

## DOT, Max's Group hold farming, tourism confab in Cordillera

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AGRIBUSINESS CONFERENCE — Ms. Carolyn Salud (left photo) director of Max's Group, Inc., delivers her talk on Industry Requirements on Business Opportunities for Farmers during the first Cordillera Administrative Region Sustainable Farming and Tourism Conference initiated by the Department of Tourism-Cordillera last Thursday at the Benguet State University at La Trinidad, Benguet. (Zaldy C. Comanda)

La Trinidad, Benguet — Agriculture plus tourism was highlighted in the “Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) Sustainable Farming and Tourism Conference” at the Benguet State University, here, last Thursday.

The conference was part of Max's Group Incorporated's (MGI) corporate social responsibility in partnership with the Department of Tourism-Cordillera Administrative Region (DOT-CAR) to empower farming communities to be competitive and become a source of pride for local food through the launch of its corporate sustainability, synergies and relationships program.

“As 70 percent of the country's poorest communities come from the rural areas where agriculture is the dominant source of livelihood and employment, we believe that it is

imperative that all concerned sectors, government, private sector and civil society work together to help make Philippine agriculture more resilient and bring about sustainable livelihood to local farmers,” said MGI Director Carolyn Salud.

Salud, who spoke on entrepreneurship, said farmers should be thanked for their sacrifice in sweating it out to produce goods needed by the market.

“From educating the youth to educating communities to make their own success stories, we at MGI have always been very conscious about how we fulfill our role to bring greater value to our society in areas close to our hearts,” she said.

MGI has been open to partnerships with farmers to help them improve their crops for the requirement of the more than 500 Max’s restaurants in the country and more than 30 others in countries like the USA, Canada, and in the Middle East.

At present, Max’s procures about five tons annually of assorted Cordillera produced vegetables, which are served in their stores.

### ***Max’s meals go Ifugao Tinawon rice***

“This is a very important occasion because we are not just talking about agriculture but also tourism. The DOT-CAR also gives importance on agri-tourism making it important to inform farmers that they do not have to confine themselves in farming, but to also encourage them to make their farms tourism ready and friendly like the Banaue Rice Terraces and other rice terraces in the Cordillera which are visited by tourists,” said Salud.

Starting May this year, select Max’s restaurants in Northern Luzon will start to serve the “Tinawon Rice Dishes.”

“This is a symbol of our commitment to our partnership with the farming communities of the Cordilleras. These dishes will proudly feature the tinawon rice of Ifugao and offered with adobo, tinola and danggit variants.”

She urged farmers to improve their rice and vegetable farms as tourist destinations which will surely go with it a new business opportunity, good for the farmer, local government unit and the country as a whole.

DOT Cordillera Regional Director Venus Tan also said that they are not just promoting tourism but also the agricultural industry, as their share in promoting the agricultural produce of the local farmers.

“Cordillera is an agricultural region and our mandate in the DOT is not merely promoting a destination, but also the capability of the community. We also involve the community,” said Tan.

She said the conference aims to help improve the products of the farmers and to invite tourists to buy the farmers' produce.

The speakers coming from big food companies in the country included Hendel Cabral, vice president of Farm Sales, Pilmico Foods Corporation spoke on "Farmers as Entrepreneurs and Enablers of Local Pride"; Rudy Fulo, president of Air 21 spoke on "Logistics in Agribusiness"; Harris Conlin Lim, president of Henry & Sons on the topic "Coffee Industry: What the World is looking for"; and Carolyn Salud on the topic "Industry Requirement."

The company representatives vowed to help in the needs of the Cordillera farmers to improve their farm productivity and earnings.