



FILIPINO seafarers may file work-related complaints direct to POEA even while aboard ocean-going vessels.
—Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz

GLOBAL Pinoy

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This section is dedicated to Filipinos overseas toiling on land and at sea, in factories, in construction sites and in the homes of the world to secure a better life for their families. These are their stories.

Batangas vet named best NZ farm manager

NEIL MOLINA, a veterinarian from Batangas, was named Best Farm Manager of the Year from the Otago region in the South Island of New Zealand, during the country's Dairy Industry Awards last month.

His regional title is part of the annual search for farmers, including dairy farmers, across New Zealand, who excel and achieve significant milestones.

The 40-year-old overseas Filipino manages a farm owned by Gred and Kelly Kirkwood in Ranfurly town that has 13 Filipinos out of 15 dairy workers taking care of 2,300 heads of cattle.

Neil's award, posted on the Philippine Embassy website and Filipinos in Wellington online, said, "As a Farm Manager, Neil contributed immensely to maximizing operations for high production, ensuring good staff support and teamwork and upgrading farm efficiency."

"I am blessed to have very good and wonderful farm owners and dedicated and motivated farm workers, and together we strive to make our farm as highly productive and efficient as possible. This award belongs to them," Neil was quoted as saying.

He also got the Human Resources Management Award given by AgITO, an agricultural training and information service group.

It runs in the family

Neil Molina formerly managed the Batangas Dairy Cooperative (Badaco) and comes from a family involved in the dairy sector. His father, Benjamin Molina, once taught at the dairy farm teaching facility of the Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. The elder Molina and another son, mechanical engineer Mark Molina, have their own dairy farm in Batangas and work with the Batangas Agribusiness Center in Lipa City.

Neil migrated to New Zealand about seven years ago.

Migrant labor problems

The Otago Daily Times said there were about 1,500 migrant dairy workers in New Zealand,

making up six percent of the workforce, with the majority from the Philippines. The country has experienced labor shortages but bringing in migrant workers has not been problem-free. Some cases of contract violations have also been noted.

Last year, a picture of Molina with some of his Filipino dairy workers appeared on the cover of "A Guide for Migrant Dairy Farm Workers" produced by Immigration New Zealand. The publication aims to help migrant workers know their rights as farm workers, and provides tips on how to adjust to their new environment.

Steep learning curve

Sharing some of his experiences as an overseas worker in a dairy seminar which was posted online, Neil had said: "The first year was tough. New Zealand dairy farming is all about efficiency and profitability. It is a fast-paced enterprise... and although I have some experience at home, the cow numbers, the machinery and multitasking put me in a situation of a very



PINOY PAMBATO Dr. Neil Molina, a veterinarian from Batangas, receives the Human Resources Management Award from Andrew Sheperd of AgITO, an agriculture training and information service group, at last month's Dairy Industry Awards in New Zealand. He also bagged the Best Farm Manager from Otago Award.

FILIPINOS IN WELLINGTON

steep learning curve."

Also, "the cold factor is one of the toughest challenges here." The country experiences freezing winters.

Perseverance and talent

In congratulating Neil, Philippine Ambassador to New Zealand Virginia H. Benavidez called him "a shining example of Filipino world-class talent and an inspiration for many Filipinos in the dairy sector of New Zealand who are ac-

knowledgeable and appreciated for their positive work ethics, sacrificial service, exemplary performance and commendable skills."

"Whenever I visited dairy farms in the North and South Islands, the unanimous and heartwarming feedback gathered from farm owners, managers and officers of farmers organizations is that the Filipinos have changed the dynamics of the farms. Together with the other Filipinos in the

dairy sector whose works and talents have been recognized in New Zealand, you continue to do our country and people proud."

Together with his wife, Neil continues to pursue his dream of securing a good education for his children, carries out his daily roles and responsibilities to the best of his ability, and looks forward to helping the Philippines develop its dairy industry for the benefit of the Filipino people.