the area for it will be very beneficial to the residents as they won't have any problems as regards the availability of cheap rice. Palay procurement activities of the agency were further discussed and farmers were urged to sell their produce to NFA.

Brgy. Trangka, Maasin is the farthest barangay of the municipality bordering Janiuay and the province of Antique. Trangka is colloquially called "Dyes para Langit" due to its topography. The area is about 18kms from the town proper and going there requires patience for it is an uphill climb on an unpaved road. Single-motorcycle one-way fare from town to the area costs about 200php per person. **(PAT ESPINOSA ALEJANDRIA, correspondent)**

## Briefing on good warehouse keeping and stocks preservation

About 20 participants composed of the staff and personnel of DSWD Visayas Disaster Resource Center (VDRC) attended the briefing on good warehouse-keeping and stocks preservation on February 21, 2019 facilitated by NFA Regional Office VII. As partner agency of DSWD in providing steadfast service to the Filipino people, NFA Region VII headed by Regional Director Fernando S. Nuñez and Assistant Regional Director Bobot D. Alojado Jr. accommodated the request of DSWD to hold the orientation. The activity aimed to enhance the skills and knowledge of the participants on the fundamental standards of good warehouse management. The attendees are directly involved in the production of DSWD family food packs and warehousing of food and non-food commodities.

As the first resource person, Regional Operations Officer Cheryl R. Delfino discussed the ten fundamentals of good warehouse-keeping. Meanwhile, Regional Engineer Ovelito C. Baritua delved on the observance

of the proper piling system and proper maintenance of storage structure. Regional Standards and Quality Assurance Officer Nestor T. Alcaarez talked about the NFA Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies in grains quality preservation.

In her closing remarks, Disaster Response Management Division Chief Josephine C. Belotindos extended her appreciation to NFA ROVII, particularly to RD Nuñez, for unselfishly and wholeheartedly allowing their request. She also thanked all the employees and staff for the warm accommodation afforded to the group. **(OLMA MARIE M. BAYNO, correspondent)**





## NFA Cebu joins nationwide simultaneous flag raising ceremony

OIC Regional Director Bobot Alojado Jr. and Provincial Manager Ma. Belen B. Barbanida, led employees of NFA Cebu in joining the nationwide simultaneous flag raising ceremony in observance of the 121st National Flag Day last May 28. The National Flag Day commemorates the day when the Philippine flag was first raised after the victory in the Battle of Alapan in 1898. NFA Cebu's celebration was marked by the raising of the national flag followed by the recitation of the "Pagpupugay: A salute to a clean flag manifesto". To better appreciate the significance of the occasion, the employees assembled at the training center for a short lecture on the historical facts about Philippine National Flag. **(OLMA MARIE M. BAYNO, correspondent)**



## Summer Buko Fest

OIC Regional Director Bobot Alojado Jr. (5th from right) supports the launching ceremony of the "Summer Buko Fest" spearheaded by the Department of Agriculture and the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) in Region 7. The festival aims to expand the market for "Buko" and provide an alternative source of income for coconut farmers who have suffered from very low prices of copra in recent months.

According to PCA-7 Director Joel O. Pilapil (6th from right), the Buko Fest was conceptualized following the directives of Secretary Manny Piñol urging offices and agencies under DA to serve coconut water along with other fruit juices during meetings. **(OLMA MARIE M. BAYNO)**



## Renovated building re-opens in Region 8

NFA Regional Office 8 and Leyte Provincial Office held the blessing of their newly-renovated workstations on June 11, 2019 with no less than NFA OIC Administrator Tomas R. Escarez as the guest of honor. RD Raymond U. Tafalla, RD John Robert R. Hermano, ARD Lolita V. Paz, PM Zaldy C. Tan of Leyte, PM Martina O. Lodero of N. Samar, PM Lynn Socorro D. Cinco of E. Samar, PM Ma. Rosario G. Cadiz of Biliran, OIC Redentor E. Arciaga of S. Leyte, Executive Assistant Richie Carpio, former PM of Leyte, Marla E. Santos, COA State Auditor IV Nelida Opena and employees of Region 8 also witnessed the said memorable event.

The day started with a Thanksgiving mass officiated by Rev. Fr. Irwin Gavilo, followed by the ribbon-cutting ceremony and the unveiling of the bronze marker. A short program capped the morning, with OIC Escarez answering questions and shedding light to concerns regarding the agency's restructuring now awaiting GCG's review and approval. The good OIC reassured all attendees that the NFA management is doing everything to protect the welfare of the employees. He encouraged the group to



stay positive and to continue to carry-out their functions with utmost diligence and determination.

It can be remembered that the NFA RO8/Leyte P.O. building withstood the wrath of Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) which devastated Eastern Visayas last 2013. However, after a series of quakes and typhoons, the management recommended for its retrofitting/renovation last year. Construction commenced on April 11, 2018 and was completed on April 05, 2019. **(ELLA VIRCELLE E. EGUILLOS, correspondent)**



## Doing small things with great love

In the morning of January 27, 2019, two bombs exploded at the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu. Twenty (20) people were killed while 102 others were injured. It is believed that the attacks were carried out by the Abu Sayyaf with the Islamic State claiming responsibility for the act. President Rodrigo R. Duterte responded by issuing an “all out war” directive against the perpetrators. The bombings were widely condemned by Muslims here and from other countries.

As Jolo is only a small town with few hospitals and limited medical teams and rescuers, the victims were later rushed to Zamboanga City, the city nearest to Sulu, where medical services and modern facilities are available.

NFA Sulu Clerk III Rhina N. Ebrahim, a registered nurse and assigned at NFA Regional Office in Region IX, has a deep concern for the constituents of Sulu. When she heard of the news that the victims were to be transferred to Zamboanga City that same evening, she immediately hurried to the city wharf and helped in providing first aid treatment to the injured. When the commercial vessel arrived in Zamboanga City carrying large number of victims, she continued to assist voluntarily until the patients were transferred to different hospitals in Zamboanga City for further medical treatment.

Her unselfish service and love for others is worth emulating especially in an organization whose mandate is to serve the people during calamities. It is always in the heart of every NFA employee to respond to the needs of their constituents at any given time and situation. **(MARGARETTE F. RIDAD, correspondent)**



*Clerk III Rhina N. Ebrahim, Registered Nurse now detailed at the Regional Office IX.*



*Ms. Ebrahim with the medical staff on board MV Mary Joy II*

## Veggie gardening

Employees of NFA Surigao del Sur plotting the soil and planting vegetable seeds inside the NFA compound. This proves that NFA Surigao del Sur could also be a home of beautiful plants and vegetable gardens in addition to the warehouses and other facilities inside its compound. **(NEIL ANTHONY T. MORALA, correspondent)**



## National Flag Day commemoration

The National Food Authority joined other government offices, business establishments, and schools in commemorating the date when our national emblem was first unfurled after the Filipino revolutionaries led by Gen. Emilio F. Aguinaldo defeated the Spanish forces in the Battle at Alapan, Imus, Cavite on May 28, 1898.

Last May 28, the 15-day observance of the National Flag Days started culminating on June 12, the day we celebrate the Philippine Independence Day, pursuant to Republic Act No. 8491 or the “Flag and Heraldic Code of the Philippines.”

NFA Region 10 participated in symbolizing the esteemed reverence and love for the Philippine flag and our country.

The flag was hoisted with pride to rekindle our fervor for our national sovereignty and independence. We commit ourselves in the spirit of solidarity on nationalism and patriotism with utmost respect to our beloved forebears who fought foreign invaders and colonizers.

We continue to fight all signs of impure proclivities that dilute public service and the interests that the Philippine Flag embraces and symbolizes.

**Mabuhay ang NFA! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!**



## NFA Mindanao braces for restructuring

In connection with the ongoing restructuring of the NFA as a result of the approval of RA No. 11203, regional directors, provincial managers, regional administrative officers, regional accountants, and NFA employees association (NFAEA) regional presidents/representatives from regions 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 & 15 gathered at the NFA Regional Office 10 Training Center for a Mindanao-wide Consultative Meeting and Workshop. It was participated in by the Change Management Team (CMT) headed by Deputy Administrator for Marketing Operations Maria Mercedes Guerra Yacapin; Acting Assistant Administrator for Finance & Administration Gerry Ambrosio; Atty Ma. Theresa S. Villafuerte, director for Legal Affairs; Isabel de Vera, chief of HRMD-MSDD; and Angeli Buclatin, HRMD-HRD Assistant.

Deputy Yacapin appealed to the employees to trust the process that the CMT is doing. The outputs of the workshop should be logical, considering the acquisition-maintenance-sales parameter, geographical location, and historical data of procurement. "Let's work on this with open hearts and minds so that we will survive," Deputy Yacapin said.

Each region was made to present the results of their discussion and evaluation on operational activities and needed positions if the NFA's function will be limited only to buffer stocking. **(HAZEL B. BELACHO, correspondent)**



RD Nuñez and members of the CMT headed by Dep. Yacapin (extreme right) and Ms. De Vera of HRMD and Atty. Villafuerte of LAD (center)



Participants during the workshop composed mostly of employees from regions 9 to 12, 14 and 15

## NFA-LDN enhances actual workplace skills of SHS students



NFA-LDN Officer-in-Charge Sambitory O. Dimaporo with the SHS students from Iligan City National High School and Iligan Capitol College

The National Food Authority (NFA) Lanao Del Norte Provincial Office accepted 10 students from Iligan City National High School (ICNHS) and Iligan Capitol College (ICC) under the Senior High School Department to have their immersion in the agency.

Through the immersion, NFA will be giving the students opportunities to integrate and enhance the theories and skills that they have learned from school. They will be exposed to the different services of the food agency.

As defined by the Department of Education (DepEd) under Order No. 40, series of 2015: "Work immersion refers to the part of the Senior High School (SHS) Curriculum consisting of 80 hours of hands-on experience or work simulation which the Grades 11 and 12 students will undergo to expose them to the actual workplace setting and to enrich the competencies provided by the

school under the supervision of the School Head and the designated personnel of the Partner."

Immersion coordinators Jasmin B. Almonia and Aquizah Dumarpa of ICC believe in the quality of work and services that the NFA-LDN could provide to the students to have their skills enhanced.

"My students will gain meaningful learning experience with one of the most important sectors in the country," Melvin Magsayo, ICNHS class adviser said. **(LENONA LENETTE TAHUPIS, correspondent)**

## Warehouse visit

RD Genaro S. Nunez Jr., who is a Mechanical Engineer himself, explains the mechanics of full operation of a dryer during his visit at the NFA Lala GID warehouse in Lanao del Norte. **(HAZEL B. BELACHO)**





## Coordination Meeting

The National Food Authority executives in Mindanao met with the Department of Agriculture in a coordination meeting held at Apo View Hotel, Davao City recently. In photo is Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol (front row, middle) with (front row, from left) Assistant Administrator for Marketing Operations Rex C. Estoperez, Agriculture Undersecretary Ariel T. Cayanan, Deputy Administrator for Marketing Operations Maria Mercedes G. Yacapin, Deputy Administrator for Finance and NFA OIC Administrator Tomas R. Escarez,



NFA Regional Directors Dianne A. Silva and Edna R. de Guzman. The said activity was participated in by DA Regional Executive Directors, representatives from PhilMech, PhilRice, ATI and other DA bureaus

and attached agencies and corporations wherein coordinative strategies for the rice industry were discussed in preparation for RA 11203. **(CHERYL ANYA C. BUGHAO, correspondent)**

## NFA Davao City joins DA's Biyaheng Bukid

The NFA Davao City Provincial Office, spearheaded by Manager Leonila V. Selpa, participated in the Department of Agriculture's *Biyaheng Bukid* in the Island Garden City of Samal (IGACOS).

The NFA was invited by Regional Executive Director Ricardo Onate for the reactivation of the Barangay Food Terminals (BFT) in Barangays Tamugan and Cadalian, IGACOS.

The BFTs were reactivated as one of the pro-poor programs partnered with the Department of Agriculture where consumers can have an access to the P27.00/kg NFA rice.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol met with farmers and fisher folks in IGACOS through the *Biyaheng*

*Bukid* program and vowed to download P30 million loan under the Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) Program.

PLEA program is "a special credit facility designed to address the financial needs of marginal and small farmers and fishermen for a fast, convenient and affordable credit."

*Biyaheng Bukid* is a DA program chronicling the journey of Sec. Piñol as he travels to remote areas of the country to hear the call of farmers and fisher folks and find ways on how to address their needs.

During the event, Manager Selpa had a brief meeting and exchange of views with the Secretary.

Sec. Piñol expressed his gratitude for the involvement of NFA even in such short notice. **(CM LAPE-CASTRO, correspondent)**

## Looking into the "Silver Lining" during rice shortage

The rice shortage was a dark experience in the province of Basilan. It started first week of August when the price of commercial rice started to increase because of the shortage of rice supplies coming from Malaysia and the neighboring provinces in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

Basilan is a rice-deficit area because our rice supplies depend on the importation via Sandakan, Malaysia. When the Malaysian government imposed stricter restrictions on rice exports to our country, this resulted to a sudden depletion of rice stocks throughout the province.

Amidst the crisis, NFA Basilan Provincial Office served as the "silver lining" as it continued to serve the public by ensuring that rice as our basic staple is always available, accessible and affordable to the people in our area of responsibility through our accredited retailers and various programs such as the Tagpuan Day Rice Response Delivery (TRRD) and Bigasan sa NFA Compound and in coordination with our Local Government Unit, ARMM-HEART and other partner agencies.

The public strongly felt the presence of NFA through our continuous effort in mitigating the effects of rice shortage by ensuring that the cheap good quality NFA rice is visible to our consumers. **(JELLA MAE L. SALVADOR, correspondent)**



*Bigasan sa NFA Basilan compound in coordination with Basilan GRECON.*



*Through Tagpuan Day Rice Response Delivery, NFA rice reached the island barangays of Isabela City, Basilan with the support of DSWD in identifying the Indigenous People as the beneficiaries.*



# Transfer of LEADERSHIP



Regional Director Mario M. Gonzales turns over the key of responsibilities to Assistant Regional Director Miguel S. Tecson as Officer-in-Charge-Regional Director of Region IV. The turnover ceremony was witnessed by OIC-Administrator Tomas R. Escarez, Deputy Administrator Maria Mercedes G. Yacapin, Asst. Administrator Gerry Ambrosio, HRMD Director Anna Karina A. Coronel, BTFMD Director Linda Balderas and Accounting Director Evelyn Barroga. **(CHEL INFANTADO, correspondent))**

RD Edna de Guzman (center) witnesses ARD Beverlyn P. Peralta (left) while accepting the key of responsibility from outgoing ARD Chona E. Brijuega (right) during a turnover ceremony at NFA Caraga Regional Office in Butuan City. **(AMIELOU JANE GALOS-MENDOZA, correspondent)**



Outgoing NFA Provincial Manager Jasmin C. Lintag (right) turns over the symbolic key of responsibility to incoming Officer in Charge of NFA South Cotabato Nelson P. Sañada (left) in simple rites held at NFA South Cotabato Provincial Office on June 20, 2019.



Asst. Reg'l Director and concurrent Prov'l Manager of NFA Zamboanga del Norte Ruben M. Manatad (leftmost) turns over the key of responsibility to incoming Provincial Manager Umisalam D. Sarip (rightmost) formerly assigned at NFA Jolo, Sulu. Witnessing are NFA-IX Regional Director, Engr. Genaro S. Nuñez, Jr. (2nd from left) and NFA-XIV Regional Director, Dr. Kitem P. Kadatuan (3rd from left). (JOY NIÑA L. BERNIDO, correspondent)



Turnover of responsibility of concurrent Regional Director and Provincial Manager of Maguindanao Kitem P. Kadatuan to Provincial Manager Rosita Machutes on June 19, 2019 at NFA Maguindanao provincial office, Cotabato City.



RD Edna de Guzman (second from right) accepts the symbolic key of responsibility of heading NFA Caraga from RD Lemuel R. Pagayunan who was assigned to head Region 6. Dep. Administrator Dansal graced the occasion. (AMIELOU JANE GALOS-MENDOZA, correspondent)



After the RMC meeting, the Turn-over Ceremony of the symbolic key of responsibility between outgoing Regional Director John Robert R. Hermano who will be reassigned to NFA Region 6, and incoming Acting Regional Director Raymond U. Tafalla was held last January 11, 2019 at Seafood & Ribs Warehouse, Pawing, Palo. Subsequently, ARD Raymond U. Tafalla turned over his responsibilities to incoming Acting Asst. Regional Director Lolita V. Paz. Such movements were pursuant to Special Order AO-2K19-01-004 dated January 09, 2019 signed by NFA OIC Administrator Tomas R. Escarez. (ELLA VIRCELLE E. EGUILLOS, correspondent)



# HOW RA 11203 TRANSFORMED NFA

By REBECCA C. OLARTE



When I was hired as PR assistant at NFA a few decades ago, I knew I was joining the biggest and farthest-reaching government office across the country, with 13 regional offices, 85 provincial offices, 18 or so Central Office departments and offices, four subsidiaries, numerous warehouses and post-harvest facilities, Kadiwa Centers, etc. It was the heyday of NFA: income was assured from monopoly of wheat and flour importation and distribution; the country was exporting excess rice; the local rice industry was thriving. For the farmers, NFA was a ready market for their produce, at a reasonable support price, with incentives and assistance in training, entrepreneurship, cooperative development, and self-growth. For the businessmen, NFA was an institutional ally, a partner that helps them grow, and thrive in the business under a fair and healthy collaboration instead of unwieldy competition. For the consumers, NFA was the anchor of food security, the institution that ensures there is available, affordable, accessible, and safe rice for all at all times.

In those days, everybody involved in the rice industry was happy, growing, thriving -- NFA employees included.

For a fresh graduate joining the corporate world, the prospect of getting immersed in such a wide range of corporate functions and services offered an endless vista of opportunities. My first major writing assignment was putting flesh to the publication "The First Decade", chronicling in pictures, graphics and text the National Grains Authority's radical beginnings, its steady trajectory towards successive firsts, dizzying expansion, and a reputable standard of public service during its first 10 years of existence.

To an outsider getting in, the tedious research, long hours in the library (no computers nor internet yet) and leafing through mounds of publications was educational: NGA/NFA is an organization worthy of its place among the best in Asia, with its unique corporate culture of excellence and quality public

service deserved by every Filipino; a corporate family that encourages personal growth and promotes mutual concern for one another much like a biological family.

The main reason the National Grains Authority (NGA) was created on September 26, 1972 was "to put order to a chaotic grains industry and promote its growth and development." With much success on its original mandate, NGA was later renamed National Food Authority (NFA) effective January 14, 1981, its scope of coverage expanded to include all other food commodities, its mandate is to serve as guardian of national food security and to stabilize the price and supply of food, particularly rice, the basic staple of Filipinos.

Forty-six years later, RA 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law will change all that -- in ways never imagined -- as changes in-between essentially retained NFA's original mandate.

The timing, too, couldn't have been more dramatic: Valentine's Day of 2019 was the day RA 11203 was signed into law, breaking the hearts of millions of farmers, small grains businessmen and consumers who tried their best to argue against that move via a series of protest actions.

As the law took effect on March 5, 2019, its self-executing provisions had to be implemented. Among these are the repeal of NFA's regulatory functions:



*It used to be called the Public Affairs Office (PAO) where there were more than 100 staff in its stable. It was renamed Directorate for Public Affairs and later as Dept for Public Affairs. Public Affairs Dept now has 14 personnel .*



registration, licensing and supervision of persons/entities engaged in the rice business; the capacity to incur loans/borrowings, as a government corporation, to effectively implement its governmental and social functions; monitoring and supervision of rice and corn businesses to generate industry information necessary for policy and decision-making; monitoring the grains business; enforcement of grains trading rules and regulations; establishment of rules and regulations for the importation and exportation of rice and corn; and the authority to import rice for food security buffer stocks.

From a mammoth agency with nationwide network of offices and facilities, NFA after RA11203, has been reduced into a simple buffer stocking agency, with domestic operations limited to palay procurement, buffer stocking, and supplying the rice needs of relief agencies and local government units (LGUs) during calamities and emergencies.

No matter how painful, NFA has to follow the law. ***Dura lex, sed lex.*** The law is harsh but it is the law, and it has to be followed.

How RA11203 will ultimately transform NFA is still a work in progress (as of this writing) as the agency was still awaiting the final restructuring guidelines from the GCG. Initially approved was the new NFA Organizational Structure with Restructured Personnel Complement (RPC) retaining the current 15 regional offices but cutting down the 86 provincial offices to 45 branch offices and the 18 Central Office Departments to 6. As a consequence, personnel complement will also be reduced, unknown yet by how much.

The bottom-line: NFA shall become a lean and mean organization, with just the right structure and personnel complement to suit its new mandate of buffer stocking with financial stability.

Meanwhile, a few months after the removal of NFA's regulatory functions over the grains industry, its former stakeholders —farmers, grains businessmen and consumers -- were already complaining.



Farmers decry the nosediving of palay farm-gate prices due to the influx of imported rice.

Thousands of rice businessmen have already closed their mills.

Consumers are still looking for the affordable good quality NFA rice at P27/kg in the markets.

Focusing on its new mandate, NFA had been surpassing procurement targets with its competitive price and incentives. As farm-gate prices dive to P14-P15/kg, NFA continues to aggressively buy palay from farmer coops at as high as P20.70/kilo and individual farmers at a maximum of P20.40/kg for clean and dry palay. By end of the first semester of 2019, NFA already bought almost 6 million bags of palay.

As NFA adjusts to its new role and mandate, those who joined the agency in the '70s and '80s, who have spent the best years of their lives with the agency, are already contemplating retirement, with a much-anticipated compensation package. Those in the middle, and those who were hired much later, can look forward to wider opportunities at self-growth and career development up the corporate ladder.

Under whatever age bracket an incumbent NFA employee may fall, the management assures all will come out happy from this period of change and transformation for the agency.





JUDY CAROL LAYUS DANSAL

# Back for a Mission

By CORA L. ABIO

**SHE'S BACK AND HOW!** And so it was that erstwhile Deputy Administrator for Marketing Operations, **Atty. Judy Carol Layus Dansal** returns to the fold of NFA to become its 20th Administrator.

This is the first time that a retired government employee has resurfaced to occupy the highest post in the agency that she once belonged. This is simply a rarity in the corporate world, at NFA to be specific.

That Lady Luck favoring this woman so much is a given. That she has a good connection at her side is a given. So anything can be possible for this woman of influence. But remember that she was no ordinary employee but a former member of the Executive Committee, occupying the second highest post in the NFA hierarchy.

Remember too, that she's a woman who's got aces up her sleeve or tucked in her belt: a legal background, experience and exposure as a pioneering leader and a pillar of the agency who knows the ins and outs of the industry as well as the whys and wherefores of food security; and her alliance or closeness to the powers-that-be. Yet, at the end of the day, her performance not her connection or this so-called alliance is the one that would really matter or spell the difference. This she would prove in the coming days after swearing her oath of office last June 18, 2019 before former Agriculture Secretary and Chairman of NFA Council Emmanuel F. Piñol as Administrator of NFA and before Executive Secretary Salvador C. Medialdea as Member of the NFA Council.

A trusted friend says Administrator Dansal decided to come back after a six-month hiatus and away from the corporate scene because she feels she still has a mission for NFA. She feels that she could do more – contribute more especially at this time when the agency is reeling from the abject negativism spawned by the signing of Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law with employees (especially those who may be affected) feeling anxious, insecure and afraid perhaps about what the future may bring with the implementation of the Law that is sure to impact on their lives and careers.

Outspoken and determined that she is, Administrator Dansal can carry the cares and concerns of NFA regarding RA 11203 and winning favorable nods at the negotiating table. Her impressive educational background would see her through: outstanding academic performance in both primary and secondary schools; an AB English degree (Cum Laude) earned from the Northern Christian College in 1972 and Bachelor of Laws from the San Beda College in 1976 – plus of course her title as a bar passer on November 1, 1976 – and a lawyer who has just been given a second lease at leadership to defend the agency in future battles for its rightful place in the industry.

Not to brush aside is her 41 years of handling various aspects of NFA's operations since she entered the NFA on March 24, 1977 until she bade goodbye on December 24, 2018 -- starting as special investigator, then as legal officer, to section chief, staff assistant, operations specialist, to higher duties as department manager and deputy administrator. She also had the honor and privilege to become Officer-in-Charge, in concurrent capacity as deputy administrator.



*Adm. Dansal swearing her oath of office before Executive Secretary, Atty. Salvador C. Medialdea of the Office of the President*

Her stern and soft character may well speak for her cool and composed demeanor who brings out the best in her people, according to her former staff at the Office of the Deputy Administrator for Marketing Operations (ODAMO). Various departments and offices where she came from attest to her being a supportive supervisor and whose gentle strictness has proven to be the right combination in managing people and earning their trust and confidence.

Close associates and friends describe her as a strong-willed person but who has a soft heart always going out of her way to extend a helping hand. Despite her ups and downs, she remains unaffected, always showing her calmness, objectivity and good sense of judgment. She may look indifferent or unmoved by feelings or emotions but deep inside she has this mercy and compassion for people and things in a troubled situation – readily offering cure and comfort.

A previous write-up in Grains cites her being eternally grateful to her parents, Dominador Layus and the former Anastacia Flores, for giving her a nice and beautiful name



*With Executive Secretary, Atty. Salvador C. Medialdea*

Judy Carol. Again, she would like to give them a much-deserved tribute through this article for the same reason – like she won't get tired saying it again and again that she's forever indebted to her parents who gave her a lasting legacy, so

to speak – Judy Carol. This positive feeling about her name, perhaps, has rubbed off on her whole being, the reason why she has this sunny disposition in life despite the challenges that have come her way through the years.





*Adm. Dansal and family: sons Mark Harris (married to Janice Costa, with son Marcus) and Hiram Azis (married to Angelica Krystle Lim, with children Iya Therese Anastacia and Jacob Lorenzo); daughter Shiela Anne (married to Jayzar Recinto, with daughter Reese Miakka).*

One challenge is raising her children singlehandedly since 1991 -- two boys, Mark Harris and Hiram Azis and one girl, Sheila Anne as a caring, devoted and proud mother – and now playing her role as doting grandmother to four grandchildren.

It is no wonder why she has that high level of positivism and strength of character despite those seemingly insurmountable odds that she had encountered in life -- and definitely will continue to confront in her lifetime. She said her upbringing as a christian and a God-fearing person has been her great mantle passed on to her by her parents who are deeply involved in the church – most especially that her father is a pastor.

She has been guided by this Bible verse “The FEAR of the Lord is the Source of wisdom” that has been her strength and has created magic as she goes through life. Part of her avowed commitment to stay loyal and faithful to her faith is serving as chairperson of the Church Council of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines (UCCP) based in Claveria, Cagayan since 2014.

Of course, everybody in NFA knows about her passion for target shooting -- a highly competitive and male-dominated sport. But she has taken this as another challenge and has even reaped honors proving equal to that sense of masculine power and pride – and that she fits into this sport quite perfectly with the right attitude and discipline.

Indeed, Administrator Judy Carol L. Dansal has gotten herself really empowered – and is back carrying not just her beautiful name – but a strong promise of great things – as she prepares for a mission for NFA.





TOMAS RAYMUNDO ESCAREZ

# A LEGACY of LEADERSHIP

By CORA L. ABIO

**HE EXUDES PASSION** – in his words – in his deeds. Passion is what makes him effective and efficient – as a leader – as a person. Passion is what propels him to be bold and daring, unafraid and unperturbed amid changes and challenges, power and pressure just so to make a difference in the course of things and people. He has this brand of passion that stirs and inspires people to do much more -- the same passion that has readied him for various roles in life. His is a story of passion that springs from old-fashioned values of family love and solidarity, diligence, hard work and discipline -- a story that tells about how such passion has broken the chains of poverty and delivered life's sweet successes – how such passion has given birth to a brand of leadership all his own – a story that is worth re-telling.

Earning his Bachelor of Arts major in English Literature degree in three years -- Cum Laude – was no mean feat considering the stumbling blocks that he had stepped over to be able to rise to the top. Completing this academic raiment is a Masters in Business Administration.

He has served the National Food Authority on a special designation as officer-in-charge, in concurrent capacity as deputy administrator, at critical times in the history of the agency. Getting the highest post on a full-fledged status may be elusive but having been handpicked to head the government's premier food marketing arm several times -- whenever and wherever there is the so-called exigency and in the best interest of service, means he has what it takes to be the man of the hour – problem solver, go-getter, thinker, decision-maker, fighter (who can give tit for tat in defense of NFA) – and yes, leader -- by all means and measures.

He is not perfect, by his own admission. But he has given his best shot with the resources at hand and has dealt with opportunities, conditions and circumstances confronting the agency the best way he could.

## Humble Beginnings

Born on September 22, 1955 to a poor family, he had tasted real hardships, like a daily eight-to-ten-kilometer walk from home to school in his elementary years in Roxas, Oriental Mindoro; and having to stop schooling after high school because he needed to work in the farm to help his parents till the soil. But he was not one who easily gives up.

He managed to continue his studies by working as a houseboy cum janitor in his alma mater, Divine Word College. Yet, despite this seemingly hapless situation, he was a standout. He was a consistent Dean's Lister, a student leader and managing editor of their school organ at the same time – displaying his leadership qualities and knack for writing that had gained headway through the years.

After graduation, he was offered the position of property custodian of the school earning nine pesos a day. Before long, he was inspired to try his luck at NFA after learning that his officemate applied at the agency. He submitted his application, too, but didn't tell anyone about it, not even to then Provincial Manager Narciso L. Alano to whom he served as “pulot” boy whenever the manager had tennis sessions with officemates or friends. He was interviewed by then administrative head Marites Alberto. Ms. Alberto asked what he knows about NFA. Before facing that interview, he already researched about NFA, memorized by heart the agency's vision and mission as well as studied Presidential Decree No. 4. His application was stamped **highly recommended** by Ms. Alberto.

And so on February 16, 1978, he joined National Grains Authority – as a Job Order assigned at Barcenaga Warehouse in NGA Calapan, Oriental Mindoro. As J.O. for three years, he got himself immersed as a laborer, checker, stocks control officer. He became a regular employee in 1980.







*Dep. Tom and his family with in-laws and grandchildren*

### **Delicate and Crucial**

When he was APM of NFA Occidental Mindoro, they had this Oplan Uranus where they had to undergo a 24-hour operation using all possible means – by land and water. They also had to bear the difficulty of having no electricity as they went about their daily tasks. Once he ordered the purchase of walkie talkies to open and ease communication lines, or to light the airport because an NFA chopper will have emergency landing. He cried during an employee's fatal accident when their "barko" capsized. He mustered all energy and strength leading his group to successfully finish their mission for NFA to share its 90% contribution to Mindoro's rice requirements that time.



### **Finding His Niche**

It was a step-by-step, uphill climb to the realization of his dreams. He made sure to be the best SDO, public relations officer, administrative officer, regional information officer, senior grains operations officer, and assistant provincial manager. There's no stopping, therefore, when he aimed to be among the 86 provincial managers, worked to become one of the 15 assistant regional directors and eventually conquered the regional director post. In-between his field office assignments, he gained familiarity with the central office setting as assistant department manager of the Department of Marketing Operations, department manager of the Department of Public Affairs and Internal Audit Department paving the way to higher echelon in the NFA hierarchy. He was promoted to Assistant Administrator, then as Deputy Administrator and, of course, Officer-in-Charge of NFA as special designation.

He didn't take any position that he never knew. He has always prepared for it and has taken every bit of challenge to learn and be empowered – including not letting himself to be left out in various office occasions when he has to sing, dance, crack jokes, or simply to be dressed to the nines. Attending a finishing school on speech and personality development has been part of keeping up and coping with the needs and calls of times.



*Dep. Tom and staff*

### **Firm and Frank**

His outstanding and effective leadership had won him honors which are a manifestation of the employees' appreciation and satisfaction with his management style that is firm and frank but people-oriented. He takes care of his employees, weighs things before making any decision, can be very serious, at times having flare-ups but easily and humbly owning up to mistakes if need be, disciplinarian but can whip up humor or punchline that can be very funny. One thing is sure though: he inspires and motivates people placing his trust and confidence in them.

His being a former regional chairman and national vice president of the NFA Employees Association from 1988 to 1990 has been instrumental in developing his leadership skills.



## High and Low

He said he will know his greatest achievement at deathbed. By then he will have his moment of introspection, measure one by one the things he had done and those he didn't try doing. One thing he assures: he will have to count what he considers as his greatest rewards in life: a successful family, satisfied clients and happy NFA employees.

Emasculating NFA through Republic Act 11203 is his biggest frustration – one low moment that really saddens not only him, not only the majority of the NFA community but a great part of the food industry as well. Even then, he considers his stay at NFA as very fulfilling. He said that if he would play his life all over again, he would choose his life at NFA as one big part of that life that he wants a replay -- the reason why he only has the best wishes for the agency – for it to become successful and attain financial viability even after the implementation of the rice liberalization law.

## Way to Success

He said: he who wants to succeed should learn to fight, to strive and to suffer. He offers this advice: success is using one's time wisely and prudently, having focus and the willpower to make things happen. He did exactly just that -- and succeeded. And aside from his family and NFA, he attributes part of this success to his former bosses as mentor, role model and influencer who had shown him the way to be the best that he can be.

At 63 and 39 years in the government service, he said he is ready to leave NFA, but wants to stay just a few months more to help in the ongoing reorganization and transition process and make sure employees get a fair and just reward for whatever their decisions are.

## Getting More Active

Life after NFA would mean spending more time with family – his wife, the former Priselda Aldea, who has been very supportive of her husband all these years; and six children who are all successful in their respective careers – eldest Mark is a nurse; second is Ryan who works in a cruise; James is third, a biochemist; Vincent, fourth – a licensed interior designer; 5th is only daughter, Florence Anne who works as an industrial designer with a German company but also into part time modeling; the youngest, Mark Joseph is taking up pre-law at San Beda College.

He will definitely remain a family man, sharing in the household chores: doing the laundry, cleaning the house, ironing clothes, preparing meals, etc. giving his wife the “prinsesa” treatment that she deserves, according to him.

He will play tennis more, spend great hours on his passion for reading and writing, and tend his one-hectare farm that he always loves doing.

Indeed, nothing would stop Deputy Administrator for Finance and Administration Tomas R. Escarez, from his norms and routine and the things that would make his mind and heart ever active. A leader never stops working -- he continues weaving dreams.



From left to right: Mark Andrew, Ryan Adrian, Deputy Tom and Ma'am Priselda, James Albert, Neil Vincent and Joseph Angelo. At center is Florence Anne.



## FEATURES

MARIA MERCEDES GUERRA YACAPIN

# People's Person

By CORA L. ABIO

**PEOPLE'S PERSON** – a title so encompassing – bestowed on the one who deserves it. Deputy Administrator for Marketing Operations Maria Mercedes G. Yacapin earns it most fittingly.

Watching her perform with her staff in past Christmases, anniversaries and other special occasions had always been a delightful sight. Not every executive would gamely play a role other than her formal self. She would be the most applauded as she moves or sways, sings, or acts with gusto. And she dances very well – and very light even with her fleshy frame. She would do whatever is called for in the program gladly and willingly. Her presence and animated participation in these celebrations and other affairs of the NFA not only pleases her staff but inspires them as well. To them, she is cool, one they could cling on, one they would be comfortable with, who never abandons them but takes their side, if need be. This is one side of her that defines the title which she acts and performs by heart.



Yet, of course, there is more to this lady executive than her performances on the NFA stage – more than the fun or bonding moments with her staff, team building or dining out more often to ease rigidity and stress and establish camaraderie and harmonious working relationship. “You cannot have a good meal together if there is tension amongst you. When I headed CPMSD and OAAMO, I jokingly told my staff to work hard and party harder,” she says.

Her real performance on the NFA stage is a public service that spans 43 years beginning June 18, 1975. This chronicles a corporate journey of trials and triumphs, of tests and gains, of frustrations and rewards, of friendships built, of values learned – punctuated by a special commitment that is more spiritual. Deputy Mercy has initiated the daily 3 o’ clock habit which ends with the “Oratio Imperata”, a prayer on calamity and the daily mass with special intentions for the NFA. This devotion is maintained up to this day at central office. Deputy Mercy believes that the center of everything, including corporate existence, is God. Her journey with NFA has been without its ups and downs but putting God at the center of it all has definitely given her a meaningful ride.

### Fair and Square

Part of her journey is to make sure that her people are happy working and empowered to deliver their best. The formula is to treat people “fair and square and no frills,” but to expect them to do their share of work as she rewards them for good performance. She gives them a good counsel, if need be, as a form of reward.

She is always open for consultation and has the facts to help her arrive at a decision or a recommendation. “Participation is a key element in my style,” she avers.

The real fulfillment of a leader is the validation coming from subordinates that he or she is doing well. Words from her current staff: “Action agad,” says one. Another says “Ma’am, istrikta itsura mo. Tinitingnan ko muna kayo bago ako lumapit,” to this she said she can’t change the expression on her face but assures that she welcomes a talk or a dialogue anywhere, anytime. “I told my secretary to get me a mirror and place in the desk to remind me to smile and change my stern look,” she says. One adds “Ma’am, kahit na promote na kayo mula pa noon, di kayo nagbabago, mabait pa din kayo.” To her, that was a heavenly praise. True enough, her former staff would attest to her humility and faithfulness to her causes and principles as a leader.

### Destiny over Distance

She was in College when her father’s friend visiting Cagayan de Oro encouraged her to apply at NFA after graduation. Since both her parents worked with the government, she was inspired to follow suit. After all, her parents were able to support all 10 of them siblings with their hard-earned salaries as public servants.

The NGA office then located on Quezon Boulevard was only a 15-minute ride to their residence. She also applied at Central Bank but did not follow up anymore because its location was too far.

Yet, perhaps, it was not the distance why she chose NFA over other corporate entities - it was destiny.





*Family memorabilia: Dep. Mercy (seated, second from left) and her parents and siblings*

She started as a casual statistical aide with a daily rate of P17. Her main responsibility was to monitor the implementation of President Marcos' Letter of Instruction (LOI) 372 which allowed farmers to pay their production loans with PNB in kind by delivering palay to NFA. Her first NFA travel alone was in Tuguegarao, Cagayan. According to her, the 14 hours or so bus ride plus staying in a scary room was terrifying. She was even intimidated talking to the Provincial Manager. But she felt a sense of purpose and achievement with this experience.

Another task was to recommend to Treasury headed by former Deputy Celia Tan, (then the Div. Chief), the remittance of cereal procurement funds. Mostly, she assisted in recording wire messages of purchases of palay, corn, sorghum, soybeans and mongo in addition to corn and palay. At that time, there were no computers. They recorded data from radio messages relayed thru single side band radios, typed with carbon copies in manual typewriters and finally recorded in index cards. Most of them were single, so they had TGIFs at nearby Shakeys every other Friday, she recalls.

### Unforgettable and Scary

In 1986, the 8-seater Cessna plane they were boarding crashed onto the waters off Bacolod. As the plane glided abruptly, all she could do was closed her eyes, prayed for safety, and mentally pictured his husband Chito and 7-year old daughter Anna Charisse, alternately. From that height, a landing in water was like hitting cement, she was told later. They were saved by fishermen who threw ropes from their bancas so they could be pulled out from the waters. It was almost dark, the water chilling cold and they were far from shore. She was then the marketing representative assigned during the World Bank observation tour of NFA operations together with Finance executives headed by then AA Magdalena Lapuz and Vengie Anago. A Central Bank representative with them almost drowned but was saved by the pilot. This near-death experience allowed her deeper appreciation of man's mortality and led her to value each day as if it were the last. "It increased my faith in God and to value family and service even more. Soon after, I was pregnant with my second child, John Mark, hehehe," she beams.

### Balancing Act

She admits that it's hard to keep an even keel between career and domestic life this is why she often times brings work to home. "Honestly, I think I dedicated more time to NFA just like many of us. But, I guess, my husband and I did alright in raising two kids who are now both professionals and have shown good character. One works as a Channels and Kids Marketing Head at Jollibee and the other as an IT SAP Consultant. My husband Chito has always been supportive of me and continues to encourage me in all my stints at NFA. We have been married for 39 years now but our relations started even when we were still in grade school. We are active members of Couples for Christ. It is really God's grace that puts balance in my personal life, family and work," she says.



*Dep. Mercy and husband Chito hugging their two grandchildren (above photo) and their children (below)*

### Simply Rewarding

She has been blessed and recognized in life. In Kinder, she was already class president, her academic performance reaping honors; enjoyed skipping the Civil Service entrance exams because of an automatic eligibility, since she graduated Cum Laude from Ateneo de Cagayan (Xavier University). At NFA, she was a model employee at DGM, as outstanding participant (Neda-Kansas State University), as a government fellow in JVO institute for business and government, outstanding presentation (competition law) among others. The most rewarding is becoming a Deputy Administrator which she



## FEATURES

has never imagined possible. This position sums up her long and fruitful years of service with the agency. The real reward and satisfaction is bringing pride and honor to her family. Her family and friends are sure proud of her, too.

### In a Good State

Her stay in NFA has been a great challenge, at times frustrating and stressful. But she is one grateful person who remains happy with what she has, even when the going gets rough and tough. She was almost “burnt out” in 2018 when she had to endure so many difficult work-related issues both internal and external. But prayers and faith sustained her. Early 2019, the issues started to be resolved as she remembers the song “There is a rainbow at the end of the rain” by South Border. Maintaining a positive attitude has sustained her in serving NFA. “To quote Michael Jordan, I will leave NFA at a state when I am happy, fulfilled and contented,” she said.

### Greatest Achievement

When she was a casual employee, she was in total awe of young lady executives. She looked up to them and imagined “kaya ko din ba yung narating nila? Isa dun si Asst. Adm. Tess Cruz, nag-abot ata kami as AAs.” One can really reach places in this agency.

While these people gave her inspiration, she has kept the Golden Rule, the Faith, and PUSH (pray until something happens), as her guidepost and the real magic behind her success.

While crowned with awards and titles, what she considers as her greatest achievement is being able to serve others without tarnishing her integrity. “This is the true measure of being a good steward of the talents and skills that God gave me. Everything that we do is really to honor God,” she declares.

She says with conviction “My siblings and I believe in what our parents taught us. And we tried to pass this on to our children. Sabi nga ng mga anak ko, si mama, pag black, black, ang white, white talaga. Hindi pwede i-compromise ang principles. Commitment to public service and integrity are big and hard words. But once you set your eyes on them and live by them, they become second nature.”

### Biggest frustration

She is dampened by bureaucratic processes and restrictions which hamper needed and immediate action. She also experienced being maligned or accused in public hearings of irregular activities without being given the chance to defend herself. But “the truth shall set you

free” and God knows best! One of her favorite verses, in Jeremiah, “For I know my plans for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you” has been her inspiration in dealing with crises.

### Commitment to Excellence

Asked what other roles she would like to play, she says she cannot ask for anything more. Every role she has played as a subordinate and supervisor at the junior, middle and senior levels were all done in the spirit of commitment to excellent service. Quoting again from the Bible “to whom much is given, much more is required.” “I sometimes wondered, though, what would have been my career path if I accepted the provincial assignment offered to me before. But no regrets because early on, I have decided never to be physically away from family,” she says.

Part of her commitment is to be able to improve certain aspects of NFA operations. She always rooted for decentralization. When she assumed the post of Assistant Administrator, she was able to initiate the Decentralization of Inventory and Inspection Report for stocks and the confirmation of designation of accountable officers. “We must continue to download those which the regional offices could do anyway,” she says.

### Wishing for the Best

She believes that the best is yet to come for NFA – that it be given the proper recognition that it deserves – and for people to realize that the agency has contributed a lot to the betterment of the food industry and the nation as a whole.

At this stage in her life, she can only express gratitude to the NFA for “taking care of me. Each day I come for work is to give back what the NFA has done for me and my family. And to work the best I can is the best appreciation I can offer to the Agency. Mabuhay NFA!”

“Through this article I wish to thank everyone for their support especially those whom I have directly worked with. All the things that we have acquired in life when my husband and I started a family came from our salaries. Practically, the house that we own (GSIS Loan, the car (SVLF), children’s education (Edu loan), rice on the table (rice allowance), dental medical care etc. spell NFA!”

Very soon, some will be leaving NFA. And if she does join the others in making the graceful exit, expect Deputy Mercy to be eternally happy and grateful and non-stop in the things she loves doing: Aerobics, Netflix, Movies, Broadway Shows, Bowling, Reading books – yes, of course, spoiling her grandkids.





REX C. ESTOPEREZ

# A TOTAL PACKAGE

By MA. CYNTHIA DL. SUAREZ

If there is one word that would aptly describe Assistant Administrator for Marketing Operations Rex C. Estoperez, it would be versatile. He has always maintained a good rapport, be it with the lowly employee or the highest executive of the agency; or even with the members of the media, whether they are from small or big media outfits, where he had a long association with being a former spokesperson of the agency. He is a total package so to speak, both in his professional and personal life.

Professionally, this is a product of his long and varied work experiences and exposures in the different facets of the food agency's operations, programs and projects. He would be 42 years in government service come August this year, all of these with the National Food Authority.

He was a fresh graduate of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, major in Agriculture Economics when he entered the then National Grains Authority- Antique as a Job Order Statistical Aide with a daily rate of P10.00. After a year, he was reassigned to the Central Office and was promoted to Sr. Agricultural Coordinator where he was also awarded as Model Employee in 1978 under the Corporate Farming Department (CFD).

Seeing his potentials and supervisory skills, the management promoted him to Section Chief while assigned at Production Services Department (PSD). From being a Staff Assistant, he was promoted to Executive Assistant IV and then as Division Chief while assigned at the Extension Department (EXD).

He was also able to use his experience as a trainer at EXD to his advantage. He was taken by the Evelio B. Javier Foundation as faculty consultant in 1996 where he did training and facilitation during the Kabisig program. He served also as one of the consultants of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on local governance and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for crop production development.

Believing that education is also an investment, he earned his Associate in Industrial Relations at the University of the Philippines after passing the Civil Service Commission's Local Scholarship Program while assigned at EXD. He pursued his Masters' Degree in Business Administration at the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila

under the Top Executive Program (PLM-TEP).

He was also assigned to the Office of the Deputy Administrator for Operations for three years, prior to his promotion as Assistant Department Manager of the Department for Marketing Operations.

Does the slogan "Pagkaing abot kaya sa bawa't mesa" ring a bell? Well, AA Rex penned this. He was also instrumental for the name tags of NFA rice distribution programs like Erap Sari-Sari Store, Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera and Tagpuan Rice Distribution Program (TRDP). He was also designated as focal person for GMA-Serbisyo Muna program.

His assignment at the Public Affairs Department in 2003 was "fit to a t." He readily adjusted to his new role as spokesperson of the agency and blended well with the members of the media. As spokesperson of the agency, it was a 24/7 job for him. It required him to do TV or radio guesting even on holidays and weekends; answer phone patch interviews even at late nights or wee hours, especially when NFA was in the limelight or there were critical issues that need to be clarified. For 12 years that he had been doing this, he had established rapport with the members of the media that worked also for the advantage of the agency. NFA got enough media exposure especially on issues that need to be clarified.

After his stint at PAD, he was assigned at the General Services Department. His stint at GSD maybe short, but still left a mark. He was part of the purchase of new vehicles, improvement of the L-shaped building, construction of the Records Center in Valenzuela and the new NFA office building in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City.

After almost a year of stay in Region VI, his first field assignment as a Regional Director, he was reassigned to Region III on August 2017. He was not only able to initiate physical and structural improvements in these regions but more importantly, he was able to foster unity and cooperation among the employees.

On July 2018, he went back to the Central Office to head the Grains Marketing Operations Department.

When Assistant Administrator Mercedes G. Yacapin assumed as Deputy Administrator for Marketing Operations, he was designated as Acting Assistant Administrator for Marketing Operations. Like a good soldier, he accepted the challenge.





GERRY J. AMBROSIO

# Rising to the Top

By MA. CYNTHIA DL. SUAREZ



Another homegrown executive who is now at the helm of finance and administration is Assistant Administrator Gerry J. Ambrosio.

Like most NFA executives, AA Gerry also rose from the ranks. He started his career at the National Food Authority as a Job Order employee on December 1, 1984 as an Accounting Aide in NFA-Mamburao earning only a daily wage of P35.00. He remained a casual employee for four years even after passing the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Licensure Exam in 1987. While still a casual employee, he was already designated as acting Provincial Accountant of NFA-Marinduque until he got a permanent position in 1989 as Accountant III.

He was often referred to as the “trouble shooter” or roving Accountant of NFA-Region IV. He was always tapped to pitch in for Provincial Accountants who were on prolonged absences due to pregnancy, travels, training and the like. As an adventurous person, he saw all of these as an opportunity to travel and as a challenge to further hone his skills and knowledge. Among the 11 provincial offices under Region IV, he never got the chance to be assigned in Infanta, Romblon and Laguna (his hometown province).

But like any person looking for a greener pasture, he resigned from the food agency in February 1, 1996 to try his luck abroad. He went to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. He was employed as a Financial Controller of Landwell Resources Pty. Ltd., a logging company engaged in import and export. Unfortunately, the company was sold to another company. This prompted him to return home after 22 months of working abroad.

Upon returning home, he re-applied at the food agency. Known for his good reputation and caliber, he was hired as Sr. Accounting Specialist of NFA-Quezon. It was noteworthy that wherever he was assigned, the province was always in the number 1 or 2 slots in the early submission of financial report at the Central Office. As a result, they were given incentives to attend training and seminars organized by the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (PICPA) and other similar organizations.

In 2002, he accepted another challenge. This time, away from his comfort zone in Region IV and family as well. From Southern Luzon, he was reassigned to Central Luzon. He was promoted to Accountant IV (Regional Accountant) based in Cabanatuan City.

It was in his more than 12 years stint at Region III that he got exposed to the operational side of the food agency at the same time. Aside from performing his functions as the Regional Accountant, he was also designated as the Provincial Accountant of NFA-Nueva Ecija Provincial Office and acting Regional Operations Officer at the same time. Being a finance officer became an advantage because he can plan how to implement more cost-efficient region wide operational activities.

In April 2009 after the implementation of the food agency’s rationalization plan, he assumed the post of Supervising Grains Operations Officer (Regional Operations Officer). The management took notice of his performance and gave him his first crack at a managerial position when he was designated as Officer In Charge of NFA-Aurora on August 9, 2011 and became a full-fledged Provincial Manager after two years.

After honing his managerial skill in NFA-Aurora, he was tapped to head NFA-Occidental Mindoro where local palay procurement is one of the highest. In less than two years, he was given another break when he was picked to become the Assistant Department Manager of Accounting Services Department (ASD). After a year, he was appointed as Department Manager of ASD and reassigned to Budget and Treasury Fund Management Department on July 2018.

When Asst. Administrator Yolanda Nieves retired from government service in March 2019, he was on top of the list of contenders for the vacant position. Tucked with the qualifications and experience needed for the job, he was appointed to the position as Assistant Administrator for Finance and Administration.



## ■ A TOTAL PACKAGE from page 39



*AA Rex with wife Baby and children*

As a family man, he is a good husband to Dir. Baby Estoperez of Corporate Planning and Management Services Department, and a good father to Fiona, Fioren, Fionze and Fiory. No matter how busy his schedules are, he always finds time to be with his family. I remember when his three children were still studying in Ateneo de Naga, he would visit them as often as he could to check all their needs, and see to it that he was with them on special events and occasions.

Now that all his children already have their own careers, they would still love to travel as a family, both local and international. The only difference now is that they are no longer the sole financier, the children already share with the expenses.

## ■ Rising to the Top from page 40

AA Gerry is also one person who uses his time more productively. He also served the academe. When he was assigned in NFA-Marinduque, he was a part time professor at the Immaculate Concepcion College teaching accounting subjects. Even while he was still assigned in NFA-Aurora until his reassignment in NFA-San Jose (2002-2016), his weekends are spent in Laguna State Polytechnic University (LSPU) for his teaching job at the undergraduate and master studies.

When asked what kind is his leadership style, “participatory and consultative management,” he said. “We have to move towards a new dimension of management approach which is from top to bottom and from bottom to top. I always maintain an open line of communication with my employees. With all the available platforms of communication nowadays, there’s no reason not to reach them,” he said.

With the approval of the Implementing Rules and Regulations

As one would keenly observe, AA Rex has no status complex. He can be approached by anybody. Like a true versatile, he can be both in the company of the “haves” and “have nots,” and still get the same kind of dealing.

As head of the operations group, his policy directions are geared towards cost efficiency. His role as a member of the NFA ExeCom will also be vital as the agency goes through a transition to a buffer stocking agency under a tariffed rice regime with the passage of RA 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law.

With only a year before reaching the compulsory age retirement, he said that availing of the compensation package remains an option if his position item will be affected. After all, he also deserves to enjoy the fruits of his hard work and long years of service in the government. It will also be time to pass on the baton to other deserving officials.

Versatile, he can be both in the company of the “haves” and “have nots,” and still get the same kind of dealing.

As head of the operations group, his policy directions are geared towards cost efficiency. His role as a member of the NFA ExeCom will also be vital as the agency goes through a transition to a buffer stocking agency under a tariffed rice regime with the passage of RA 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law.

With only a year before reaching the compulsory age retirement, he said that availing of the compensation package remains an option if his position item will be affected. After all, he also deserves to enjoy the fruits of his hard work and long years of service in the government. It will also be time to pass on the baton to other deserving officials.



*AA Ambrosio with family. From left to right: Gemarie, TJ, AA Gerry, grandson Cian, Precious Joy, his wife Emma, Ian and Lorie Anne. Photo taken at Enchanted Kingdom in August 2019.*

(IRR) of Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law, NFA top management has proposed a five-year financial plan to make NFA a debt-free agency capable of sustaining its operational efficiency while maintaining the country’s food security during calamities. AA Gerry’s financial expertise has been instrumental in crafting the said financial plan.

The challenges ahead for the food agency are bigger with its transition into a buffer stocking agency under a mean and leaner organization. AA Gerry’s varied exposures both in the operational and financial aspects of the agency will be better put into use in the policy implementation and decision making as a member of the NFA Executive Committee.





# GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

## Coming Closer to Gender Equality

By CORA L. ABIO

**THE PHILIPPINE Commission on Women (PCW)** dedicates its Guidebook on Gender Mainstreaming to all partner agencies whose “continuous support and dedication make the passion for gender and development burning brightly...incessantly...” A product of intensive study and active consultation with partner agencies, the Guidebook is a useful tool in facilitating gender mainstreaming and making government work for gender equality.

As a partner agency, the NFA has been actively pursuing the task of gender mainstreaming in so many ways that it deems appropriate and significant to the ultimate goal of gender equality and development which contends that women are active agents of development and not just passive recipients of development assistance. As initial steps, various projects were conducted both in the central and field offices to bring GAD concepts to the consciousness of employees.

The NFA Focal Point System, headed by OIC-Administrator and concurrent Deputy Administrator for Finance and Administration Tomas R. Escarez, and the NFA-GAD Technical Working Group, led by HRMD-Manpower Development Division Chief, Marlene G. Brillantes, (with the support of central office departments and field offices) are working hand-in-hand to immerse the entire NFA community in the stages of gender mainstreaming and the major entry points to guide the agency in tracking and assessing the progress and status of its gender mainstreaming initiatives.

To be able to adopt gender mainstreaming, the NFA has conducted budgeting, monitoring and evaluation of GAD programs (through formal trainings and re-examination of beliefs, ideals, and opinions about the roles of men and women held by personnel at all levels of the organization); creation and/or strengthening of the GAD Focal Points; and generation and maintenance of GAD database.

Over the last three years, various capacity-building programs were held: Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability in Public Service and Stress Management for Leaders (five batches for central and field offices); Competency-Based Succession Planning and Management and Restructuring through Rightsizing Seminar-Workshop (four batches for central and field offices); 2017 Omnibus Rules on Appointments and other HR Actions; A Journey to Self-Realization; Orientation on Gender Mainstreaming and Attribution (conducted at NFA Region 4); NFA GAD Harmonizing, Planning and Budgeting Seminar-Workshop; Forum on Women Empowerment; four sessions of Health Forums; and six sessions of livelihood activities for Central Office employees.

On policies, NFA-GAD released Special Order on the reconstitution of the GAD Executive Focal Point System and Technical Working Group; and Memorandum on the Guidelines on the Identification of Projects, Activities and Programs (PAPs) Chargeable to GAD.

NFA-GAD Advocacy Programs have addressed health and wellness through sugar and blood pressure check; cervical cancer awareness (pap smear check up); mass calisthenics and zumba; facial care services; kidney ultrasound and checkup; prostate checkup (digital rectal exam); and stress debriefing courtesy of the NFA Marawi Rehabilitation Program. The National Women's Month is being celebrated yearly with different contests such as singing, photo and poster making; livelihood seminars; and wellness checks.

The field offices have complemented the central office activities with their Clean and Green Program, Ugnayans, team building integrated with GAD concepts; continuing professional development of employees; trainings on leadership, livelihood, fundamentals of cooperative, competency based succession planning, salaries and wages; food safety and nutrition; IEC materials on tobacco control; construction of NFA office at NFA warehouse; and paralegal training from the Office of Restoration of Filipino Values.

Communication plays an important role in any undertaking. GAD mainstreaming projects and activities at Central and Field Offices are being published in Grains, NFA's corporate publication for the information of the NFA community. A GAD Bulletin Board at the HRMD Central Office provides updates on GAD projects and activities.

The challenge of gender mainstreaming in the workplace lies in how agencies present the GAD issues they have encountered and how they were able to manage them adapting the mainstreaming evaluation framework where goals, objectives and strategies would fit into their own organizational systems and facilitate the mainstreaming process. In the long run, the NFA can aim to become a more gender responsive organization.

The NFA Day Care Center is a major project of NFA-GAD that addresses the needs of working parents to remain productive and maintain good attendance in the workplace without leaving behind their young children at home under the care of their nannies.

The establishment of day care centers and supplemental feeding units in every barangay started on June 11, 1978 through PD No. 1567, known as the Barangay Day Care Center Law of 1978. This was part of the government's effort to combat malnutrition to promote the social and mental development of pre-school children with ages ranging from 0-6 years, in support to the nationwide nutrition program.

*Quote: Gender mainstreaming is an approach to development that looks more comprehensively at the relationships between women and men in their access to and control over resources, decision making, benefits and rewards in society.*



# Women's Month celebrations across the country

by LINA G. REYES

March is celebrated as the National Women's Month as part of the worldwide observance of the International Women's Day (IWD).

According to the Philippine Commission on Women's website, the theme, "We Make Change Work for Women," emphasizes that women should be active drivers in bringing about positive changes, and that they should also reap from fruits of development efforts.

The men and women of NFA, in coordination with the Gender and Development (GAD), participated in various Women's Month celebrations last March.

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NFA **La Union** Regional and Provincial Office conducted on March 21, 2019 their Gender and Development activities for the Women's Month. The first part of the program was a briefing on "Cancer Awareness" by Dr. Kimberly Abrenica of the Ilocos Training and Regional Medical Center (ITRMC), San Fernando City, La Union. This was followed by a free medical check-up administered by Dr. Abrenica. She was assisted by Dr. Leamsi Gay V. Arpon, and Dr. Jastine Bares.

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Women employees of NFA **Eastern Pangasinan** took a break from their office routine to celebrate and give honour to womanhood at Isdaan Seafood Restaurant in Gerona, Tarlac last March 8.

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A brief discussion on women's rights was conducted at the NFA **Ilocos Norte** Provincial Office on March 8, 2019 as a kick-off activity in celebration of the National Women's Month.

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Employees and stakeholders of NFA **Western Pangasinan** attended a training/semnar on massage/reflexology and ear candling for livelihood. The seminar was spearheaded by Provincial Manager Ramon B. Cuaresma together with TESDA Lingayen representatives, Ms. Marife Langit, Mr. Dhan De Guzman and Mr. Chito Decelis.

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Employees from **Region IV** and **Batangas** Provincial Office joined a two-day seminar on Enriching Gender: Women Empowerment through Financial Literacy and Psychological Well-being. The objective of the seminar is for participants to know the different kinds of abuse and how to address them.

Invited to speak on various topics were Provincial Manager Maria Lewina A. Tolentino, Ms. Mary Ann C. Daza, and Mr. Al Ryane B. De Sagun.

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NFA **San Jose** held its Training/Seminar on Laws on Protecting Women and other GAD issues last March 26, 2019 at NFA Occidental Mindoro Provincial Office, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro.

AO III Aleli V. Reyes and GOO II Robert Jerome F. Osano acted as facilitators of the training and gave different trivia to participants related to the activity.



## FEATURES

Provincial Manager Osmundo R. Guinto Jr. delivered an inspirational message while AO III Reyes introduced the resource speaker, SPO3 Analyn P. Loja who is currently the Investigator at San Jose Municipal Police Station, Occidental Mindoro.

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Regional Office V and **Albay** Provincial Office participated in the 1st Quarter nationwide simultaneous Earthquake Drill last February 21 at the NFA Social Hall, Legazpi City.

The speakers of the activity were Special Rescue Unit (SRU) Team Leader FO2 Bernardino Garcera, FO2 Mark John Conejero and FO1 Manuel Arandia Jr from the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) Legazpi City Fire Station.

A Drill Committee was organized before the actual drill. The drill focused on the scenario of a 7.2 magnitude earthquake where participants performed the "Duck, Cover and Hold".

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NFA **Catanduanes** employees, headed by Provincial Manager Rod Embate wore purple polo shirts in support of #PurpleThursday.

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Also in Region VII, employees of NFA Negros Oriental attended a skills training on baking. Employees were taught how to properly coat a cake with icing.

NFA **Basilan** employees attended a seminar on Family Planning and Mental Health Awareness to empower GAD sensitive individuals conducted by the Isabela City Health Office on March 26, 2019 at the NFA Basilan Provincial Office lobby.

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NFA **Region VII** conducted GAD-related orientation on Republic Act 9710 or the Magna Carta for Women with resource person from the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Region VII. OIC Regional Director Bobot Alojado Jr. highlighted women's significant roles in the family and in the society.

Special Investigator III Marie Jescor Aytona of CSC Region VII discussed and elaborated the salient features of RA 9710 and CSC Memorandum Circular No. 25, s. 2010 specifying guidelines on the availment of special leave benefits for women who have undergone surgery caused by gynecological disorders.



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**National Capital Region (NCR)** officials and staff warmly welcomed OIC Tomas R. Escarez at the J. Dela Cruz Hall in NCR on March 7, 2019. Escarez was accompanied by Grains Marketing Operations Director Lemuel R. Pagayunan. The visit coincided with the celebration of the 2019 National Women's Month. NFA NCR-CDO celebrated Women's Month by holding a Zumba fitness exercise in all Thursdays of March.

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*Correspondents:* Olma Marie M. Bayno, Jasmin Jay M. Benavidez, Samaira Datu, Maezle M. Ferrer, Chel Infantado, Camilo C. Kebite Jr., Ruby Jean C. Pambid, Jaharah Shyrra R. Pavilando, Jerome Osano, Sonny Rey Rivera, and Jella Mae L. Salvador



# NFA TO BECOME DEBT-FREE IN FIVE YEARS

By MA. CYNTHIA DL. SUAREZ



The National Food Authority as an organization is expected to become lean and mean once it has transitioned into a buffer stocking agency after its restructuring plan takes effect as a result of the passage of Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law.

The food agency is also hopeful that it will become debt-free in five years once its proposed financial plan is approved by the Department of Finance.

The NFA has an outstanding debt of about P163 billion as of December 31, 2018. These debts were accumulated over the years as a result of the agency's trading activities, trust agreement, and other financial obligations secured from the different banking institutions, domestic and foreign loans, and advances from the National Government through its Net Lending facilities.

To improve the agency's financial position, NFA management has proposed a debt financial restructuring plan for the next five years, starting from 2020 to 2024 thru proper programming of its debt servicing for short and long term loans; and eventual conversion into subsidy of its existing National Government advances including interest and guarantee fee, to avoid accumulation of debt, high interest payment, default and penalties on existing debt.

As an initial step, NFA Management has requested the NFA Council's approval of the conversion into government budgetary support-subsidy amounting to P49.094 billion representing Net Lending-National Government (NG) Advances including interest as of December 31, 2018 plus guarantee fee as of December 31, 2018 on short-term borrowings and for inclusion in NFA's Corporate Operating Budget (COB) for fiscal year 2020. Once approved by the NFA Council, the restructuring plan shall be submitted to the Department of Finance for evaluation and approval.

NFA has experienced cash flow difficulties since 2000 that resulted into an accumulated equity deficiency of about P148.365 billion as of December 2018. These difficulties were further aggravated by several factors such as high inflation rate and high loan interests due to surge in foreign exchange rate. The volatility of NFA operations are deeply rooted in loans compounded with non-cost recoverable pricing structure which is buy high and sell low.

The food agency cited that its accumulated debt was attributed primarily to the high cost of buying palay. With limited funding and subsidy, the food agency resorted to domestic borrowings from various local financial institutions such as Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and other private banks at commercial rates guaranteed by the national government.

NFA was not given additional subsidy for its rice importation activities. It relied heavily on domestic borrowings. It had to absorb payments on loan interests and other incidental expenses from load port to port of destination up to the designated place of distribution. Until such time that the imported rice were turned into sales receipts, the NFA had to avail of additional loans, extend and/or renew its maturing loans to continue and finance its rice importation activities. This resulted to the ballooning debt of the food agency.

Added to this was the continuing sale of low-priced subsidized rice for pro-poor programs using NFA accredited outlets and to government relief agencies during calamity and emergency situations.

Records show that for the last 19 years (2000-2018), the food agency had received only a total subsidy of P67 billion while its total net loss was P151 billion.

Given this scenario, the financial condition of the NFA will not improve

and may fall further into a huge debt trap without support from the national government in the form of subsidy.

In the five-year financial debt restructuring plan (2020-2024), NFA Management cited the provisions under Administrative Order No. 10, series of 1998, (Strengthening and Enhancing the Procedures for Setting the Annual Net Lending Program for Government Owned and/or Controlled Corporations (GOCCS), and Guidelines for the Conversion of National Government Advances, Including Interest on National Government Advances Into Equity and/or Subsidy to GOCCs).

Under Section 4 of AO 10, it is explicitly stated that proposal for conversion of NG advances into equity and/or subsidy to GOCCs can be considered meritorious given the following conditions; (1) the GOCC is experiencing cash flow difficulties as a result of, but not limited to: high interest payments and foreign exchange losses; heavy reliance on loans; and tariff/pricing structure that is not cost recoverable; (2) there is no workable option for improving its cash position; and (3) loans advanced by NG being requested for conversion were used for undertakings/projects which are not purely recoverable or which by its nature require NG support.

In the course of evaluation, DOF shall also take into consideration, the effects of conversion on corporate operations, financial position, international commitments and other applicable covenants.

As a matter of procedure, once the Secretary of Finance approved the conversion, the proposal shall be endorsed to the Department of Budget and Management for inclusion in the appropriation for the succeeding year.

With this legal basis, it is hoped that the food agency will have a fresh beginning as it transforms into a buffer stocking agency that is DEBT -FREE.



# THEY MAKE NFA PROUD

A S E R I E S

This special section is for outstanding NFA employees and their children making significant mark in their respective fields. Email your contributions at [nfapublicaffairs@gmail.com](mailto:nfapublicaffairs@gmail.com)

Many were called but only few were chosen... Such is the cliché storyline of every lawyer who passed the bar examinations and finally have that coveted title, ATTY, affixed to their name. But not all lawyers are alike, or their stories, the same.

Without question, the story of Neriza Joyce Mapalad Recinto, HRDO III at the Human Resource Management Department – NFA Central Office is a tale to tell. She is one of the 1800 new lawyers (out of 8,115 examinees) who successfully passed the bar examinations last November 2018.

To Atty. Recinto, her story of success is not one for drama to deserve an episode of MMK. But she thinks her road to success is a story that will surely inspire anyone who wants to pursue a career as a lawyer, that for someone who is determined to achieve, no challenge is too great.

Atty. Recinto, or Neriz to her friends and colleagues at HRMD, started to work at NFA on January 2011 as HRM Assistant assigned at the Office of the Administrator. Before her NFA career, Neriz just finished her Psychology degree at St. Scholastica's College, where she graduated with honors (cum laude), and a short stint at Empire East, one of the giant real estate companies in the country.

Inherently an achiever, the competitive nature of Ms. Recinto knew from the start her college degree will never be enough. Neriz said she always envisioned herself pursuing further studies, although she was not so sure yet if she will take up law. Luckily, fate may have actually had it for her that she was given the opportunity to take up law while working. After she qualified for the San Beda College (now San Beda University) – College of Law in 2012, she never let go of the chance.

She knew that her admission to one of the best law schools in the country was just one of the easier stages, the calm before the storm. She had to manage all her time juggling full-time work and law school.

More than the daily dose of commuting through traffic, being a law student also taught her that in order to get or achieve something, you have to earn it. Law life in San Beda showed her that nothing is given, everything is earned. It forced her to work harder, instilled in her more humility, and truly tested her character, perseverance, and will power.



**NERIZA JOYCE M. RECINTO**

HRDO III, HRMD - NFA Central Office  
2018 Bar passer

## Ora et Labora

Six years later, Neriz proved that none of her ordeals could deter her way to success. Although she admitted that at times she had her own dose of frustrations, her determination to succeed never waned. She took them in stride, and turned her failures as added inspirations and challenge for her to work and study even harder to achieve her final goal.

Finishing law school and passing the bar do not also necessarily mean that you must have a special skill in memorizing all the legal maxims, or the ability to gobble every book just to be ready for the dreaded recitations and exams. More importantly, Neriz said that becoming a lawyer is more about hard work and being prayerful.

"Don't lose hope. Always pray and work harder. Keep on igniting the fire within you and you will prevail," Neriz said in her speech during her thanksgiving party.

On top of all the hard work and prayers, Neriz said she is also very lucky that she had the support of her parents, family and relatives. "They were always there, and one with me in hurdling all the challenges, praying with me up to my moment of triumph... I am forever grateful to them for making it possible for me to attain my law degree and the title- ATTY," Neriz said.

When she received the news that she passed the bar, she couldn't hold her tears. She looked back at all her sacrifices and all the adversities she had to go through. And though Neriz said that the reality that she is now a lawyer still has not sunk in yet, she also quipped that she is certainly now ready to take up more mature and challenging roles that come along with her new profession, as Atty. Neriza Joyce M. Recinto. (**CHARLITO DELA CRUZ**)





**MARY MAYE M. IGNO**  
2018 CPA Board passer

Mary Maye, the fourth among the five siblings of Mr. & Mrs. Iluminado G. Igno is a graduate from University of Batangas and finished a degree in Bachelor of Science in Accountancy on May 23, 2017. Like her mother she dreamed of being an Accountant so she pursued her studies and took a review for several months. She hurdled the 2017 CPA Examinations but to no avail. Believing in her favorite quotation "With GOD all things are possible" she never quit until she passed the Certified Public Accountant Board Examination last October 2018.

She is called "Maye" by her friends, classmates, batch mates and the like. During her primary and secondary education she's very much inclined in sports like table tennis, thus she received Athletic Awards during her high school days. She continued to play table tennis in college where she gained her scholarship for three years. Being a member of the Table Tennis Team of the University of Batangas, she joined and won the competition in the PRISAA National Games in 2015 and 2017. She was selected to be part of the Country's delegation in the 28th Summer Universiade that was held on Gwangju City in Korea from July 3-14, 2015. The Philippine delegation while she belongs competed with top university athletes from all over the world including those from powerhouse countries like the United States, China, Japan and Korea. The Philippine team was sponsored by Federation of School Sports Association (FESSAP). Aside from playing this sport, she also loved swimming and became a member of Swimming Team in Calapan City during her elementary.

This young woman is not only an athlete but also lovely, smart and simple. She joined Ms. Sto. Niño 2010 and gained the title. She is presently management audit Assistant at the Land Bank of the Philippines Her parents Mrs. Rosie M. Igno currently the Provincial Manager of NFA Mamburao Occidental Mindoro and Mr. Iluminado G. Igno, Grains Operations Assistant of NFA Oriental Mindoro are very proud of her.

We all have dreams and his ultimate dream was to become a CPA – Lawyer.

On September 05, 1986, Henry S. Cariño II was born in Pagadian City to Mr. Henry Miranda Cariño and Francisca Maglasang Salibongcogon. The eldest of three siblings, Henry grew up in a simple, happy, supportive, and loving family.

His journey in acquiring knowledge thru formal education was not easy for him and his parents. But due to his perseverance and dedication, he made his family proud. He excelled in almost everything and was always on top of his class. He took his Elementary Education in Tuburan Central Elementary School at Tuburan, Pagadian City and graduated as class valedictorian. The new lawyer pursued his secondary education at the Zamboanga del Sur National High School (DOST) in Sta. Maria, Pagadian City and graduated 5th Honorable Mention. He chose to continue his college education at Saint Columban College and took a Bachelor of Science degree in Accountancy and graduated Cum Laude. Then he took and passed the Certified Public Accountant board exam on May 11, 2008.

On the 8th of October 2011 he married Ms. Phoebe Jade V. Dirampaten, a fellow CPA and currently working at the LANDBANK of the Philippines. They were blessed with two beautiful children, Henri Phoemela D. Cariño, 7 years old, an outstanding pupil at Pagadian City Pilot School and 3-year old Heinrich Prime D. Cariño.



**HENRY SALIBONGCOGON CARIÑO II**  
Warehouse Supervisor II - NFA Zamboanga  
2018 Bar passer



## FEATURES

Henry is a dedicated and hardworking person. Before joining the NFA, he worked as an instructor in Accounting at the La Salle University in Ozamis, City from January 2008 to March 2009. He was a branch accountant at Rural Transit Mindanao, Inc. in January 2009. On October 26, 2009, he started his career with NFA as an Accountant II in Dipolog City. He transferred to Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur on May 16, 2012. He was promoted to Senior Enforcement and Investigation Officer (SEIO) on April 12, 2015. Since March 12, 2019, he is a Senior Grains Warehouse Supervisor.

Obsessed in becoming a lawyer, he took up Bachelor of Laws in 2014 at the Pagadian Capitol College. Managing multiple demands of career, school and personal life was

indeed challenging, but the support of his loving wife, family and the encouragement of co-workers made it possible for him to finish the degree in May 2018. Due to lack of time, he underwent self-review while managing his precious time between work, family and studies to take the 2018 bar exams. With confidence and faith in God, he applied for a leave of absence and took the bar exams in Manila on November 2018. Then the waiting game started. May 3, 2019 was a memorable day for NFA Zamboanga del Sur, for Mr. Henry S. Cariño II passed the 2018 bar examinations.

NFA Zamboanga del Sur is so proud of the achievement of our Warehouse Supervisor II, Atty. Henry S. Cariño II, CPA!

It's a great accomplishment to finish Bachelor of Laws, but to pass the bar examinations is even greater!

Indeed, all the hard work and sacrifices of Grains Operations Officer I (GOA) Dhoy Manuel A. Marpuri paid off when his name was listed as one of the successful passers of the 2018 bar examination given last November 2018. The official results were released by the Supreme Court of the Philippines five months later.

GOA Dhoy Manuel A. Marpuri, or Dhoy as he is fondly called, initially took up Electronics and Communications Engineering at the Ateneo de Naga University right after High School. But perhaps, becoming an engineer was not his destiny. He ended up shifting to AB Political Science instead at the University of Nueva Caceres. After he graduated in 2012, he landed a job at NFA Camarines Sur as a Job Order assigned at the Industry Services Section. Since then, he juggled his job and studies as he took up Bachelor of Laws at the University of Nueva Caceres that same year.

Dhoy consistently did well in his job and got his permanent status as Clerk III in March 2015. He continued to perform well and got promoted to GOA I in May 2016. Alongside his good performance at work, he also did well in school making sure that he spends most of his spare time reading and studying. After he finished his Bachelor of Laws in 2018, he filed for six months leave of absence to intently focus on his review for the bar exams. After his review, he went back to work and we joined him as he waited in hopeful anticipation for the day that we would soon call him "ATTORNEY".

And on May 3, 2019, his long wait, our long wait, was over. He nailed it! He passed the bar examinations! Finally, we can officially call him ATTORNEY DHOY MANUEL A. MARPURI.

CONGRATULATIONS ATTORNEY! Your NFA family is truly proud of you! (**CAREN S. ARRIOLA**, correspondent)



**DHOY MANUEL A. MARPURI**

Grains Operations Officer I - NFA Camarines Sur  
2018 Bar passer

# Congratulations!

**An Investment in Knowledge Always Pays the Best Interest**

— Benjamin Franklin —

From left: Ms. Sunglao, PM Nuestro and other awardees.





# NFA Bataan bags Red Orchid Award

By JINKY M. LANDICHO

The National Food Authority - Bataan Provincial Office bagged its first Red Orchid award during the 7th Central Luzon Excellence Awards for Health (CLEXAH) held at Royce Hotel, Clark City, Pampanga. The Red Orchid Award was received by NFA Bataan Provincial Manager Adelaida C. Nuestro and Tobacco Control Program Coordinator Evelyn M. Sunglao. This award is the highest award given in this particular search. It is followed by the second highest award, the Pink Orchid, and the third tier, the White Orchid.

The Department of Health's Red Orchid Awards is the search for 100% tobacco-free provinces, municipalities, cities, government offices and hospitals, and DOH centers for health development. It follows the World Health Organization (WHO) framework convention on tobacco control article 8 that recommends adoption of measures to provide protection from exposure to smoke in indoor workplaces, public transport, and other public places.

In recognition of the different agencies' active participation in massive campaign for a 100% Smoke-Free Environment in the whole province, the Provincial Government of Bataan headed by Gov. Albert S. Garcia distributed to each concerned agency cash award of P20,000 to be used for various projects for tobacco control during the Provincial Capitol's flag raising ceremony at Bataan People's Center, Balanga City. NFA Bataan shall utilize the cash award for the printing of various anti-smoking signages and the purchase of one projector needed for video or PowerPoint presentations during lectures.



PM Nuestro (2nd from right) and Ms. Sunglao (extreme right) during the awarding ceremonies.



PM Nuestro (right) and program coordinator Sunglao after the awarding ceremonies in Bataan with Governor Garcia (center).



# Turning a New Leaf

A S E R I E S

## Witnessing for God's Glory

By MA. CYNTHIA DL SUAREZ



Assistant Administrator Yolanda C. Nieves who is known for her high-heeled shoes fashion statement, retired from the National Food Authority last March 6, 2019, after serving the agency for 43 years.

She has retired from government service after reaching the compulsory age retirement of 65, but not as a worker in the vineyard of the Lord. She now has the luxury of time to focus on her various ministries in her church, Jesus Christ Saves Global Outreach, a full gospel church. But even while working then at NFA, she would squeeze important church activities or events in between her busy schedules.

As a gesture of thanksgiving for her bountiful blessings, she went back to her hometown in Lanna, Tumaini, Isabela two days after her retirement, to conduct an outreach program in the community. More than the physical feeding where she distributed some goodies to the less privileged, she shared God's love and faithfulness.

Since she encountered the Lord Jesus Christ in spirit and truth on June 11, 1986 (when their house was robbed of jewelries, appliances, etc. worth P35,000) she has been faithfully serving the Lord and boldly witnessing for Him because her life is a living testimony. Also, on this day, she started meditating the Word of God, the Holy Bible. According to her, when she started reading this Holy Book, she has been through a lot of challenges. The first challenge was when she and her husband frequently quarreled with each other every time her husband came home from Baguio, where he was assigned as a Branch Manager of a mining equipment distributing company. She said that her marriage then was on the rocks. Her husband, Dante even told her that he will not go with her in that full gospel church and even said "kahit magpantay ang aking mga paa." She started asking God if she was on the right track going to that full gospel church. For five months, she prayed without ceasing. God answered her prayers; Mr. Nieves embraced her faith.

She was also into deep financial crises. She had to pay for someone's debt worth P.5 million as a financial guarantor.

Before she became a Christian on June 11, 1986, she said that she was a regular church goer but admitted that there was emptiness in her heart. Until a friend, Elizabeth Agustin, a pawnshop owner introduced Jesus to her. She accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior and had a personal relationship with Him since then.

But even then, her faith was put into test. In 1997, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, stage 2B while assigned in NFA-Pampanga and in 2007 with verrucous carcinoma. She held on to her faith. She was healed knowing that Jesus is her Jehovah-Rapa or the God who heals.

AA Yolly was a consistent honor student. She was a Valedictorian when she graduated in Elementary and in High School. She was one of those employees who started their career with NFA at a very young age. After graduating in college with a degree of Bachelor of Science in Commerce-Accounting, Cum Laude at Araullo Lyceum, she successfully landed her first job as Accounting Clerk in NGA-Isabela in 1976. After passing the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Licensure Exam that she took in 1975, she was promoted as Accountant of NGA-Kalinga.

She worked her way up the corporate ladder. She was assigned to different NFA field offices mostly in Regions 2, 3 and NCR in various capacities until she was reassigned to Central Office. In 2014, she was promoted to Assistant Director of Accounting Services Division and as Department Manager after a year. In less than a year prior to her retirement, she was promoted as Assistant Administrator for Finance and Administration.

After retiring from government service, she has several plans in mind; house repair, travel goals, etc. But topmost in her list is to be a servant of the Lord in her various capacities. The service in the vineyard of the Lord has no age limit and has no retirement . . .



ARD Casawadan Cabilangan Macabanding:

# An Epitome of Kindness and Compassion

By CLEOFÉ S. YU



Assistant Regional Director Casawadan "Sadz" Macabanding, officially retired on January 8, 2019 after 41 years of dedicated government service.

She was born on January 21, 1954 with a royal blood and was enthroned as a "Bae a-Labi" of the highest sixteen (16) Royal Houses of Lanao del Sur, the Royal house of Ditsaan Ramin. In Meranaw royalty, the highest rank of a woman is called 'Bae-a-labi' or princess. Meranaw women have their own duties and responsibilities.

Despite her royal status, Sadz remained humble and kind but courageous. She pursued a career different from the will of her family. After graduating at Mindanao State University in Iligan City with a degree of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration she worked as a Marketing Analyst at the Department of Agriculture in Quezon City for three years which required her to travel around the country. Her parents feared for her safety living alone in the city with a different culture and society.

Eager to make her return home, Sadz was fetched by her brother and told that she will land a job at the National Food Authority-Lanao del Sur Provincial Office in Marawi City. Left with no choice, she returned home. True enough, she was employed as a casual Statistical Aide on May 25, 1977. This started her journey with the food agency that lasted for 41 years. She was given a permanent position as Eco Researcher on October 17, 1977 and was later promoted to the positions of Provincial Economist, SG00 (WSII) and Provincial Manager. Before she retired, she was promoted to Assistant Regional Director (ARD) of ARMM.

NFA was also instrumental in meeting her lifetime partner, Atty. Casan Barani Macabanding. Atty. Macabanding was then applying for a license for his rice milling business when she met Sadz; this gave way to their love story. Their union was blessed with 10 children, who are now all professionals with their chosen careers.

ARD Macabanding was known for her motherly image. All her employees could freely approach her to seek for advice, whether it is work related or personal. She was accorded so much respect not only because of her royal status as a "Bae a-Labi" in their locality but also as a woman with so much dedication to her work, compassion, kindness, and above all, great faith in "Allah".

In her 41 years with the NFA, she is proud to say that her children and extended family grew eating NFA rice. It is common to the Maranao culture that extended families live under one roof. In her case, they are all 32 that are living in the house, and 32 mouths to feed as well. She could not imagine having no NFA rice allowance to sustain her family. But with great faith in "Allah," they were able to sustain their needs and meet life's challenges.

With great responsibilities as ARD and Bae a-Labi at the same time, it takes courage and faith to the "Almighty" for a woman with compassion and kindness to carry on and happily retire from the government service knowing that she was able to accomplish her mission.



# A MEMORABLE JOURNEY with RD NANDING

By OLMA MARIE M. BAYNO

It is often said that people who stayed for only a short time are the ones who end up making a lasting impression not only in our lives, but in our hearts as well. Although we may not realize it at this time, they will make a difference and change our lives in a way we never imagined.

Rewind to the day when Regional Director Fernando S. Nuñez first set his foot on NFA Region VII to officially assume his new post on August 2, 2018. What followed were seven months of fun but challenging times, when RD Nanding announced his intention to retire effective February 28, 2019. All the employees were surprised that a great mentor and a true leader is leaving the agency.

In his 37 years with the NFA, RD Nanding has contributed a lot in fulfilling the mandates and various programs of the agency. RD Nanding is a leader who shows the importance of building relationships by introducing his LEGACY (Leading Empowered and Goodhearted Agents of Change Year-Round) Program; groupings and gatherings through the different acronyms like LINK (Leading, Inspiring and Nurturing Keepers), MEG (Monthly Employees Gathering), GEM (General Employees Meeting) and TGIM (Thank God It's Monday). His LEGACY Program has greatly helped employees wherever he is assigned in harnessing their innate talents and skills. His leadership has made the employees more productive, their skills were transformed into strengths.

RD Nanding was a former artist-illustrator and KKK operations officer before he joined NFA in 1981. A graduate of AB Economics from the Notre Dame University in Cotabato City, he came to NFA during that critical time when the agency was tasked to handle sugar during the sugar crisis. In 1983, he became the Provincial Economist of Sultan Kudarat and was later promoted to Regional Economist and Supervising Grains Operations Officer of Region XII.

His managerial skill was put to a test when he was designated as Officer-In-Charge of NFA Southern Philippines Grains Complex in 1998. On March 7, 2001, he became a full-fledged Provincial Manager and was assigned to the various NFA provincial offices. He was promoted as Acting Assistant Regional Manager in Region XIV on April 4, 2014. Through hard work and dedication, he was promoted as Regional Manager on September 15, 2017 assigned at NFA Region X for almost a year. On August 02, 2018, RD Nanding was transferred to Region VII, seven months prior to his optional retirement.

Unknown to many, RD Nanding was awarded Most Outstanding Agricultural Achiever for 1993-1994 by the Department of Agriculture-Region XII for his efforts in maintaining harmonious working relations with the agency's stakeholders, various line agencies, the media and the local government units. The award was an embodiment of his good works and good values as a leader who is guided by the philosophy, "sow kindness and you will reap kindness."



During the retirement tribute tendered by NFA-Region VII officials and employees on March 1, 2019, the testimonies of his family, co-workers and friends attested to what kind of a father, a leader, a mentor, a colleague, a friend and a person he is. Some of those who gave their personal accounts were his daughter, Ms. Krizia Marie Nuñez Pentecostes; his nephew, Mr. Rene Salape; his fraternity brother, Ms. Espie Hiponia; and high school classmate, Ms. Lorna Rellin.

The "barrio-fiesta" themed tribute was an afternoon nostalgia. The Provincial Managers expressed their gratitude to RD Nanding for his 7-month's journey with them. They also cited that working under his leadership is truly a blessing, and the memories with an inspirational leader like RD Nanding will never be forgotten. The different LINK groups prepared special numbers and impressive performances.

The honoree was grateful and a bit surprised with the testimonies. "I have genuinely enjoyed my journey here in NFA Region VII. I am very grateful for your trust and confidence in me. I will surely be missing all of you," RD Nanding remarked.

RD Nanding has gotten the support, trust and confidence of his subordinates because he first trusted and believed in their knowledge, wisdom, talents and capabilities. To think that one person can have such a profound effect on your life forever is truly a blessing. It is because of these encounters that we learn some of life's best lessons and also about ourselves.

With his retirement, RD Nanding can now spend more time with his family and pursue his passion on farming. He may be out of the NFA, but his heart will always be with the agency. His imprint as a well loved and respected leader will remain in the hearts and minds of his peers and employees who have been part of his memorable journey with the agency.





**DIR. MARIO GONZALES:**

## Diligence and Hard Work Paid Off

By CHEL INFANTADO

It was a long and winding 41 years of government service with the National Food Authority for Regional Director Mario Gonzales who retired last May 10, 2019. It was his first and last job, so to speak.

He started his career with NFA-Nueva Vizcaya in 1978 as a casual Public Relations Aide barely few months after graduating with a degree in Bachelor of Arts major in English/History. It was during his stint in NFA-Nueva Vizcaya for almost 10 years that he got a permanent position and was promoted to Grains Supervising Control Officer then to Warehouse Supervisor II and Provincial Operations Officer.

From then on, he had held various positions and had been assigned in many parts of the country, gaining his expertise in the varied operations of the agency. His first taste of executive position as Provincial Manager was in NFA-Ilocos Norte in 1994. He was Provincial Manager for 11 years before he was promoted to Assistant Regional Director first in Region 2 and then in Region 12 and 8. He became a full-fledged Regional Manager in 2015 while assigned in NFA-Region 2 and held the same post until his retirement in NFA-Region 4.

The years he worked with the agency was marked by unsurpassed efficiency and excellence. In recent years that he was with NFA-Region II, the office was in the list of top awardees in the Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (PRAISE) for four consecutive years such as best employee, best maintained warehouse, highest licensees and collection. NFA-Region II was also a Hall of Famer in the Red Orchid Award given by the

Department of Health for three consecutive years from 2012-2014, for promoting and maintaining a smoke-free environment/workplace.

Considered as one of the pillars of the food agency in his generation, Dir. Mar has earned respect and admiration among his fellow workers. He led by example, showing his commitment, dedication and hard work. He motivated and inspired employees to become achievers. He has been a mentor to many and his influence has made an indelible impact on a lot of people. In fact, for two consecutive years, from 2015 to 2016, Civil Service Commission conferred the National Dangal ng Bayan awards on Roy Esteron and Wenceslao Carangian, both from NFA-Region II under his leadership.

During Dir. Gonzales' retirement tribute tendered by NFA-Region IV officials, OIC Administrator Tomas Escarez said that his hard work and diligence have greatly benefited the Agency. "I am very grateful to have worked with you and wish you success and happiness in your new journey," he added.

"I am very grateful to have spent my last few months and the opportunity to lead Region IV with great company and deeply honored to have worked alongside with competent employees," said Dir. Mar. He said that he will forever be grateful to the NFA and will cherish all the memories.

For Dir. Mar, it's now time to reap the fruits of his hard work and enjoy a less-stressed life along with his wife Cora, who retired earlier, a former Regional Licensing Officer from NFA-Region II, and their two daughters as well.



## Laguna pays tribute to Lady Retirees By ROBERT E. ALVERO

"The wheel has come full circle and it's the time to begin again. The best is yet to come and I hope that sentiment holds good for the three of you and for the company that bears your influence. Enjoy your retirement, your hobbies, shopping, travel and whatever new activities you turn to. There is a new world of business, leisure, and voluntary opportunities waiting. There are dozens of organizations that would value your talents and skills. Retirement is the moment when all your favorite colleagues will turn to

become your best friends. Again, congratulations on a wonderful career, and best wishes for the next phase, it has been our pleasure to know you and work with you. I wish you long life, health, and happiness with your loved ones. Thank you for your dedication, commitment and contributions to the achievements of the agency's mission and goals." This was the message delivered by Provincial Manager Roman Sanchez during the retirement tribute tendered to the three lady retirees from the provincial office.

The lady retirees are Provincial Industry Services Officer Lydia C. Jacinto who retired on March 27 after 44 years in service, Grains Operations Officer II Nelia J. Yalung on April 9 after 38 years in service, and Assistant Provincial Manager Fe M. Sangalang who spent 42 years with NFA and retired on April 27.

NFA Laguna employees expressed mixed emotions for the three lady retirees. They will surely miss their presence but also joyful with the thought that they will now enjoy the fruits of their labor.



PISO Lydia C. Jacinto



APM Fe M. Sangalang



GOO Nelia J. Yalung

## The Veteran Driver has Retired

By SONNY REY R. RIVERA

He served the NFA for 40 years, 6 months and 3 days to be exact. He started his career as Truck Driver when he joined the food agency on August 1, 1978 assigned at then National Grains Authority (NGA) Benguet Provincial Office. In 1983, he was transferred to NFA Regional Office I in San Juan, La Union.

Mr. Rogelio A. Isibido, or "Manong Anong" as he is fondly called already retired from the government service effective February 3, 2019. He held the Truck Driver position from the time he was hired up to reaching the mandatory retirement age of 65. He was assigned as the official driver of the Assistant Regional Director.

Manong Anong is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Finance at the University of Pangasinan in 1976. He is a father of seven. He resides at Brgy. Nazareno, Agoo, La Union.

You could be filled with awe and be of the view that he should have been assigned either at the Accounting, Operations, Administrative or other sections that require routinary paperwork since he had finished a four-year course. According to him, he is way much better at holding the steering wheel than performing desk work. He easily gets bored!



Manong Anong is good-humored and warm-hearted. Having smart driving skills is innate to him. He's one of the darlings in the workplace. You won't feel dull in a trip if he's the driver because he would certainly tell unending stories and crack jokes.

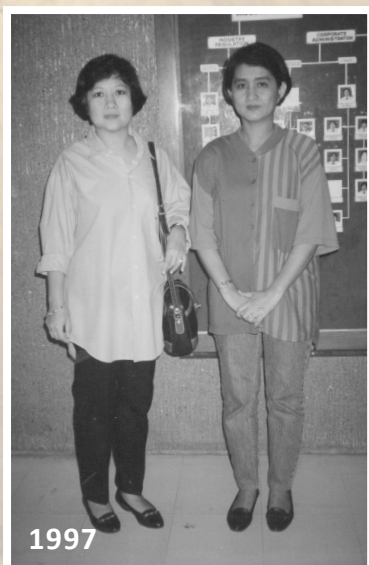
Presently, Manong Anong drives his own tricycle as his pastime. He also looks after his grandchildren.

Thank you for all the fruitful and jolly years Manong Anong. Until we meet again...



ganito kami noon...  
 ganito kami noon...  
 ganito na kami ngayon...  
 ganito na kami ngayon...

## *Best Friends Forever*



**Teresita O. Coloma**  
 Actg. PSQAO (left)  
 and  
**Guadilla G. Manongdo**  
 GOO II (right)



**Lilibeth B. Agua, Chel P. Infantado and Editha M. Lebumfacil**  
 Supply Officer                      Clerk IV / RIO                      Accounts Analyst



**Feliza Balleza**  
 NFA San Jose SGOO (left)  
 and  
**Rosalinda Tacderan**  
 Cashier III (right)





“On every failure you can build  
a tower of success  
with belief in yourself and  
a positive frame of mind”  
- Anil Sinha

