

'Pre-trial to boost delivery of justice'

Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban is encouraging courts and lawyers to use pre-trial proceedings to speed up the delivery of justice in the country and decongest court dockets.

Speaking in a conference of judges, clerks of court, prosecutors, clerks of court, and Westin Philippine Plaza hotel in Pasay City, Panganiban said the pre-trial would help appellate courts decide

on cases. Pre-trial proceedings or conferences would shorten trials because prosecutors and defense lawyers can already thresh out and limit the issues and facts that would be discussed before the trial itself, Panganiban explained.

It is useful in the appeals process because the appellate courts would be oriented

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Cordillera heirloom rice project



By PRECIOSA S. SOLIVEN

It is a pity that it is only just recently that I met Mary Hensley, a former US Peace Corps volunteer in Kalinga and now the founder of Eighth Wonder, together with Vicky Garcia who heads RICE (Revitalize Indigenous Cordilleran Entrepreneurs, Inc.) and whose self-sustaining project of growing and marketing Ifugao *tinawon* and *unoy* rice could have won the ACCU-UNESCO Asia-Pacific Innovative Program for ESD. They called on me at our UNESCO National Commission (UNACOM) office requesting assistance to be officially introduced and linked to

the Department of Agriculture, which our UNESCO Culture Agriculture Chair Carmen Padilla personally attended to. We also linked them with the FAO Rome project that considered financing its existing initiative of marketing and producing these traditional rice varieties. This is their story.

THE NATIVE RICE AND MAGNIFICENT RICE TERRACES: THE FUTURE OF IFUGAO AND KALINGA PEOPLE

"Even after 30 years, I vividly remember the aroma of the native *unoy* rice as it was cooking. It was so wonderful, so intense that I could hardly wait to eat it." That memory led Mary Hensley to dream of the day when the native rice from the famous rice terraces of northern Luzon would be served in the best restaurants in North America and be sought by gourmets from around the world, the day when *tinawon* and *unoy*, the Ifugao and Kalinga names for their native rice, would summon visions of the Philippines, just as jasmine and basmati evoke Thailand and India, respectively. Those visions inspired Ms. Hensley to found the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project and eventually Eighth Wonder, Inc., a marketing company in the United States, which promotes the sale of



Nearly 400 Ifugao and Kalinga farmers, together with representatives from the regional, provincial and municipal levels of government, attended the launching of the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project, organized by RICE and Eighth Wonder that will assist the Rice Terraces Farmers' Cooperative in expanding their production of *tinawon* and *unoy* rice.



To expand the volume of production, Eighth Wonder and RICE financially supported the establishment of revolving seed banks in both Ifugao and Kalinga. Here, Banaue Municipal Agriculturist Jimmy Cabigat oversees the distribution of 500 bundles of certified *tinawon* and *unoy* rice seeds.



The Mayoyao farming village in Ifugao, one of the five clusters of UNESCO World Heritage Sites



Season like this Banaue Amganad Harvest of 2006 when 62 Ifugao farmers harvested the *tinawon* rice from the terraces. They now promote the revival of traditional farming practices of *albuyog* (bayanihan or community farming) in maintenance of the terraces and harvesting of their crops.

remaining terraces are now abandoned, and the indigenous culture of community rice production is disappearing. Although nearly 100,000 farming families still work the terraces, no economic development project has ever focused on making traditional rice varieties a source of economic opportunity. The farmers in Ifugao and Kalinga have never sold their native rice on a commercial scale.

When no NGO or alternative trade organization expressed interest in assisting the



The Ifugao rice ritual is celebrated by the local Mumbaki priest to ask the rice gods for a bountiful harvest.



The Hungduan spirit flower (encircled) can be found on nearly every terrace, protecting the rice against evil spirits.



The Hingyon harvesters stopped for lunch break. Traditionally, they take home a rice bundle carrying it like a hat over their heads.

heirloom rice from the Cordillera.

The native rice and the magnificent rice terraces of northern Luzon are the legacy and the potential future of the Ifugao and Kalinga people. Carved into the steep mountainsides, the Philippine rice terraces are an engineering masterpiece and a stunning testament to the indigenous cultures that have revolved around rice, ecology and relationship to the environment for centuries. In 1995, UNESCO enlisted five of the most spectacular terrace clusters in Ifugao as a World Heritage Site. These dramatic terraces were the first sites to be designated within the category of "living cultural landscape."

Yet many factors, both natural and man-made, are bringing about a slow but steady degradation of the rice terraces and a corresponding demise of the indigenous cultures that have revolved around these terraced landscapes. Lack of economic opportunity is forcing the younger generation to leave terrace farming and search for more lucrative opportunities elsewhere. At current domestic prices, there is no incentive for the commercial production of traditional varieties. Adapted for high elevations, the native varieties are cold-tolerant and pest-resistant but also very slow maturing, requiring a growing season of six to eight months.

100,000 IFUGAO AND KALINGA FARMING FAMILIES STILL WORK THE TERRACES

According to UNESCO, 25 percent of the



Usually, Ifugao women do the rice planting, as shown here in the rice terrace of Kiangan. Because of the steep terrain, all farming must be done by hand. Therefore, the cost of production is almost three times that of lower elevation farms where machinery and modern hybrid rice varieties can be used.

farmers, Vicky Garcia from Cavite undertook the challenge and founded RICE, Inc. Ms. Garcia and Ms. Hensley were classmates and are both graduates of the master's program in Intercultural Management at the School for International Training in Vermont, USA. Through workshops, trainings and networking with local government units and other NGOs, RICE is building the bridge between farmers and the export market. Approximately 370 farmers from five municipalities in Ifugao and 200 farmers from four municipalities in Kalinga are currently participating in the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project.

To test the market, one metric ton of heirloom varieties of *tinawon* and *unoy* were shipped to the United States, which resulted in an enthusiastic response from restaurant chefs, food writers and specialty

food distributors. In order to coordinate the production of rice on a commercial scale, the farmers organized and registered the Rice Terraces Farmers' Cooperative. Monthly meetings are being held to plan strategies for increasing production and instituting quality control standards. RICE, Inc. is facilitating workshops on all phases of the business enterprise, from production to export. This is in preparation for involving the farmers as equity owners in the international marketing enterprise, Eighth Wonder, Inc.

TWENTY TONS OF TINAWON AND UNOY RICE FOR EXPORT IN 2007

With the assistance of the Banaue and Hingyon Municipal Agriculture offices, approximately 1,250 kilograms of quality planting seeds for these two traditional varieties were distributed to 210 participating farmers. Planted in December 2005, these were harvested last June. Meantime in Kalinga, 750 kilos of seeds were purchased and distributed to farmers for their July 2006 planting. After harvest, a similar amount of quality planting seeds will be returned to the seed banks for distribution to other interested farmers. With the 2006 harvest just completed in Ifugao, the Cooperative was able to ship five tons of *tinawon* to the United States last week and Kalinga is expected to ship four tons of *unoy* rice in December. The farmers expect to export 20 tons in 2007.

The project has received support and encouragement from the Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban, the National Food Authority, US Peace Corps, and UNESCO. RICE is working closely with the Kalinga Provincial Department of



Like in Ilocos region, the traditional practice is to tie the harvested rice into bundles and laying them out in the sun to dry.



Constructing houses within the rice terrace area is a violation of the UNESCO WHS rules that they should be built along the border (buffer zones) so as not to destroy the landscape architecture. This cascade of the Hungduan Rice Terrace stretching along the one-hour mountainous road ride towards Banaue is called the Hapao Spider Web.



The Banaue Gohang demo seedbeds are planted with the certified native seeds of *tinawon* and *unoy* and waiting to be transplanted into the terraces.

Agriculture (OPAS), the Kalinga Municipal Agriculture Offices of Tabuk, Lubuagan, Tinglayan and Pasil, the Ifugao Provincial Agricultural and Environment Resources Office (TAENRO), as well as the Municipal Mayors and Agriculture Offices of Banaue, Kiangan, Hingyon, Hungduan and Mayoyao.

More information on the Cordillera Heirloom Rice Project can be found on their project website at www.heirloomrice.com.