

## Philex enables knowledge transfer among coffee growers

TUBA, Benguet – Philex Group Foundation Inc. (PGFI), the corporate social responsibility arm of Philex Mining Corp., has enabled the “knowledge transfer” between its farmer-beneficiaries engaged in organic-coffee farming, helping the latter improve their production capacity as well as saving funds for the company.

### Sustaining the coffee industry

“Our country needs more coffee growers to sustain the coffee industry and coffee lovers,” Paul Buenconsejo, executive director of PGFI, told the 11 farmers who gathered on Feb. 21 at a workshop in this town’s Sitio Ligay, Barangay Camp 1. “That’s why we’re here to share the knowledge and skills of our two farmer-trainers.”

Stressing the foundation’s successful program on transferring of knowledge from one part of the organization to another, he added, “Trainers are no longer hired consultants – which costs us so much – as there are already capacitated farmers in the community who can train those who are interested to engage in coffee production, with organic-vegetable farming as cash crops.”

Funded by the Metrobank Foundation Inc., the workshop, dubbed “On-site Training on Coffee Farm Rehabilitation and Processing,” was facilitated by Osmundo Sabelo and Charwel Olo-an, farmer-beneficiaries themselves and had earlier trained and learned from the organic-farming experts hired by PGFI.

### Local capacity training mission

“This training is one of the

missions that PGFI wants to implement – which is to build local capacities who will train their interested neighbors in coffee farming and organic-vegetable farming,” Buenconsejo said.

With an average of 1,500 shrubs of Arabica coffee that each of the 11 farmers in Sitio Ligay own and tend to, the PGFI now has a total of 22,500 plants of Arabica coffee as its source, including the 6,000 plants belonging to coffee growers in Tuba’s Sitio Torre, Barangay Camp 3, and in Itogon town’s Sitio Sta. Fe, Barangay Ampucao.

### Program extended

“We are thankful for Philex Foundation for extending their program here in our community, as this was timely and informative,” Romana Nalib-

san, 71, who participated in the workshop, said in an interview after the event. Speaking in her dialect, she added, “We can apply the techniques you taught us as early as tomorrow in our gardens. We can also teach our children and grandchildren on the proper way of coffee farming and the great benefits of producing organic crops.”

He said his team is prepared to look for more distributors

once its farmer-beneficiaries increase their yield. PGFI now has 10 major distributors of its roasted and ground coffee beans, as compared to eight in 2016, the latest addition of which are the Ideal Space Foundation and the Ryokudo Eco-Services and Trading Inc. It wants to improve on the number of its distributors of organic vegetables, however, as it has seven only now as compared to eight in 2016.

### Number of farmer-beneficiaries increasing

Tasked to establish livelihood programs for Philex Mining beneficiaries in the host and neighboring villages of its gold-and-copper operations in Benguet, the PGFI, which was incorporated in September 2010, is confident it could increase its yield of vegetables and coffee this year, citing an increasing number of farmer-beneficiaries going into organic farming.

In 2017, the PGFI sold 817 kilogram of organic Arabica coffee (roasted and ground) as compared to 755 kg a year earlier, while it sold 5,020 kg and 3,800 kg of organic vegetables for the same period. The foundation also produces organic strawberries and vegetables.

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