

Visayas Tree-Seed Center to boost massive reforestation program

By **Jonathan L. Mayuga** | **Business Mirror** | FEBRUARY 19, 2017

THE government has built a tree-seed center (TSC) in Minglanilla, within the 123-hectare Cebu Experimental Forest (CEF), to boost the germplasm for superior quality trees to ensure the sustainable supply of quality planting materials until 2028.

The TSC within the CEF is the first in the Visayas. A similar TSC was established in Bislig, Surigao del Sur, an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said.

In a statement, Executive Director Dr. Henry A. Adornado of the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) said the Visayas TSC, which will act as germplasm for quality-planting materials, is capable of supplying tree seedlings for the entire Visayas.

A germplasm is a source of breeding materials. It may be of wild species or a pre-selected breeding line. It can have genetic characteristics desired for a planting material's mass production. The TSC in the Visayas will be a storage for such germplasm base.

The Visayas TSC will certify the quality of seeds to be distributed to other regions and will test the seed samples for government, nongovernmental organizations, and private enterprises and plantations.

The development of seed-material registry and certification systems should upgrade the seed quality of tree species.

The availability of a variety of tree species will be enhanced as the TSC will do seed exchange, according to Dr. Alicia L. Lustica, who heads the ERDB research center in Cebu.

The CEF is in the century-old first reforestation project—the Osmena Reforestation Project, which was established in January 1916. It was a 2,710-hectare forest-reserve area that was ran in earlier times by the Vatican, known as the Friar Land Estate.

The high rate of mortality, poor growth and survival affect the overall forestation program of both the government and the private tree-farming industry.

The TSC is part of the forest nursery modernization program, in line with the Enhanced National Greening Program (E-NGP), which aims to mass-produce quality, disease-free seeds.

It has a laboratory that may be used to test the germination of seeds. The Visayas TSC is just waiting for an occupancy permit to start operation.

Through TSC, the ERDB will enhance existing government facilities—seed bank and laboratory. ERDB will establish orchards and document seed collections in each region. ERDB will improve seed collection, procurement, storage, testing, disposition, seed exchange and marketing systems. It will update the forest tree-seed calendar. Based on ERDB records, as of June 2015, Central Visayas alone had seed collection and supply of 1.222 million.

Seed requirements will increase as Executive Order 193 mandated the extension of the NGP up to 2028. This envisions a wood and agroforestry product self-sufficiency set at an annual production target of 750,000 hectares of timber, 60,000 hectares of coffee and 300,000 hectares of fuelwood.

The wood and papers products produced are estimated to be worth \$900 million yearly.

Partners that may use Visayas TSC's seed production are DENR-ERDB's own provincial, city or municipal environment and natural resources offices (Enro), state universities and colleges, community and people's groups and private, industrial tree plantations.

The TSC has a seeder area where seeds are sown into containers, and are watered through misting for growth. Germinants are turned into seedlings in the growing area. In the hardening area, sunlight allows for drying of the seedlings for sturdiness.

ERDB has been conducting research in CEF since June 1986. It involves bamboo, rattan, dipterocarps (hardwood and tropical trees), narra, endemic tree species, neem, tiger grass, flowers and honey production. It is also a site for training Enro researchers on cave ecotourism and forest conservation. Despite being considered a national heritage and a protected and forest-reservation area, the CEF is faced with threats of illegal logging.

“Our forest is still threatened by illegal tree cutting and charcoal extraction. Informal settlement, farming, wildlife hunting, sand, gravel and black-stone extraction and bamboo harvest are also threats. We need valuable community partners to fight the threats,” Adornado said.

The top 10 tree species in the CEF are teak, gmelina, lumbang, lanutan, narra, antsoan dilau, Genguet pine, banaba and auri.

The CEF site is a biodiversity-rich area. It is home to faunal species as *kokok* (Philippine coucal), *alimokon* (white eared browndove), tamsi (sunbird), maya (munia), tikling (moorhen), pugo (buttonquail), manatad

(common emerald dove), toktor (barber), punay, siloy (Cebu black sharma), ngiwng (grass owl), sayaw (swift), kikik (koel), gitgit (swallow), tagmaya (bulbul) and uwak (crow).

“Very native wildlife community in CEF depends on unique plants, caves, rivers and creeks.” The CEF has two caves out of seven found in the Osmeña Reforestation Project.

ERDB received a mandate to put up forest TSCs under E-NGP.

It now also has a TCP in Los Baños, Laguna. ERDB is further building TSCs in Loakan, Baguio City; Pagbilao, Quezon; and Tagum City, Davao del Norte.

“Seeds collected from the established seed sources—seed-production areas and individual plus trees (IPTs)—nationwide will be submitted to forest TSC for processing and certification before it will be distributed to different stakeholders,” said ERDB.

IPTs are materials in breeding and are selected and crossed with each other as part of producing superior tree breeds.

(Article retrieved from: <http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/visayas-tree-seed-center-to-boost-massive-reforestation-program/>)