

Seaweed farming project launched in Zambales town

Manila Bulletin · 31 May 2018 · 7 · By JONAS REYES

SUBIC, Zambales – A seaweed farming project is underway in Barangays Cawag and Matain here, a joint initiative of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Central Luzon, Redondo Peninsula Energy, Inc. (RP Energy), and the people of this municipality.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed by BFAR, the Subic Bay Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Fisherfolk Association (SBIFARMFA), and the Farm Capital Corporation on May 19.

The MOU will involve the setup of two pilot seaweed nurseries in the two barangays, which will later be expanded into seaweed farms.

The electricity consortium facilitated the establishment of the seaweed nurseries and initiated the social preparation and coordination between the two beneficiary organizations of the project, namely the Parola Fisherfolk Neighborhood Association (PAFNA), and Samahan at Ugnayan ng Mangingisda sa Matain (SUMAMA) of Subic.

Meantime, SBIFARMA and Farm Capital Corporation's Weedera brand surveyed possible locations for the nurseries.

BFAR meantime will be in charge of monitoring the nurseries, providing technical assistance, and training the beneficiary groups for the project.

Weedera, which currently exports seaweeds to various countries such as Japan, China and Taiwan, will purchase the seaweeds from the organizations at competitive prices.

Ready market "This project is very promising, as we have started with the market of the product – something that is usually last to be figured out in other livelihood projects," said Litz Manuel-Santana, VP and Head of External Affairs of Meralco PowerGen, the majority owner of RP Energy. RP Energy's CSR Officer Jason Gavina said that the project is already viable since there is an identified buyer of the produce, which ensures the sustainability and profitability of the livelihood project.

"Our aim is to develop a marketbased livelihood program for our beneficiaries and so we partnered with Weedera, a private corporation based in Iloilo, who will be buying all the produce," Gavina said.

"This is complemented by the technical know-how of our BFAR experts who will assist the groups in setting up the nurseries," he added.

"There is a huge demand for seaweed, especially in Taiwan, China and Japan. In fact, unknown to many, the Philippines is the third largest producer of seaweed in the world. There is still a very huge potential in our undertaking," Weedera President Neil Huele said.

The project started with the launch of the seaweed farms, including a community training on May 22.

BFAR educated the community members on how to create the net and install the seedlings properly.