

First, the company was able to improve the production process with a systematized process flow, Food and Drug Administration Certification, GMP compliance, and HACCP alignment.

Second, the company was able to improve and innovate its products. The product line expanded and diversified from pili nut confectioneries to coco jam, sesame seed balls, sampaloc candy, banana chips, butter scotch and puto seko.

Research and development initiatives of the company also extended the shelf life of the products making them suitable for export.

Third, better management of people through personnel training was accomplished by the company.

Fourth, the company was able to penetrate more markets with additional sales outlets and reach to international market including South Korea and the United States.

All of this of course translated into financial benefits through savings in fuel cost, increased productivity, product acceptance and sales.

The impact of SETUP intervention did not end with the company, she adds. The community was able to benefit in terms of additional jobs and cleaner production technology with minimum environmental impact.

The SETUP award, given during the National Science and Technology Week's SETUP Forum, seeks to recognize adoptors, inspire new entrepreneurs, and highlight the role of science and technology in industries. Aside from the National Best SETUP Adoptor, the Regional Best SETUP adoptors were also recognized.

During the SETUP Forum, Ms.Lomibao and five other business owners/managers shared how the DOST program made impact in their lives.

Summing up the activity's objective, Engr. Rowen Gellonga, regional director of DOST VI, said, "This forum is not only about sharing and learning but also about networking and building partnerships."

Sec. Mario G. Montejo, who was himself a SETUP beneficiary when he was still involved in SMEs long before he became DOST secretary, extended his compliments to the awardees. "I hope that you will serve as an inspiration to others," he said. He also encouraged entrepreneurs to avail of the program. "SETUP is here to provide assistance not only in the urban areas but most especially those in the country sides," he said.

SMEs that belong to any of these categories-- food processing; furniture; metals and engineering; agriculture; marine products; and gifts, houseware, and decors-- can avail of SETUP assistance. SMEs interested in availing of SETUP may contact the Regional DOST Office where their businesses are located. ( *Luisa S. Lumioan, S&T Media Service*)