

— *Opisyal na Pahayagan ng Kawanihan sa Pamantayan ng Agrikultura at Palaisdaan* —

PAMANTAYAN

Isyu 3

Enero - Hunyo 2021

BAFS' New Mandate:

Certifying and Accrediting Core
Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)
Groups as Organic Certifying Bodies

page 14



PAMANTAYAN is the official newsletter published by the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS). This will be published every semester to highlight the agency's achievements and impact, and serve as a platform to provide news to our wide array of stakeholders.

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The cover art depicts farmer empowerment as one of the cornerstones to rural development through the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS).

To ensure the integrity of organic products, PGS involves farmers in the entire verification, decision-making, and selling process.

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MESSAGES



MYER G. MULA, PhD
OIC-Director
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The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards formally presents the 3rd issue of Pamantayan that depicts a picture of the Bureau's overall operation through "BAFS Operation Manual: A Reality", and news and stories of how these are supported and put into reality in the 1st Semester of 2021.

Through the pages you will find that stakeholder engagement and collaboration are reflective of BAFS culture. It embraces the Participatory Guarantee System, defined as a locally focused quality assurance system developed and practiced by people engaged in organic agriculture, that is built on a foundation of trust, social network and knowledge exchange (RA No. 11511). It pursues collaboration on standards development and in projects.

Another worthy accomplishment of the institute as a book and e-book publisher is the registration by the National Book Development Board (NBDB) with Certificate of Registration No. 2929 by acknowledging BAFS role in publishing Knowledge Products (KP). The KP is to disseminate information and encourage a common understanding of the provisions of Philippine National Standards (PNS), Organic Agriculture regulations, and specific Food Safety issues related to agriculture and fishery settings such as illustrative guides, manuals, comics, technical bulletins, and posters.

It is my privilege and honor to dedicate this issue to the stakeholders of DA-BAFS, our partners in pushing for the "Masagang Ani at Mataas na Kita" in the agriculture and fisheries sector as 'One DA'. Maraming Salamat at Mabuhay po tayong lahat!

Amidst the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, BAFS personnel continue to be productive from the couch as they are from their cube. This pandemic has tested the passion, commitment, and persistence of BAFS employees in achieving targets. And I am proud to say that the Bureau, as one, passed with flying colors!

It is with great pride that BAFS adds the 3rd issue of Pamantayan to its banner publication line covering the 2021 first semester accomplishments. Together, we worked hard to present the significant activities, stories, announcements, and news that our stakeholders need to know.

We hope that you will find our newsletter a good source of information related to the agri-fishery sector and will share it with your colleagues. Happy reading!



MARY GRACE R. MANDIGMA
Assistant Director
Bureau of Agriculture and
Fisheries Standards,
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BAFS Operations Manual: A Reality

Katrina L. Maminta

In an organization, the operations manual is a repository of all critical information that will help an organization function well. In it, a lot of details are available in one place. So, can a procedural manual be used as an indication that an agency has a strong culture that fosters high-performance and quality service, all the time?

Consider the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) Operations Manual (OM), a guidebook that provides a detailed description of BAFS operations through procedures, work instructions, and relevant forms. The OM has four (4) parts covering the office overview, quality management system, core processes, and administrative-related processes. The processes are consistent with the BAFS Citizen's Charter and Employee's Handbook.

This OM is the output of tedious work and the unwavering commitment of the BAFS personnel to provide not only its new and existing employees but its stakeholders as well, with well-reviewed and updated written processes and procedures.

OIC-Director Myer G. Mula, through the guidance of Secretary William D. Dar, approved the OM last May 2021, which is guided by the



The BAFS Operations Manual can be accessed through this link: <https://bit.ly/bafs798>

mandate of the Bureau's Mission, Vision, and Objectives. As practically flexible as possible, the OM will provide step-by-step guidance so that tasks are carried out towards consistent results.

Do you have meaningful thoughts that will help us continually improve? Contact us on our Facebook page or official website! ■

Successful Turnover of NOAB Secretariat from BAFS to the NOAP-NPCO

Gio Renzo M. Caballero • Geeza June V. Painaga

As the year 2021 starts, the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) embarks on a new endeavour with the approval of the Republic Act No. 11511 or the Act Amending the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010. Taking effect on January 21, 2021, the RA 11511 transfers the function of technical and administrative support for the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB) from the BAFS to the National Program Coordinating Office of the National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP-NPCO). In order to facilitate a smooth transition, a meeting between the BAFS and the NOAP-NPCO was held on January 11, 2021 to discuss the details on the NOAB Secretariat functions. The BAFS, led by OIC-Director Myer G. Mula and Assistant Director Mary Grace R. Mandigma, presented to the NOAP-NPCO the mandates and functions of the NOAB Secretariat per RA 10068, the existing NOAB technical committees and its functions, accomplishments of the NOAB from FY 2012 to 2020, and the proposed priority agenda and calendar of activities for FY 2021. In addition, the two offices discussed specific provisions of RA 11511 to clarify issues and come up with proposed texts for its implementing rules and regulations (IRR) that is currently being drafted.

The transfer officially concluded during the Ceremonial Turnover held on January 15, 2021 at the Agricultural Training Institute - Rural Development Education Center (ATI-RDEC), Quezon City. The ceremonial turnover was graced by Undersecretary Zamzamin L. Ampatuan, Alternate Chairperson of the NOAB, together with the newly appointed non-government members of the NOAB for FY 2020-2023 - Dr. Victorio Fernando D. Nacpil, Small Farmer - Luzon Representative; Mr. Renato D. Dela Cruz, Small Farmer - Mindanao Representative; Mr. Roldan C. Paraguison, Non-Government Organization Representative; Mr. Henry James M. Sison, Agribusiness Firm Representative; and Dr. Adeflor G. Garcia, Academe Sector Representative.

In his speech during the ceremony, OIC-Director Mula recounted the Bureau's decade of service to the National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP) as the technical and administrative secretariat to the NOAB. He gladly welcomed the new mandate provided by RA 11511 and expressed BAFS' commitment to continue its service to the organic agriculture industry, by maintaining and upholding excellence and quality deserved by the stakeholders from the highest policy-making body, down to the grassroots – our farmers and fisherfolks.

In conclusion, Undersecretary Ampatuan commended the BAFS for a “job well done” in providing technical and administrative support to the NOAB. He expressed his support to the NOAP-NPCO in its new undertaking as the technical and administrative secretariat to the NOAB. ■

TradeNet Onboarding Efforts

Katrina L. Maminta

Republic Act No. 11032, otherwise known as “The Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018” mandated all government agencies in the Executive Branch including Local Government Units (LGUs), Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs), and State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) to streamline and harmonize their process to reduce, if not eradicate, red tape in the bureaucracy.

Relatedly, the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) developed and implemented the TradeNet to achieve efficiency and harmonization of procedures across various government agencies concerning trade. According to Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA), TradeNet is an interoperable online platform to reduce processing time and harmonize the permitting procedures involved in import and export clearances. It can also act as the Philippines’ link to the ASEAN Single Window, which can help improve regional interconnectivity and facilitate trade between and among countries.

BAFS as the trade regulatory agency for organic agriculture

Apart from being the sole agency that develops and promotes relevant and science-based Philippine National Standards (PNS) for primary and postharvest agriculture and fishery products, tools and machinery, BAFS also was mandated as the regulatory agency for organic agriculture by virtue of RA 10068 otherwise known as the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010.

As of May 2021, the BAFS has submitted its designated Agency Counterpart Team (ACT) to the DOF. Consequently, BAFS ACT members have attended the virtual meeting organized by the TradeNet Coordinating Team (TCT) last April 14, 2021. The BAFS ACT is responsible for implementing

onboarding activities and providing specific updates, with the corresponding status of each item, based on the TradeNet Onboarding processes and timelines.



Meeting with DOF discussing the onboarding activities held at BAFS meeting room in 2019

BAFS TradeNet onboarding efforts started in 2018 when BAFS personnel attended an initial training led by the DOF’s TCT. Thereafter, in June 2019, the BAFS had approved its User Manuals (verifier/ reviewer, assessor, approver, and client) and Activity Diagrams prepared by DOF. Later this year, BAFS will finalize the agency module and conduct a pilot activity, issue operational guidelines, procedures and manuals, establish a Customer Help Desk, submit a formal notification on the use of TradeNet, and release a public announcement that BAFS is onboard the TradeNet system.

BAFS is already close to completing all the integration and onboarding activities and is excited to go live in the TradeNet system soon! ■

BAFS conducts Seminar-Workshop on Basic Records and Archives Management

Chester G. Benavidez • Georlene P. Orbista • Dr. Alpha Mateo-Lanuza

Government offices generate voluminous and rely numerous records to work efficiently and systematically. To strengthen the system of management and administration of archival records, the Republic Act 9470 also known as the National Archives of the Philippines Act of 2007 requires the State to give utmost priority for the safeguard, protection, and preservation of its public documents and records for efficient and effective governance. All public records with enduring value, held by government offices, including, but not limited to all branches of government, shall be transferred to a permanent government repository for proper management, control, and regulation of record disposition.

To comply with the requirements of RA 9470 and to ensure the accessibility of Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) records relevant to its core functions and support services, the Bureau conducted a Virtual Seminar-Workshop on Basic Records and Archives Management last March 9 to March 12, 2021 via Google Meet. The Seminar-Workshop was participated by 54 BAFS employees and was done in collaboration with the National Archives of the Philippines (NAP) as the competent authority on records management of the Government and other resources relevant to the history and development of the country.



The 54 registered participants of the seminar-workshop in a screen-captured photo at the end of the event.

The activity intended to strengthen the Bureau's management of documented information, records, and their archival in order to update its current records disposition schedule. The updating of records disposition schedule is part of the Bureau's commitment to the continual improvement of its Quality Management System.

The activity focused its discussions on the following topics as led by resource persons from NAP:

1. Republic Act No. 9470 or The National Archives of the Philippines Act of 2007, Introduction to Records Management, Records and Archives Management Program (RAMP), and Records Creation and Control with Ms. Maita Espina-Abunales, Administrative Officer V
2. Records Maintenance and Use, Mail Management, and Files Management with Ms. Cheryl Alvarez, Training Specialist III
3. Records Disposition Administration with Ms. Jhoana Marie M. Ong, Records Management Analyst I
4. Records Center Administration, Archives Administration, and Security of Records with Mr. Wilson Cabiles, Training Specialist I

In addition to the lectures, live quizzes, workshops and open fora were also conducted to ensure a more interactive engagement with the participants.

OIC-Dir. Myer Mula fully supported the endeavor. In his opening message, he highlighted the importance of improving the Bureau's record system and its value in the future.

After the 4-day seminar-workshop, the following recommended actions were lined up for the Bureau:

1. Reconstitution of Records Management Improvement Committee (RMIC);
2. Review and update of records inventory;
3. Updating of BAFS Records Disposition Schedule;
4. Exploration of records center development; and
5. Planning of Training re: Electronic Records Management. ■

Philippine SDOs Strengthen Collaboration on Standards Development

Camille Barraquiel

In February 2021, the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) initiated a series of meetings with the two other Philippine Standards Development Organizations (SDOs), which are Department of Trade and Industry - Bureau of Philippine Standards (DTI-BPS) and Department of Health - Food and Drug Administration (DOH-DA), to strengthen coordination and referral between and among SDOs.

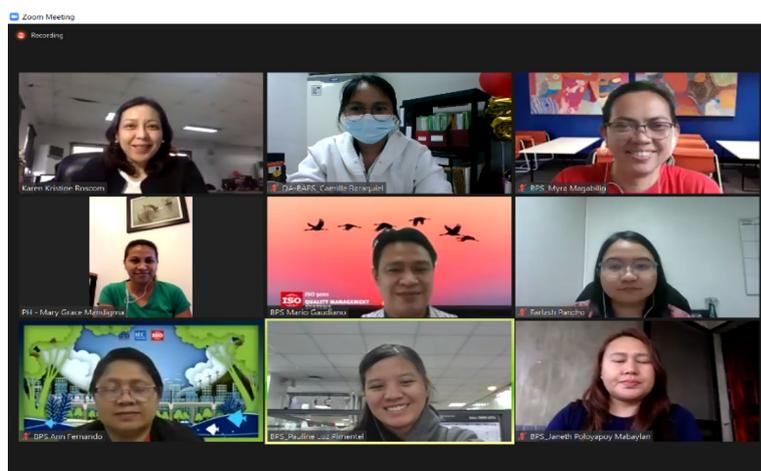
In the Philippines, there are three SDOs with mandates on standards development varying depending on the commodity coverage. BAFS is mandated to develop standards for primary production and post-harvest agriculture and fishery commodities, and machinery, tools, and equipment, BPS to develop standards for other non-food processed products, and FDA for processed and pre-packaged foods. The DTI-BPS serves as the National Standards Body (NSB) of the Philippines, mandated to develop, promulgate, and implement standards for all products in the Philippines, to promote standardization activities in the country, and to ensure the manufacture, production, and distribution of quality products for the protection of the consumer.

The meeting with DTI-BPS was held online on February 1, 2021 and was participated by Mr. Mario Guadiano, Ms. Myra Magabilin, Ms. Ann Fernando, Ms. Pauline Pimentel and Ms. Janeth Mabayan of DTI-BPS and Assistant Director Ms. Mary Grace Mandigma, Ms. Karen Kristine Roscom, Ms. Farlash Pancho and Ms. Camille Barraquiel of BAFS. Meanwhile, the meeting with

DOH-FDA was participated by Ms. Ma. Victoria Pinion, Ms. Caroline Duller and Ms. Gladdys Pascual of DOH-FDA, Engr. Mario Guadiano, Ms. Myra Magabilin, Ms. Janeth Poloyapoy Mabayan and Ms. Ann Fernando of DTI-BPS, and Assistant Director Ms. Mary Grace Mandigma, Ms. Karen Kristine Roscom, Ms. Joeve Calleja, Engr. Ibrahim Racmat, Ms. Farlash Pancho and Ms. Camille Barraquiel of DA-BAFS and was held on March 3, 2021.

Table 1 summarizes the discussions and agreements with the two other SDOs, guided mainly by the laws and issuances that provide standards development mandates to BAFS.

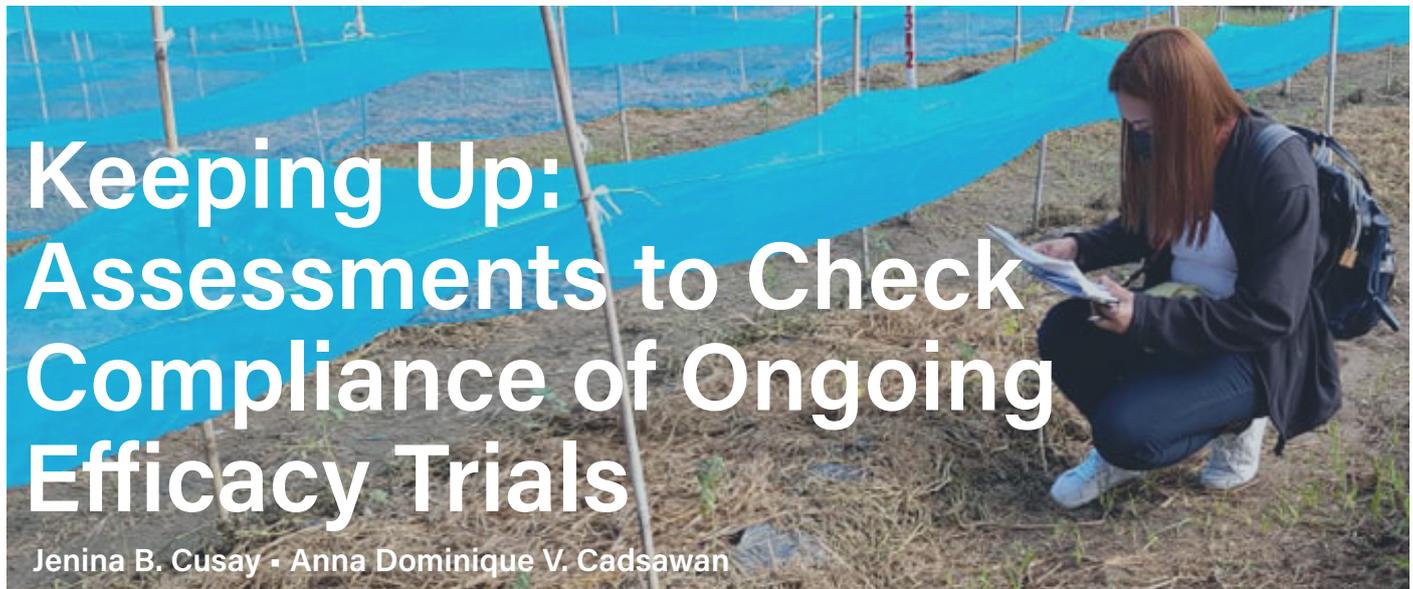
The meeting with DTI-BPS and DOH-FDA also highlighted the need for the establishment of a formal mechanism on information sharing including work programs. ■



DA-BAFS and DTI-BPS holds an online meeting on February 1, 2021

Table 1. Summary of agreements on the standards development functions mandated by several laws and issuances to each SDOs.

Laws and Issuances	BAFS	BPS	FDA
Republic Act No. 7394 (Consumer Act of the Philippines of 1992)	Development of standards for fresh and primary processed products	None	DA-BAFS, DOH-FDA, and DTI-BPS to consider specifying in Article 7 of RA 7394 or its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) the explicit identification of standard Development Organization (SDO) in DA, DOH, and DTI. The 3 agencies should operationally define SDO.
Republic Act No. 8435 (Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997)	Development of standards for primary, and post-harvest agriculture and fishery products	Development of standards for other non-food processed products (e.g., textiles)	BAFS to define the primary and secondary process under RA 8435 and other internationally recognized documents for discussion with DOH-FDA.
Republic Act No. 10068 as amended by RA No. 11511 (Organic Agriculture Act of 2010)	Development of organic agriculture standards including organic fiber Registration of organic producers and products Accreditation of organic certifying bodies	Development of standards for organic textiles Business name registration related to organic	BAFS to officially write to the Director-General of FDA regarding the development of PNS under the 3 areas of concern namely: 1. PNS on Organic Cosmetics; 2. PNS for Processed and Pre-packaged food products including Organic Food Supplements; and 3. PNS for Organic Body Care Products. BAFS to request a meeting with the FDA (ICTMD and CFRR) on the registration database concerning organic food products. BAFS, as per comment of FDA, may include specific provision in the IRR of the amended Organic Agriculture Act on the submission of the organic certificate as proof issued by BAFS accredited OCB, for processed food applying for product registration with claim that the product is organic (both for local and imported products).
Republic Act No. 10601 (Agriculture and Fisheries Mechanization Act of 2013)	Development of standards for agriculture and fishery machinery, tools, and equipment	None	The succeeding standards for agriculture and fishery machinery, tools, equipment and structure shall be named as PNS/BAFS.
Republic Act No. 10611 (Food Safety Act of 2013)	Development of food safety standards for primary and postharvest foods, including organic agriculture	None	DA and DOH to schedule another meeting to explore the possibility of a joint PNS development covering primary to processed products.
Republic Act No. 10817 (Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Act of 2016)	Development of standards for Halal agriculture and fishery primary and postharvest foods	Development of Halal standards for nonfood products aside from drugs and cosmetics	None



Keeping Up: Assessments to Check Compliance of Ongoing Efficacy Trials

Jenina B. Cusay · Anna Dominique V. Cadsawan

Seems that options are running out due to pandemic restrictions? Being in the new normal did not hinder BAFS Organic Agriculture Division- Registration and Evaluation Section (OAD-RES) to fulfill its mandate of ensuring that organic inputs, specifically organic biocontrol agents (OBCAs), are compliant with the requirements for efficacy trials. The BAFSOAD-RES, as the team responsible for the registration of integrated organic farms, organic input producers, and products, developed a mechanism to check and verify continuing compliance of on-going field trials with approved protocols through a blended approach - (1) actual field visits and (2) via online platforms.

Field assessment is an activity conducted to check the execution and compliance of efficacy trials with approved protocols. This will ensure that organic bio-control agents (OBCA) products that are being sold in the market are effective according to its claims. However, with the travel restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, remote checking was seen as an alternative in carrying out assessments.

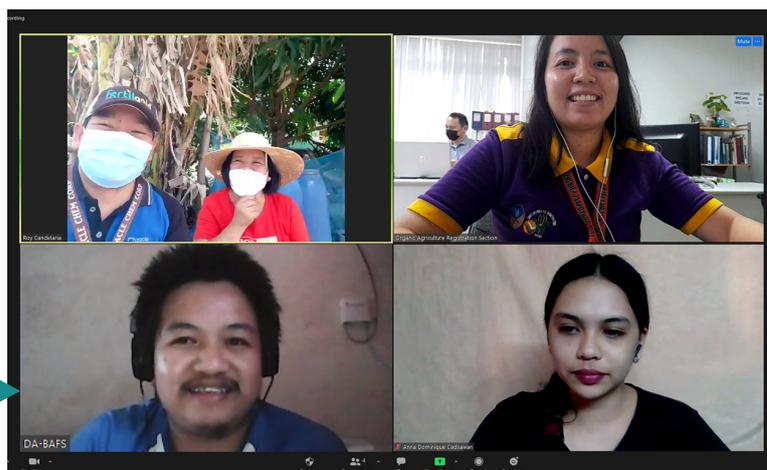
Field Assessment: On-site Visit to Verify Compliance with Approved Efficacy Trials

Field assessment is a method of verifying the compliance of an on-going efficacy trial with the approved protocols. The activity is being set out by the OAD-RES team based on the company's submitted efficacy trial plan. The team usually conducts the assessment during or after the first treatment application, a critical stage of the trial.

On June 14-15, 2021, the team composed of Ms. Jenina B. Cusay and Ms. Anna Dominique V. Cadsawan conducted field visits to two efficacy trials of Promax against Fusarium Wilt (*Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *lycopersici*) located in Caurdanetaan, Umingan, Pangasinan (site 2) and Licaong, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija (site 1). The trial proponent, Oracle Chem Corporation, represented by Mr. Roy B. Candelaria was present during the field visit together with Dr. Constanca Dacumos, BAFS Certified Researcher, who is conducting the two efficacy trials.



Field assessments of on-going efficacy trials: Promax Site 2 - Caurdanetaan, Uminga, Pangasinan (cover photo); and Enviro Ultra PK Site 2 - BSU, La Trinidad, Benguet (top photo)



BAFS OAD-RES compliance assessment team conducts a remote assessment of Oracle Chem Corporation together with BAFS certified researcher Dr. Constanca Dacumos

On June 16, 2021, the OAD-RES compliance assessment team conducted the field assessment of the product Enviro Ultra PK for the control of downy mildew and head rot of cabbage located at the Pomology Area, Benguet State University, La Trinidad, Benguet. The team was joined by Ms. Gellie de Leon of RadialPro Trading Inc. and BAFS Certified Researcher, Dr. Aurora Piñon.

The team assessed the compliance of the on-going field trials with the following parameters: 1) methodology, 2) cultural management practices and 3) process in data gathering. Based on the field assessment findings,, it was concluded that the three (3) efficacy trials are being conducted in accordance with the approved trial protocols.

It was indeed a fulfilling activity, that after a year, the BAFS OAD-RES team once again was able to do this vital step of the registration process. Though the conduct of remote compliance assessment of the field efficacy trials was also very effective in carrying out tasks, on-site assessment is still the better way to go.

Remote Assessment: An Alternative Mechanism to Verify Field Compliances of Approved Efficacy Trial Protocols

Utilizing available technologies during this restricted time, the OAD-RES explored remote compliance assessment as an alternative way to continuously assess efficacy trials. To proceed with the remote compliance assessment, a Feasibility Risk Analysis (FRA) was first established.

(continued on page 31)

BSS&S Project on DA Veterinary Diagnostic Labs Concludes

Zaireen B. Cleofe

The 45-month journey of the Project on the “Enhancement of the Biosafety and Biosecurity Capabilities at the Department of Agriculture Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories” came to its conclusion last March 2021.

In 2017, the Department of Agriculture (DA), with the support of United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (US DTRA) endeavored to improve the biosafety, biosecurity and biosurveillance (BSS&S) capabilities, capacity, culture and laboratory infrastructure of the Department through the implementation of the BSS&S Project. The BSS&S Project specifically targeted the improvement of the laboratories of the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and the DA Regional Field Offices at Regions 2, 3, 7, 10, 11 and 12. The project’s main goal was met and was even exceeded through the valuable support of the project collaborators namely the BAI, Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering (BAFE), Information and Communications Technology Service (ICTS), Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), Special Projects Coordination and Management Assistance Division (SPCMAD), Project Development Service (PDS), the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) and regional counterparts. The notable accomplishments of the BSS&S Project were its contribution to 3 of the Department’s 8 Paradigms, particularly Modernization of Agriculture, Infrastructure Development and Road Map Development.

The project designed, constructed, renovated and equipped laboratory facilities compliant with Biosafety Level-2 (BSL2) laboratory standards. New Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (RADDL) facilities were constructed in Mandaue City, Cebu and Tarlac City, Tarlac.

Similarly, a new Anthrax Testing Laboratory was constructed in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan. The renovations of the RADDL building took place in Cagayan de Oro City and General Santos City. RADDLs in Tuguegarao City and Davao City were also enhanced in consideration of the biosecurity measures. The BAI – Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (ADDRL) generator was also upgraded to support operations of critical equipment.

“These targeted types of projects are really the cutting edge of the development in a developing country like the Philippines.”

- Former DA USec. Segfredo R. Serrano

The new and renovated RADDLs were equipped with state-of-the-art laboratory diagnostic equipment and were provided with initial outfitting consumables. The RADDLs staff in the Philippines were also capacitated through a series of BSS&S trainings. Capacity was established for the diagnosis of animal diseases including the most recent: African Swine Fever (ASF), Avian Influenza (AI) and Newcastle Disease. The Department’s management and leadership were also trained to ensure sustainability and continued development of the Department’s BSS&S in the future.

Essential documents that will support the continual improvement of DA laboratories were also drafted and approved. DA issued

Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratories (RADDL) in various regions (from top left, clockwise): Tarlac City (Region 3), Cagayan de Oro City (Region 10), General Santos City (Region 12), and Mandaue City, Cebu (Region 7)



Department Order No. 1, series of 2021 "Adoption of the DA Integrated Laboratory Master Plan". DA Integrated Laboratory Master Plan is a reference document, which incorporates international bio-risk management standards and laboratory best practices. The DA also crafted the Plan of Action and Milestones (POA&M) which outlines an integrated multi-agency plan over the next five years to establish a sustainable and effective BSS&S system in the DA. A directive on the implementation of this document is expected to be issued through a Memorandum Circular No. 12 s. 2021 approved on June 22, 2021.

The US-DTRA also bestowed assistance and recommendations in the determination of the most appropriate approach of the potential Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) for the DA - ADDRL.

"These targeted types of projects are really the cutting edge of the development in a developing country like the Philippines", the former Undersecretary for Policy and Planning and former Chairman of the DA BSS Project Steering Committee Segfredo R. Serrano said. ■



▲ Anthrax Algorithm and Safe Practices Training conducted. Photo taken by Black and Veatch Special Projects Corp.



▲ An Anthrax Reference Laboratory located in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan. Photo taken by Black and Veatch Special Projects Corp.

COVER STORY

BAFS' New Mandate: Certifying and Accrediting Core Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) Groups as Organic Certifying Bodies

Geeza June V. Painaga

The amendment of Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 or Republic Act No. 10068, by virtue of RA No. 11511 is a dream come true for most smallholder farmers and fisherfolk in the organic agriculture industry.

The RA No. 11511 recognizes Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) as an option for smallholder farmers and fisherfolks on organic certification. The PGS, which is defined in RA No. 11511 as 'a locally focused quality assurance system developed and practiced by people engaged in organic agriculture, that is built on a foundation of trust, social network and knowledge exchange' empowers the organization and its members particularly the farmers and fisherfolk including the consumers through direct participation in the establishment and sustaining their own system that will guarantee organic integrity of their produce and products. The system also acknowledges the involvement of other sectors in the community as an integral part not only in verifying the integrity of the produce and products but also in providing a platform for sharing of experiences and learning new farming techniques in organic agriculture.

With the amendment of OA Act of 2010, the Department of Agriculture and its implementing agencies are now tasked to implement programs and activities that will aid in the formation and/or strengthening of

PGS groups. The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS), in particular, is tasked to certify and accredit core PGS groups that intend to operate as organic certifying bodies (OCBs).

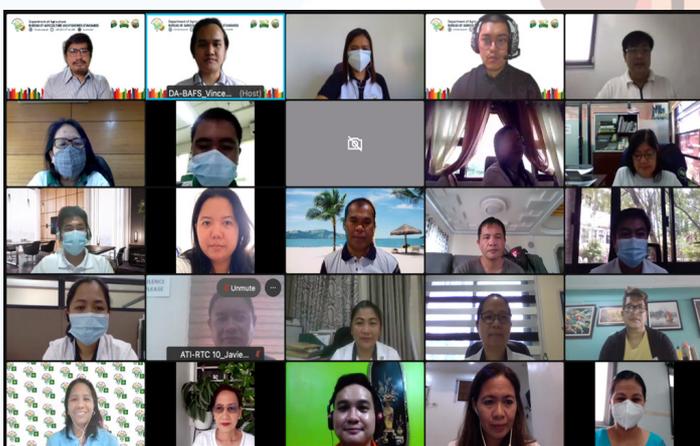
The BAFS has played a major role in the promotion and development of organic agriculture even before the enactment of the OA Act in 2010. And now, with the amendment of the law, the BAFS sets forth to a new endeavour.

[How did it start?] BAFS' initiatives in support to the amendment of OA Act of 2010

As early as 2013, various small farmers' and fishers' associations and nongovernment organizations have been lobbying to the DA and to the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB) the recognition of PGS as an organic certification scheme. This clamor was due to the restrictive provisions of Section 18 (Labelling of Organic Produce) of the OA Act of 2010, which only allowed third-party certified operators to use 'organic' as label to their produce and products. This restrictive provision has been



Turnover Ceremony of NOAB Secretariat Functions from BAFS to NOAP-NPCO held on January 15, 2021



General Orientation on PGS held on June 10, 2021 through a virtual platform, attended by personnel from the DA-RFOs, and ATI-RTCs



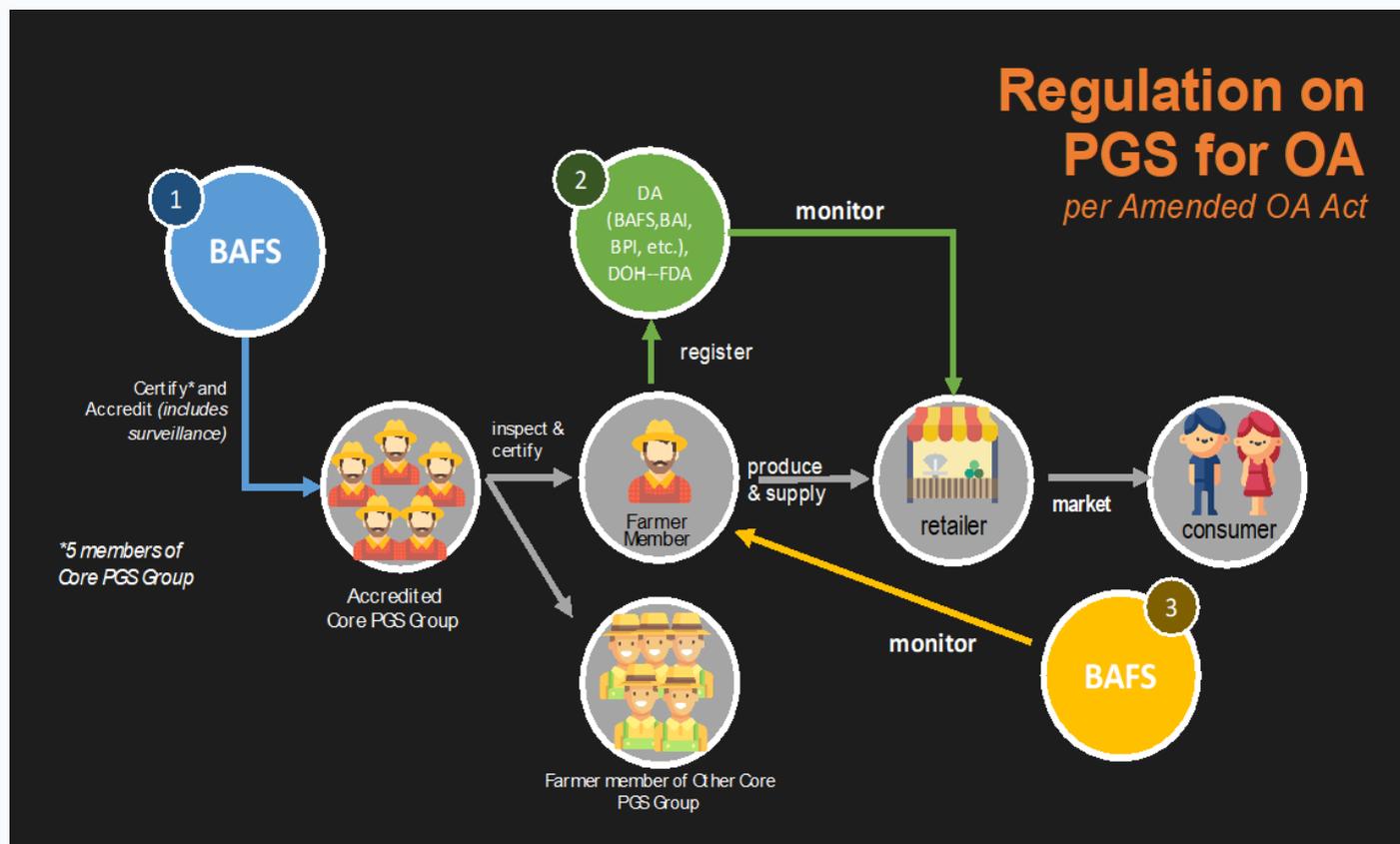
Grand Launching of PGS and unveiling of the Philippine PGS Guaranteed Organic Mark held on June 04, 2021 attended by (Clockwise) ATI Assistant Director Rosana P. Mula, NOAB-NGO Representative Mr. Roldan Paraguison, BAFS Director Myer G. Mula, NOAP-NPCO Director Bernadette F. San Juan, and NOAB Small Farmer Representative for Luzon Dr. Victorio Fernando Nacpil

identified as one of the major bottlenecks in the implementation of the National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP). The high cost of certification and tedious process for third-party certification discourage small organic agriculture farmers and fishers in getting certified despite the DA's certification assistance program (provision of technical and financial assistance). This is evident on the consolidated data of BAFS from 2011 to 2020, where only an average of 57 operators per year were certified as organic and the proliferation of produce and products labeled as "organic" without third-party certification in the local markets.

To address these concerns, the NOAB through the BAFS, former NOAB Secretariat, initiated the amendment of the OA Act in 2016. Series of technical working group (TWG) meetings and public consultative meetings with concerned organic agriculture stakeholders were conducted to come up with a comprehensive proposal for the amendment of RA No. 10068. The proposed amendment as approved by the NOAB was submitted to both Congresses through the respective offices of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Agriculture.

Moreover, in preparation for implementation of PGS, the Technical Services Division (TSD) of BAFS facilitated the development of guidelines for the establishment and maintaining a PGS group. This draft guidelines was developed in close collaboration with the existing PGS groups across the country and has undergone public consultation. Although it was not formally approved, the draft guidelines for PGS subsequently served as a reference document in the development of the guidelines relative to the implementation of PGS.

The staunch lobbying of the farmers and fishers' associations and non-government organizations paved the way to the enactment of the RA No. 11511, an act amending the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 (RA No. 10068) on December 23, 2020.



[What has been done?]
BAFS Conducted Activities relative to the Amended OA Act of 2010

With the start of year 2021, the BAFS embarked on a new endeavour with the approval of the Republic Act No. 11511. Pursuant to Section 10 of the said Act, the BAFS officially turned over its function as the administrative and technical secretariat of the NOAB to the National Program Coordinating Office of the National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP-NPCO) on January 15, 2021. Prior to the ceremonial turnover, a series of meetings between the Bureau and the NOAP-NPCO were conducted to ensure the smooth transition.

In support of the new NOAB Secretariat, the BAFS assisted in the drafting of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of RA No. 11511. The BAFS conducted a series of consultative meetings with concerned offices under the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) that have regulatory functions

under the amended Act. The meetings were conducted to clarify the mandates of the concerned agencies vis-a-vis its roles and responsibilities in accordance with the amended Act, and to come up with their proposed provisions to the draft IRR. The draft IRR was approved by the NOAB on March 30, 2021.

While waiting for the IRR to take effect, the BAFS concurrently developed two (2) guidelines to operationalize the provisions of Section 14 (Participatory Guarantee System) of the amended OA Act and its IRR. The following draft guidelines underwent public consultation and a series of consultations with the NOAB, partner implementing agencies, and existing PGS groups prior to its finalization and approval by the NOAB on May 21, 2021:

1. Guidelines for the Operation of Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) Groups as Organic Certifying Bodies (OCBs); and

2. Guidelines for the Certification and Accreditation of Core PGS Groups as Organic Certifying Bodies (OCBs).

Further to this, the Bureau in close coordination with the NOAP-NPCO and the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) conducted several activities that include orientation and a series of training sessions for the partner implementing agencies, as follows:

1. Virtual orientation on Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for DA NOAP Operating Units - regional field offices (RFOs) and implementing agencies to harmonize the understanding of the partner implementing agencies on the basic concepts of PGS per RA No. 11511
2. Development of Standardized Training Module for PGS to ensure uniform delivery of capability-building activities consistent with the provisions of the amended OA Act of 2010 and its IRR. The Standardized Training Module contains topics on the amended OA Act of 2010 and its salient provisions pertaining to PGS, Philippine National Standards (PNS) on organic agriculture, criteria and requirement for PGS groups to operate as OCBs, procedure for certification and accreditation of core PGS groups, as well as lectures on inspection and auditing protocols.
3. Grand Launching of the PGS for organic agriculture and the Philippine PGS Guaranteed Organic Mark on June 4, 2021. The activity aimed to increase the awareness and interest of the public on the PGS pursuant to the provisions of RA No. 11511, and the NOAB approved mark for PGS guaranteed/certified organic produce and products.
4. Conduct of Specialist Training Course on PGS in collaboration with the Agricultural Training Institute from June 14 to June 25, 2021. The target participants are the Organic Agriculture Focal Persons and Alternate Focal Persons of DA-RFOs, NOAP Implementing Agencies, and ATI

Regional Training Centers (ATI-RTCs). The specialist training course aims to capacitate the technical personnel of the said offices on the establishment and operations of PGS groups consistent with the organic agriculture standards and corresponding technical regulations. The graduates of this training course will facilitate and serve as resource persons of the capability-building activities for PGS groups in their respective regions.

5. Conduct of series of focused group orientations on PGS with DA-RFOs, which aim to ensure a uniform understanding of the basic concepts of PGS, and to clarify the collaboration mechanisms between the BAFS and DA-RFOs in the implementation of PGS. To date, the BAFS has conducted the following orientations:
 - a. DA - RFO I on May 27, 2021;
 - b. DA - Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) on May 28, 2021;
 - c. DA - RFO III on June 10, 2021;
 - d. DA - RFO V on June 14, 2021;
 - e. DA - RFO II on June 29, 2021; and
 - f. DA - RFO VII on June 29, 2021.

[Ways Forward] BAFS' Upcoming Activities for PGS

On July 2021, the Bureau is set to conduct focused group orientations in the remaining regions.

Moreover, with the new mandate, the BAFS needs the assistance from the Regional Field Offices (RFOs) of the Department of Agriculture, particularly the Regulatory Division in the conduct of inspections and audits to core PGS groups. As such, the BAFS will capacitate the Regulatory Divisions of the DA-RFOs and DA regulatory agencies on the process for certification and accreditation of core PGS groups as OCBs. A week-long training for this purpose is tentatively scheduled for the 2nd week of August 2021. ■

BAFS strengthens collaboration with DA-RFOs for the Implementation of PGS

Geeza June V. Painaga

In preparation for the implementation of the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) provisions of the amended Organic Agriculture Act of 2010, the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) conducted a series of focused group orientations in various DA Regional Field Offices (DA-RFOs) that started on May 28, 2021. The activity aims to ensure a uniform understanding of the basic concepts of PGS pursuant to the amended Organic Agriculture Act of 2010, and to clarify the collaboration mechanisms among the BAFS, DA-RFOs, and Bureau of Fisheries Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in the implementation of PGS.

The BAFS Team led by Director Myer G. Mula together with the personnel from Organic Agriculture Division presented the salient provisions of the amended Organic Agriculture Act of 2010, particularly those pertaining to the PGS, and overview of the certification and accreditation process of core PGS groups. These presentations were based on the draft guidelines crafted by BAFS that provide the criteria and procedure for the certification and accreditation of core PGS groups that intend to operate and apply as organic certifying bodies (OCBs). The rollout of activities relative to the implementation of PGS for FY 2021 was also presented.

During the focused group orientations, the DA-RFOs commonly sought clarification on the composition of the core PGS group, the requirement for accreditation, and the

role of the DA-RFOs and the BFAR in the implementation of PGS. The BAFS Team clarified that the criteria, which include the composition of the core PGS group and the requirements were all specified in Section 14 of the amended Organic Act of 2010. The BAFS added that the Regional Organic Agriculture Program (ROAP) of DA-RFOs and BFAR together with the Regional Training Centers of Agricultural Training Institute (ATI-RTC) will play a major role in capacitating interested PGS groups to qualify for certification and accreditation conducted by BAFS. On the other hand, the Regulatory Divisions of these offices will be tapped by the BAFS during the inspections for certification of the core PGS group members and audits for accreditation of core PGS groups.

To date, the BAFS has conducted focused group orientations in DA-RFO 1 (Ilocos Region), Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), DA-RFO 3 (Central Luzon), DA-RFO 5 (Bicol Region), DA-RFO 7 (Central Visayas), and DA-RFO 2 (Cagayan Valley).

Another round of the focused group orientations is scheduled this July 2021 in regions 4A, 4B, 6, and 8. Focused group orientations in the remaining regions are scheduled in August 2021. ■



From top, left to right: (1) The Focus Group Orientation (FGO) in DA RFO 1 was attended by personnel from the Regulatory Division, AMAD, RAED, and the Regional OA Program; (2) FGO in DA-RFO 3 conducted on June 10, 2021 through a blended mode. It was attended by RED Crispulo G. Bautista, Jr., personnel from Research and Regulations led by OIC-RTD Arthur Dayrit, Operations and Extensions RTD Eduardo Lapuz, Jr., and Regional OA Program led by Dr. Irene M. Adion, OA Program Focal Person. (3) FGO in DA-RFO 5 held on June 14, 2021 was attended by RED Rodel P. Tornilla, RTD Luz Marcelino, OA Focal Team headed by Ms. Adelina Losa, Regulatory Focal Team headed by Ms. Rose Imperial, and SAAD Team headed by Ms. Mae Rodriguez; (4) FGO in DA-RFO 2, conducted in blended mode was attended by RED Narcisso Edillo, Ms. Rosemarie Martin, Chief of the Regulatory Division of RFO 2, Mr. George Caday, OA Focal, personnel from Regulatory Division and OA Program, and representatives from BFAR Region 2. Center Chiefs of the Research and Experiment Stations of DA-RFO 2 also attended via Google Meet; (5) FGO in DA-RFO 7 was attended by the Research and Regulations RTD Joel A. Elumba, Field Operations Regulations Division Chief Dr. Gerry S. Avila, Regulatory Division Chief Dr. Raul D. Migrño, and OA Program Focal Person Ms. Mae Montecillo. RD Alfeo Piloton and personnel of BFAR Regional Office 7 also attended the orientation (Photo by Ms. Jolina Dano, SAAD Region 7); (6) BAFS and Regional Team led by Director Mula and Ms. Calleja introduced PGS to the Jagobiao Urban Integrated Farmers Association Inc. during the site visit held on June 29, 2021.

Regulations to Ensure Organic Integrity and Organic Certification Process

Vicente D. Limsan, Jr. • Joeve S. Calleja

Certification is a process of providing written attestation that a clearly identified process has been assessed according to specified requirements or standards and is found to be compliant. In organic agriculture, certification is the attestation from an organic certification body that a farming and/or processing system is compliant with the specified requirements of the applicable Philippine National Standards for organic agriculture (PNS for OA). This process ensures that the products labeled as organic have been assessed and certified indicating that its integrity as organic is maintained.

However, how do we know that these certification bodies, or commonly called as organic certifying bodies or OCBs, are assessing these farming and/or processing systems in accordance with the applicable PNS for OA? How do we ensure that these OCBs are not partial to its clients, which are the subject of certification? How do these OCBs conduct their assessment? These are just some of the questions on organic certification. These questions are best answered by accreditation.

Accreditation is an attestation that an OCB is competent, consistent in its operation, and impartial in its conduct of organic certification. By virtue of accreditation, the OCBs are assessed in terms of their capacity and capability to conduct inspection—the physical examination of the farm or food systems or processing facilities to verify compliance with specified requirements. In organic certification scheme, the BAFS, by virtue of the Republic Act (RA) No. 10068 or Organic Agriculture Act of 2010, which was recently amended by the RA 11511, is mandated to grant accreditation to OCBs.

For the official accreditation of OCBs, the set of requirements is provided in Department Circular (DC) No. 01, Series of 2018 or the Revised Guidelines for the Official Accreditation of Organic Certifying Bodies. This Guideline is consistent with the principles of the ISO/IEC 17065:2012 - Conformity assessment—Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes, and services, to ensure competent, consistent operation, and impartial provision of certification.

The DC No. 01, Series of 2018 specifies the minimum requirements for an entity or body to operate as an OCB such as, but not limited to, criteria, resource requirements such as qualification and competence of personnel, process requirements like documented procedures for inspection and certification, and documentation and recordkeeping, including control of documents and records.

The minimum requirements for certification, on the other hand, are set forth by the applicable PNS for OA. The applicable PNS for OA is being used by the accredited third-party OCBs in the conduct of inspection and certification services. There are substances that can be used in organic agriculture and these are listed in the Standard as annexes. Substances that are not listed in any of the Annexes mean that these are not allowed for use in organic agriculture. With the advancement in technology, new substances have been permitted for use in organic agriculture.

The DC No. 07, Series of 2020 titled as Guidelines for the Establishment, Maintenance, and Amendment of the National List of Permitted

Substances for Organic Agriculture, guides the process for the inclusion of these new substances in the Annexes. This Circular provides the procedure for the review and approval of amendment to the list of permitted substances and materials, thus facilitating its faster amendment.

Through the faster mechanism for establishment, maintenance and amendment of the list of permitted substances for organic agriculture as provided in DC No. 07, Series of 2020, another DC was released through DC No. 09, Series of 2020.

The DC No. 09, Series of 2020 or the National List of Permitted Substances for Organic Agriculture, or commonly called as "National List", provides the comprehensive list of permitted substances. The list is divided into four categories: (1) Organic Crop Production, (2) Organic Animal Production, (3) Organic Aquaculture Production, and (4) Organic Food Production. The list of substances listed in the Annexes of the applicable PNS for OA have been repealed and replaced by the

National List. The National List, however, must be read and used in conjunction with the applicable PNS for OA.

To ensure that the products labeled and sold as organic are true to its claim, there are several regulations that are in place. These regulations are part of the control system to ensure that the bodies or entities providing certification are competent, consistent and impartial in its provision of inspection and certification services; and the products certified as organic are compliant with the minimum requirements as provided in applicable PNS for OA and the National List.

The DC 1 s.2018, DC 7 s.2020 and DC 9 s.2020 are downloadable in the BAFS Official Website at <http://www.bafs.da.gov.ph>. ■



BAFS Goals and its Logical Framework

Dr. Alpha M. Lanuza

True to its commitment to continually improve its system, the Bureau developed its first logical framework through the leadership of OIC-Director Myer G. Mula and the collaborative efforts of four (4) technical divisions. The BAFS Logical Framework is anchored in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan of the Bureau which was developed in partnership with the Development Academy of the Philippines.



The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is an analytical process and set of tools used to support objectives-oriented project planning and management. It provides a set of interlocking concepts which are used as part of an iterative process to aid structured and systematic analysis of a project or programme idea¹.

Following this approach, a program or project is recognized to have three basic levels of responsibility namely:

1. Inputs/Activities refer to the resources and set of activities done by an organization;
2. Outputs refer to the results committed to be produced by the managers; and
3. Purpose refers to the reason or rationale why the outputs are produced.

Above these three hierarchy is the superior level known as the Goal which relates to the aspirations of an organization in relation to national or societal objectives.

All levels are linked and are defined by a causal relationship. The inputs are perceived to contribute to the output completion leading to the realization of the purpose towards the achievement of overall goals. They are linked by a

¹Lifted in verbatim from the publication of EU Integration Office of Government of the Republic of Serbia entitled: Guide to the Logical Framework Approach: A Key Tool for Project Cycle Management (2nd edition)

hypothesis where a series of predictions are made using an IF-THEN statement. Since uncertainties are part of predictions, the LFA also considers the recognition of uncontrollable factors, such as assumptions and risks, that may affect the hypothesis.

With this structure, the logical framework gives an organization a sensible flow of objectives from the ground to the national level.

Specifically, the BAFS Logical Framework anchored its goal in its mandates which are: ensuring consumer health and safety, and making agri-fishery products globally competitive. It is supported by related impacts and purposes as well as the specific outputs and activities tasked to each division. All in all, these will lead to the attainment of the Bureau's overall goals.

The BAFS Logical Framework uses indicators and means of verification to ensure that results are measurable and observable. Indicators set conditions that demonstrate the attainment of results while means of verification provide tangible means that would verify the existence of the indicator.

Similarly, the logical framework parallels the direction of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to link the employees' performance with the organizational performance through the mechanism of Strategic Performance Management System (SPMS). The SPMS requires government agencies to measure their performance using the performance commitment and review form with corresponding success indicators and rating criteria on quality, timeliness, and efficiency.

The Bureau aligned its performance commitment and review form with the approved logical framework to ensure that employees' performances contribute to the achievement of the Bureau's goals.

Lastly, the approved logframe highlighted the interrelation of each division. Despite the different functions, their connection to each other are deemed inevitable through the common goals and ground of developing, promoting, and implementing Philippine National Standards. ■



BAFS Participation in the ASEAN Meetings for Agriculture, Fisheries, and Livestock Working Groups

Standards Development Division

As one of the founding members of the ASEAN, the Philippines continues to actively participate in the meetings of various working groups towards achieving the region's motto of 'One Vision, One Identity, One Community'. In terms of standards development activities for agriculture, the Department of Agriculture (DA) through the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) commits to harmonize the Philippine National Standards (PNS) on agriculture and fishery products with international (i.e. Codex) and regional (i.e. ASEAN) standards. Hence, the Bureau particularly the Standards Development Division (SDD) sees to it that the PNS is aligned with the adopted ASEAN standards. This year, the SDD participated in several ASEAN meetings relevant to standards development purposes. All of these meetings were conducted virtually due to Covid-19 travel restrictions.

Experts Working Group on Good Agricultural Practices (EWG-GAP)

The 12th EWG-GAP met via BlueJeans to discuss the AMS status of ASEAN GAP implementation and the alignment of the national standards with the ASEAN GAP Standard. Singapore hosted the meeting with participation from the representatives of the

ten ASEAN Member States. ASEAN cooperation partners - JICA and GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)) also presented the progress of ongoing projects during the Working Group meeting. For the status of alignment of PNS on GAP for Fruits and Vegetables (PNS/BAFS 49:2017) or Philippine GAP (PhilGAP) Standard with the ASEAN GAP Standard, the Working Group meeting recommended to review and revise the standard to attain full alignment with ASEAN GAP. As the lead of the alignment initiatives of the AMS national standards with the ASEAN GAP standard, BAFS will provide assistance on the conduct of alignment exercises.

EWG on Organic Agriculture (OA)

This year marks the last year where the Philippines will act as its Chairman. The 5th EWG-OA was chaired by Ms. Mary Grace Mandigma, Assistant Director of the Bureau and was held virtually last May 21, 2021. The Meeting was participated by representatives from the ten AMS. The AMS discussed the implementation of the Plan of Action (POA) for the ASEAN Cooperation on Organic Agriculture (2021-2025) and validated the alignment of Singapore's national organic standard vis-a-vis ASEAN Standard

for Organic Agriculture (ASOA). The meeting agenda included the presentation of ASEAN-German Project on Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Value Chains in ASEAN (AgriTrade) and updating the list of National Focal Points of EWG-OA. According to the 5th EWG-OA Meeting report, the next Chairman of the EWG OA is Singapore, pending internal consultation and consultation with Thailand. Based on the Rules of Procedures (ROP), Chairmanship of EWG on OA will be for a term of maximum of 4 years.

EWG on the Harmonization of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) of Pesticides among ASEAN countries

The Philippines through the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) hosted the 25th Meeting of the EWG on the Harmonization of MRLs of Pesticides among ASEAN countries on May 24-25, 2021. The Meeting aims to facilitate the trade of agricultural commodities through harmonization of standards for pesticides in the ASEAN region. The Working Group Meeting was participated by delegates of the ten AMS. The Philippine delegation was headed by Dr. Amelia Tejada of FPA together with Ms. Jacqueline Romualdez, and Ms. Bella Fe Carmona; BAFS representatives, Ms. Karen Kristine Roscom, Ms. Farlash Pancho, and Ms. Kristel Alarice Aborido; and BPI representatives, Ms. Esperanza DG Uy, and Dr. Sonny B. Conde. The discussion focused on the harmonization of MRLs of pesticides for the following commodities: carambola, chili, longan, mangosteen, jackfruit, pepper, and rice. The AMS also reported the confirmation and identification of pesticides for harmonization for CY 2022, and the progress of adoption of the ASEAN MRLs as the national MRLs. The Philippines will continue to hold the Chairmanship of the EWG-MRLs for the period of 2020 to 2022, which are the 24th, 25th, and 26th EWG-MRLs Meetings. The 26th EWG-MRLs meeting in 2022 will be hosted by Thailand.

EWG - Good Aquaculture Practices (GAQP)

The Philippines, through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), hosted the 1st EWG-GAQP Meeting on June 1, 2021. The meeting was participated by delegates of the ten AMS. The Philippine delegation was headed by BFAR with support from the BAFS-SDD, represented by Ms. Karen Kristine A. Roscom and Ms. Camille B. Baraquiel. The meeting

discussion concentrated mainly on the Plan of Action of the ASEAN Cooperation on GAQP (2021-2025). Each AMS gave a 10-minute presentation on the implementation of GAQP at national level. The proposed alignment matrix tool and the Guidance Manual for using the alignment matrix were also discussed.

Task Force on ASEAN Standard for Horticultural Produce and Other Food Crops (TF-MASHP)

The 16th TF-MASHP was held last June 08, 2021. The meeting was chaired by Assistant Director Mary Grace Mandigma with representatives from Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam in attendance. The Philippine delegation was led by Ms. Karen Kristine A. Roscom and OIC-Dir. Myer G Mula of BAFS along with the members from the DA- Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) - Ms. Mary Ann Guerrero, Ms. Nancy Aspuria and Mr. Jerico Noynay and DA- Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) - Dir. Vivencio R. Mamaril. The Task Force secretariat for the meeting was also spearheaded by the representatives from the BAFS-SDD. The Meeting endorsed the draft ASEAN Standard for Romaine Lettuce to the 28th ASWGC Meeting, for subsequent endorsement to SSOM-42nd AMAF and 43rd AMAF. The Meeting also discussed the draft ASEAN Standards for Avocado and Ginger, approved the development of ASEAN Standard for Oranges and Star fruit as new work, identified longan, table grapes, fresh bamboo, grains, and mature seeds as commodities for harmonization in CY 2022 to 2024, agreed to circulate Plan of Action (PoA) on MASHP (2017-2020) for comments and updating, and updated the list of MASHP focal points. The 17th Meeting of the TF-MASHP will be hosted by Brunei Darussalam in 2022.

EWG on Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP)

On June 24, BAFS will participate again in the 5th (EWG-GAHP). BAFS and BAI conducted a preparatory meeting last June 18, 2021 led by Ms. Karen Kristine Roscom of BAFS. BAFS and BAI discussed and prepared the position of the Philippines on the agenda item listed on the draft provisional agenda sent by the ASEAN Secretariat. ■

Lead coordinator for DA Labs to shift from BAFS to FDC

Melissa L. Astillero

A draft Department Order was initiated early this year by the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) that will transfer the coordination function for DA Laboratories from BAFS to the Food Development Center (FDC). The transfer of responsibility was initiated with the transfer of the FDC from the National Food Authority (NFA) to the DA in 2019 as provided in the Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01-2019 (The Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Republic Act No. 11203, "An Act Liberalizing the Importation, Exportation and Trading of Rice, Lifting for the Purpose the Quantitative Import Restriction on Rice, and for Other Purposes"). The draft Department Order also is in line with the implementation of Rule 16.11 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Food Safety Act of 2013, which identified the FDC as the coordinating laboratory of the DA laboratories.

The BAFS, currently the coordinating agency for the rationalization of DA Laboratories, as designated through Department Order 4, s. 2017 titled as Department Policy on Rationalizing and Strengthening DA National and Regional Laboratory Services, drafted the creation of the Revised Policy on Rationalization and Strengthening of the Department of Agriculture (DA) National and Regional Laboratory Services. Salient provisions are the transfer of the coordinating function of BAFS to the Food Development Center (FDC), and integration of the DO 4 s. 2017 with the Department Order No. 10, s. 2018 titled as Establishing the Institutional Link and Coordination Between the National Laboratories of the Bureaus of Animal Industry, Plant Industry, and Soils and Water Management and the Integrated Laboratories of the Regional Field Offices of the Department of Agriculture. The draft policy was formulated abreast relevant

issuances on DA Laboratory Services. Virtual consultations on the draft policy were held on May 4, 6, and 14, 2021 with attendees from Food Development Center (FDC), Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering (BAFE), Information and Communications and Technology Service (ICTS), Planning and Monitoring Service (PMS), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Fertilizer and Pesticides Authority (FPA), National Dairy Authority (NDA), National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), Sugar Regulatory Authority (SRA), Integrated Laboratory Division (ILD) of the Regional Field Offices (RFOs), Policy Research Service (PRS) and DA Legal Service.



DA-BAFS calls for virtual consultations on the draft DA laboratory rationalization policy

FDC Director Dr. Jocelyn Sales and Assistant Director Albert Cariso and heads of laboratory units objectively accepted the new functions provided in the draft policy. The draft policy is currently undergoing review by the DA-PRS and by the DA Legal Service afterwards, prior to its endorsement to the Office of the Secretary for approval.

The transfer of the coordination function to the FDC will pave the way for the BAFS Laboratory Services Division to intensify its function in gathering and generating scientific data to support the development of Philippine National Standards (PNS) for primary and postharvest agriculture and fishery product standards. ■

PinyAmazing na MangGaling pa! BAFS releases 2 illustrative guides

Jan Vincent DR. Tecson



We live in an age of visual information, in which visual content is used in almost every aspect of life. According to a study, at least 6 out of 10 people are considered as visual learners. In short, many people learn better and process information faster if aided by visuals. This is because visuals break down information into smaller, easier-to-process bits. When done correctly, visual information becomes more comprehensible than text-based materials or even plain audio files.

With this information in mind and in line with the goal of mainstreaming its promotion strategies, the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (DA-BAFS) endeavoured to develop Illustrative Guides (IG), which will serve as additional learning materials for adopted Philippine National Standards (PNS).

The IG contains supplementary photographs or images pertaining to specific provisions of the standards. It is envisioned that through the IG, stakeholders, particularly producers, will have a better understanding and interpretation of the PNS, allowing for more efficient adoption and implementation. As a result, producers can assure the quality of their produce while also being competitive on a local and global scale.

On May 17 and June 4, 2021, the IG for PNS/BAFPS 13:2004 Fresh Fruits - Mangoes - Specification and IG for PNS/BAFPS 09:2004 Fresh Fruits - Pineapple - Specifications were made available through the Bureau's official website. These IGs contain supplementary visual contents to highlight the minimum requirements, classifications, pre- and post-harvest defects, packaging, marking and labelling provisions of the standards.

The BAFS - Technical Services Division (TSD) began developing the IGs in 2020, in close collaboration with members of the Technical Working Group (TWG) from the academe, government institutions, and private sector organizations. The photographs/images included in the documents were either taken by the TSD staff through field work, downloaded from the internet, or provided by the TWG. A number of TWG meetings were also held to confirm the technical accuracy of the documents.

The illustrative guides can be viewed or downloaded at: bit.ly/IGMangoXPineapple. ■

BAFS' Mid-year Physical and Financial Accomplishments Hit Targets

Frederick Crisol

The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) held a blended FY 2021 Midterm Review last May 31, 2021. This year's Midterm Review was held earlier than usual in order for the Bureau to have enough time to reprogram its physical and financial commitments in the coming months. In attendance were OIC-Director Myer G. Mula, Assistant Director Mary Grace R. Mandigma, and all Chiefs and heads of technical divisions and operating units of the Bureau.

During the Midterm review, OIC-Director Mula stressed the importance of the Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) system to the Bureau particularly in identifying performance gaps. The results will also be used to identify the most feasible solutions and appropriate strategies to narrow the gaps.

Financial Performance

In the implementation of the Bureau's January to May 2021 projects, programs and activities, BAFS operating units was able to utilize 90.45% of its financial target which amounts to Php 14,384,746.40, vis-a-vis total target of Php 15,902,970.00. Identified contributing factors to the 10% difference were the delays in the payment of supplies and services rendered to the Bureau, the implementation of lock downs due to the on-going pandemic, travel restrictions, and unfilled contract of service and plantilla positions for the January to May period. Figure 1 illustrates the January to May progress of BAFS expenditure.

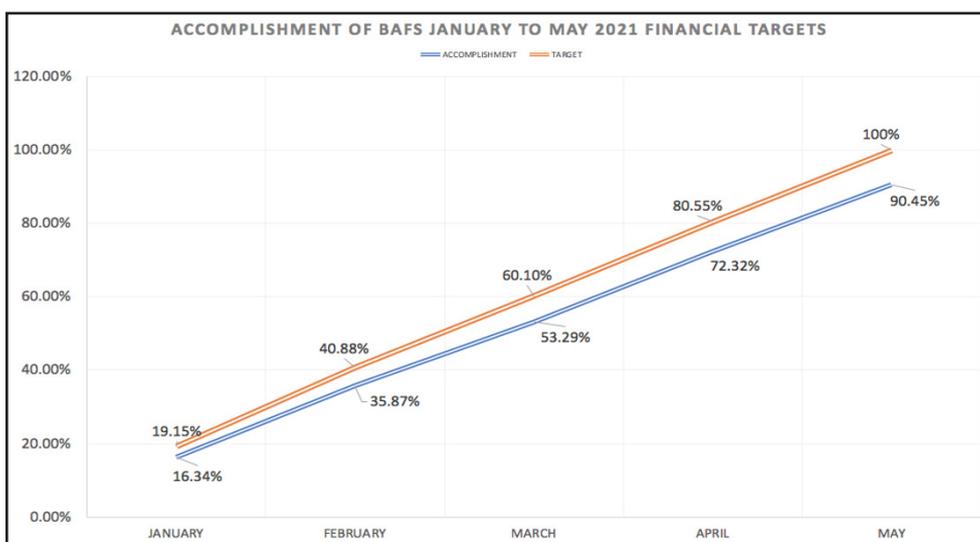


Figure 1. January to May Monthly Progress of BAFS Expenditure

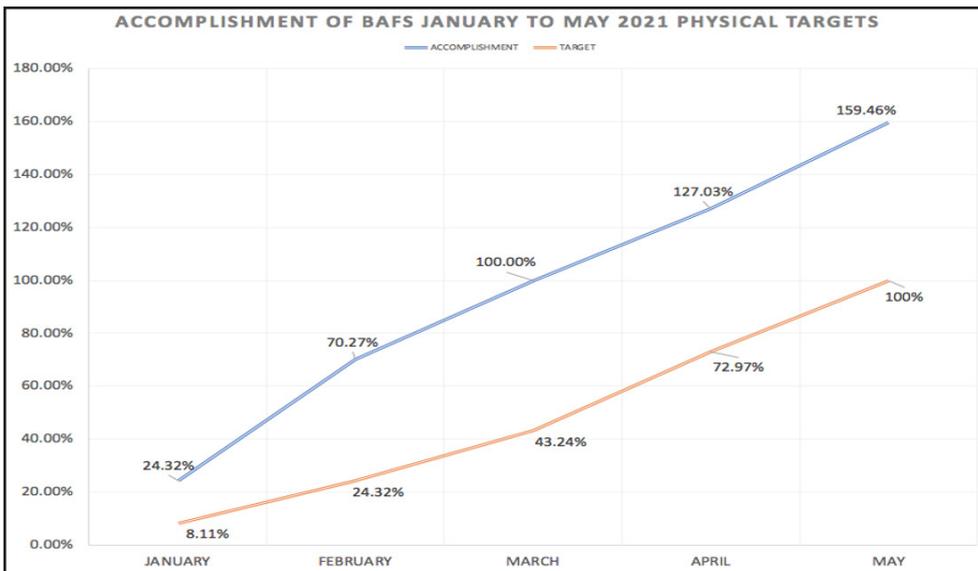


Figure 2. Overall performance of BAFS on January to May 2021 Physical Targets

Physical Performance

For January to May, BAFS was able to achieve 159% of its overall physical targets. The Bureau's issuance of regulatory documents contributed much to this high percentage performance. The Bureau was able to issue a total of 40 regulatory documents for permits and registrations out of the 22 regulatory documents targeted for January to May. For the Bureau's function on the monitoring of organic producing facilities and products, the Bureau was able to monitor a total of 9 facilities and 7 products out of the targeted 5 facilities and 6 products.

On the establishment of Agriculture and Fishery Standards, the Bureau was able to formulate 3 out of the 4 standards targeted for the period. Establishment of standards involves the review of regulatory agencies concerned and the lockdowns during the January to May period caused the delay of its approval. Figure 2 illustrates the accomplishment of the BAFS physical targets.

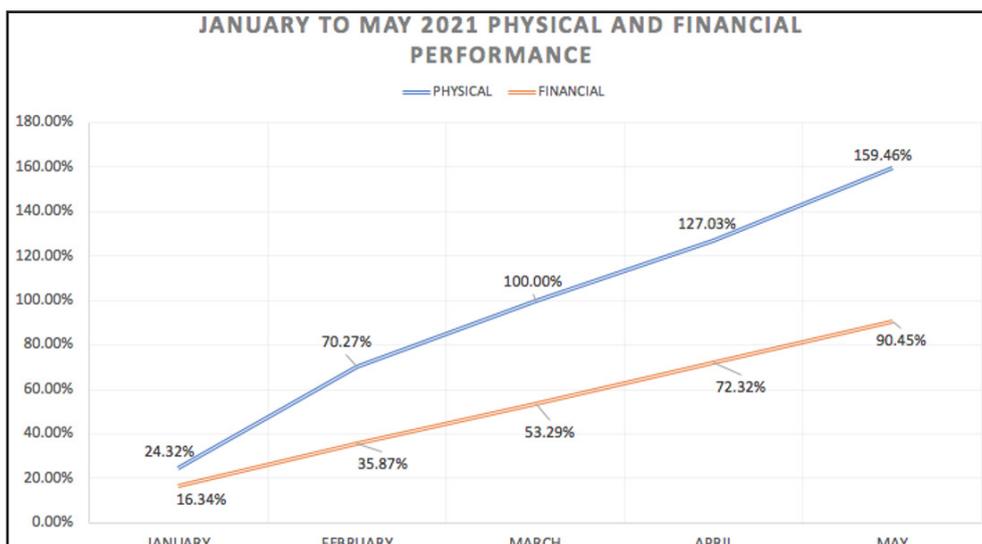
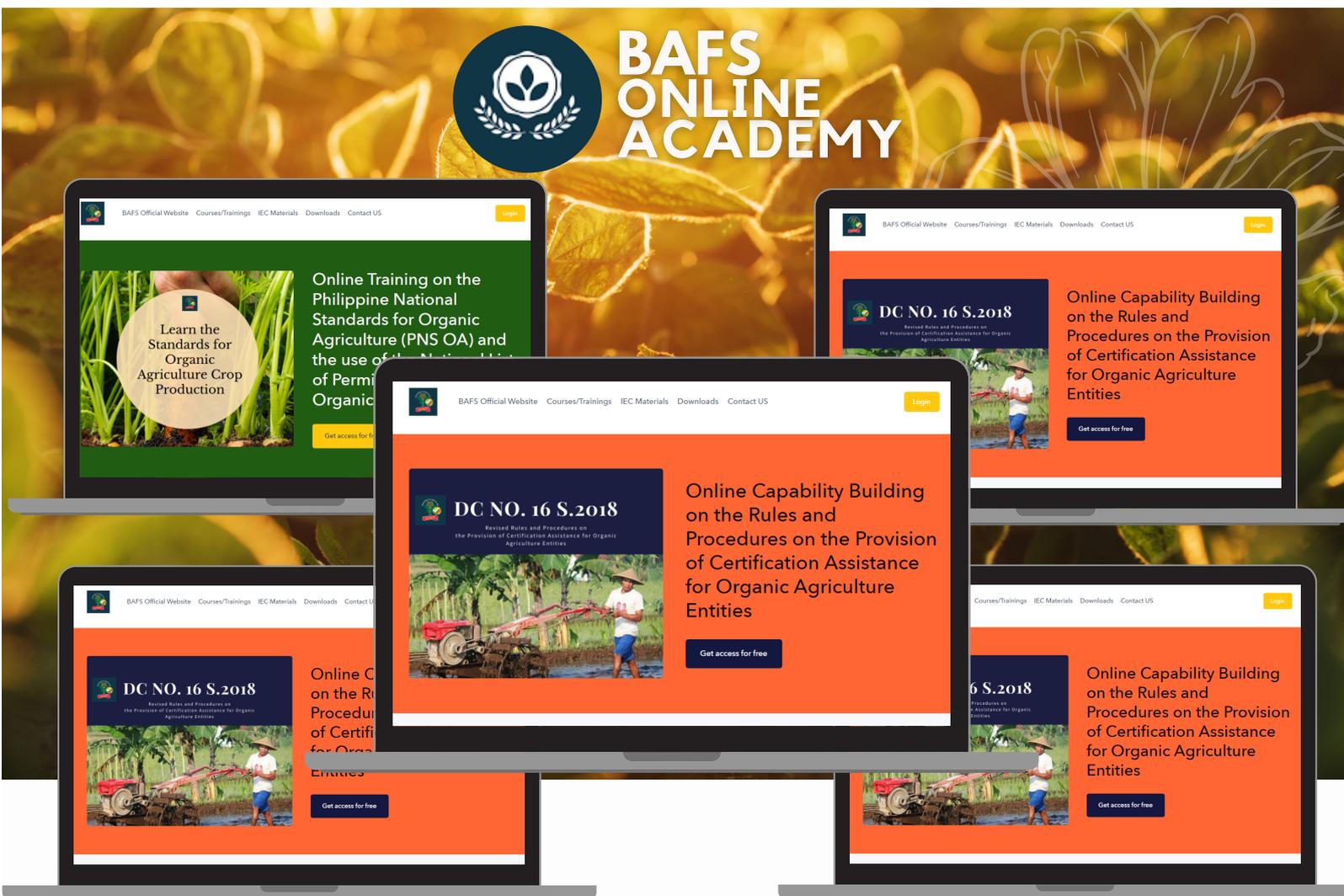


Figure 3. Comparative illustration of BAFS January to May Physical and Financial Performance

January to May 2021 Physical vis-a-vis Financial Performance

For January to May, BAFS was able to accomplish 159.46% of its physical targets and utilize 90.45% of its financial targets as shown in figure 3.

The midyear review provided a venue for BAFS to assess its performance, identify gaps, and collectively formulate strategies to further improve the performance of the Bureau. With these strategies, BAFS aims to excel in the delivery of its services in the remaining seven months of its program implementation for FY 2021. ■



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(continued from page 11)

The FRA is a planning tool to assess the auditor and auditee's competencies including the available resources [e.g. information and communication technology (ICT), personnel]. From here, the information gathered will be used in the development of the remote assessment plan. The OAD-RES team will then communicate the remote assessment plan to the researchers and the company's regulatory staff, specifying the components and aspects of trials that will be checked during the activity.

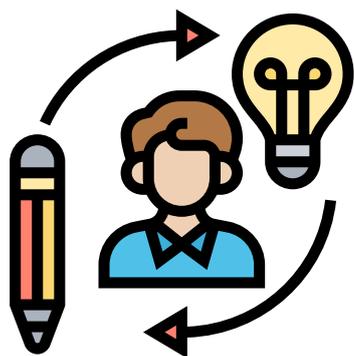
The first remote compliance activity was conducted in September 2020. By the end of the same year, OAD-RES was able to conduct six remote compliance assessments. Since its initial implementation, there were no recorded non-compliances from the assessed efficacy trials, but the team noted some observations and discussions on the conduct of the trials.

This year, the OAD-RES continued the implementation of the remote compliance assessment. In fact, for the months of April and May, two remote field assessments were conducted by the team of Ms. Jenina B. Cusay, Anna Dominique V. Cadsawan and Mr. Charlie T. Palilio. On April 28, 2021 a remote assessment was conducted for Oracle Chem Corporation, for their product Plant Shield 4.6 SL located in Science City of Munoz, Nueva Ecija. company's representative, Mr. Roy Candelaria and BAFS Certified Researcher, Dr. Constanca Dacumos participated in the assessment.

The most recent remote assessment was conducted on May 4, 2021 on the efficacy trial of Mpede, a product of Agspec Philippines Corporation located in Carmen, Davao del Norte. It was participated by the company representatives Mr. Felicitos Palis and Ms. Hannah De Guzman; and BAFS Certified Researcher Ms. Elsie Gahuman.

However, conducting such activity via virtual platform entailed a number of challenges. Internet connectivity was the number one concern. Poor internet connection at the trial sites hinders the researchers from providing live recordings of their activities. It likewise affects the presentation of the requested information and documents during the actual conduct of the remote compliance activity. In addition, schedules need to be adjusted in time for the stable internet connection, particularly for the walk through of the researchers at the field for the live presentation of the field area and the trial components.

Despite the challenges, the team was able to assess the compliance of the on-going trials on the approved objectives, cultural management practices, methodology and specifically checked on the critical aspects of the trial that include the following: 1) stage of the crop; 2) actual formulation and application of the treatments; 3) activities on how to avoid spray drifts; 4) data gathering; and 5) presentation of initial data gathered. Based on the findings of the remote assessment, the team verified that the efficacy trials were compliant with the approved efficacy protocols. ■



Rethinking strategies to encourage the use of PNS

Katrina L. Maminta ▪ Jan Vincent DR. Tecson

"How do I use the standard? What's in a standard? How flexible is it?"
"Kailangan ko ba magpatayo ng konkretong storage area o warehouse? Ang hirap naman gawin ng mga 'yan. May benefits ba ko makukuha dyan?" These are just some of the questions farmers and fisherfolks ask when presented with a standard.

According to a recent survey commissioned by the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS), the Philippine National Standard (PNS) was deemed beneficial by 53 percent of the 234 respondents (growers). The study also recommended that Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and activities such as national TV and radio plugs, advertisements through Facebook and other online media, websites, and brochures should be prepared and aired/broadcasted to spread awareness on a particular standard.

Since 2004, the BAFS has been developing PNS, which have been promoted through seminars and trainings. While BAFS continues to produce standards, there is also a need to ramp up promotion efforts and explore multidisciplinary techniques to raise knowledge and appreciation of the standards. Rethinking the strategies for broader dissemination and further adoption of the standards, BAFS began planning Knowledge Management (KP) and Learning & Development (L&D) activities to promote 80% of the 307 PNS by 2025.

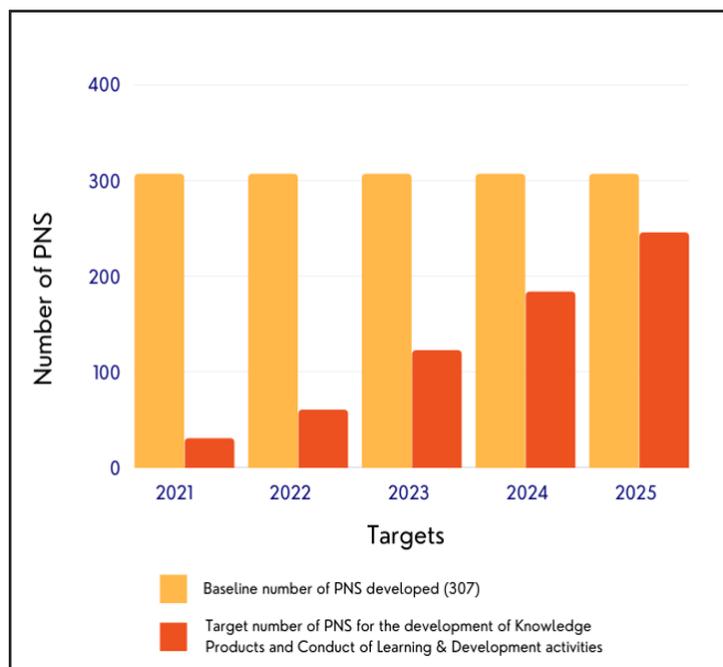
This year, BAFS has identified 31 PNS to be promoted through webinars and the development of KP such as explanatory manuals and illustrative guides, infographics, and online course modules. The KP and L&D

activities are designed to promote common understanding and enhance appreciation for agriculture and fishery commodity standards, including those for agricultural machinery, leading to enhanced adoption. BAFS also set out the number of PNS for promotion in the coming years to reach its goal of promoting 80% of adopted PNS by 2025. In 2022, BAFS targets 61 PNS (20% of the 307 PNS as baseline), 123 (40%), 184 (60%) and 246 (80%) PNS for 2023, 2024 and 2025, respectively.

The knowledge products developed such as explanatory manuals, illustrative guides, comics, and infographics are available and can be downloaded for free on the BAFS website. In addition, learning and development activities such as webinars are also free and are streamed live on the BAFS Facebook page, while the online course module will be available soon in the BAFS Online Academy.

Yes, it's time to explore other multimedia approaches in promoting the standards for better appreciation and increased adoption. Do you have other ideas that might help us in promoting standards towards harmonized understanding and increased adoption? Share your thoughts with us at tsd.bafs@gmail.com. ■

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COMICS

Yun PALAYun!

Upang higit na maunawaan ang Philippine National Standard on Code of Good Agricultural Practice for Rice (PNS/BAFS 141:2019), isang serye ng komiks ang aming inihanda. Halina't samahan natin sila Gep at Pil sa pagtuklas sa mga tamang gawi sa pagtatanim ng palay tungo sa ligtas at de kalidad na produkto.

Para mabasa ang lahat ng isyu ng 'Yun PALAYun!' mangyaring bisitahin ang aming website sa www.bafs.da.gov.ph o kaya naman sa aming official Facebook page sa www.facebook.com/da.bafs. ■





Department of Agriculture
**BUREAU OF AGRICULTURE
AND FISHERIES STANDARDS**

*“..ensuring consumer’s safety and product quality,
and contributing to environmental protection,
worker’s welfare, and enhanced market access.”*

