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

PAMANTAYAN

Isyu 2

Hulyo - Disyembre 2020

BAFS 2020 JOURNEY:

BOON  **?**
or BANE

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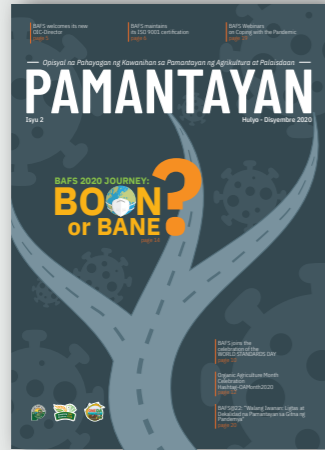


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PAMANTAYAN is the official newsletter published by the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS). This will be published every semester to highlight the agency’s achievements and impact, and serve as a platform to provide news to our wide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

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The year 2020 became the most challenging year as it confronted BAFS with countless and enormous obstacles. The BAFS was not spared from the wrath of COVID-19. Despite the hurdles, BAFS did not lose sight of its goals, strategies and guiding principles. Looking at the journey of BAFS for 2020, how did we fare?

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EDITORIAL TEAM

Advisers Myer G. Mula, Ph.D. • Mary Grace M. Mandigma • **Editor-in-Chief** Rosemarie V. Calibo • **Assistant Editor** Katrina L. Maminta • **Layout & Design** Vicente D. Limsan, Jr. • **Writers & Contributors** Jenny Lee M. Cambe • Zaireen B. Cleofe • Gio Renzo M. Caballero • Krisha Marie L. Mecija • Kristel Alarice R. Aborido • Dr. Alpha Mateo-Lanuza • Jan Vincent DR. Tecson • Geeza June V. Painaga • Jeffrey S. Garrido • Mark Brian Umali • Rio Angelo Canaria

MESSAGE



MYER G. MULA, Ph.D.
OIC-Director
Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards,
Department of Agriculture

It is indeed heartwarming to note that despite all the odds, the BAFS continued to step up and deliver quality service, as it remained committed to its multifarious clientele and stakeholders. Proof of these efforts are translated into a narrative of events put together in a compilation called "Pamantayan".

We are pleased to present to you the 2nd issue of Pamantayan covering the second semester of 2020, hoping to get not only news, information and inspirational stories out to you in a timely manner, but this is also BAFS' way of saying that we value you, for staying connected with us. We appreciate the confidence that all of you, employees and readers have placed in us and in our work, prompting us to strive to be better each day.

We acknowledge the time constraints and the many news sources that vie for your attention, so we offer a brief look at each story in this newsletter, as well as the opportunity to grasp our messages in a glance.

Thank you for taking the time to read, and we look forward to keeping in touch with you in 2021!



call for EXPERTS

Katrina L. Maminta • November 27, 2020

BAFS is ready to accept nominations and applications of experts from the academe, research institutions, and other relevant organizations to become part of the DA Pool of Experts (DAPE), who shall provide scientific advice to support the development of standards and issuance of technical regulations. The minimum requirements are to at least have an advanced university/college degree in microbiology, food science, chemistry, and/or related fields, with at least five (5) years of relevant work experience and knowledge in the principle of risk analysis.

The experts' main function is to come up with scientific output, in the form of a concise document, based on risk assessment or risk profiling, to address an issue on food or feed

safety. The experts will serve in their individual capacity and shall not represent any institution or organization in performing their function.

For 2021, BAFS will embark on the assessments of meat issues to help update existing regulations and establish clear guidelines on the implementation of regulations related to meat safety. With this similar initiative, BAFS, in collaboration with the experts, recently endorsed its preliminary findings concerning the risk of *Clostridium botulinum* in Fish Sauce. Further studies were also recommended to address existing limitations and data gaps.

Work with us! Submit your nominations or applications together with a curriculum vitae through the email address tsd.bafs@gmail.com. ■

BAFS welcomes its new OIC-Director

Rosemarie V. Calibo • November 6, 2020

The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) cordially welcomes its new OIC-Director, DR. MYER G. MULA, as he gladly met the key officials in an orientation meeting held at the Director's office on Monday, November 4, 2020.



Dr. Myer G. Mula met with the key officials of the BAFS last November 4, 2020

Dr. Mula's designation as BAFS OIC-Director was furthered by virtue of Special Order No. 707 series of 2020 duly signed by Secretary William D. Dar on October 20, 2020. He replaced Dr. Vivencio R. Mamaril who was likewise transferred as OIC-Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR).

Apart from his involvement with the private agricultural sector for a decade, and with various designations under the Department of Agriculture – Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Dr. Mula is no longer a neophyte to the programs and activities of the Bureau since he was once designated as Regional Focal Person in the early years, when BAFS was still called the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS).

Dr. Mula is a renowned international scientist, involved with the Seed System of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) based in India for 9 years (2008-2016), and has been instrumental in the enhancement, strengthening and development of seed system model aimed to sustain quality peanut, pigeonpea, and chickpea seeds also in India, Africa and the Philippines.

He also authored and co-authored various scientific publications, including a book entitled "Lifting the Level of Awareness on Pigeonpea: A Global Perspective" which was launched by India's Father of Green Revolution, Dr MS Swaminathan.

The seamless energy of this indefatigable person knew no bounds, for Dr. Mula concurrently serves as the National Program Director for the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) and the Special Adviser for Research and Seed System of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

The Bureau is truly happy that you have joined us. We believe that you can stir the wheel towards the best direction and move BAFS to the next level. We can't wait to know your plans and work with you in the attainment of BAFS' goals and ambitions. Our mirthful and happy wishes for you Sir, and wishing you all the good for being a part of this energetic and improving Bureau. With enthusiasm we believe we will triumph and become achievers, because you are here with us.

Welcome to your team, Dr. Myer! ■



BAFS maintains its ISO 9001 certification

Jenny Lee M. Cambe • December 23, 2020

The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) successfully maintained its ISO 9001:2015 certification after complying with the surveillance audit findings held last December 7, 2020.

BAFS Director Myer G. Mula, twenty five (25) process owners, together with Mr. Lance Xavier Dy, auditor of the TÜV SÜD PSB Philippines, attended the opening meeting. Mr. Dy provided a brief discussion about the organization and presented the audit plan to the process owners.

The current scope coverage of BAFS certification are: (1) Development of Philippine National Standards for Agriculture and Fishery; (2) Provision of Official Accreditation to Organic Certification Bodies; (3) Registration of Organic Agricultural Inputs; (4) Verification of Registered Organic Agriculture Operators; (5) Provision of Technical and Administrative support to National Organic Agriculture Board; (6) Creation of Linkages and networking with various stakeholders of organic agriculture; and (8) Conduct of Impact Assessments for Philippine National Standards.

After the audit process, the Bureau incurred one non-conformity, two minor nonconformities, and two opportunities for improvement. Three days after, root cause analysis and its intended correction and corrective actions for each findings were submitted: (1) Handling of Nonconformities: Ineffective approach to the timely closure of non-conformities; (2) Risk Assessment: Non-utilization of revised form which includes the review of risk arising from non-conformities; and (3) Conduct of Capability Building: Non-inclusion of pre-test in the Training Design, the inconsistency of some topics with the online instructional materials, unable to carry out the assessment activity of Module 4, and premature administration of the final

exam. TÜV SÜD PSB Philippines accepted the submitted action plan on December 22, 2020 and consequently endorsed the maintenance of BAFS' ISO 9001:2015 certification.

The Bureau intends to enroll the Information Dissemination process of the Technical Services Division as an expansion of the scope for the next surveillance audit. ■



From top: (1) BAFS Personnel provides clarification on auditor's findings on BAFS QMS; (2) One of the BAFS Organic Agriculture processes is audited by Mr. Dy; (3) External audit Closing meeting presenting the findings to BAFS top management and process owners

FEATURED PNS

Field Data Gathering for PNS Garlic at Pasuquin, Ilocos Norte

Kristel Alarice R. Aborido • June 22, 2020

The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) together with the members of Technical Working Group (TWG) for the Philippine National Standard (PNS) on Garlic conducted a Field Data Gathering (FDG) in Region I – Ilocos Norte on June 18-20, 2020. The activity was participated by BAFS project managers - Ms. Farlash D. Pancho and Ms. Kristel Alarice R. Aborido, and TWG members - Dr. Bonifacio F. Cayabyab of UPLB-NCPC, Dr. Perlita A. Nuevo of UPLB-PHTRC, Ms. Lilian F. Pateña UPLB-IPB, Ms. Noralyn Legaspi and Mr. Raymund Julius Rosales of MMSU; and visited three (3) of garlic farmers during the field validation.



Interview session of FDG team with Mr. Henry Cassimiro

The field data gathering activity aimed to confirm the grading specifications and varieties of garlic grown in the Philippines. In addition, the FDG was conducted to document the grading, classification and specification of garlic to verify the proposed revisions in the PNS. The field data gathering was conducted into two (2) parts: sampling and interview. The documentation of current industry practice is

indispensable as this will serve as baseline data for the revision of the PNS.

All of the farmers interviewed during the FDG shared that they have no standard size classification for their harvested garlic. The technique they use to identify the size of a garlic depends on what can be measured by the eyes. One of the farmers interviewed was Mr. Henry Cassimiro who owns a garlic farm with 'miracle' and 'mexican' garlic varieties planted. Mr. Cassimiro shared that he usually harvests garlic 90-120 days after planting and sells these to the traders by 'bundle' with a variety of sizes sold at a single price. Garlic farmers interviewed encounter the same pests and diseases such as purple blotch and root rot in their farms.

With the revision of PNS Garlic, farmers can be guided on the suitable standard size classification which can help them increase their income through fair marketable characteristics and good quality of agricultural products to their consumers. ■

Stored garlic for retail and planting (garlic with roots)



BAFS launches Laboratory Online Profiling System

Zaireen B. Cleofe • December 10, 2020



Exploring modern technologies, BAFS developed an online laboratory profiling system, dubbed as "BLOPS", and deployed it to DA laboratories in September 2020 in order to support the needs of our farmers in locating which laboratories offer specific services.

This new working tool system provides information on general laboratory profile, such as its locations, laboratory services offered, type of samples analyzed, equipment inventory and status of laboratory compliances of DA Laboratories at national and regional levels. When accessing the information through the online system, the user may opt to narrow the selection based on selected information only. The computerized system offers some definite advantages over paper-based systems in terms of increased efficiency in data collection, organization, storage, reporting, and transmission.

As of November 2020, a total of 188 laboratories have been profiled. The information gathered will be used by BAFS and DA laboratories in planning future strategies and identifying

developmental activities. This year, the system will undergo further expansion towards providing quick and readily accessible laboratory information to stakeholders, not only DA agencies, but most especially farmers and fisherfolks.

The profiling system is a milestone for BAFS in its efforts to support the goal of the Department in strengthening its National and Regional Laboratory services. It was a collaborative effort of the Laboratory Services Division, BAFS IT personnel, and DA Laboratory personnel addressing the technical, administrative management and programming aspects of a laboratory tool. ■



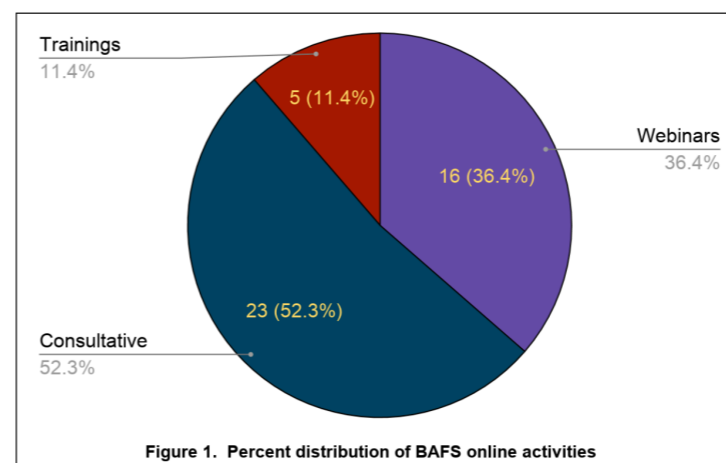
BAFS Laboratory Online Profiling System Tutorial Sessions held on September 3, 4 and 9, 2020

BAFS activities transition to the online platform got an Excellent Rating from stakeholders

Mark Brian Umali • December 21, 2020

The year 2020 proved to be both a challenge and opportunity for most government offices. This year, our stakeholders bore witness to how most government services went online. This year, the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards was no different.

For 2020, from July to December, the Bureau conducted 44 online activities: 16 webinars, 23 consultative meetings, and 5 trainings.



In total, the Bureau had 2,301 participants.

Guided by the principles of ISO 9001:2015 and the Bureau's commitment to observe continual improvement in all its processes, the activities conducted by the Bureau such as consultative meetings, seminar awareness and forums were subjected to post-activity evaluation.

The Bureau's evaluation form is based on the template provided by the Department of Agriculture. The form was distributed to the participants after every activity. Participants who have successfully completed and submitted an evaluation form automatically received an electronic certificate.

Since the activities were all conducted via an online platform the evaluation forms were also translated digitally via Google Forms. The form used a 5-point Likert scale format: 1-poor, 2-fair, 3-satisfactory, 4-very satisfactory, and 5-excellent. The areas rated are methodologies, handling of comments, presentation materials, management team, and platform used. To calculate the overall rating, the Bureau applied the following:

Interval index

The lowest point of the scale is subtracted from the highest point then divided by the number of point-scale. Since

BAFS uses the 5-point scale, the highest point is 5 minus by the lowest point, which is 1 then divided by 5, which is the number of points observed in the Likert scale format used. Using the said formula, (5-1)/5, the interval index calculated is 0.8. This value was used to establish the rating scale.

Rating Scale

The interval index calculated will be used to establish the rating scale applicable for BAFS. Using the interval index of 0.8, below is the established rating scale:

Numerical	Qualitative Description
1-1.8	Poor
1.81-2.6	Fair
2.61-3.4	Satisfactory
3.41-4.2	Very Satisfactory
4.21-5	Excellent

Overall Satisfaction Rating

The rating scale developed will serve as the reference for computing the overall satisfaction rating of the Bureau. Initially, the rating given will be multiplied by the number of participants who gave the said rating. For example, out of 2,301 participants, 694 gave an overall satisfaction rating of 3 thus will give you a value of 2,082. After which, the product computed for each rating will be summed up then divided by the total number of participants.

Out of 2,301 participants below shows you the breakdown of their ratings:

Rating (A)	Number of Participants (B)	A x B (C)	Sum of Column C / Total number of Participants
1 - Poor	9	9	10046/2301 = 4.56 Overall Rating falls within the description of Excellent
2 - Fair	1	2	
3 - Satisfactory	113	339	
4 - Very Satisfactory	694	2,776	
5 - Excellent	1,384	6,920	

Applying the above mentioned, the Bureau is proud to say it passed with flying colors as according to 2,301 participants, BAFS provided Excellent service having an overall rating of 4.56.

Suggestions and comments were also collected in this form. The rating and suggestions collected from this evaluation were then analyzed and forwarded by the program manager of each division to the assigned personnel to serve as a guide for further improvement. ■

World Standards Cooperation (IEC, ISO, ITU)
World Standards Day • 14 October 2020

Protecting the Planet with Standards



BAFS joins the celebration of WORLD STANDARDS DAY

Krisha Marie L. Mecija • October 14, 2020

Every October is a celebration for 'World Standards Day!' This international celebration aimed to pay tribute to volunteer experts worldwide who are involved in technical agreements to publish international standards, with the 2020 theme "Protecting the Planet with Standards."

As the standard-setting agency for agriculture and fishery products, the DA- Bureau of and Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (DA-BAFS) joined the celebration of world standards day. The BAFS- Standards Development Division (SDD) led the month-long celebration and conduct of different online activities with a theme, "Learn. Adapt. Execute: Standards Development Approach during Pandemic" The Bureau shared with the public how the standards are developed while coping up with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The BAFS- SDD conducted the following online webinars:

1. October 15, 2020- Standards 101: Basic Principles in Standards Development
2. October 27, 2020- Progressing Philippine National Standards during Global Pandemic
3. October 29, 2020- Looking Beyond: What is the Use and Impact of Standards?

LEARN. The celebration jump-started by sharing the fundamental knowledge and information on developing the Philippine National Standard (PNS)

with the topic "Standards 101: Basic Principles in Standards Development." The SDD project managers discussed the step-by-step process of standards development for the different commodities of crops, fishery and aquaculture, livestock and poultry, and structure and machinery.

ADAPT. The part-two of the celebration was a sharing session with SDD technical working group (TWG) experts and their perception of the new-normal set up for developing standards. The experts shared their points of view on the transitions, challenges, and opportunities in developing standards through a virtual platform.

EXECUTE. The month-long celebration ended with a discussion on the use and impact of standards in the country. The session was participated by representatives from the academe, private industry groups, and organizations, in which they shared how they adopted the PNS in their respective fields.

In the end, the "World Standards Day" was celebrated to highlight the importance of written standards on the local and global economy and to inform the public on how standards are developed. With this activity, BAFS raised the audiences' awareness to standard, through LEARN, ADAPT, and EXECUTE approach even in extraordinary times. ■

*Illustration used is part of the winner of the Poster making contest for World Standards Day.

KOMIKS

PINYAAmazing Adventures ni Pina

Jan Vincent DR. Tecson

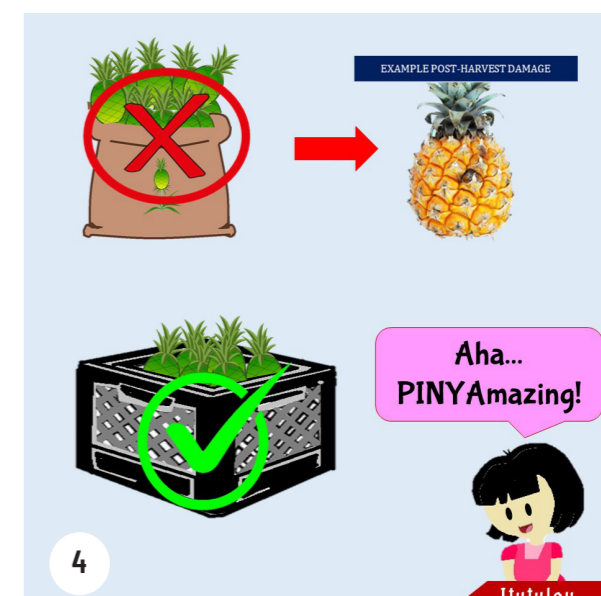
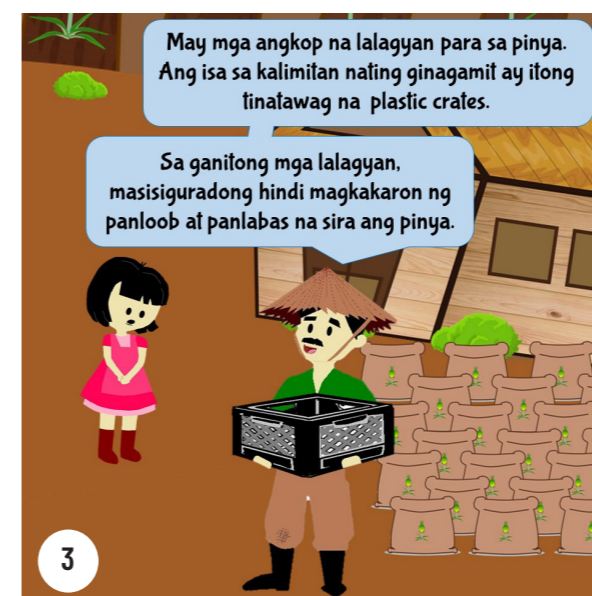
Nagbabalik si Pina para sa pagpapatuloy ng kanyang adventure kasama si Mang Isko. Tara na't samahan natin siya na alamin kung ano nga ba ang swak na swak na lalagyan ng mga naaning pinya.

Ang komiks serye na ito ay handog ng BAFS upang higit na maunawaan ang *Philippine National Standards (PNS) on Fresh Fruit - Pineapple - Specification (PNS/BAFPS 09:2004)* at *PNS on Code of Good Agricultural Practices for Fruits and Vegetable Farming (PNS/BAFS 49:2017)*.

Isyu 2: Swak na Lalagyan

Kwento nina: Sweet Jessabel M. de Guzman, Raissa Marie R. Reformado
at Jan Vincent DR. Tecson

Iginuhit ni: Sweet Jessabel M. de Guzman



Organic Agriculture Month Celebration: #OAMonth2020

Gio Renzo M. Caballero • November 27, 2020

Two thousand-twenty (2020) was the sixth year of celebrating the National Organic Agriculture Month or OA Month since its enactment through Proclamation No. 1030 in 2015 by former President Benigno Aquino III. The annual observance of the OA Month was since then aimed at promoting the practice of organic agriculture nationwide as a farming system and an effective tool for development, environmental conservation, and health protection of farmers, consumers, and the general public.

In the past five years leading to 2020, the OA Month was celebrated alongside the annual National Organic Agriculture Congress (NOAC) held in a designated host region and attended by organic agriculture stakeholders from all corners of the Philippines. However, with the occurrence of the global COVID-19 pandemic, physical gatherings, including the NOAC, were suspended indefinitely.

Opportunely, the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS), as one of the lead agencies in promoting organic agriculture standards and regulations, initiated a month-long series of activities to mark the 6th National Organic Agriculture Month. The activities aimed to boost awareness on organic agriculture advocacy, educate stakeholders on relevant standards and regulations, and present to the next generation an alternative sustainable way of farming.

The Bureau kicked-off the celebration of the OA Month with the Organic Agriculture Fansign Contest, a social-media-driven photography competition that showcased entries from forty-two (42) stakeholders of organic agriculture.

Each photo showcased the creative side of organic agriculture practitioners and highlighted a snapshot of their farms or produce. All photos were posted on the BAFS Facebook page, prompting the hashtag "#OAMonth2020", expressing support for the advocacy. The top three (3) entries were announced after a week of voting using the Facebook React buttons – in third place was Venus Tabago of Tarlac garnering 2,300 votes with a photo of herself and a self-drawn organic-inspired fansign; Mariejo Picazo of Zambales came in second place with 2,900 votes as she posed by her garden trellis; and finally, the top spot was given to Zenna Gaile Valete of Tarlac with 3,900 votes for her photo posing with their eggplant produce.

On November 25, 2020, the BAFS Organic Agriculture Division hosted the Chikahan sa BAFS: OA Edition, a rendition of the Bureau's online talk show-styled presentation and discussion which covered the Philippine National Standards (PNS) for organic agriculture and the regulations on organic agriculture. This served as a platform for BAFS in-house experts to answer the queries of its online audience relative to the technicalities of organic agriculture.

"...Labor intensiveness and law of supply and demand are the factors that drive up the prices of organic produce, these factors primarily influence the premium pricing of organic products..."

-Ms. Vera Ysabel dela Cruz, BAFS in-house expert, answering the question "Bakit mahal ang organic products?"



Winners of the Fansign Contest (from left, clockwise): Ms. Zenna Gaile Valete (1st place), Ms. Mariejo Picazo (2nd place), and Ms. Venus Tabago (3rd Place)



Screenshot of the recorded live stream of the "Tagisan sa BAFS (OA Edition)" - an online quiz contest featuring organic agriculture



Screenshot of the recorded live stream of the "Chikahan sa BAFS (OA Edition)" - a talkshow style discussion on organic agriculture standards and regulations

The Bureau's activities for the 6th National Organic Agriculture Month culminated with the Tagisan sa BAFS: OA Edition, an online quiz contest featuring questions on relevant PNS, regulations, and trivia on organic agriculture. Students and professionals alike, registered, participated, and tested their knowledge on organic agriculture during the live online quiz contest. Out of the forty-four (44) contestants, the top three spots were won by Jay Four C. Javier of the Tarlac Agricultural University, Tarlac in 3rd place, Fatima D. Echague of the Laguna State Polytechnic University, Siniloan, Laguna in 2nd place, and Mike R. Medina of the Catanauan National High School, Quezon in 1st place.

For BAFS, this year's OA Month did not go unnoticed as the Bureau strived to increase its online presence, capitalized on the wide reach of social media, and utilized online platforms and applications such as Facebook, Slido, and Streamyard to innovatively provide stakeholders with enriching activities, nevertheless. ■

COVER STORY

BAFS 2020 Journey: Boon or bane?

Rosemarie V. Calibo • December 17, 2020

Fear slowly creeps in like an endless smoke from nowhere, forcefully blending into the air we breathe. Lockdowns, isolation, and quarantine protocols ensued. Undeniably, millions of lives around the world have either been wobbled, devastated or worse, ended. Do we simply succumb without putting up a good brave fight? Of course, not!

The year 2020 became the most challenging year as it confronted BAFS with countless and enormous obstacles – natural calamities and erratic climate conditions – that were first thought to be insurmountable. Both the physical and mental health status of its workforce were put to an arduous test as they fought to survive and struggled to ensure work-life balance in the ‘new norm’.

The BAFS was not spared from the wrath of COVID-19 infection, as it had a number of its personnel who tested positive for the virus, despite diligent obedience to the government’s health and safety protocols. BAFS even lost one precious life to this deadly virus. Mandatory wearing of face masks/shields, frequent washing of hands, and social distancing are now adopted and form part of the new standard for hygiene and safety protocols. We obeyed, adopted, and adapted to the changing times.

The year is almost over, but for the BAFS family, the battle has just started. When public transport services became scarce, the BAFS provided vehicles for its employees.

Just as we thought we would fail in achieving our targets when neither travels nor face-to-face interactions were no longer allowed; online platforms for virtual meetings, webinars, and consultations offered an overwhelming outcome, without sacrificing the quality of our outputs. We have accomplished more as BAFS turned digital and increased our social media presence.

Even with the challenges posed by restriction of movement due to COVID-19, we have developed 24 Philippine National Standards, hosted 20 webinars, profiled 194 DA laboratories, and launched the BAFS Online Academy. To the Department of Agriculture management, we endorsed the two important documents that were used as the basis of management decisions – food safety risk assessment on radionuclide and Guidelines on Food Safety for Philippine Agricultural and Fisheries Sectors in COVID-19. We have remained true to our commitment to our organic stakeholders by issuing 86 regulatory documents, continuous accreditation certificate to two organic certifying bodies, and four technical regulations to ensure the integrity of marketed organic products.

Despite the hurdles, BAFS did not lose sight of its goals, strategies and guiding principles. It gathered inspiration and drew strength from the lessons learned throughout this journey, leaving no stones unturned; we stood up and continued moving forward.

As we are being pushed to our limits, we become even more innovative – employing strategies to cope with these extraordinary times. There is no stopping us. We fully realized how this current situation only led us to a blessing and how everything has miraculously worked in our favor. Nothing is a mistake. Most of all, we remain united and committed to work together as one big happy family! #WalangLwanan ■

24
Philippine National Standards developed

20
Webinars conducted

194
DA Laboratories profiled

86
regulatory documents to ensure organic integrity



Various promotional posters and infographics for BAFS webinars

BAFS Accomplishments for FY 2020

Learning with BAFS Today: Online Seminar on PNS and the National List of Permitted Substances for Organic Agriculture

Jeffrey S. Garrido • Geeza June V. Painaga • November 27, 2020

Following the successful debut of the BAFS Online Academy last November 2, 2020, which featured the Bureau's first online learning – Online Capability Building on the Rules and Procedure on the Provision of Certification Assistance for Organic Agriculture Entity, the Bureau utilized this newly launched online platform to conduct the awareness seminar on the Philippine National Standard (PNS) for organic agriculture (OA) and the National List of Permitted Substances for OA, which ran from December 1, 2020, to December 11, 2020.

The awareness seminar was conducted by the Organic Agriculture Networking Section of the Organic Agriculture Division to promote standards and regulations relevant to OA. The event aims to increase knowledge and deepen comprehension of the provisions of the PNS OA (PNS/BAFS 07:2016) – particularly on the requirements for organic crop production.

The online event seeks to address the common misinterpretation of stakeholders regarding the requirements of organic crop production such as documents needed to be prepared or complied with by farmers in preparing conversion plan, the required documents to be submitted in order to grant a reduction of the prescribed conversion period, the provision regarding the choice of seeds and planting materials to be used, materials allowed for the treatment of seeds, selling of products as organic during conversion period and those planted in buffer zones, installation of buffer zone even without a presence of adjacent conventional farm, and use of undecomposed animal manure or chicken manure that is fed with GMO feeds during fertilization management, among others. As a result, stakeholders will be able to conform to OA-related standards and comply with relevant regulations towards achieving third-party organic certification.

To further guide farmers and operators toward their conformance to OA related standards, the online event included a discussion on the Department Circular (DC) No. 9 Series of 2020 or the National List of Permitted Substances for Organic Agriculture (or "National List"). The National List provides the list of substances and materials allowed for use in organic agriculture or at a certain stage of organic production management system. The inclusion of the mentioned Circular in the online awareness seminar will apprise the stakeholders to use the National List in combination with the applicable PNS relevant to OA as this will provide the allowed substances and materials in OA. The National List is grouped into four (4) categories, namely: Organic Crop Production, Organic Animal Production, Organic Aquaculture Production, and Organic Food Production. Each category is further divided into groups depending on the specific use of the substance or material.

The online activity facilitated effective information dissemination among the OA personnel of DA Regional Field Offices (DA-RFOs), implementing agencies, and institutions, to improve the conduct of pre-assessment and ensure that only qualified OA entities can avail of the certification assistance. There are around 113 individuals who participated and completed the online seminar. The majority (47%) of the participants are from the national government agencies, followed by local government agencies (22%), academe (16%), and organic practitioners (15%). The breakdown of participants, as well as other relevant information, is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Distribution of the online seminar awareness participants (December 1-11, 2020)

Demographics	Number		
	Male	Female	Total
Academe	8	10	18
Certified Organic Farmers	1	1	2
Organic Practitioners	9	6	15
National Government Agencies	20	33	53
Local Government Units	11	14	25
Grand Total	48	65	113

“Despite the current situation of the people behind this seminar, the BAFS still managed to conduct an online training.”

-Edivine A. Remedios, Research Assistant, Cebu Technological University (CTU), Barili Campus

The online seminar awareness was considered a success for reaching a wider audience with a total of 113 stakeholders across the country from various demographics. This shows that the online platform is an effective tool to address previously encountered challenges like limited participation. The online event also became a venue to connect various stakeholders and supporters of the OA Program and encourage knowledge sharing towards skill enhancement.

Further, the online event draws positive feedback from its 113 participants where the majority (96%) perceived that the event exceeded their expectations; 98% commended the Bureau as the topics included are all relevant and applicable especially to those who are aspiring to be certified as organic. As for the platform used, the larger part (98%) of our participants felt that the online academy is accessible and is an excellent choice to deliver training to its target stakeholders.

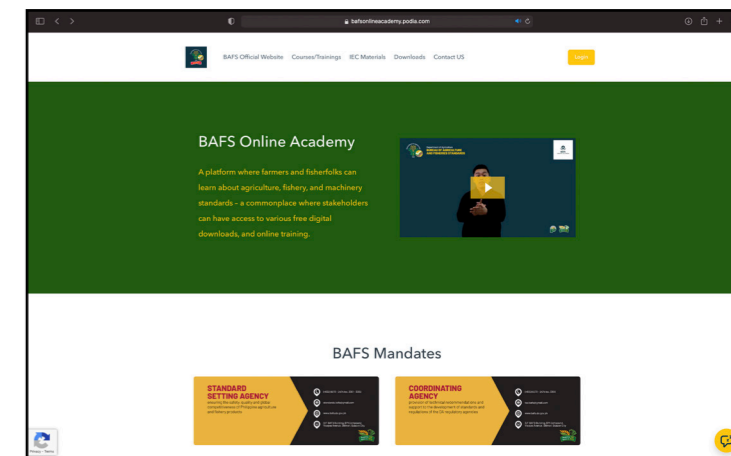
Participants who finished this online seminar can now access the next training on PNS for Organic Bio-control Agents (PNS/BAFS 182:2016) and the Conduct of Risk-based Inspection during pre-assessment of certification assistance applicant or organic farm management. The training will be available from December 16, 2020 to December 28, 2020.

Indeed, the BAFS Online Academy facilitates the efficient learning and transfer of knowledge to our intended stakeholders. The BAFS Online Academy is accessible via:

www.bafsonlineacademy.podia.com. ■

“The BAFS has made the topics very clear and precise, in the way they present and explain it virtually.”

-Judy Rose L. Bisoy, Agriculturist II, Department of Agriculture-RFO Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)



From Top: (1) Screenshot of BAFS Online Academy Homepage, (2) BAFS Online Academy Emblem



Available online courses at BAFS Online Academy

Agriculture Secretary William Dar approves the revised guidelines for the selection of the DA Pool of Experts and its functions

Katrina L. Maminta • December 14, 2020

Sustaining the government's efforts to ensure science-based decision-making, Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar signed on September 15, 2020 the Department Circular (DC) No. 13 Series of 2020 or the Revised Guidelines for the Selection of Experts for Membership to the Department of Agriculture Pool of Experts (DAPE) and the Issuance of Scientific or Technical Advice. The revision includes updates on the procedure for the selection of experts to ensure a more comprehensive and extensive search, as well as the procedure for the issuance of scientific or technical advice to the DA Secretary, the Undersecretary for Policy and Planning, Undersecretary for Regulations, the DA Regulatory Agencies and the National Codex Organization (NCO).

The new Guidelines also acknowledge that when the issuance of advice through the conduct of risk assessment may not be feasible at times due to unavailability of data,

risk profiles will provide contextual and background information on the potential risk when food and hazard are combined.

In 2017, the DC No. 02 Series of 2017 or the Guidelines on the Creation of the DAPE and the Issuance of Scientific or Technical Recommendations was issued in compliance with Section 16 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Food Safety Act of 2013. The Act mandated BAFS to organize the DAPE to support the development of food safety standards and provide scientific advice. The revised Guidelines replaces DC No. 02 Series of 2017.

BAFS Technical Services Division will create internal working procedures based on the revised Guidelines and the Codex Working Principles for Risk Analysis. ■

BAFS Webinars on coping with the pandemic

Rio Angelo Canaria • December 17, 2020

To help deal with stress and confusion brought by the limitation of movement due to the implementation of health and safety protocols, the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) conducted webinars on mental health awareness and violence against women. These webinars aimed to help promote awareness of women's mental health and welfare at work and at home.

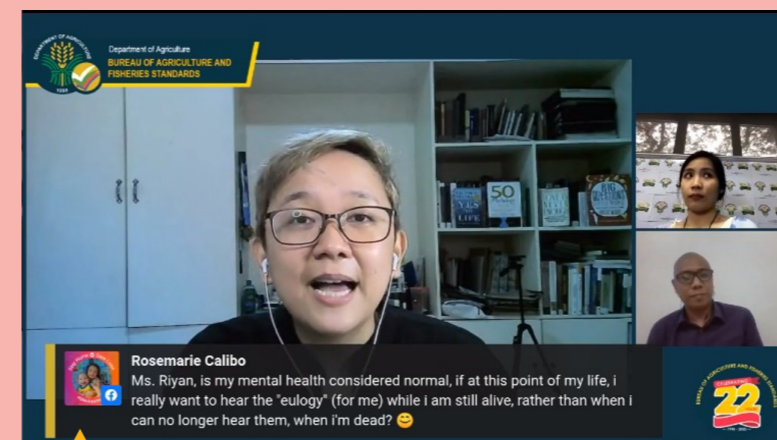
On December 4, 2020, the webinar entitled "Koronang Tinik: Estado mong Malupit" was conducted as part of the 22nd Anniversary of BAFS and was intended to aid BAFS employees to maintain a healthy state of mind and not go bonkers during the pandemic. The guest speaker was Ms. Riyan A. Portuguez, a well-known social media influencer, and psychologist. The talk was streamed online and was attended by BAFS employees and various viewers following the Bureau's Facebook page. The speaker's positive vibe and eagerness encouraged active interaction. There were questions on dealing with work-related mental stress, family issues, depression, etc. and Ms. Portuguez answered all questions objectively. The attendees were satisfied with the discourse and expressed that they are looking forward to another session with Ms. Portuguez. Luckily, we will have another talk lined-up for 2021.



Screenshot of the Q & A portion of the webinar "VAWAl yan dito" with resource speaker Dr. Natsy A. Verceles with the hosts Ms. Chin Flores and Mr. Angelo Canaria.

How do you deal with a sexist coworker who doesn't believe in gender-related violence? This is just one of the questions posed during the webinar in support of the Campaign to End Violence Against Women on December 11, 2020 spearheaded by BAFS. Entitled "VAWAl yan dito", the webinar focused on spreading information about gender-based violence against women and enlightening the people of BAFS about the new administrative mechanism against sexual harassment in workplaces as reflected in the newly-signed R.A. 11313. With the knowledgeable Dr. Natsy A. Verceles as the speaker, she effortlessly relayed information on the reality that violence against women is still happening in this modern age and must be stopped, especially during this time of the pandemic where women are more susceptible to acts of violence due to the lockdown. Various questions were asked to the guest speaker, and she answered them clearly so that it can be clearly understood. As with the previous webinar, this was also conducted online and was attended by BAFS employees.

With these two webinars keeping us sane and well-informed, the pandemic seemed a little bit tame and manageable. Well, not really, but at least it's helping us cope and look forward to the future where it will be safe for everyone again. ■



Screenshot of the Q & A portion of the webinar "Koronang Tinik: Estado Mong Malupit" with resource speaker Ms. Riyan A. Portuguez with the hosts Ms. Chin Flores and Mr. Angelo Canaria.

BAFS@22: “Walang Iwanan: Ligtas at Dekalidad na Pamantayan sa Gitna ng Pandemya”

Katrina L. Maminta • Zaireen Cleofe • December 4, 2020

Keen to sustain the progress it has achieved in the past years, the BAFS celebrated its 22nd founding anniversary last December 2-4, 2020, with the theme, “Walang Iwanan: Dekalidad at Ligtas na Pamantayan sa Gitna ng Pandemya” using various online platforms. The 3-day celebration consisted of various activities including food safety webinar, virtual quiz contest, and photo contest.

The opening ceremony on December 2 was held at Rural Development Educational Center Function Hall, Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), Quezon City. Dr. Myer G. Mula, the OIC Director of BAFS and the DA Executive Officials USec. Zamzamin Ampatuan and USec Ernesto Gonzales, and BAFS former director Dr. Vivencio Mamaril joined the opening ceremony.

During the welcome remarks, BAFS OIC Director Dr. Myer G. Mula thanked all those who participated physically and virtually in the celebration. “Despite the substantial accomplishment with very lean resources, BAFS has fully demonstrated its valuable contribution to the Department’s efforts of producing safe and globally competitive agri-fishery commodities standards,” OIC Director Mula said. The OIC Director also assured everyone that BAFS will continuously improve its capacity to provide reliable information based on available scientific data.

Dr. Mula expressed that BAFS remained true to its commitment, embraced the new normal challenges as an opportunity, and pledged to enhance further the BAFS system. BAFS will likewise ensure the active sharing of reliable data and information through strong

monitoring and evaluation systems. “We will share our success with all of you as, without your active involvement, these efforts will not be at all possible. We do our best when we do it together. You bear witness as we pledge to you that we will continue to enhance our system through active learning and proactive collaboration.” the OIC Director added.

Also, during the opening program, USec. Ampatuan delivered the message on behalf of the Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar. “Ipagpatuloy ninyo ang inyong misyon sa paggawa ng mga pamantayan at regulasyon na science-based, globally harmonized and consistent with international standards,” said USec. Ampatuan.

Now let’s take a look at the other activities during the celebration!

Presentation of the BAFS Strategic Plan

Mr. Frederick Crisol, BAFS Planning Specialist, presented the BAFS Strategic Plan which showcased the Bureau’s mandate and goal for years 2020 to 2025, its 12 strategic objectives (SOs), 27 success indicators, 11 quick wins, and seven strategic initiatives.

Quiz Contest: Utakan sa BAFS Virtual Edition

Although organizing a virtual quiz contest can be very challenging, BAFS managed to do it through an online quiz platform, Slido. Stakeholders from different sectors, as well as partner agencies from the Department of Agriculture, participated in the virtual quiz contest. This activity aimed to strengthen the Bureau’s partnership and collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders through an interactive game.



Director Myer G. Mula delivering a welcome message during the BAFS 22nd founding anniversary.



#WalangIwanan Photo Contest winner in terms of relevance



#WalangIwanan Photo Contest winner in terms of popularity

Webinar on Online Meat Selling and its Safety

Avoiding digital misinformation, the webinar on online meat selling hoped to increase awareness on the guidelines for online meat selling or buying and delivery, its pros and cons, and the food safety issues associated with it. This webinar was the most requested topic by the stakeholders based on the results of a prior poll conducted by BAFS.

Photo Contest

A photography contest in line with the anniversary theme enticed photo enthusiasts to submit an original photo promoting Philippine agriculture (i.e. livestock, poultry, fisheries, crops, and/or agri-fishery machinery and structures) sector. Two (2) winners were awarded - the Grand Winner and the Most Popular Photo.

The winning photo captured a moment when volunteers from Samahan ng Magjiisda ng San Rafael Ragay crosses the brackish Paculago river and bravely endure the heavy rain to fix their seedlings at the Mangroove Nursery.

Taunang Parangal

When it comes to employee recognition, BAFS did not fail to acknowledge its employees’ hard work and named the exceptional ones during this year’s Parangal sa Natatanging Empleyado. The 2021 awardees were:

1. Ms. Grace B. Pascua – Best Support Staff (Janitorial Services)
2. Mr. Ronaldo Badillo – Best Driver
3. Mr. John Joshua D. Saquing – Sunshine Award
4. Ms. Zaireen B. Cleofe and Rowena B. Dacanay – Masinop Award

5. Ms. Alma V. Reyes – Most Groomed (Female Category)
6. Mr. Mark Paulo J. Padullon – Most Groomed (Male Category)
7. Ms. May Ann B. Redulfa – Tenure Recognition Award
8. Mr. Vicente D. Limsan Jr. – Artist of the Year
9. Engr. Abbygail Jaylo – Leadership Award
10. Mr. Frederick C. Crisol – Laging Handa Award and Ulirang Kawani (Non-supervisory category)
11. Dr. Alpha M. Lanuza – Ulirang Kawani (Supervisory category)
12. Mr. Jeffrey S. Garrido – Employee of the Year (Non-Supervisory category)
13. Ms. Jerilee Sabariaga – Employee of the Year (Supervisory category)

All these activities entailed thorough planning and preparations. But we did it, and the outcome was very fulfilling! ■



BAFS 22nd anniversary celebration logo drawn by late Mr. Alex Victor in collaboration with Ms. Alma Reyes

The ‘New Normal’ of BAFS Stakeholder Engagement

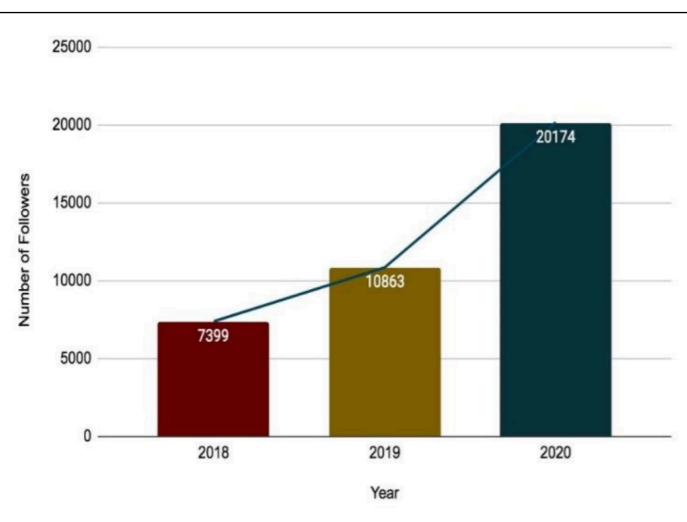
Jan Vincent DR. Tecson • Dr. Alpha Mateo-Lanuza • November 6, 2020

Through the years, the Bureau has consistently carried out its commitment to develop and promote agriculture and fisheries standards. Since its establishment, various seminars, training, workshops, consultations and meetings were conducted in order to engage with its stakeholders.

However, in 2020, as everyone deals with the threat of COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau explored various methods to continue widen its reach to stakeholders and to stay relevant during the new normal setting. BAFS took this as an opportunity to shift to digital platforms.

Facebook as a tool of engagement

With the dawn of the social media age, the Bureau launched its Facebook page on November 28, 2014. The BAFS Facebook Page became a stable support for BAFS physical activities and website information. For the past six (6) years, there was a steady increase in the growth of followers. In fact, the website has 10,863 followers as of December 31, 2019. The page was a stable support for BAFS physical activities and website information.



BAFS Facebook Page followers from 2018 to 2020

In 2020, Facebook was one of the Bureau’s most commonly used platform in conducting online activities such as webinars, orientations, photo contests, and virtual quiz contests, among others. Through this platform, consistent engagement with various stakeholders was made possible despite the distance and limited resources.

The BAFS Facebook page demonstrated noticeable improvement based on the quantifiable metrics, i.e. number of followers, reach, and post engagement. Last year, the highest number of reach and post engagement was observed in a photo-contest held during the World Food Day celebration entitled “Grow, Nourish, Sustain Together”. The activity recorded 273,000 FB users reached with 15,000 engagements. As for the webinars conducted, the Pesticide Residues in Crops recorded the highest number of reach at 26,000 FB users.

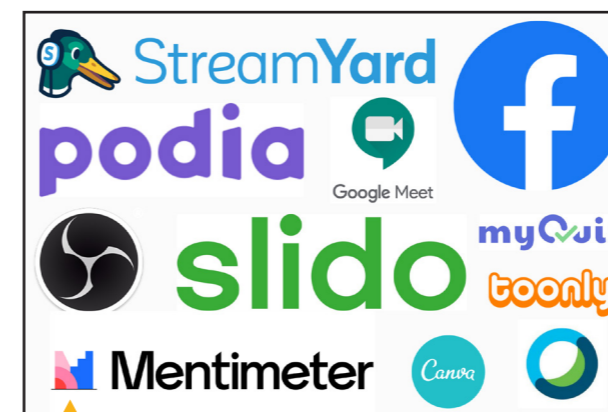
Notably, the FB page is a useful tool to connect with stakeholders nationally and internationally. If the data were to be compared with initiatives done physically, restricted by budgetary requirements, time, manpower and logistics, it can be noted that there is a wide gap from the usual 50-100 participants of a seminar-orientation. In addition, online sessions done through this platform are automatically recorded making it accessible to anyone visiting the page, anytime.

BAFS online training courses offered

An online learning platform was launched by BAFS on November 2, 2020. Designed as an addition to the Bureau’s regular information dissemination activities, the BAFS Online Academy’s initial online courses cover topics related to organic agriculture.



Screenshot of BAFS FB Page (mobile view)



Online platforms and applications used in BAFS stakeholder engagement.

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Following its debut, the BAFS Online Academy conducted its first four (4) online training courses:

1. Online Capability Building on the Rules and Procedures on the Provision of Certification Assistance for Organic Agriculture Entities,
2. Virtual Awareness Seminar on the Philippine National Standards for Organic Biocontrol Agents (PNS/BAFS 182:2016),
3. Online Training on the Philippine National Standards for Organic Agriculture (PNS OA) and the use of the National List of Permitted Substances for Organic Agriculture, and
4. Risk-based Inspection (RBI): Conducting RBI during pre-assessment or organic farm management.

The courses, which initially ran during the whole month of December, aimed to enhance the understanding and capacity of stakeholders on OA-related standards and compliance with relevant regulations towards achieving third-party organic certification. As of writing, it has reached a total of 288 participants.

The BAFS Online Academy, powered by the online course platform Podia, can be accessed at <https://bafsonlineacademy.podia.com>.

What’s in store for the future?

The BAFS FB page will continue to deliver better service and provide more offerings. Its link with the Bureau’s website will be strengthened, its content improved, and will be managed effectively to monitor its performance. In the coming months, the BAFS Online Academy will offer more courses such as Remote Auditing during extraordinary times and others which are related to BAFS mandates.

The Bureau will also launch the BAFS Online Commenting System for Draft PNS, which aims to increase stakeholder engagement by soliciting comments and inputs through online means. Finally, since these digital platforms enabled the Bureau to reach new heights in stakeholder engagement despite the COVID-19 pandemic, BAFS will continue to explore more innovative yet efficient ways to connect with its stakeholders. ■



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

*"...ensuring consumers' safety and product quality,
and contributing to environmental protection,
worker's welfare, and enhanced market access."*



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