



Department of Agriculture
Special Area for Agricultural
Development (SAAD) Program
daan sa maunlad na kabuhayan

PERSPECTIVES

**SAAD's capacity to view things on Agriculture and Fishery
in their true relations and relative importance**

Editors

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Edited by Myer G. Mula, Ulysses J. Lustria, Jr., and Jhomai S. Canlas

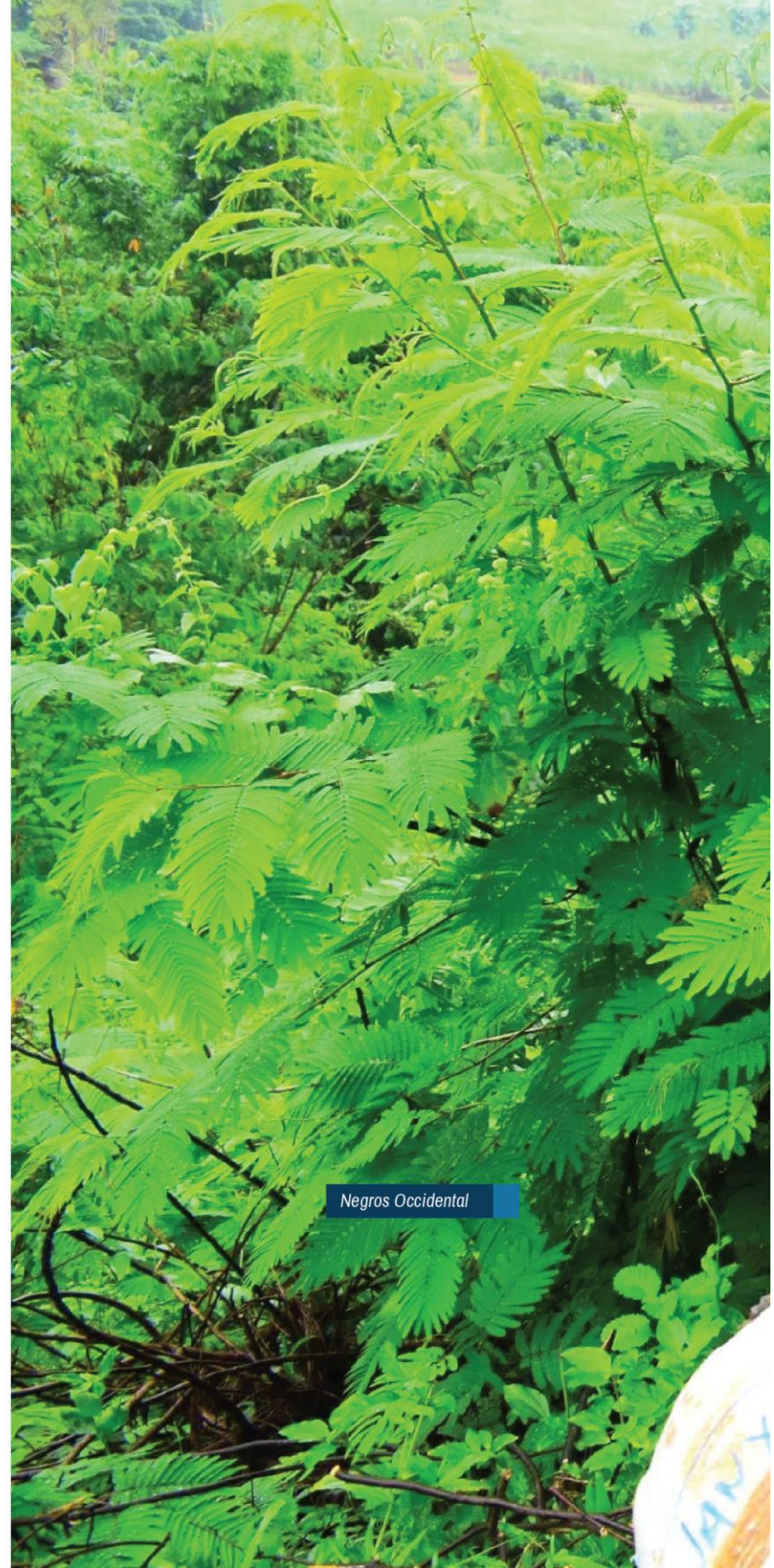
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Negros Occidental



FOREWORD



As we envision “smart farms” managed by a relatively young and innovative population, the agricultural sector calls for a more critical age of reform in an effort to lay down a strong foundation and policies for the younger generation of farmers and fishers.

Our goal is to enable Philippine agriculture to shift from traditional farming into a competitive, science and technology-backed industry through innovative approaches and modern technologies.

The emerging demands to amend the farming and food systems toward impactful results for the welfare of our farmers and fishers require a holistic and inclusive approach to targeting significant investments, not just in terms of infrastructures and input deliveries, but also of research, innovations, market information, regulations, and policies.

Considering this approach towards poverty reduction, the representation of our stakeholders and implementers in the field is fundamental. I would like to assure that our leadership listens and recognizes every stride towards a meaningful transformation of policies of the agriculture sector, of the people, and for the people.

I therefore wish to commend the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program implementers of the Department of Agriculture for their dedication to put forward our partner-farmers’ and fishers’ welfare by laying down practices in the field, and prepositions to improve their condition. I hope that this editorial compendium from the three years of implementation can eventually reflect representations and resound essence in the strategic design of the ongoing efforts to improve our agricultural and food systems.



*Mabuhay ang pambansang
sektor ng sakahan at
pangisdaan! Mabuhay
ang magsasaka at
mangingisdang Pilipino!*

William D. Dar, Ph.D.
Secretary

MESSAGE



As Chairperson of the Special Area for Agricultural Development's (SAAD) Program Steering Committee, our mission is to create a better future for the agriculture and fishery sectors.

The SAAD is one of the programs of the Department of Agriculture that addresses the lingering poverty situation in the countryside. It will help poor communities in increasing food production, thereby contributing to the growth of family income as well.

I believe that livelihood interventions SAAD provides focus on both household consumption and agri-enterprise development. Specific activities include capacity building up to marketing assistance.

As I look beyond this compendium of editorial articles, I realized the importance of opinions based on research. They can drive decision-makers to take action on issues relevant to our farmers and fishers.

With this, I emphasize to give importance to assessment as a critical part of any organization to evaluate and monitor program implementation and results.



*Let's see measures to
improve our engagement,
transparency, and
accountability as an
agency to further deliver
great results.*

Engr. Ariel T. Cayanan
Undersecretary for Operations

MESSAGE



Every year, the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program marks milestones for its continuous growth as it takes bolder steps to redefine the concept of government services.

As we touch the farmers' and fishers' lives through various interventions, we also make sure that their voices be heard through our SAAD editorial team.

As the management, we continue to find ways that will allow them to receive more tangible benefits by creating a platform that will urge the public and the policymakers to take action.

We take the role of responsive communication to increase awareness, foster behavioral changes, facilitate mobilization, and establish partnerships for the development of the Philippine agriculture and fishery sectors.

It is my honor to present to you the compilation of the SAAD Program's editorial articles published from 2017 to 2020.

As Deputy Director of the SAAD program, I also laud our hardworking employees at the national, regional, and provincial offices who perform their tasks efficiently and effectively.



The success of our beneficiaries is also the success of our program.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ulysess V. Lustria Jr.".

Ulysess V. Lustria Jr., CESE
Deputy Director, SAAD Program

MESSAGE



I personally believe that the core of community development is to empower people through innovation. And to empower is to continue to challenge the system with new thinking. Our marginalized Filipino farmers and fishers have always had a voice, and the challenge is to listen and include them in the discourse of initiatives and policies for agricultural development.

This anthology of providence, written by the Special Area for Agricultural Development Program implementers and communications arm in the regional and national units, does not resonate the voice of the program implementers but the voice of the farmers and fishers whom we have closely worked with throughout the course of program implementation.

I would like to emphasize the importance of recognizing this voice - to be considered as the anchor of future initiatives, to secure a substantive, inclusive, modern, and impactful change to our farmers and fishers that are not reached or minimally influenced by the Department of Agriculture's banner programs, and the welfare of the communities under the poverty threshold.

With this, I pose a challenge, to our policymakers, and stakeholders, to listen closely and consider collaterals such as this book, as a basis for structuring or refocusing agricultural policies in the fields of technological innovation, market and enterprising, partnerships, and capability building among our partner-farmers/fishers and their communities.



As an agricultural scientist and development program implementer, I believe that only through the recognition of scientific, socio-cultural voices, can equip our farmers and fishers with a real fighting chance to win the perpetual war against poverty

Myer G. Mula, Ph.D.
Director, SAAD Program

CONTENTS

Foreword	
Dr. William D. Dar, Secretary	i
Messages	
Engr. Ariel T. Cayanan, USec for Operations	ii
Mr. Ulysses J. Lustria Jr., Deputy Director	iii
Dr. Myer G. Mula, Director	iv
About the Program	1
Introduction	2
Editorials	
JMD Gabon, MG Mula, and UJ Lustria Jr. 2020. Empowering indigenous communities in the agriculture and fisheries sector: the SAAD's commitment	5
JA Valcobero, MG Mula, JMD Gabon, and NO Delos Reyes. 2020. SAAD books: a tangible proof of a compelling journey	9
IR Sanggoyod. 2020. Dream Catcher	13
MG Mula. 2020. Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture: A Clever and Novel Way of Feeding a Conurbation	15
MG Mula and JDR Arro. 2020. SAAD Agri-Enterprise: a step towards sustainable household socioeconomic status	17
UJ Lustria Jr. 2020. Partnership: An Essential SAAD Tool Against Poverty	22
MG Mula and IKM Sevilla. 2020. Social Preparation: An approach to a sustainable agriculture system of SAAD	24
MF Dabuet. 2020. SAAD Farmers Not in a State of Flux Despite Pandemic	27

MG Mula. 2020. Seed System: An Integral Ingredient of the SAAD Program	29
MG Mula. 2020. Agripreneurship as an Enterprise: a Boon to SAAD Program	31
MG Mula. 2020. Seeds Without Borders: A new normal for Philippine agricultural development	33
MF Dabuet. 2020. Tactical Agriculture	35
DP Daguio. 2020. Loving Our Farmers	36
MF Dabuet and JA Valcobero. 2019. Through the SAAD lens, clearly	37
MF Dabuet and PRP Arciaga. 2019. World Food Day and SAAD Program	38
MF Dabuet and PRP Arciaga. 2019. Importance of Technology in the Agriculture Industry	40
MF Dabuet and PRP Arciaga. 2018. SAAD Program: A Potent Tool in the Fight Against Poverty	42
JG Basilan and PRP Arciaga. 2018. Broadening the plate of DA interventions	43
RL Dusaban. 2018. Touching Farmers' Lives the SAAD Way	44
UJ Lustria Jr. 2018. Upscaling Poverty Alleviation Programs: A Must In the War Against Poverty	47
UJ Lustria Jr. 2018. Women: The Best Fighters Against Poverty	48
UJ Lustria Jr. 2018. Painting the Face of Poverty: The Best Solution	49
CJ Alviela. 2017. Sarangani Upland Rice: Hitting two goals with one sprout	50

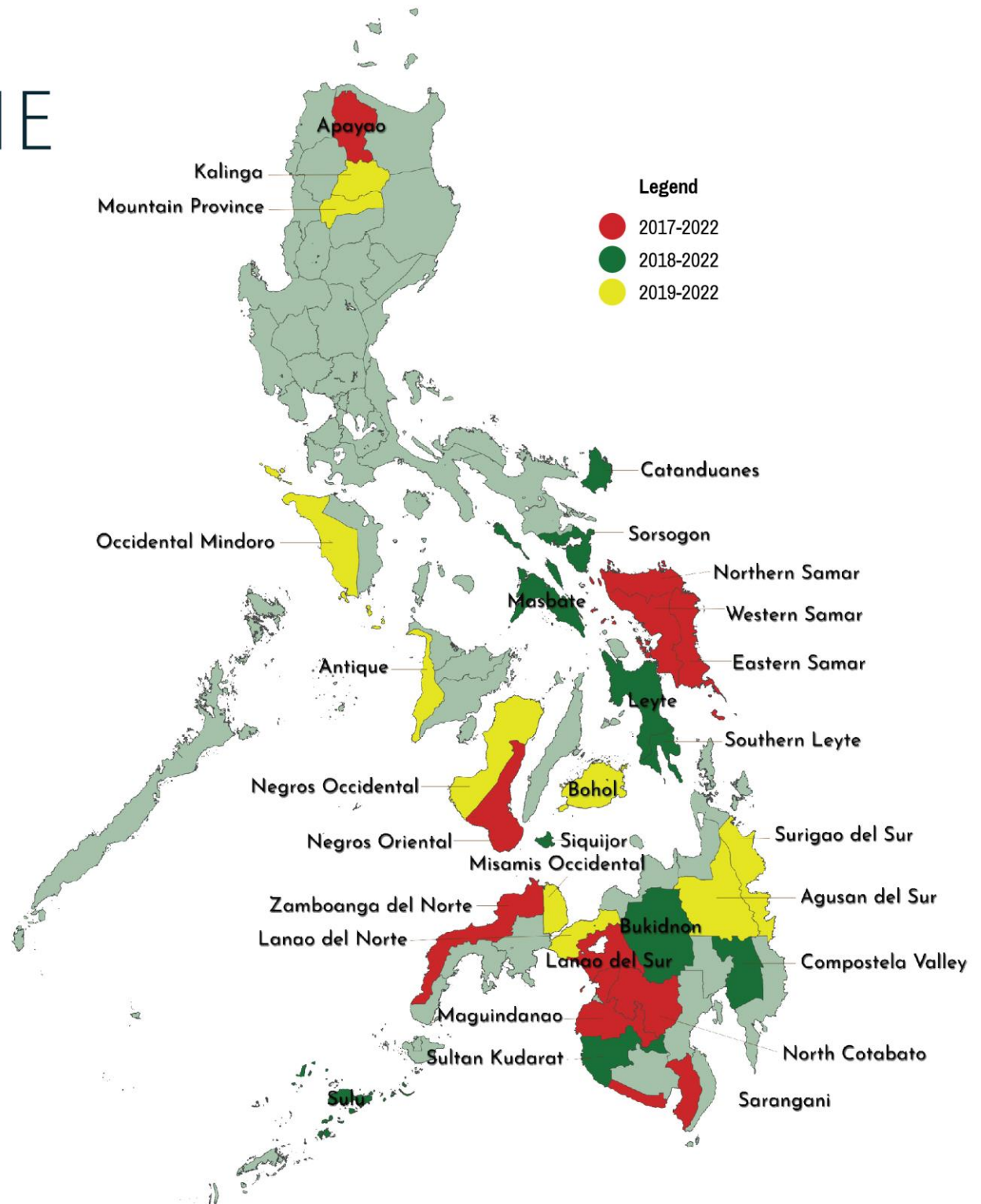
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) program is a 6-year (2017 to 2022) locally-funded project of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

SAAD, 'promise' in Visayan and 'commitment' in Masbate, aims to help marginalized farmers and fishers of the 30 poorest of the poor provinces move out of poverty categorized by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) based on 2012 and 2015 data as well as areas covered by Executive Order No. 70, Series of 2018 (end local communist armed conflict – ELCAC).

The strategy of the program is to increase food production and the establishment of community enterprises by providing the appropriate technology, marketing, and other support services for animals (livestock and poultry), crops (food and industrial), and fisheries (capture, aqua, and pond culture) to individuals, households and organized farmers and fisherfolk including the Department of Social and Welfare Development's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) and Indigenous Peoples (IPs).

Beneficiaries were assessed through social preparation to provide the needed training and livelihood interventions. Post-production inputs, tools, machinery, equipment, and facilities are also given to improve farm and fish production practices to prepare them to become agripreneurs.



INTRODUCTION

‘INFORMATION’ + ‘OPINION’.

When combined, a person or an organization creates an editorial article. This type of article work as a catalyst for thought that is why it is usually researched, reasoned, and crafted.

An editorial article aims to promote critical thinking, explain and interpret, criticize actions or decisions, persuade and move readers to action, and show support for people and organizations.

The editorial became the voice of the SAAD Program since 2017. It is an opportunity for its staff to bring certain issues and topics about the Philippines' agriculture and fishery sectors, which are relatively connected to the program's goals and implementation.

For more than a decade – 14 years to be exact, the two sectors have been consistently battling on the country's top poorest sectors. In 2015, farmers had a 34.3% poverty incidence rate while fishers had 34% - both are even higher than the national rate of 21.6%.

The high poverty rates of both sectors urged the DA to create a program that will contribute to the poverty alleviation of 30 provinces in the country until 2022.

SAAD editorial team's purpose is to make a positive change in the agriculture and fishery sectors by influencing and informing its target readers, which are the public and the policymakers, through various articles.

The group believes that the program's goal may have an extensive impact if supported not just by the government but also altogether. One of the team's platforms is writing editorial articles - which are informative, appealing, and arguable in nature.

The views of the team – whether it will be agreed upon or not – may become a tool to open ignored discussions, initiate actions, and unify people.



Apayao

23

In total

articles

were documented from 2017 to 2020,
which were published on the program's
SAADvocacy newsletter found at the
program's website and Facebook page.

saad.da.gov.phfacebook.com/da.saadprogram

A photograph of a woman and a young child in a lush green field of bitter melons. The woman, wearing a grey t-shirt, is holding a long, green bitter melon fruit in her right hand and looking upwards. The child, wearing a white shirt with the number '30' in pink, is holding a bitter melon fruit and looking directly at the camera. In the foreground, several bitter melon fruits are laid out on a wooden surface. The background is filled with dense green foliage and more hanging bitter melon fruits.

Sorsogon

EDITORIALS

EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES SECTOR: THE SAAD'S COMMITMENT

December 16, 2020

By Jessa Mae D. Gabon, Dr. Myer G. Mula, and Ulysses J. Lustria, Jr.



“Development by the people, of the people, and for the people,”

– Angelito Manalili (1990)

The need to empower the indigenous cultural communities (ICCs) or Indigenous Peoples (IPs) is a must if we want them to truly develop. The SAAD Program always has this in mind.

Crossing the public and private divide is an “inescapable part of many developmentally successful programs,” according to Peter Evans (1999). Synergistic phenomena in community development may rest into complementarity (which includes tangible and intangible inputs from the development initiators to the communities) and embeddedness (quality of social network involving the locality in building a dense social relationship) which acknowledges very important concerns on the complex nature of advancing the welfare of poverty-stricken areas, specifically, the ICCs.

The ICCs or IPs have a long history of the struggle for rights recognition, adaptability to modernization, and socio-economic progress inclusion. Some of the ICCs/IPs' major and

perpetual dilemmas have everything to do with disempowerment and sidestepped incorporation to development programs and initiatives, as well as difficulties in creating sound and relevant policies, further emphasizing subordination to the dominant population (hence, the term “cultural minorities”).

However, the constitution indicates the protection of the rights of indigenous people, conjointly prioritizing political, socio-economic, cultural preservation, and adaptation to the contemporary dynamics of communities.

In 1987, the term Indigenous Cultural Communities was introduced to the Philippine constitution, where the issues involving the minorities are seen as a topic of governance

(Hirtz, 2003), seeking to assert a thorough approach on handling and crafting a space for the indigenous communities in the policy and development discourse in the Philippines and adhering to the recognition of territories and preservation of customs and cultures.

In 1997, the key legislation – Republic Act No. 8371, the Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA Law) was established, declaring the recognition, protection, and promotion of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples rights. This consists of the four bundles of ICCs/IPs' rights which are: Right to Ancestral Domains and Lands; Right to Self-Governance and Empowerment; Social Justice and Human Rights; and Cultural Integrity.



Empowering indigenous communities in the agriculture and fisheries sectors: the SAAD's commitment

While the IPRA of 1997 is in place, and the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) as an institution whose primary mandate is to rally for the welfare of the ICCs is operating, forces and tensions in politics create narrow progress for the communities to be taken off the edge of poverty, accordant with the social justice provision.

Locating the ICCs in the Philippine development discourse

Despite numerous efforts in rights recognition and ICCs/IPs reform initiatives both from the state and a number of non-government agencies advocating for inclusivity in terms of development, the indigenous communities remain to be one of the most marginalized sectors in the Philippines (De Vera, 2007).

In a discussion among SAAD Project Development Officers, SAAD Director Dr. Myer Mula carefully distinguished the disparity between the general contexts of “poor” versus the “landed-poor” communities (most often the ICCs/IPs) and how miscalculations in development program implementation further widen the social gap, putting the ICCs/IPs in a disadvantaged position. He emphasized the need for exclusive, specific, and intricate response to address poverty among the indigenous communities through sustainable livelihood programs as a proactive measure.

In the case for example of infrastructure-based economic development initiatives, while it helps the general economy, the landed communities are being forced for a geographic displacement conceiving land tenure issues, which then reflects gradual depletion of access and control over natural indigenous resources due to emerging commercialization, and existing political contentions. As the communities get displaced, an array of interdependent disempowerment prevails over the present and future generations of the Indigenous Communities.

Highlighting the space for development of ICCs in the agriculture and fisheries sector

However, despite the complexity of the IPs situation, there exist agencies and entities that do not abandon the pursuit of relevant reform and capacity building for the indigenous cultural communities. With the initiative of the Department of Agriculture (DA), former Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, and in line with President Rodrigo Duterte’s response to address poverty in the country, the Special Area for Agriculture Development (SAAD) Program was implemented in 2017. Two years later, Secretary William Dar took over and introduced the 8 Paradigms (New Thinking) to level up agriculture which aims to strengthen food security while addressing the sufficiency of farmers’ and fishers’ livelihood resources.

The SAAD Program caters to the marginalized and most vulnerable farming and fishing sectors living in the remote provinces in the country. The intricate program design of SAAD is a long-term investment to improve public-private engagement by empowering grass-root communities, including the indigenous people.

As of 2020, under the directorship of agriculture-scientist Dr. Myer G. Mula, the SAAD Program has continued to serve more than 17,000 identified individual farmer/fisher-beneficiaries belonging to different indigenous cultural communities in the 30 poorest of the poor provinces it covers. The program as an approach to push for impactful drop and hopefully, total eradication of poverty incidence in the agricultural sector, anchors its mechanism to contemporary framework and methods of community organizing. By using the SAAD’s four major components; (1) Program Management; 2) Social Preparation; 3) Production and Livelihood Interventions; and (4) Marketing Assistance and Enterprise Development, the program ultimately hopes to organize and transform the IP farmers and fishers from mere beneficiaries to participants

and leader-collaborators of development in their community, and to cooperate to the national capacity building.

The SAAD IP beneficiaries as of 2020 come from remote provinces of CAR, Regions 4-B, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. Some agricultural-livelihood projects that have been granted to the ICCs/IPs in the provinces since the program’s establishment include rice and vegetable production, livestock and poultry, high-value crop production, communal gardening, corn production, abaca production, aquaculture/pond culture, and farm and post-harvest machinery (Table 1).

Decentralization and empowerment

The core of SAAD Program framework lies in its Social Preparation component as a standard procedure in penetrating target communities. As contemporary theories on community organizing always emphasize: development initiative needs to be collaborative and should foster collectivity when it comes to decision-making between the initiators of development and the community members.

The concept of social preparation component is quite similar to the rapid rural appraisal (RRA), but differs significantly in the implementation. Social preparation is a long-term investment aiming to define roles with regard to the involvement and limitations of each of the actors in the whole process. The important goal is to increase the community’s social capital by enabling the community members to build a coordinated-collective leadership, which encourages independence in politics, economy, and social activities towards attaining a common goal. At the same time, the said goal sets limitation to the role of the state in terms of control, while giving space to move forward to other communities. By defining these roles, actors of development designs healthy synergistic relations in attaining one

goal.

The complexity of penetrating the indigenous communities lie in the distinct customs embedded in each area. The ICCs/IPs are immensely connected with the environment and their spirituality, this is why the regional, and provincial SAAD implementers, as well as the Local Government Units (LGUs) play a key role in the program field execution as the fundamental units of organizing. These local networks are the staff that was born in the same or within the locality that actually can relate, or understand local identities and representations.

Social preparation aims to foster leadership, participation, and ownership of the livelihood programs being provided. The program offers workshops and training to enhance farmers' capability through adapting to technological farming innovations, utilization of farming materials, imparting modern and sustainable agricultural practices, and value-adding activities to the locality's produce. This is a pro-active approach to sustain development initiatives through meticulous apportionment of priorities to social/community capacity-building.

Standing up for ICCs

The SAAD Program interventions organizing process does not only address livelihood resources for its beneficiaries but also introduces a development perspective anchored on grass-root empowerment concepts, resounding good collective practices on leadership, participation, collective understanding, and consciousness of the state-private collaborations.

While it seems that the point at issue roots from ambiguity in policies, questionable political will, and misguided approach to development, the state and its arms, such as

Table 1. Overview of projects received by the ICC/IP beneficiaries of the SAAD Program 2017-2020 (data as of December 2020)

REGION	IP GROUP	NUMBER (INDIVIDUAL)	PROVINCE	PROJECT
CAR	Agta Tabangnon, Isnag, Applai, Ibanag, Igorot, Kankana-Ey, Subanen	3,946	Apayao Mountain Province	Fruit Trees Production (Sub project 1) Cattle Production Table Egg and Banana Production Fruit Trees, Draft Animal Production, & Post Harvest Rice Production - Rice Production & Post Harvest Machinery (with MPTS) Large and Small Ruminant Production - Buffalo Production Post-Harvest Machinery - Compact Tiller Cattle Production Integrated Crop Production - Vegetable Production
Region 4-B	Profiling in progress	1,358	Profiling in progress	Profiling in progress
Region 5	Agta Tabangnon	383	Sorsogon	Livestock – Chicken Native Chicken Production Vegetable Production Upland/Rainfed Rice Production with Thresher and Draft Animal Duck Production Goat Production Native Chicken Production Swine Production Upland/Rainfed Rice Production with Thresher and Draft Animal White Corn Production
Region 6	Profiling in progress	1,061	Profiling in progress	Profiling in progress
Region 7	Tribu Magahat	212	Negros Oriental	Improved Goat Production
Region 9	Subanen	561	Zamboanga del Norte	Pamansalan Ecotech Project (Provision of Farm Machineries)

the Department of Agriculture continues to seek empowering programs designed for the indigenous communities in hopes to eventually lift them beyond the poverty threshold.

In essence, SAAD Program implementation always seeks to:

- Secure indigenous communities' representation and participation in the initiated projects, while avoiding intrusion through intricate environmental and social scanning of the implementers.
- Invigorate agriculture/fishery activities to improve provincial agricultural performance.
- Provide linkages and strengthen regional,

provincial and municipal local government, and members of the community to maintain access to public services.

- Organize farmers and fishers into groups, establish community/local enterprises and develop market and value chains.
- Reinforce access to nutritious, sufficient, culture-appropriate food, and food production capability of marginalized rural communities.

SAAD advances inclusivity by capacitating the indigenous communities to choose, sustain, and enhance livelihood programs. In this process, the program fosters independence and social participation among the members and implementers in the province, further

strengthening social capital of the communities.

While SAAD is one of the many state-initiated programs that cater to the ICC/IPs, there is still an enormous amount of effort needed to advance the welfare of the indigenous communities in terms of policy execution in the issues of land, environment, and resource utilization and ownership.

As for the program, the experiences in immersing with the ICCs/IPs can contribute to further development, innovation, and flexibility of its implementation to fit different communities as the program progresses.

Indeed, any true development for the ICCs or IPs should be "by the IPs, of the IPs, and for the IPs." ###

Region 10	Higaonon, Higonon, Lumad, Maranao, Igorot, Ibaloi, Manobo, Talaandig, Matigsalo, Matigsalog, Tigwahanon, Umayamnon, Tigwahan	565	Bukidnon, Lanao del Sur	Integrated Agricultural Livelihood Project in Baungon Integrated Agricultural Livelihood Project Itik Pinas Project Integrated Agricultural Livelihood Project (Corn, HVC and Layer Chicken)
Region 11	Dibabawon Manobo, Mansaka, Mandaya, Bol-Anon, Bagobo, Agusanon, B'laan	1,292	Davao de Oro	Native Chicken Production OPV White Corn Production Upland Rice Production
Region 12	B'laan, Manobo, Lupon, T'boli, Subanen	4,968	Sarangani, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat	OPV White Corn Production Upland Rice Production Cacao & Coffee Production Swine Breeding Livelihood Project
Region 13	Profiling in progress	522	Profiling in progress	Profiling in progress
TOTAL		17,673		

Note: The table consists of a partially summarized list of interventions for the ICC/IP communities from the SAAD Program. Some regions are yet to send a complete list of ICC/IP beneficiaries, and interventions.

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Resource Persons

- Mr. Camilo A. Andi Jr., Office of the Undersecretary for Regulations
- Mr. Ulysses J. Lustria Jr., Deputy Program Director, SAAD Program

SAAD BOOKS: A TANGIBLE PROOF OF A COMPELLING JOURNEY

October 9, 2020

By Jennifer A. Valcobero, Dr. Myer G. Mula, Jessa Mae D. Gabon, and Natalianne O. Delos Reyes

Communication and responsibility are two converging phenomena that can be powerful tools to determine progress and further augment community welfare towards development. Communication is essential in crafting structures of systems, keeping track of progress, and strengthening existing impacts that intend to develop a specific sector. It concerns and influences the overall trend of understanding of social actors, and stakeholders, on the trajectory of their development. Considering the holistic relevance of communicated and on-going communicative collaterals for development initiatives can be used as factors or guide in governing future resolutions and legislation.

Towards development, a responsive communication plays an important role because it is a contributing factor to increase awareness, fostering behavioral changes, facilitating mobilization, and establishing partnerships in pursuit of common goals. It also

promotes accountability and transparency, and helps ensure equitable and sustainable distribution of project benefits.

According to Servaes (2007), communication for development is “sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs, and capacities of all concerned. It is thus a social process.” Servaes however, emphasized that communication for development most of the time is confused as just the utilization of media platforms to disseminate information to

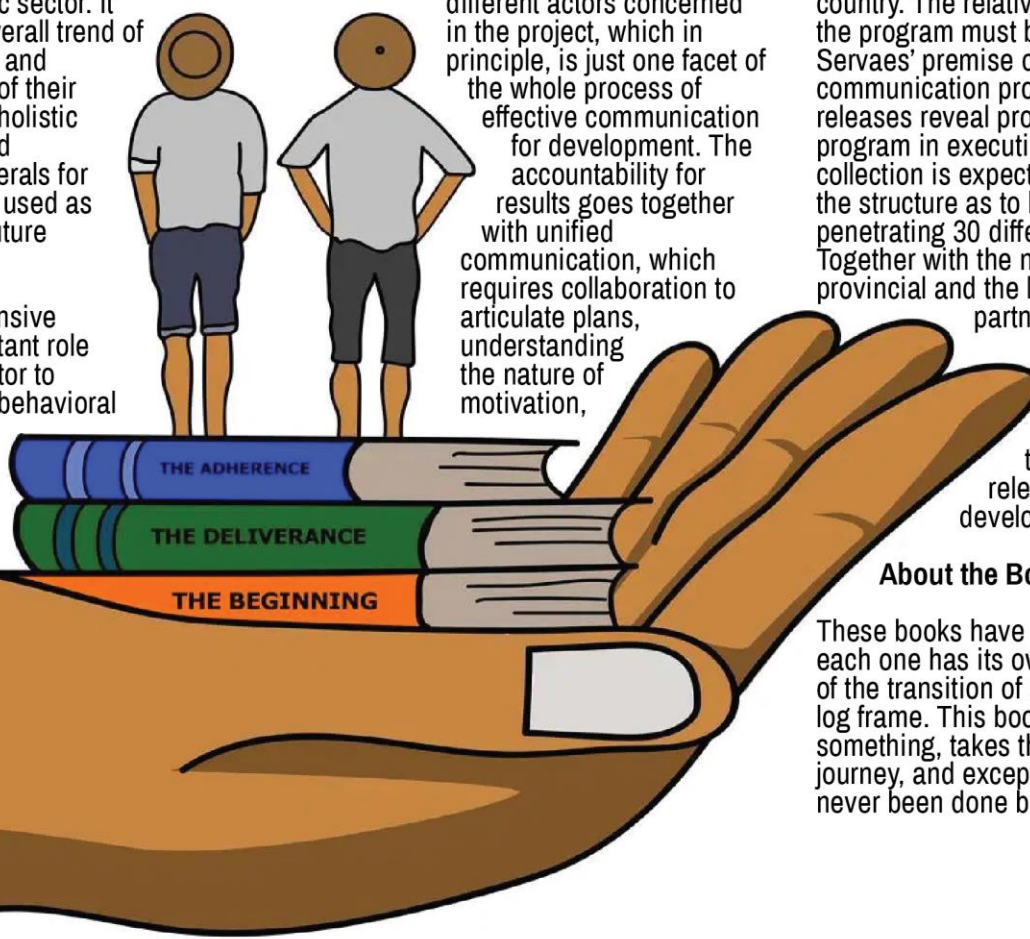
different actors concerned in the project, which in principle, is just one facet of the whole process of effective communication for development. The accountability for results goes together with unified communication, which requires collaboration to articulate plans, understanding the nature of motivation,

and the desired outcomes. Even though that there are different teams, different audiences, but that does not mean that they have to work in silos – rather, their efforts are aligned to make sure that their messages are unified. This will make an organization hastily revamp the business growth and performance.

The corporate communications cluster of the SAAD Program has been focused on creating a space where the program can begin to be part of the discourse concerning development and drives addressing poverty incidence in the country. The relatively young implementation of the program must be considered in tackling Servaes’ premise of complexity in the communication process. Its series of press releases reveal prominent actions taken by the program in executing its mandate. The collection is expected to create an image of the structure as to how the program started penetrating 30 different provinces from scratch. Together with the national arm, regional, provincial and the local units, down to our partner-farmers, the collated materials speak to SAAD’s beginning and continuing stories of both challenges and victories towards impactful and relevant agricultural development.

About the Books

These books have beginning and an end. But each one has its own unique feature because of the transition of activities following SAADs log frame. This books make its readers learn something, takes the reader on a compelling journey, and exceptional experiences of what’s never been done before.



In 2020, the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) released its three books which are compilation of year to year remarkable agricultural and fishery activities and events at the regional and provincial levels from 2017 until 2019 of covered provinces in the country.

The three books namely: **The Beginning**, **The Deliverance**, and **The Adherence**, are scenes of the SAAD program which started in 2017 until 2019, on how the program grows in time which provide a chronological compilation of activities and events for the upward mobility of the SAAD Program's mission and vision.

The Beginning

In 2017, the SAAD, through its first 10 provinces, heard the woes and cries of the farmers and fisherfolk who are hungry for both

agricultural and fishery livelihood support. It has been a challenging year because the program management office was just being assembled. During its baby steps and first few chapters, it was met with so much birth pains, peaks, valleys, mountains, and rivers that have to be hurdled.

However, these did not hinder the staff in its relentless effort to not just fulfill a promise but to make sure that every Filipino family will always have food on their table.

To do this, the beneficiaries were equipped with the knowledge and skills before the actual inputs were handed over to them. Thus, 2017 focused more on social preparation activities and specialized training of the program as these are the initial step in community organizing. This is designed to prepare the affected families to cope with the changes brought by the program and to encourage them

to actively participate and prepare their society, community, and personal responsibilities in their quest for lifetime security, human development and basic services, employment and livelihood, and other government programs for the urban poor.

Contact building, information campaign, identifying the beneficiaries and projects, profiling, geotagging, helping in organization and registration of associations, and training of beneficiaries emanate

the whole SAAD social preparation process.





The Adherence

In 2019, SAAD expanded its coverage to 30 provinces then became an effective instrument to uplift the lives of these modern heroes who tirelessly till lands and heroically sail the seas to feed the country. This year is purely testimonials of both individual and group beneficiaries who have improved their lives through the help of SAAD. Some of these grantees have a promising future ahead of them since they are already preparing to develop community enterprises.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) cited the program as a contributing factor in poverty reduction of Eastern Visayas in 2018 through its labor-enhancing and income-enriching agricultural interventions.

The success of these beneficiaries is also the success of the program. This means that the strategies used to achieve compliance are

The Deliverance

So, to continue what has been set through and sweated out in the previous year, the program started to get bigger by covering 20 provinces to distribute the actual livelihood interventions intended for each beneficiary in 2018.

"The Deliverance" showed that these interventions provided immediate benefits to the beneficiaries because there were already success stories of these farmers who have exceptional performance and how their lives have improved since they received the livelihood support. Some of them are individual farmers but agreed to be grouped into an association for them to easier develop an enterprise.

Through the untiring efforts of the SAAD program's staff, countless distributions of farm and fishery inputs, equipment, and machinery to far-flung areas that most DA regular programs could not reach were made possible.





SAAD Saga of Sarangani in General Santos City

working – creating deterrence through periodic reporting of program activities and accomplishments. From its humble beginnings, bumpy roads crossed, and challenges encountered, it has recorded a total of 72,546 individuals and 1,633 groups benefiting the program. It has also covered 17 cities, 313 municipalities, and 2,695 barangays from the 30 SAAD covered provinces.

viewed on the program's official website. The SAAD NPMO is accountable to each stakeholder of the program such as the farmers, the government and international partners, private organizations, local government units, and extension workers.

We witness through the articles that the role of SAAD is critical because they have to educate the beneficiaries that the livelihood support will be provided to them but the production and the success depends on their hard work and efforts to sustain these projects.

Focused beneficiaries were those battling with both hunger and poverty. Filipino farmers and fishers are the most vulnerable to poverty despite being the producers of food for the nation. SAAD was conceptualized to provide assistance to these farmers and fishers, teaching and guiding them to have a sustainable production and livelihood.

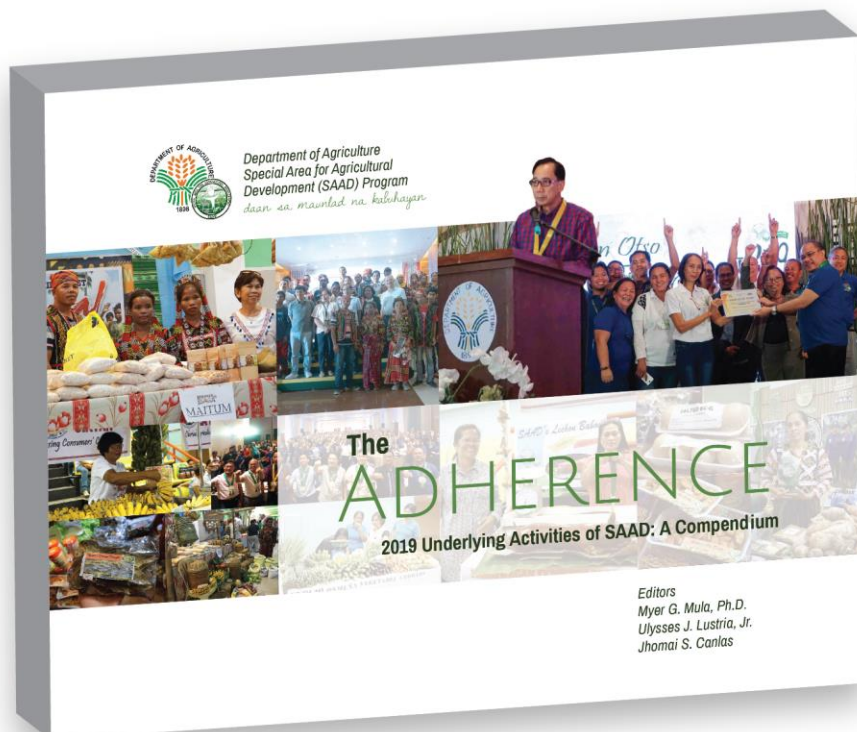
The publications also help us get a grasp of the challenges, compromises, and exerted efforts of every coordinator from the provincial, regional and to the national level to make the program work.

In reality, not all the projects will be developed into enterprise. However, the information that we gather from the news articles may be used to further improve the system of our program, and also help other observers on their own implemented programs and projects. ###

A glimpse of the SAAD Program

The SAAD regional and provincial team are just as responsible for the outcome of every project implemented in the provinces. The program implementers ought to report each movement to provide transparency.

The previous activities of SAAD were documented through the different types of press and photo releases which may be



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DREAM CATCHER

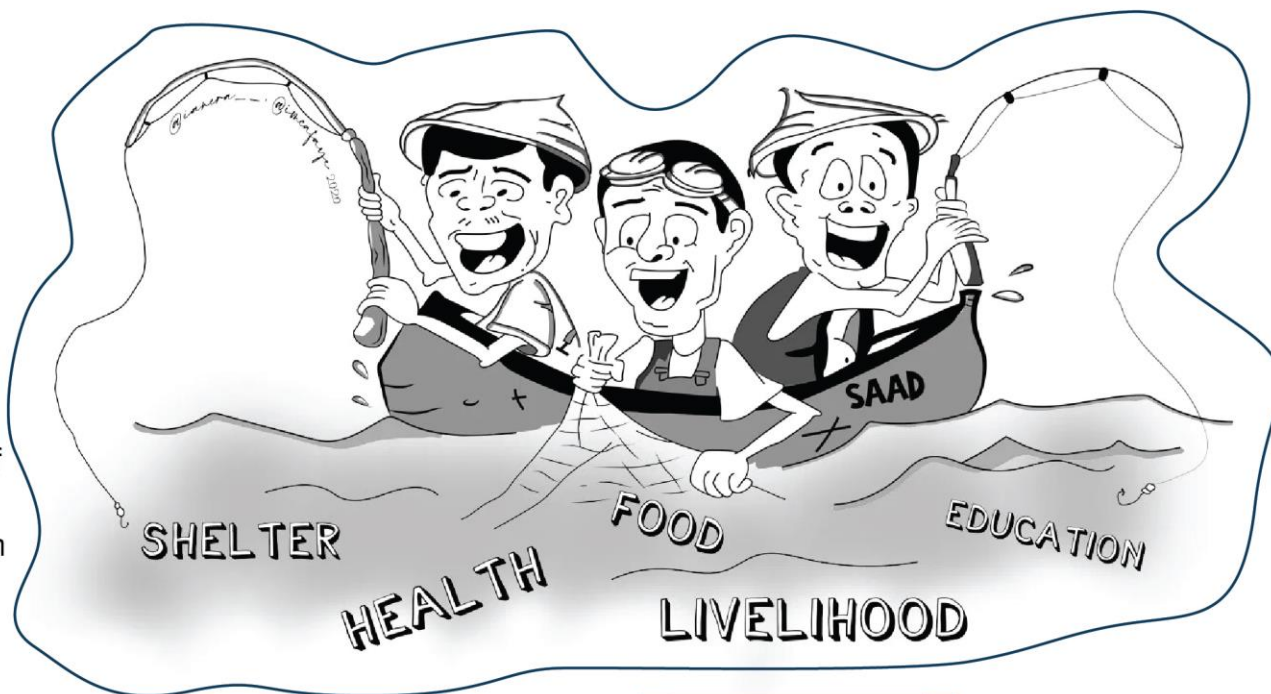
August 18, 2020

By Ibrahim R. Sanggoyod

Philippines is widely known for the richness of its aquatic resources and has the world's longest discontinuous coastline. It has the potential for economic growth as over a million Filipinos are engaged in marine fishery. However, due to neglect, distraction, and abuse of resources, the fishing industry is greatly affected.

In addition, fisherfolk remain as one of the poorest sectors in the Philippines, with poverty incidence of 26.2% in 2018 according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Many fishermen say fishing is a dangerous seasonal job. They endure storms, high winds, fatigue, stress, and financial pressures. The hazardous work conditions faced by the fisherfolk have a strong impact on their safety. However, their dreams and responsibilities kept them going.



Illustrated by Christian Era Jaime

Due to illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing happening in the country's coastal areas, the government is now looking for alternative ways to help its people uplift their way of living. The government are not just focusing on the coastal areas but also on the far-flung areas with great farm and fishery potential, where livelihood and interventions are limited.

With this, the Department of Agriculture through the fishery sector – Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), launched the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program in 2016, aiming to contribute to poverty alleviation and increased production through the promotion of social venture initiatives that fit the needs of the fisherfolk in the area.

For BFAR Region 10, the province of Bukidnon is one of the pioneers to receive the livelihood projects from the program in 2018. Now on its 3rd year of implementation, one of its beneficiaries is reaping the benefits of SAAD.

PICKISM (Pinilayan, Cebile, Kiburiao, Sta. Cruz, Moibantang) Tilapia Growers Association's 30 beneficiaries were once rice and sugarcane farmers, who relied for their livelihood on agriculture farming alone. From earning an average of Php 3,200 net income by selling three to four sacks of palay harvested in their ¼ hectare lands every three months, they now enjoy a significant increase in their income (of at least 2 to 3 times) ranging



Mabini, Davao De Oro

from Php 6,000 – 8,000 by allocating a parcel of their land for tilapia farming.

Inspired by the opportunity the program has provided them, they expanded their business by using the profit they earned from their harvests to purchase poultry, livestock, and other farm products. These would not have been possible if not for the collaborative efforts of key government agencies and LGUs and, of course, the dedication and commitment of the fisherfolk to improve and sustain the project.

With the aim of improving the lives of our 30 upland fish farmers in Quezon, Bukidnon, the project, without noticing, also gave easy access to other people living in the hinterlands to buy fresh and safe fish products since they no longer need to take long walks just to put food on their tables. The location is also easily accessible to the whole community, and they can even get fresh tilapia by catching it in the pond themselves. Fresh, affordable, and accessible, indeed.

SAAD could very well be living up to the promise of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, saying it is his “moral obligation to provide available and affordable food for my people”. Though in local dialect “SAAD” means PROMISE and PROMISES for this never meant to be broken, definitely most of them felt their lives have changed for the better as SAAD came to their aid.

With the assistance that they received and the knowledge they learned from the program, it will be a great tool to increase their income and uplift their living. All they need is to keep moving forward and catch their dreams. The dream of achieving food security and food sustainability towards a better community. ###



Dupligan, Tanudan, Kalinga

Tadian, Mountain Province

URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE: A CLEVER AND NOVEL WAY OF FEEDING A CONURBATION

August 17, 2020

By Myer G. Mula, PhD

It has been projected that more than half of the world's population will live in cities in a few years and food security will be a perennial challenge that will confront humanity. This situation will make it more difficult to improve the living conditions of the urban poor specifically during crises such as earthquakes, typhoons, cyclones, and the recently CoViD-19

pandemic, where agricultural products are restricted to enter the urban markets.

With the advent of the pandemic, where health is considered a precious resource such in the case of highly urbanized cities of the country (i.e. Metro Manila, Cebu, Baguio, Davao) and the 30 poorest of the poor provinces covered by the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program of the Department of Agriculture, the enormous potential of urban and peri-urban agriculture

(UPA) as a sustainable food source is life-changing.

Urban and peri-urban agriculture has existed in various forms and occurs within and surrounding the boundaries of major cities. It was first documented during the Aztec and Mayan civilizations and in prehistoric Jericho in various forms and locations. An advantage of UPA is being in control of the type of crops, animals, and fish to raise considering the household needs and availability of resources.



Container and Vertical Gardening
for Vegetables and Herbs



Livestock and poultry-raising in
urban and peri-urban areas



Hydroponics: an answer to food
always in the home,



Aquaculture for Tilapia and Hito



Aquaponics: A perfect setting to feed
urban and peri-urban families



Vegetables you can harvest in less than two
months to boost the immune system

We all know that people in the countryside continue to flock the conurbation due to economic, social and creative opportunities. However, urbanization also presents major challenges. In the Philippines, urbanization is rapidly increasing with almost 49% of Filipinos now living in urban areas, and by 2030, that number is expected to jump to 77%. Metro Manila, for instance, has more than 12 million inhabitants, many living in dense communities with large building structures. Traffic congestion, rising fuel prices, high cost of basic commodities, and poor road infrastructure have produced a problem in

moving agricultural products from rural areas to urban markets where a lot of people reside and where the food is consumed more.

In this scenario, the driving force appears to be increased migration from rural to urban areas, along with increased demand for crop-, animal-, and fish-based foods. At the same time, there is an urbanization of poverty, the challenges facing global agricultural production and food security, and malnutrition is a prevailing problem among the urban poor. The changing state of agriculture over time led to farming communities and policymakers to search for more remunerative and viable production portfolios during the time of crisis.

Urban and peri-urban agriculture has seen in recent years a clear shift mainly to produce vegetables for food and ornamentals for beautification to raising animals and fish. At present, growing crops and raising animals, and fish in urban and peri-urban areas is a common practice in many low-income countries and an important survival strategy for the urban poor while viewing economic return estimated to be comparable to the income of unskilled construction workers.

Crop, livestock, poultry, and fish will offer an opportunity to improve the quality of life through the accessibility of food, improve nutrition, and increase cash income from sales. Improved nutrition is attained as these households are likely to consume a diverse and nutritious diet to enhance their immune system. As diets change, as a consequence of urbanization and rising income, urban production may also, to some extent, meet the increased urban demand for food, and may complement rural and foreign sources of food supply to cities. It has been estimated that urban and peri-urban production only represents 20-30 % of the country's total food production while 80% of food stock in the urban areas is supplied from rural areas and

imports.

The collective benefits from UPA include among others solving transportation problems, air pollution, and converting urban waste into fertilizer. To ensure the sustainability of production, UPA productivity needs an integrated production model through agricultural technology innovation (i.e. hydroponics and aquaponics) that will create a resilient food system to accelerate the realization of food security. Given the potential benefits of UPA, government policies need to provide access to electricity, clean irrigation water, while also protecting and improving public health.

In conclusion, the SAAD program has initiated the implementation of UPA including documenting and releasing 6 articles in advocating food availability and accessibility in support to DA's Plant, Plant, Plant Program namely: Container and Vertical Gardening for Vegetables and Herbs, Aquaculture for Tilapia and Hito, Livestock and poultry-raising in urban and peri-urban areas, Hydroponics: an answer to food always in the home, Aquaponics: A perfect setting to feed urban and peri-urban families, and Vegetables you can harvest in less than two months to boost the immune system. ###

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SAAD AGRI-ENTERPRISE: A STEP TOWARD SUSTAINABLE HOUSEHOLD SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

August 17, 2020

By Myer G. Mula, PhD and Jemiema D.R. Arro

Agriculture today faces many challenges, including globalization and market liberalization, food price crises, natural resource depletion, climate change, rapid urbanization, changing production and consumption patterns, demographic changes, pandemic, soil health, invasive crop pest and so on. With a growing recognition of the important role of smallholder agriculture for economic growth and rural development in many countries, market-oriented agriculture appears more prominently on the agenda (GFRAS, 2020).

In an earlier publication by Mula (2020) on 'Agripreneurship as an enterprise: a boon to SAAD program', he stated that one way to revitalize and modernized agriculture sector is through agripreneurship as an enterprise. He further reiterated that real development is people development.

With the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program having one of its components, the 'Marketing Assistance and Enterprise Development' has the objective to help communities create enterprises by establishing market linkages and providing technical assistance and logistic support. The program, a locally funded project of the Department of Agriculture, was created in 2017 to contribute to the poverty alleviation of poorest of the poor farmers from 30 priority provinces.



Barangay Suuh, Panamao, Sulu

The program provides a wide range of agricultural livelihood interventions from production, processing and marketing-related inputs to its farmer-beneficiaries. One of its major end goals is the establishment of community-based agri-enterprises to ensure the sustainability of the beneficiaries' source of income. The aim is not only to contribute to the betterment of the lives of its beneficiaries but also the improvement of the whole community by providing quality, nutritious, accessible, and more affordable products in the area.

Before the establishment of such enterprises, livelihood projects on production of crops and livestock were provided to farmer-beneficiaries to efficiently produce the main source of products they wish to market. In addition, social preparation and technical training on production to marketing were provided to improve farming practices and management.

Dir. Mula emphasized the importance of marketing assistance and enterprise development as it will shape farmers to become successful entrepreneurs. SAAD will provide the beneficiaries with marketing assistance and linkage, conduct entrepreneurial capability-building programs, and upscale livelihood into enterprises through collaboration with partners (local government units, private sector, and government agencies).

From 2017 to 2019, a total of 45 agri-enterprises worth Php 33,787,470 were established across 6 SAAD provinces managed by 45 groups/associations covering 24 types of community-based enterprise (Tables 1 and 2) with 1,172 farmer group members (Table 2). These provinces include Apayao (CAR), Samar Provinces (Region 8), Southern Leyte (Region 8) and Zamboanga del Norte (Region 9). These enterprises vary from selling fresh and processed crops of vegetables, fruits; and livestock (live &

Table 1. Number of Community-Based Enterprise established and targeted (2017-2022)

Particulars	Established				Target			Grand Total
	2017	2018	2019	Total	2020	2021	2022	
Number of Community-based Enterprise (CBE)	1	16	28	45	78	311	102	536
Number of Groups Benefited from CBE	1	16	28	45		311		536

processed) and poultry products (dressed chicken, eggs, quail eggs, and salted eggs).

For 2020 until 2022, the program aims to continue providing agricultural interventions as support to its beneficiaries. These includes various livelihood agri interventions, technical training and capacity building activities in preparation to the establishment of its target community based enterprises. ###



Table 2. Detailed enterprise established by province (2017 – 2019)

Municipality	Barangay	Title of Project	Enterprise Established	Beneficiaries		Name of Association	Year Established	Cost of Project (Php '000)
				Group	No. of Group Members			
TOTAL				45	1172			33,787.47
CAR								
Apayao								
Pudtol	Brgy. Lower Maton and Brgy. Alem	Quail Production	Selling of Quail egg	2	7	PIAS Farmers Association, MULA DUR-AS Farmers Association	2018	1,755.00
Flora	Brgy. Malubibit Sur	Quail Production	Selling of Quail egg	1	7	MAST Farmers Association	2018	1,884.00
Sta. Marcela	Brgy. Panay	Quail Production	Selling of Quail egg	1	7	PaCoMarNuSan Farmers Association	2018	1,755.00
Region 8								
Northern Samar								
Lope De Vega	Bonifacio	Vegetable Gardening	Selling of Assorted fresh vegetable (eggplant, pole sitao, pechay, ampalaya & squash) & operating a mini-agrivet store	1	40	Samahan ng Kababaihan sa Barangay (SAMAKABA)	2017	406.77
Catubig	Cagugubngan	Mallard Duck Production	Selling Salted Eggs, fresh eggs and ducklings	1	40	Cagugubngan Farmers Association	2018	809.00
Lavezares	Libas	Swine Fattening	Piglets, Feeds and training	1	78	Rural Improvement Club- Libas	2018	1,865.00
Southern Leyte								
Malitbog	Asuncion, Cantamuac, Concepcion,	Swine Fattening	Marketing of Piglets	3	56	Cantamuac Farmers Association, Concepcion Farmers Association, Asuncion Farmers Association	2018	2,129.57

Eastern Samar								
Borongan	Cagbonga, Bayobay	Swine Production and Marketing	Piglet and Carcass selling	1	60	Cagbonga Backyard Swine and Duck Breeder Association	2018	529.00
Arteche	Carapdapan	Enhanced Poultry Production	Selling of Fresh Eggs	1	32	Carapdapan SAAD Poultry Farmer Association	2019	2,073.76
Western Samar								
Catbalogan City	New Mahayag	Mallard Duck Production	Selling of Salted eggs, fresh duck eggs, balut, ducklings, and leche flan	1	56	Mahayagnon Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative	2019	855.00
Jiabong	San Fernando	Mallard Duck Production	Selling of Salted eggs, fresh duck eggs, balut, ducklings, and leche flan	1	25	San Fernando Farmers Association	2019	427.50
Jiabong	Jia-an	Mallard Duck Production	Selling of Salted eggs, fresh duck eggs, balut, ducklings, and leche flan	1	30	Jia-an Rice Farmers Association	2019	427.50
Region 9								
Zamboanga del Norte								
Sibutad	Kanim	Native Chicken Raising	Selling of Live Chicken	1	32	Kanim Farfish Association	2019	521.00
La Libertad	La Union	Native Chicken Raising	Selling of Live Chicken	1	25	La Union FA	2019	969.00
La Libertad	Mauswagon	Sibuying production and Processing	Sibuying Pickles (Sweetened and Salted)	1	25	Mauswagon Sibuying FA	2019	553.00

Mutia	Sto. Tomas, Poblacion	Broiler Chicken Raising	Dressed Chicken	2	52	Poblacion WA Sto. Tomas WA	2019	3,054.00
Polanco	Villahermosa	Ginger Production	Selling of Raw and processed Ginger	1	30	Canibongan FA	2019	636.00
Piñan	Ubay, Desin	Upgraded Native Pig Raising	Hog Fattening/Weanling	2	51	Ubay FA Desin FA	2019	841.00
Dipolog	Diwan	Native Chicken Raising	Selling of Live Chicken	2	100	Diwan FA	2019	3,263.00
Manukan	East Poblacion, Punta Blanca, Don Jose Aguirre, Villaramos, Patunan, San Antonio	Native Chicken Raising	Selling of Live Chicken	7	96	Piangon FA, Patunan FA, Don Jose Aguirre FA, East Poblacion FA, Villaramos FA, Sitio Bayol FA, Lingatongan Small Coconut FA	2019	3,669.00
Siayan	Litolet, Macasing, Seriac	Banana Production	Fresh Fruit Banana (Lakatan)	3	30	Litolet Consumer's Coop, Macasing Consumer's Coop, Seriac Consumer's Coop	2019	1,277.00
Siayan	Moyo, Soguilon, Datagan, Balunukan	Banana Production	Fresh Fruit Banana (Lakatan)	4	60	Moyo Consumer's Coop, Datagan Consumer's Coop, Balunukan Consumer's Coop	2019	1,522.00



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PARTNERSHIP: AN ESSENTIAL SAAD TOOL AGAINST POVERTY

July 16, 2020

By Ulysses J. Lustria, Jr.

Partnership is an essential tool of any poverty reduction project such as the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

What is partnership? It is “a relationship between individuals or groups that is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility, as for the achievement of a specified goal”.

The SAAD's goal is to contribute in the reduction of poverty incidence of beneficiaries in its thirty (30) poorest of the poor covered provinces.

The SAAD cannot do this alone and thus, partnership is essential. This is why the SAAD has been initiating and establishing partnerships with all stakeholders which include its farmers and fisherfolk beneficiaries and the concerned local government units.

Over the years, from 2017 to date, its other partners are:

1. Non-government organizations, such as cooperatives. Cooperatives can help in the sustainability of a SAAD livelihood project

because they already have capacities in organization development, financial literacy, and marketing.

2. State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), such as the University of the Philippines (UP). SUCs can provide technical assistance in areas such as technology training and project evaluation, among others.
3. National government agencies such as the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and the Commission on Population (POPCOM). Complementation of interventions can be done with other agencies. This helps make the pooled interventions achieve more impact.
4. Other DA units such as the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) and Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI). The expertise of other DA units certainly helps the SAAD. ATI has the expertise in extension services, the BAR on R & D, and the BPI on quality planting materials and crop production systems.
5. Private groups such as Go Negosyo. Go Negosyo can assist the SAAD in terms of enterprise development and marketing assistance.



PARTNERSHIP

Partnership with the
Turkish Cooperation and
Coordination Agency



6. International agencies such as Turkey Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Donor agencies can provide additional projects for the beneficiaries as well as technical assistance.

The SAAD is also partnering with member agencies for the Enhanced Partnership Against Hunger and Poverty (EPAHP), for the Human Development and Poverty Reduction Cluster, and for the implementation of Executive Order 70, series of 2018: Institutionalizing the Whole-of-Nation Approach in Attaining Inclusive and Sustainable Peace, Creating a National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, and Directing the Adoption of a National Peace Framework.

Partnership is essential because it helps ensure sustainability of projects. Partnerships facilitate the creation of linkages, namely: horizontal, such as farmer-to-farmer; vertical, such as farmer-to-institutional buyers; and support, such as farmer-to-government.

Partnerships also has a multiplier effect. This is why agencies do “convergence” activities. An example is the SAAD’s policy of assisting Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Combining agriculture (what SAAD provides) and social protection (such as the interventions given to 4Ps beneficiaries) can produce bigger positive impact to beneficiaries rather than no coordination and complementation. A FAO study (2013) shows that there is evidence that agriculture and social protection support each other through direct and indirect impacts on farm production as well as on vulnerability reduction and income-generating capabilities.

This shows that the SAAD, and other poverty

reduction projects, should initiate and continue to forge partnerships with other change agents.

There is a saying that goes: “There’s more than one way to skin a cat.” We can similarly say that there are many ways to fight poverty. However, we should take note that there is only one cat (poverty).

Thus, we can be more effective if we combine our scarce resources to fight poverty together as partners. ###



From left to right: DA-Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service, Agricultural Training Institute, and Bureau of Plant Industry during SAAD's FY 2019 Year-End Physical and Financial Assessment



Partnership with Go Negosyo
and Sarangani PLGU

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SOCIAL PREPARATION: AN APPROACH TO A SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE SYSTEM OF SAAD

May 28, 2020

By Dr. Myer G. Mula and Ian Kevin M. Sevilla

The initial step in community organizing is the social preparation activities. The series of activities is designed to prepare the affected families to cope with the changes brought about by government programs or development projects and to encourage them to actively participate and prepare their society, community and personal responsibilities in their quest for tenurial security, human development and basic services, employment and livelihood, and other government programs for the urban poor.

While it is true that community organizing is characterized by mobilizing volunteers, staff roles are limited to helping volunteers become effective, to guiding the learning of leaders through the process, and to helping create the mechanism for the group to advocate on their own behalf and always includes confrontations.

Community organizing strategies include meeting with corporate or government decision-makers to hold them accountable for their actions, designing programs for others to implement the necessary needs of the community, and aggressive group action to block negative developments or behaviors. Rural and even urban dwellers are continuously in need of advice and information to address the issues and constraints of their farm-related livelihood system. This explains the requisite of basic principles in doing extension work where this will form part of their



future professional responsibility.

Community organizing is the process of building power through involving a citizenry who lives in proximity to each other and comes together into an organization that acts in their self-interest in: identifying problems they share and the solutions to those problems that they desire; identifying the people and structures that can make those solutions possible; enlisting those targets in the effort through negotiation and using confrontation and pressure when needed; and building an institution that is democratically controlled by the community that can develop the capacity to take on further problems and that embodies the will and the power of that citizenry.

The Department of Agriculture through its local program, the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) instituted in 2017 have one of its components, Social Preparations. The main objective is to empower marginalized farmers and fisherfolk through series of meetings and trainings (including needs assessment) in order to ensure the readiness of SAAD beneficiaries in accepting and managing the project in collaboration with partners (local government units, private sector, and other government agencies and stakeholders) in the 30 poorest of the poor provinces with highest poverty incidence of the country.

The said program intensifies production and livelihood interventions to pro-poor growth and proactive investment in poverty reduction, food security, nutrition, and enterprise. Most have also committed to social development goals, such as equitable development, gender equality, social protection, and peace. Agricultural development is activity-based that encompasses investments in land and water, crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries, natural resource management, commodity trade, and agricultural employment through social

analysis.

Social analysis is the practice of systematically examining a social problem, issue, or trend, often with the aim of prompting changes in the situation being analyzed. Social analysis is instrumental in designing and implementing successful pro-poor policy and institutional reforms and poverty-targeted investment programs and projects. It is fundamental for understanding the complexities of social diversity, gender, and the various dimensions of poverty (e.g. low income, lack of assets, vulnerability, exclusion, powerlessness, lack of voice, and an inability to withstand shocks).

With the majority of the country's poor living and working in rural areas, investment in agriculture and fishery through rural development can significantly contribute to these goals. However, contrary to the general assumption that any growth-oriented investment in the agricultural sector effectively reduces poverty, experience has shown that untargeted investment to increase agricultural production is relatively ineffective in reaching the poor. The principles behind the effective implementation of a program/projects lay in the shoulder of the following:

- Agricultural investment must be designed to be proactive, people-centered and socially inclusive from the earliest stages of the programming and project cycle;
- Social analysis strengthens the capacity of agricultural investment to reduce rural poverty and to create socially inclusive, gender-equitable and sustainable development outcomes;
- An interdisciplinary and holistic approach to social analysis is required to appreciate the interface between social issues and the technical, institutional and economic aspects of project design, and to ensure that overall



program objectives are sensitive to relevant aspects of the socio-economic and cultural environment;

- Social analysis is a cross-cutting issue which should penetrate all program activities and not be confined solely to the interests of the sociologist;
- The sociologist reflects the priorities of the intended beneficiaries and others in negotiations with government and donors regarding agricultural investments;
- The process of social analysis contributes to building local ownership and mutual understanding of investment program among



Capability-Building and Skills Training on Urban Organic Gardening in Negros Oriental

the financing agency, government and intended beneficiaries, and enhances the capacity of local actors to implement them; and

- Social analysis is applicable at all stages of the programming and project cycle and for all types of agricultural investments.

For this purpose, SAAD has developed general procedures on how social preparation should evolve:

1. **Contact building.** The SAAD Coordinators – Provincial Coordinator (PC), Area Coordinator (AC), or the BFAR Provincial Fisheries Officer (PFO) – must send

communication letters and secure consent or approval from the concerned Local Government Units (LGUs) and communities before any operations will take place. The SAAD staff are to brief them about the SAAD Program, its subprojects, and beneficiary eligibility requirements.

2. **Information Campaign.** The SAAD Coordinators will visit the target municipality(ies) and/or barangay(s) to create a community profile where basic information such as geographical information, population, demographic profile, poverty incidence, existing agricultural activities, and, if any, existing farmer associations. Information sources such as the DA-Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (DA-RSBSA), Office of the Municipal Agriculturist, Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and, if applicable, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) database, are also reliable references.

3. **Identify the beneficiaries.** In coordination with local officials, the SAAD Coordinators will hold community meetings to introduce the program and its beneficiary eligibility requirements. Qualified partner-farmers will be identified and listed.

4. **Identify projects.** The SAAD Coordinators will provide the prospective beneficiaries the menu of available projects that range from rice, corn, high-value crops, livestock and poultry, industrial crops (i.e. abaca), and fisheries (aquaculture and capture) from which the beneficiaries will choose, with respect to the SAAD Implementing Guidelines.

5. **Organization, geotagging, and registration.** The SAAD Coordinators will assist the residents in registration to be formally

identified as SAAD Program beneficiaries. They will also be assisted for registration in the RSBSA.

6. **Training of beneficiaries.** With the beneficiaries being formally part of the SAAD Program, the SAAD staff will help train beneficiaries in agriculture and fishery production and enterprise development.

With these procedures in place, the program hopes to further strengthen its social preparation practices down to the barangay level and ensure that each beneficiary, whether individual or group, are well-prepared to receive livelihood projects.

For four years since the SAAD Program started its implementation from 2017 to mid-2020, a total of 801 social preparation and 1,857 specialized training activities were performed benefitting 96,663 farmer-beneficiaries and 3,126 associations, granting 886 livelihood projects with 69 enterprises developed. ###

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SAAD FARMERS NOT IN A STATE OF FLUX DESPITE PANDEMIC

June 3, 2020

By Michael F. Dabuet

It was in January 9, 2020 when the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that a novel coronavirus was identified by Chinese authorities. Subsequently, WHO declared CoViD-19 as pandemic and considered as public emergency of international concern.

Conditions incumbent on the present pandemic has brought some difficulties for Filipino farmers, such as limitation in the movement of products. Although measures were set for the unhampered delivery of food supplies, the implementation and interpretation of rules at the local government unit level became a hindrance, especially for smallholder farmers who rely on consolidators or middlemen, because market hubs, such as malls,

supermarkets, etc. were locked down.

In this time of crisis, the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program saw to it that the welfare of farmers was prioritized to ensure an efficient flow of food supply from the farm to all Filipino households. The SAAD assisted in the establishment of community loading posts or “*tabo*” (informal markets), accreditation of food producers and suppliers, financial assistance system, and facilitation of delivery services of agricultural produce through the issuance of food lane pass. These proved to have greatly benefited farmers, not necessarily limited to SAAD beneficiaries.

More importantly, the aggressive promotion of integrated farming to augment their income and productivity has been continually pursued.

Despite one of the hardest affected by crisis,



SAAD farmer-beneficiaries still went to great lengths of providing healthy food for the populace during this pandemic. They who are actively engaged in food production are prepared, and adequate measures were set to make them productive and resilient in this times of crisis.




Cansoso Livelihood Association of Workers (CLAW) of Matag-ob, Leyte



Bulod Integrated Farmers Association of Sta. Fe, Leyte

On April 20, 2020, two farmers' associations delivered assorted vegetables worth Php 5,897.50 to the Kadiwa Center established by the Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Office 8. Customers, mostly government employees, were able to buy fresh, safe, and cheaply priced *okra*, *pipino*, *ampalaya*, Baguio beans, hot chili, and bell pepper, produced by the Cansoso Livelihood Association of Workers (CLAW) of Matag-ob, Leyte and Bulod Integrated Farmers Association of Sta. Fe, Leyte.

In Southern Leyte, a total of 27 fattened pigs were sold by SAAD swine producers to local butchers and



wholesalers. The Sto. Niño integrated Crops Farmers Association of Brgy. Sto. Niño, Bontoc sold 15 pigs totaling to 1,110 kilograms (kg) live weight. At Php 120 per kg, the group was able to earn Php 133,200. On the other hand, Magaupas Farmers and Fisherfolk Association of Brgy. Magaupas, Liloan had aggregate sales of Php 115,170 at Php 110 per kg live weight for 12 pigs sold (1,047 kg).

Being one of the African Swine Fever (ASF)-free regions in the country, the timely marketing of fattened pigs helped mitigate the shortage of pork supply in the area while the CoViD-19 lockdown was enforced. Other regions have now signified their intent to import pigs from Southern Leyte produced by SAAD farmers because they are certified safe and of good quality.

Ecological agriculture farmer Jon Sarmiento said, "Anumang sakuna – bagyo, tagtuyot, o kahit itong CoViD-19, ang magsasaka ay hindi mapigilan sa misyon nitong lumikha ng pagkain para sa mamamayan." (In whatever calamity there is, be it typhoon, drought, or even this CoViD-19, the farmer cannot be prevented in his mission to produce food for the Filipino people.) ###

SEED SYSTEM: AN INTEGRAL INGREDIENT OF THE SAAD PROGRAM

May 28, 2020

By Myer G. Mula, PhD

While we are aware that the coverage of the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program covers not only the 30 poorest of the poor provinces of the country but also are generally situated in mountainous and upland areas and under rainfed condition.

Agriculture is the main livelihood of the community and quality seeds are paramount to increase productivity. Another setback is farmers sourcing of quality seeds and lacks knowledge on the ability to produce their own superior seeds.

The potential benefits of seed to crop productivity and food security can be enormous. In addition, production increases brought about by the use of adapted varieties increases farmers' income when market linkages exist. Food security is heavily dependent on the seed security of the farming community.

Seeds are the lifeblood and foundation of a profitable farming and a crucial element in the lives of agricultural communities (Mula et. al., 2013). Though seed plays a significant role in crop productivity, its availability often affects the farmer's ability to sow the crop timely (Cromwell, 1996). Quality seeds are those which have genetic purity, physical purity, health standards, germination and moisture percentage. With these, the farmer can increase his production by 20% (Mula, 2012).

If the seed is of bad or low quality, then all the investments of the farmer such as labor and other inputs turn to waste.

Producing quality seeds would have not been possible if no system will be installed. According to Tesfaye et. al. (2005), a seed system is outlined as all the channels through which farmers acquire genetic pure materials in interaction with the commercial seed industry. However, Mula (2019) defined it more precisely by a progression of all the networks through which a cultivar is collected, selected, characterized, purified, bred, tested, certified, released, stored, and marketed with close interaction of farmers and the commercial seed industry. Mula's definition can certainly purify a contaminated cultivar with which a farmer would want to keep due to cultural or ritual

importance through training and the establishment of a farmer's seed model by way of 'one village one variety' concept to guarantee isolation to avoid seed contamination.

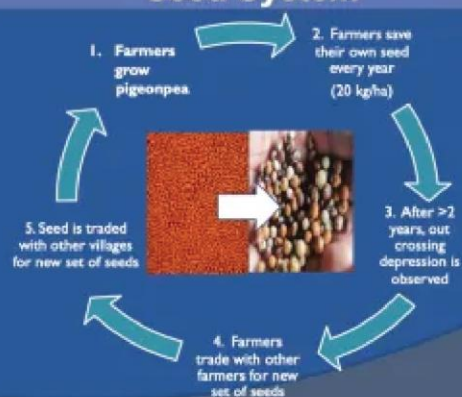
A sustainable seed system will ensure that high-quality seeds of a wide range of varieties and crops are produced and fully available in time and affordable to farmers and other stakeholders. However, in many developing countries farmers have not yet been able to fully benefit from the advantages of using quality seed due to a combination of factors, including inefficient seed production, distribution and quality assurance systems, as well as bottlenecks caused by a lack of good seed policy on key issues such as access to credit for inputs. Moreover, the pressure from the fluctuating food prices and climate change creates additional challenges (FAO, 2020).

In the existing practice of SAAD beneficiaries, the traditional farmers' seed system (informal) is through saving seed from own harvest, and using the seed for re-sowing, sharing, exchanging, and selling. The cultivars used are invariably local landraces, and awareness about improved varieties, seed availability and seed access are poor. Approximately 80-90% of all planting material used is largely sourced from farmers' own-saved seed or the informal seed sector. Farmers save seed of local varieties and use this continuously



Image from thriftyfun.com

Existing Smallholder Farmer Seed System



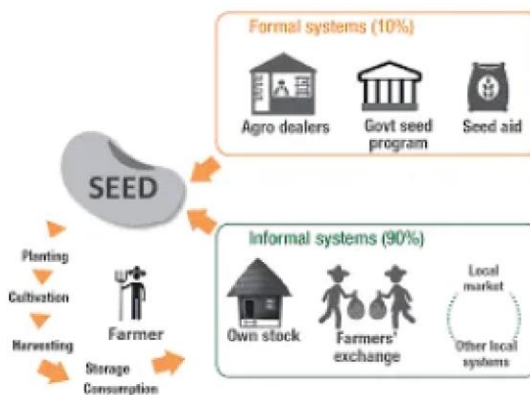
with low seed replacement ratio of 2-3% because the proportion of quality seed available each year is only 10-12%.

Seed is procured off-farm only when necessary as when own seed is not available due to drought, poverty or seed pests and diseases. The main sources of off-farm seed are local markets, relatives, other farmers and government relief agencies. However, these statements about the predominance of the informal seed sector cover significant differences between crops, villages, farmer groups and their socio-economic conditions. Traditional seed systems are location-specific and vary greatly within farmer communities.

The formal seed sector has made some

progress in certain crops (i.e. lowland rice with the exemption of upland rice where open pollination is prevalent) but very little in others (i.e. corn, vegetables and pulses) where the traditional (informal) system remains dominant.

Seed system in this type of environment has a long way to go. However, in developing and strengthening seed production and delivery



systems to ensure quality seed of improved farmer preferred varieties in SAAD areas, we should do the following:

- Improving access to seed for smallholder farmers that focus on subsistence production through the enhancement of local village seed systems by testing a range of seed production and delivery options and searching for options to scale-up and scale-up alternative seed production and delivery schemes to avoid seed contamination;
- Knowledge empowerment of farmers/rural entrepreneurs in seed production, post-harvest and processing, and marketing;
- Exploiting market niches commercial (large scale) production by developing seed markets and identifying seed supply constraints and recommending options to improve its efficiency; and
- Developing and/or strengthening seed regulatory framework as well as a seed policy that considers regulations of an expanding and diversifying seed sector for the benefit of the farmers engaged in the seed production system. ###

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AGRIPRENEURSHIP AS AN ENTERPRISE: A BOON TO SAAD PROGRAM

May 16, 2020

By Myer G. Mula, PhD

It has been said that real development is people development. Money, machine, land and material are only productive if people know how to use them properly. Any person who can create something new or something different has already acquired a competitive advantage because it means an improvement. In short, it is an innovation that distinguishes entrepreneurship from other activities.

According to Mula (2018), resources like money and machinery are as equally important since these are inputs to make one's business competitive. Money would also include skills and knowledge in financial tasks. Financial literacy is important not only in putting up schemes for financing agribusinesses but the entire process of

decision-making. Towards the pursuit of agripreneurship, one must not only have the appropriate tools or equipment but must also be abreast with the latest or state of the art machineries to achieve cost-efficient production and processing including packaging.

Based on data from the Asian Development Bank, the Philippines has the lowest (1.6) gross value added average (GVA) in ASEAN from 2010 to 2014 followed by Thailand (2.0), Malaysia (2.8), and Vietnam (3.2). The Philippines having the lowest GVA in ASEAN somehow explains why poverty is still prevalent in the countryside by 40% in 2014, which is hardly an improvement over the 46.9% recorded in 2000. Thailand's rural poverty incidence was 13.9% in 2013, Indonesia 13.8% in 2014, Vietnam 17.4% in 2010, and Malaysia 8.4% in 2009 (Dar, 2016).

One way to revitalize and modernize the country's agriculture sector is through agripreneurship, which is wider in scope than agribusiness. In fact, agripreneurship has special or extraordinary features, whether micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have a significant role in tapping the potentials of agriculture to ensure economic security. Agriculture is a remunerative stable livelihood especially when provided full support. Indeed, the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program of the Department of Agriculture is a testament where the beneficiaries of the 30 poorest of the poor provinces benefitted with the livelihood granted to them.



Tres Maria Drive (TMD)
Vegetable Growers Association
in Donsol, Sorsogon



Dalican, Bontoc,
Mt. Province



Tabuk City, Kalinga



Laum Suwah,
Parang, Sulu

Suwah Parang, Sulu

Pangian Farmers'
Association in Siocon,
Zamboanga del Norte

However, agripreneurship should eventually result in Agribusiness Incubation (ABI), which should result in scientific innovations to propel business growth for smallholder farmers. ABI demonstrates clearly that science and entrepreneurship go hand-in-hand. With these in place, the vulnerability of the country's food and agriculture systems will improve. Even the competitiveness of agricultural products will advance since this is a function of innovative product development, good marketing, with a sound understanding of consumers. Thus, market-oriented farming is not mainly or simply a hand-to-mouth existence.

Through Agricultural Industrialization, which is one of the 8 paradigms of the New Thinking of Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar, the block farming approach can also make production more efficient because this will allow farmers to organize into smaller groups and pool their resources to adopt mechanization and other farming technologies. Once farmers realize that processed products have higher value-added, they can innovate or develop more products from raw farm produce, and even plant other crops that can be processed into more finished products.

Inclusive value-chain approach captures as much of the value in all stages from pre- and post-production, processing and distribution for meeting domestic and export market requirements as well as niche markets. Making the most of agricultural output means thinking of how to convert raw agriculture produce into products that have higher value-added. This is referred to as agro-processing. This requires tapping into innovation and markets. When agripreneurs are able to utilize business processes and resources to convert agricultural commodities into higher-margin products, they can compete even in the export market. If the export markets are successfully tapped, this can stimulate even greater farm production, thus bringing more income to agripreneurs and



Tadian, Mt. Province

even farmers who work together with them (Devaux et. al., 2018).

To conclude, agripreneurship will open enormous possibilities for the subsistence farmer whose simple aspiration is to have food and some cash on a seasonal basis to a transformation especially as a contributor to stable livelihood. Over the long term, agripreneurship should elevate the country's agriculture sector, and inclusive growth should follow. ###

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SEEDS WITHOUT BORDERS: A NEW NORMAL FOR PHILIPPINE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

March 28, 2020

By Myer G. Mula, PhD



Philippines is still an agriculture-based economy where majority of its population lives in rural areas with employment in agriculture reported at 22.10 % in early 2019. The increasing population in the country resulted to increase in the demand for food products, thus much pressures were given to agriculture sector to produce more to feed the ballooning population of the country.

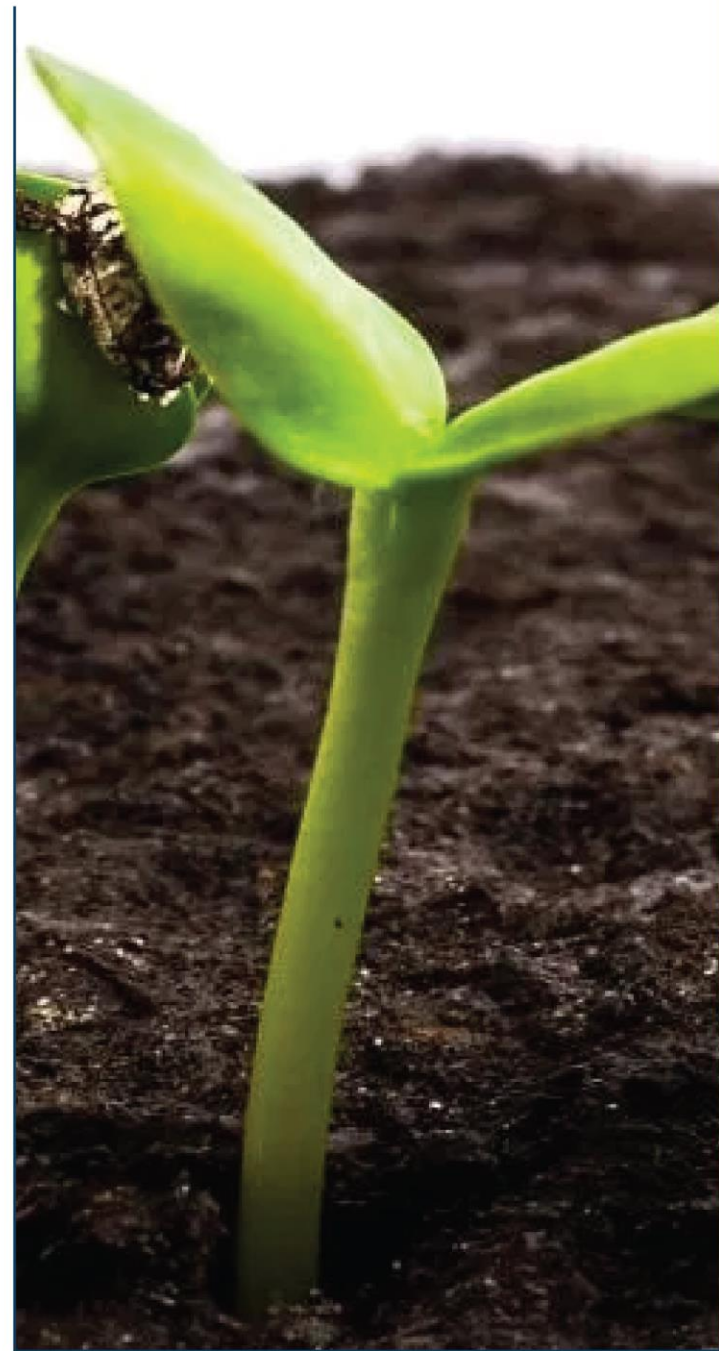
In 2018, the Philippine Seed Market was valued at USD 691 million. However, this industry is still dominated by rice as the most important staple crop in the country, followed by corn, dry beans, and potato, while the main vegetable crops are eggplant, pumpkin, squash, gourds, tomato, and onion. Other important local crops with significant areas of harvest include cassava, sweet potato, pulses, and oilseeds.

New seed varieties in the Philippines are a mixture of seeds bred both by public and private sector, and imported varieties by private companies. However, seed replacement rate is too low (2-25%) and slow.

The most powerful gizmo and foundation for

crop production and safeguarding food security is a quality seed. According to Mula (2012), seeds are the lifeblood and foundation of successful farming and a crucial element in the lives of agricultural communities. A good seed has higher physical and genetic purity, germination percentage, vigor, and must be free from pests and diseases. Quality seed of a suitable improved variety is a must to ensure its good productivity at farmers' field. Ensuring availability of quality seed is a big task faced by most of the countries in Asia and Africa. Most of the varieties currently used by farmers are either very old (sometimes more than 30 years old) or are selections from landraces that yield low, are of poor quality, and are unresponsive to management and modern agronomy. The rate of varietal replacement from farmers must increase to at least 80%, and old varieties need to be phased out to ensure continued gains in production and market value with good returns for farmers.

Currently, the Seeds without Borders has an existing intergovernmental seed-sharing agreement between Cambodia, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Bhutan. Their vision is to strengthen multinational ties for mutual sharing of genetic resources, improved climate and time-bound growth adaptive crop varieties of seeds for food security and livelihood of farmers, producers, and consumers, specifically the disadvantaged population. The agreement covers several rice-based crops such as maize, wheat, vegetables, root crops, pulses, and other crops with the possibility to include many more in the



future.

Benefits from the “Seed Without Border” Agreement

1. **Have access to partner-countries’ research data, methodology and technology.** Philippines would have added advantage of other member country’s research data, including results of farmers’ participatory varietal selection activities, generated in one country to support varietal release in the other country; thereby, fast-tracking varietal development to significantly help improve the standard of agriculture;
2. **Improve the nutrition and incomes of Filipino farmers in Philippines.** Joining the agreement will have better access to better seeds, and better harvests, which will lead to better nutrition and incomes of the farmers and their livelihoods;
3. **Meet the market demand for high quality seeds compared to high yielding seeds.** Joining the agreement will help Philippines to have access to already tested and approved high quality seeds from member countries, especially other crops beyond the staples;
4. **Development of formal seed system.** Joining the agreement will help to boost the economy and ensure a well-managed seed system consisting of good quality seeds;
5. **Development of new varieties, particularly resilient/climate-smart varieties.** Joining

the agreement will help Philippines to have access to information and materials of resilient/climate-smart varieties developed from member countries; and

6. **Reduce resources (time and budget) for research and breeding activities.** Joining the agreement will reduce time and budget for breeding activities and evaluation of varieties released in neighboring countries of similar agro-ecologies.

One can argue that formalization of trade in seeds, will improve seed demand-supply scenario between two or more countries. This formalization, however, require a few other issues to be effectively addressed on both sides of the border. The foremost among these is harmonization of seed laws, regulations and certification procedures; others being issues relating agreement on varietal testing, approval, and release of a variety as seed production.

Harmonization of certification standards is one measure which can enable the smooth flow of seeds across the border. This will not only enable seeds trade but will also help farmers in two member countries to have easy access to quality seeds. ###

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TACTICAL AGRICULTURE

March 17, 2020

By Michael F. Dabuet

Social media netizen Raul Reyes commented on the recent breaking news posted on Facebook, “NEDA says SAAD contributes to Region 8’s decrease in poverty.” Here is his remark in toto:



SAAD is Tactical Agriculture. With PRRD’s (Pres. Rodrigo Roa Duterte’s) term two years more to go down the road, what the Department of Agriculture (DA) needs is Tactical Agriculture (Planning by Doing) and not Strategic Approach (Thinking and Planning). Strategy vs. Tactics: The Main Difference and How to Track Progress of both. Strategy defines long-term goals and how one plans to achieve them, while tactics are much more concrete, and are often oriented toward smaller steps and a shorter time frame along the way. Proof of this concept is SAAD Program in Region 8.

SAAD Program is grateful to Mr. Reyes for this unsolicited commentary as it validates the fact that not only direct beneficiaries and stakeholders have experienced and felt the cause that the program advances, but other non-related entities that are constantly on the watch for impactful, innovative initiatives of the government are appreciative of the efforts by the program to tilt the lives of farmers.

One of the strategies employed by the program, which relates to the concept

espoused by Mr. Reyes, is the crafting of multi-year plans on a yearly basis through stratified consultations with DA-Regional Field Office 8 management, local government units (LGUs) at the provincial and municipal levels, and farmers’ associations. Discussed elaborately in the September 2019 issue of SAAD Peryodikit, the carefully laid-out plans were specific, doable, and can be realized in the short-run. Periodic monitoring is then conducted to evaluate if set goals are achieved and to sort out backlogs to implementation.

Lately, a fourth component, Marketing Assistance and Enterprise Development, was appended to the original three (3) components of the program. This is congruent with the suggestion of Sec. William D. Dar long before he was appointed agriculture

chief. On February 28, 2018, the Business Mirror published an article entitled, “LGUs, DA should partner to better steer, row extension service.”

In it, Sec. Dar brought up the idea of “DA and LGUs adopting the IMOD framework to set goals in developing agricultural extension services to smallholder farmers. IMOD stands for Inclusive Market-Oriented Development that builds on four principles - markets motivate growth; innovation accelerates growth; inclusiveness ensures that the poor



Pabanog, Paranas, Samar

benefit; and resiliency sustains growth.”

This smart tactical move of steering farmers towards marketing and entrepreneurship is aimed not only to provide them immediate welfare gains, but it also contributes towards achieving the short-term goals of the program.

While the government through the Department of Agriculture is still the primary force that shapes the agriculture sector, SAAD Program endeavors to make conscious contributions to alleviate the poverty situation in the countryside – as program management, planners and decision-makers, and project implementers. To discourage continuous dependency and dole out, the interventions and services are carried out in a developmental manner in order to preserve the farmers’ human worth and dignity.

Thanks to Mr. Reyes, a new catchphrase was coined: SAAD is Tactical Agriculture! ###

LOVING OUR FARMERS

February 23, 2020

By Danilo P. Daguio

Farmers are a special breed of people who don't get enough credit for what they do. They subject themselves to the hard labor of going out every day to tend to their farms, slaving away at blistering heats just get the job done. And all of this work just to put food on the plates of the general public.

They work like there's no tomorrow as they know a single mistake can cause them grave damages to their livelihood and their communities.

Different risks in agriculture are what these farmers go through every season, as these involve uncertainties in inherent weather, yields, prices, market, and government policies along with other factors.

The general public is probably unaware of these problems that could arise. As long as there is still food on their plates... they're fine. Agriculture is treated as a side thought without realizing that our lives have been getting better while theirs have been roughly the same throughout the years. So much has technology advanced for selected few while most farmers remain in poverty.

We've built ourselves a place where an accomplishment of a farmer's son is to leave "the farm" for the city to get a better life. It seems that the love of farming has been left to the elderly, which in most cases is sadly true for us and for other countries as well.

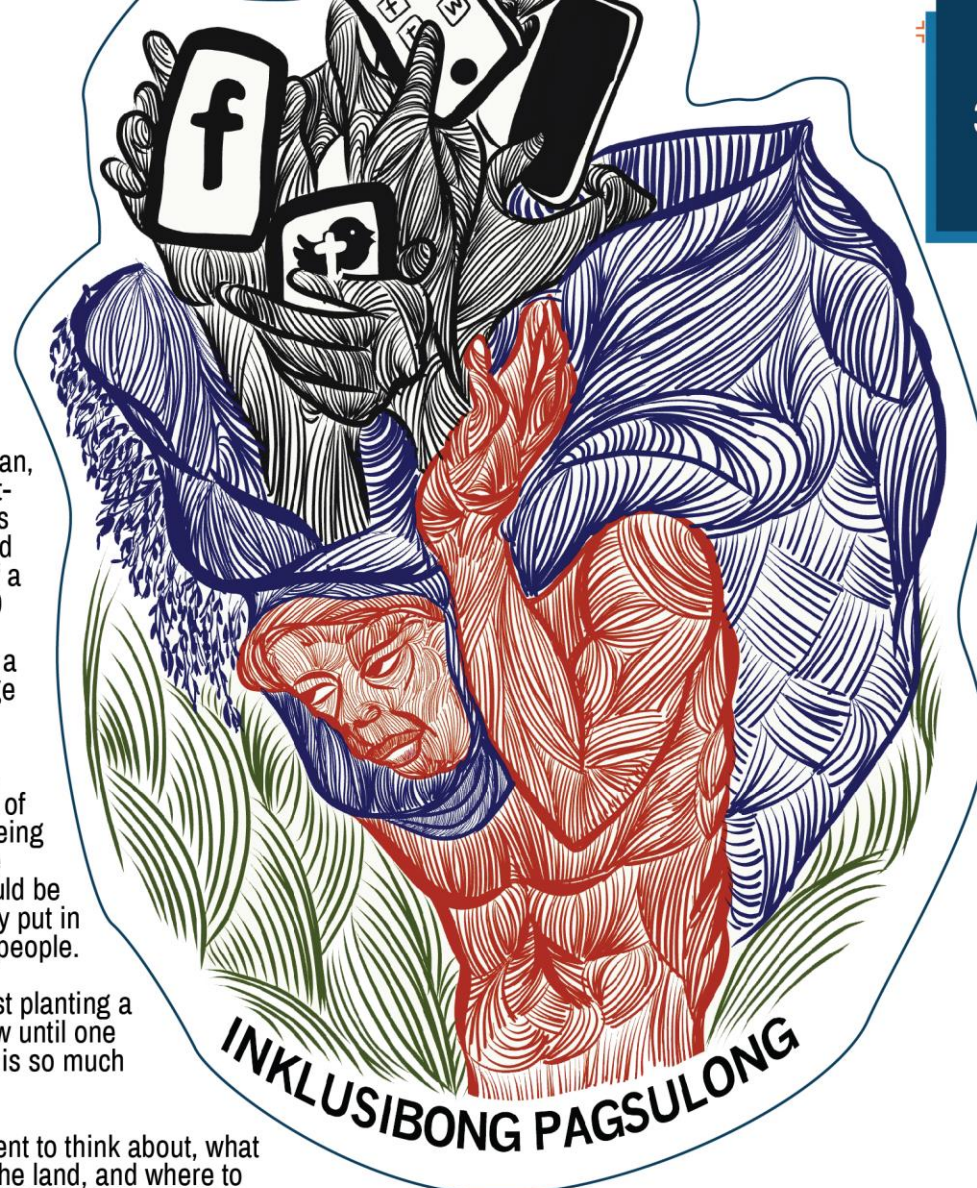
In the 2018 Innovation Olympics held in Bulacan, Hank Herman, the East-West Seeds Philippines General Manager, noted that the average age of a Filipino farmer is 57-59 years old. He also concluded that there is a great need to encourage the youth to engage in crop production for the country's food security. This begs the question of what is the stigma of being a "farm boy" among the youth? When they should be lauded for the work they put in because they feed the people.

Farming isn't simply just planting a crop and making it grow until one can turn it into profit. It is so much more than that.

We have the environment to think about, what crop is best suited for the land, and where to sell the produce, things like that. It is as complex as building a business or even more. There are many other different processes that should be considered.

Maybe tapping the government for projects that cater to bringing more youth in agriculture would work? Or maybe their parents should also be oriented in keeping the farm and leaving it to their children?

It is a hope that we can make farming "cool again" as the millennials would say; but until



Illustrated by Jessa Mae D. Gabon

then, we need to love our farmers and respect them for what they do for us and for the future generations. ###

THROUGH THE SAAD LENS, CLEARLY

May 28, 2019

By Michael F. Dabuet and
Jennifer A. Valcobero

The theme of this article is derived from the passage in the Holy Bible that says: For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

According to Jonathan Lovell, an English Professor of San Jose State University, the original context of the phrase denotes that we see everything in this world imperfectly. But it will only be at the end of days, the second coming of Christ, that we will see the real truth “face to face.”

In the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program, the plans, strategies, and activities have been settled in place. But, the program management is driven to make the poverty alleviation campaign a priority in order to create a meaningful and sustainable livelihood in the agricultural sector.

Therefore, aside from providing agricultural inputs, technical assistance, access to farm services, such as agricultural machineries/equipment, and infrastructure development (hogstel), the interventions will also be associated with capability enhancement activities, coaching and mentoring to prepare the farmer-partners for their responsibilities now and onwards.

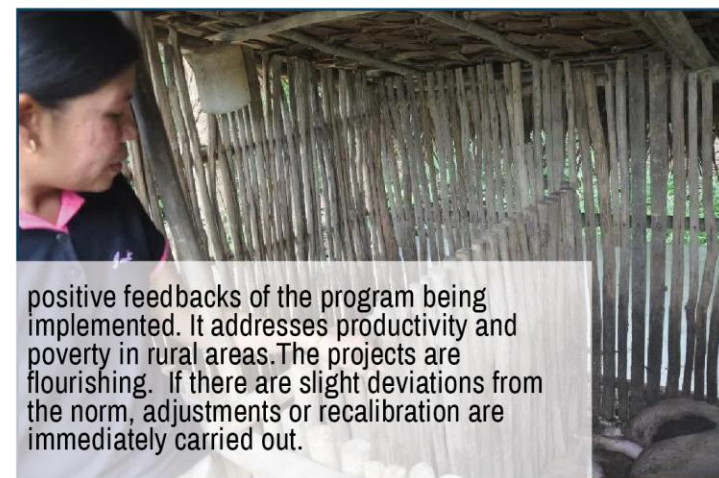
In the occurrence of the El Niño climate, the SAAD program is apparently right in providing farmers and fisherfolk the means to earn

alternative income. The management had given out their best to assist the farmers in coping up with the drought. The farmer-partners have been encouraged to engage in livestock and poultry production or cultivate hardy crops that can withstand the dry spell. During trainings, they were taught on how to adapt to climate change. They were also given mitigation measures in times of climatic changes.

Above all, these farmers are trained to market their own product and imbibe the entrepreneurial spirit in order to not just stay as food producers all their lives, but rather as innovative individuals who will process their products into value-added marketable commodities.

A concrete example is Ms. Michelle G. Montances, 35, of Brgy. Sabang, Oras, Eastern Samar, who's now in her fourth production cycle of swine fattening. Montances is a beneficiary of the 2017 SAAD Swine Fattening Project. She was given 3 heads of piglets and 4.5 bags of starter feeds. With her patience and perseverance in taking care of these inputs, she earned Php 28,000 pesos in the 1st cycle, Php 23,000 pesos in the second and Php 27,000 pesos during the 3rd cycle. From there, Montances is now owning a sari-sari store where she sells hog feeds to serve other partner-beneficiaries and hog-raisers. She said that her savings account and her income from the store enabled her to purchase a brand new refrigerator.

SAAD Program is indeed helping the poor communities and individuals. During the recent monitoring, the farmer-partners attested to the



positive feedbacks of the program being implemented. It addresses productivity and poverty in rural areas. The projects are flourishing. If there are slight deviations from the norm, adjustments or recalibration are immediately carried out.

Through these cutting-edge plans, the program had set its goals and had already foreseen its objective in contributing to the poverty reduction among farmers in Eastern Visayas. From its 46.7% poverty incidence in 2009, it has been sighted to decrease down to 22.7% by 2022. It firmly believes that farmers have the power to shape their own destiny, given the right break and motivation. ###

WORLD FOOD DAY AND SAAD PROGRAM

January 14, 2019

By Michael F. Dabuet and
Pamela Ruth P. Arciaga

On October 16, 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) celebrated World Food Day, and together with more than 130 countries, advocated a common goal: a world free from hunger and poverty, where everyone can lead healthy lives. Toward this end, many activities had been lined up to promote the occasion.

Poverty is always equated with hunger because it is one of the underlying causes of the latter and is often the direct cause of malnutrition. People who are poor can't afford nutritious, healthy food, or food in general, and

therefore tend to get ill more easily. This makes it difficult to work or earn a living and often means that people remain in a poverty trap.

Hence, NO POVERTY is foremost among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, supported by all UN organizations. Nations, governments, private companies, and citizens from around the world are working hard to achieve the 17 goals by 2030, starting with hunger and poverty.

The Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program is on a parallel journey, though its objective is not in totally eradicating poverty. Rather, it aims to contribute to the reduction in the country's poverty incidence among the farmer population in the shorter term. In Region 8, its objective is to contribute

to efforts of everyone – government agencies, LGUs, NGOs, CSOs, etc. to reduce poverty incidence among farmers from 46.7% in 2009 to 22.7% in 2022.

To achieve this goal, it has employed strategies that are subsumed in two (2) program components – social preparation and livelihood interventions. The first is necessary to prepare the areas and their respective constituents for the entry of various interventions. The second, which is the core of program implementation, provides funding and technical support for livelihood projects to target beneficiaries who may be individual farmers or groups/associations selected based on certain criteria.

Agricultural interventions focus on both household consumption and agri-enterprise development. Specific activities include capacity building up to marketing assistance. Almost every activity involves sharing of information and technology, whether in utilizing resources to improve people's lives, monitoring project status and developments, imparting changes in climate and how they could put people's life and health at risk, teaching advanced and new growing techniques and how they can be made to serve the most economically disadvantaged individuals, as well as the greater good.

All projects are now in operation in the five (5) SAAD Program-covered provinces in Eastern Visayas. They consist of rice and corn production enhancement, swine production and fattening, and vegetable, poultry, cassava, and ube production. While some projects have already borne fruits and shown a positive



Designed by pikisuperstar / Freepik

impact in the lives of beneficiaries, others are still on startup status, especially those implemented only in 2018 in the expansion provinces of Leyte and Southern Leyte.

From testimonies of farmers, projects which have been operational since 2017 were instrumental in bringing enough food to their table, curing some maladies, and supporting their children through school, among other forms of benefit they brought them. The projects likewise enhanced their capacity to generate more productivity and income.

In the case of associations, they improved their access to resources and maximized their profits. Together, they were able to adapt to climate variability and develop common strategies for sustainable cultivation, as well as learned how to prepare for natural disasters and adverse conditions and recover faster from their impacts.

The initiatives are geared towards empowering communities to become self-sufficient so that hunger and poverty are combatted. If all work together to produce food for the family and for the rural community they belong to, it could lead to resolving these chronic problems that have beleaguered our society ever since we can remember.

We could duplicate the feat of Brazil's "Fome Zero" (Zero Hunger) Initiative, where millions of people escaped poverty and hunger because of this program. In time, the twin goals of hunger and poverty eradication shall have been achieved through this and similar efforts like SAAD Program. ###



IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

January 14, 2019

By Michael F. Dabuet and
Pamela Ruth P. Arciaga

The agricultural industry is constantly under pressure to increase output as global populations continue to grow. A study suggests that the Philippines' agricultural industry should focus its efforts on innovation by acquiring new technology platforms and rescaling farmers and farm workers. Innovation is seen as the animating force behind the future of production.

Factors like climate change, population growth, and food security concerns have propelled the agricultural industry into seeking more innovative approaches to improving crop yield and ensuring food sufficiency. Shifting weather patterns, such as an increase in temperature, drastic changes in precipitation levels, and groundwater density, affect farmers, especially those who are dependent on timely rains for their crops.

This is critical as agriculture is impacted by environmental factors that cannot be controlled, unlike other industries where risk is easier to model and predict.

Technology transfer by way of capability building activities is thus a major initiative utilized by the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program towards creating increased income and providing stability for the rural poor communities.

It is important that farmers are equipped with training that are up-to-date to ensure that new, improved technologies are used and for us to continue to help improve their capacities to produce tangible benefits. Their adoption means more intelligent, sustainable agriculture – allowing farmers to maximize efficiency and yield while minimizing risk.

The Leyte Provincial Program Management Support Office (PPMSO), which began SAAD Program implementation only in 2018 because the province is an expansion area, conducted the following succession of training on the commodity interventions in the 2nd and 3rd quarters, some even overlapping due to the exigency of the time and operational arrangements.



Centro Mandaon
Farmers Association
in Masbate

The two-day Corn Production Enhancement Training was conducted from May 8 to 9, June 5 to 6, and July 26 to 27, 2018 at Ocean Pearl Cove Resorts, Inc., Tabango, Leyte; Camp Kawayan, Burauen; and Balai Constancia, Bislig, Carigara, respectively. Farmers trained totaled 106, coming from the localities where the training was conducted.

From July 10 to August 17, 2018, two-day successive training on Vegetable Production were held in four sites, namely: BLAMPCI, Tabango; Balai Constancia, Bislig, Carigara; Juan Titang's Beach Resort, Palompon; and Epiphany's Garden, Alangalang. Common among the topics discussed were Farm Production System, Cropping Pattern, Seed to Seedling, Land Preparation, Insect

Identification, Management Control, Disease Identification, and Management Control. Also instilled in the participants were Values Formation concepts. Invited resource persons were East-West Seed Co. Knowledge Transfer staff, Agricultural Technologists from OPA-Leyte, and Mr. Alvin C. Portugal, a private entrepreneur. The total number of participants trained was 471 belonging to 19 organized farmers' associations.

Finally, the series of training on Swine Production and Management happened from July 4 to October 5, 2018. These three-day training were attended by 613 swine farmers. The venues where the training was held were Balai Constancia, Bislig, Carigara; Sergis Beach Resort, Sabang, Palompon; BLAMPCI, Tabango; Kitchen Yum, Palo; and Juan Titang's Beach Resort, Palompon.

In all, farmers trained in various technologies totaled 1,190. What was remarkable was that farmers shared a common passion to learn, they were open to new ideas, and had unbridled, infectious enthusiasm, which was manifested by their decisive questions in every training and through sharing of experiences, mores, practices, and beliefs.

The continuous capability enhancement activities are SAAD Program's commitment to partner with farmers and their associations as they face the challenges of the times. We add value as we team up with identified beneficiaries for growth because we want what we have started to be sustainable. Collectively, we desire to live in a better world. We want our lives to be easier.

Innovating by applying technology and development is the program's way of contributing to nation-building, one step at a time. By working together, we will make it happen. ###



Training participants in Leyte



Training on Indigenous Micro-Organism, Lactic Acid Bacteria Serum, and Carbonized Rice Hull in Mutia, Zamboanga del Norte

SAAD PROGRAM: A POTENT TOOL IN THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY



September 27, 2018

By Michael F. Dabuet and
Pamela Ruth P. Arciaga

Countless agricultural programs/projects that aim to help farmers and fisherfolk improve their lot in life had been initiated. Many have succeeded, while others were not as effective. This is commendable on the part of our government functionaries, non-government organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders who try their best to make a dent in the farmers' economic status. For sure, there are factors - or a combination of them - that influence the success or failure of these initiatives. These include climate variability of which the country is vulnerable; availability of agricultural infrastructures, market, and credit facilities; economic conditions in the localities that favor productivity; and synergy of government assistance from concerned agencies; among others.

The Special Area for Agricultural Development

(SAAD) Program - launched in 2017 - continues to make breakthroughs in areas that were identified as poorest of the poor, and where marginalized farmers make their living.

Farmer-partners engaged in swine production and fattening projects in Barangay Sabang, Oras, Eastern Samar - with their swine that just recently reached its marketable weight, were very pleased that they were able to earn from these endeavors and continue by multiplying the offspring. Meanwhile, rice farmers in Brgy. MacArthur, Lavezares, Northern Samar realized the importance of complete farm inputs (complete fertilizers and urea) to achieve maximum harvest, as compared with no inputs at all.

In the expansion province of Southern Leyte, launching/orientation activities were conducted towards the end of May 2018 in nine (9) recipient municipalities. Some Local Chief Executives (LCEs) were on hand to lend full support to the different projects that will soon be implemented. Cassava and Corn Production Technology Training as well as Swine Production and Management Training, were conducted beforehand to capacitate the project partners. Various capacity enhancement activities had also been completed in project areas of Northern Samar. These trainings were handled by the University of Eastern Philippines (UEP), which collaborated with DA-RFO 8 as the training arm in the implementation of SAAD Program.

A unique feature of the program is that

assistance to the farmers in the form of livelihood programs go directly to the individual - who were pre-identified according to a set of criteria - rather than to an association. As the livelihood program is tailored fit to their needs, the program's impact is then more immediate and the benefits accrue to the individual and their family. Eventually, these beneficiaries will be organized into associations or cooperatives to further the interests of its members, as government institutions and funding agencies usually course their interventions through duly recognized and accredited groups.



Apparently, the Program is heading in the right direction. The Department of Agriculture (DA) recognizes its contribution to poverty alleviation efforts of the government through the interventions that were engaged in identified areas.

In the 15 June 2018 issue of the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), the article, "DA's Poverty Reduction Program Getting Bigger Budget," stated that the SAAD Program had greatly helped the rural poor with its intervention programs since it started at the beginning of President Duterte's term.

With the reservoir of goodwill that the program has for the poor and marginalized farmers, it is not farfetched that the agriculture sector is set to move steadily forward, with the SAAD taking the lead in poverty alleviation, hunger mitigation, and the overall growth and development of the country. ###

BROADENING THE PLATE OF DA INTERVENTIONS

January 14, 2019

By Jeanrose G. Basilan and
Pamela Ruth P. Arciaga

The Philippine population is expected to increase significantly over the next three decades, but our capacity for food production will struggle to keep pace. Because humanity has to feed its ballooning population, and exacerbating factors such as climate change and food security concerns cannot seem to satisfy the food requirements of the consuming public, the Department of Agriculture (DA) continues to seek more innovative approaches to improving crop yield and productivity, while generating job opportunities in the farming sector, without adversely affecting the environment.

The Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program, which was launched in 2017, is a fundamentally new strategy meant to help alleviate the poverty situation of the country's most vulnerable people—the farmers—through food production, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for them in order to restore their dignity and self-worth as productive members of society.

When an individual talks about a farmer, an image that immediately comes to mind is that of someone who is poor, uneducated, and marginalized. But the saying that goes, "If you have eaten a meal today, thank a farmer!" speaks volumes—for one may need a lawyer, policeman, or fireman once or twice in their lifetime, but a farmer is needed by the populace at least three times a day.

Hence, the farmer is the core of this comprehensive strategy. The "poorest of the poor" in this sector, who have been selected through a rigorous 11-step process, will engage in projects that are viable and doable, such as enhanced rice and corn production; swine, poultry, vegetable, cassava, ube, and peanut production; and swine fattening. It is important that farmers are equipped with appropriate training to ensure that technologies are used and will aid in their continuous improvement.

In the recently-concluded SAAD Consultative Meetings with Provincial/ Municipal Agriculturists (PA/MAs), and State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), RTD for Operations and Extension and SAAD 8 Regional Focal Person Dr. Andrew Rodolfo T. Oras emphasized that climate change adaptation and risk reduction measures are incorporated in the modules of Climate-smart Farmers' Field School (FFS) across all commodities. In this way, farmers are made aware of strategies to combat climate impacts in an environment that is highly susceptible to climate variability. People are guided to make extreme choices.

During said meeting held from May 17 to 22, 2018 for the three (3) Samar provinces, Leyte, and Southern Leyte, program implementers were oriented on Market Development Strategies and Buyer's Preferences and Volume Requirements for all commodities.

These learning technologies will be cascaded to farmer-recipients and their associations through coaching, mentoring, and handholding.

On a related vein, trends show that there is a shift in community values, lifestyles, and gender relations that has led to women empowerment resulting in women taking more active role in decision making. The program encourages women to participate in community life alongside their husbands in consonance to gender awareness and equality policies of the government.

Thus, involvement by women not only in domestic affairs but also in the farm and other societal roles would bolster women's rights.

SAAD Program will not replace the knowledge and intuition that farmers have always relied on to help manage their farms; rather, it will complement them and DA banner programs and projects to make life a bit easier for our food producers in the countryside. ###

TOUCHING FARMERS' LIVES THE SAAD WAY

July 11, 2018

By Ronillo L. Dusaban

It's no longer business as usual at the Department of Agriculture (DA). Under the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program, farmers from the poorest provinces, whom the government serves the least, will be given special attention.

The SAAD Program, as envisioned by DA Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol, is one of the key programs that will address the lingering poverty situation in the countryside. It will help poor communities in increasing food production, thereby contributing to the growth of family income as well.

In Zamboanga Del Norte, the SAAD Program intends to build basic farming communities that will play important role in transforming villages into vibrant productive areas. The basic agriculture communities will be the launching pad for SAAD intervention in the area.

In partnership with the local government units, civil society organizations, state universities and colleges, as well as private businesses, the program will vigorously pursue building institutions to manage community livelihood projects.

The focus shall be on strengthening people's resolve to free them from the economic morass. Activities, which aim to show them the enormous potential of their areas to produce food not only for themselves but also for the bigger community, were conducted.

Training on natural farming and other organic means of producing food livestock and poultry management, the integrated farming system, and forage management were also done as part of the capacity-building component of the program.

Series of learning sessions were carried out to enhance knowledge and skills in food production, value-adding activities, and enterprise development.

Partnership with local government units in the province has proven to be one of the best practices. 500 farmer-partners from the most remote village of Diwan in Dipolog City have been trained under the TESDA NC II program

for Organic Farming. These SAAD farmer-partners have become advocates of organic farming. They now serve as resource persons on the natural farming system.

Salug

In Salug municipality, the once sleepy villages of Pacuhan and Liguac are now teeming with livelihood activities. The layer chicken project implemented in these villages has awakened the spirit of the community to further engage in other productive endeavors. They are now engaged in vegetable farming as well.

The project has rekindled the spirit of the community. People now have the sense of



Liguac Farmers
Association in Salug,
Zamboanga del Norte

belongingness. They are a community reborn. They now commit themselves to transform their towns into the “fresh egg basket” of the province.

Leon B. Postigo

In the conflict-affected village of Nacibac in the municipality of Leon B. Postigo, originally named Bacungan, a ray of hope is on the horizon.

Endowed with a vast tract of fertile land, food production was surprisingly very low. Farmers were not keen on producing more than they could consume. The nearest corn mill is more or less 25 kilometers away. The road leading to the village is almost non-existent and much worse during rainy days.

When the SAAD Program of the Department of Agriculture adopted the village as its pilot community for agricultural development, things have changed for the

Nacibac, Leon B. Postigo, Zamboanga del Norte



people and its community.

After so many years of seeming neglect, they now felt government presence through the deployment of a community development facilitator, also known as Area Coordinator from the program.

The local government unit also designated a SAAD focal person from its agriculture office, who complements the effort of the Area

Coordinator in organizing the community and facilitating participatory planning sessions to identify and prioritizing the needs of the community.

After a series of consultations, the community decided to implement a SCoPSA-inspired corn production project with mill component. SCoPSA or Sustainable Corn Production in Sloping Areas is one of the Department of Agriculture's soil conservation and climate change adaptation measures for corn areas vulnerable to soil erosion.

The initial project was aimed at producing corn for food coupled with soil conservation practice.

For 2018, the community proposed to implement an upland rice production project in addition to their existing corn farm. The new project, with a rice mill component, also includes native chicken raising project.

Mutia

In the Municipality of Mutia, four associations with 168 women farmers received eight modules of egg machine each. One module consists of 48 heads of fully vaccinated 22-week old ready-to-lay pullets complete with cage, drinkers, and feeding trough.

The layer chicken production projects are implemented in Buena Suerte, Diland, New Land and New Siquijor. These villages are the most impoverished areas in Mutia town.

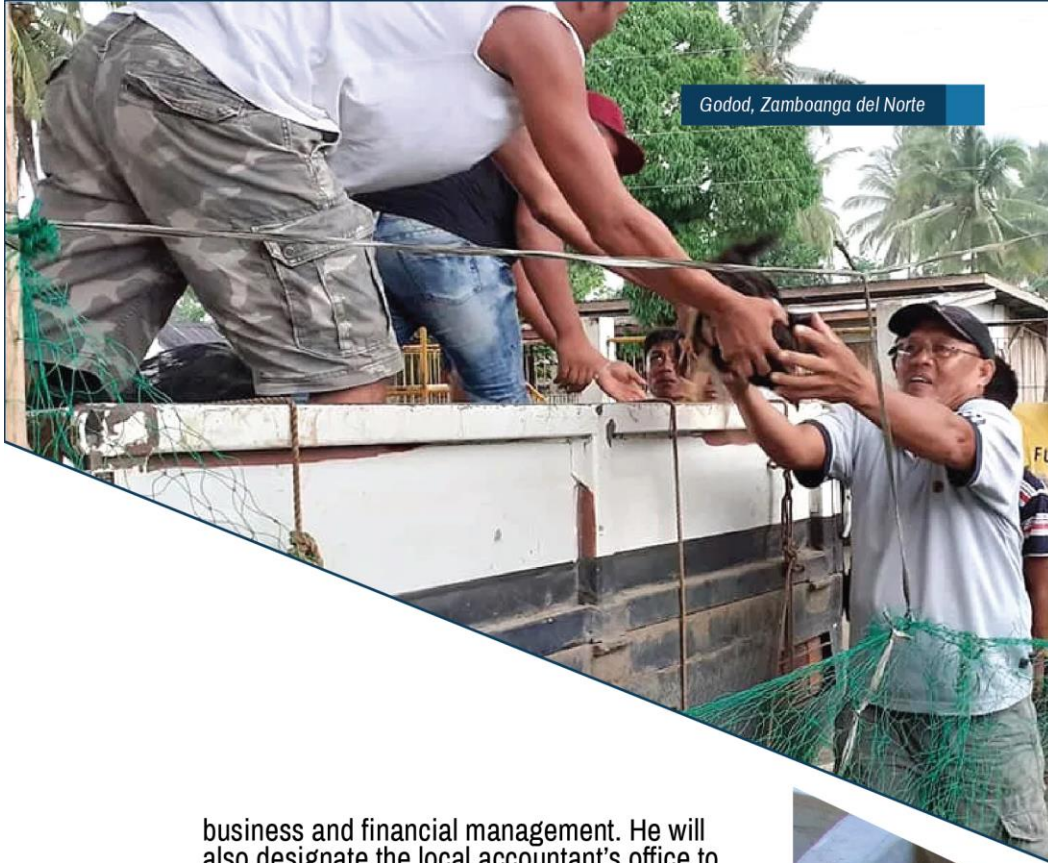
Mutia Mayor Arthur Tenorio said that he fully supports the livelihood projects for women. He said he is very optimistic that the project will increase family income as well as solve some nutrition concerns in the remote villages.

Tenorio also committed to providing the associations with the necessary training on

New Siquijor Women's Association in Mutia, Zamboanga del Norte



Godod, Zamboanga del Norte



Siayan, Zamboanga del Norte



San Juan Farmers Association and Situbo Farmers Association sold chickens in Zamboanga del Norte



Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte



business and financial management. He will also designate the local accountant's office to train the group on basic auditing processes.

With strong support from the local government unit, the women sector will become a strong partner in community development. Soon, Mutia will become a key producer of fresh, clean and organic eggs that will support the school nutrition program being implemented by the Department of Education in the villages.

Salug, Leon B. Postigo, and Mutia are just a few municipalities in Zamboanga del Norte, where the DA-SAAD Program has touched the lives of farmers.

It is evident that living with the farmers, and sharing with their hopes, joys, doubts, and fears, a difference can be made.

This is the SAAD way. The communities, the local government units, the academe, the civil society organizations, and the DA through its SAAD Program are one on a journey towards a better and brighter tomorrow. ###

UPSCALING POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMS: A MUST IN THE WAR AGAINST POVERTY

March 16 – April 15, 2018

By Ulysses J. Lustria Jr.

To win the war against poverty, poverty alleviation programs should be upscaled.

Although it has been proven that programs directly targeting the poor are the most effective weapon against poverty, there is a need to upscale them to be more successful. They should be increased in terms of scope, reach, and quality.

Upscaling can be achieved by sourcing more funds for poverty alleviation programs, not only from the national government but also by partnering with local government units, nongovernment organizations, the private sector, and donors.

Complementation or convergence, not in terms of funds but in terms of common beneficiaries, can also be done. Once common beneficiaries (e.g. same target communities) are identified, implementers or agencies can join forces in planning and implementation of programs.

Implementers who are strong in one area can share their expertise, thus improving the quality of programs and increasing their probability of success.

The poor will always be left behind if we will not upscale our poverty alleviation programs.

It is time to Go Big. ###

Pandanon Integrated Upland
Small Farmers Association in
Salvador Benedicto, Negros
Occidental



WOMEN: THE BEST FIGHTERS AGAINST POVERTY

February 16 – March 15, 2018

By Ulysses J. Lustria Jr.

We have this old-age debate on who is better at money management: men or women. But studies show that it is the latter.

Assuming this is true, we can also say that women are also the better fighters in the war against poverty.

Why? They are better in saving and in investing, and therefore have more chance in lifting their families from poverty.

Many men, especially those involved in the stock market, may disagree and say that women are risk-averse. That women usually do not invest big amounts and so do not earn much. But this is exactly a reason that women are better money managers. They do not invest big, are cautious, and therefore lose less money.

They are also better borrowers. That is why the recipients of micro financing institutions (MFIs) are mostly women. One study covering 350 MFIs from countries says that women represent 73% of microfinance customers on average. Various studies also show that their repayment performance is also way better than men.

Further, not only are women better money managers, they have a better sense of priorities when it comes to caring for their families. An International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) publication states: "research has shown that women are also



Lorega Ancestral Management and Development for All Generation in Kitaotao, Bukidnon

more likely to invest additional earnings in the health and nutritional status of the household and in children's schooling. This means that the targeting of women has a greater positive impact on child and household poverty reduction, measured in terms of nutrition, consumption, and well-being."

With these evidences at hand, we should let women lead the way to solve poverty. ###



New Siquijor Women's Association in Mutia, Zamboanga del Norte

United Nations Women Organization in Bayabas, Surigao del Sur

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PAINTING THE FACE OF POVERTY: THE BEST SOLUTION

January 16 – February 15, 2018

By Ulysses J. Lustria Jr.

Poverty can be solved through focused or targeted interventions. We have to find who and where the poor recipients are and then provide them the appropriate assistance. As they say, we have to give poverty a face.

Many will say that we can help the poor become unpoor by developing the economy in general and stop at that; that benefits will trickle down to them.

But evidence is on the contrary. A World Bank study ["Global Extreme Poverty" (2018) by Max Roser and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina] mentioned that "traditional 'big push' macro policies are perhaps not the best approach to reducing poverty." A given example of such policy is the expansion of micro-finance. It is not enough to provide capital.

The study states: "The evidence suggests that multi-pronged interventions aimed at relieving multiple joint constraints at the household-level are more likely to reduce poverty than 'big push' policies on the macro-level."

It adds: "Around the world, most government programs hope to reduce poverty through short-term interventions that have lasting effects. While this is not an easy task, there is concrete evidence suggesting that it is possible. In six different countries, a multifaceted program offering short-term support along various household dimensions has been shown to cause lasting progress for the very poor."

Thus, the solution to poverty is that we should identify and profile our household recipients and design interventions that are based on their specific needs, their available resources, and their environment.

Yes, poverty has a face. And we need to "paint" it correctly to really help the poor. ###

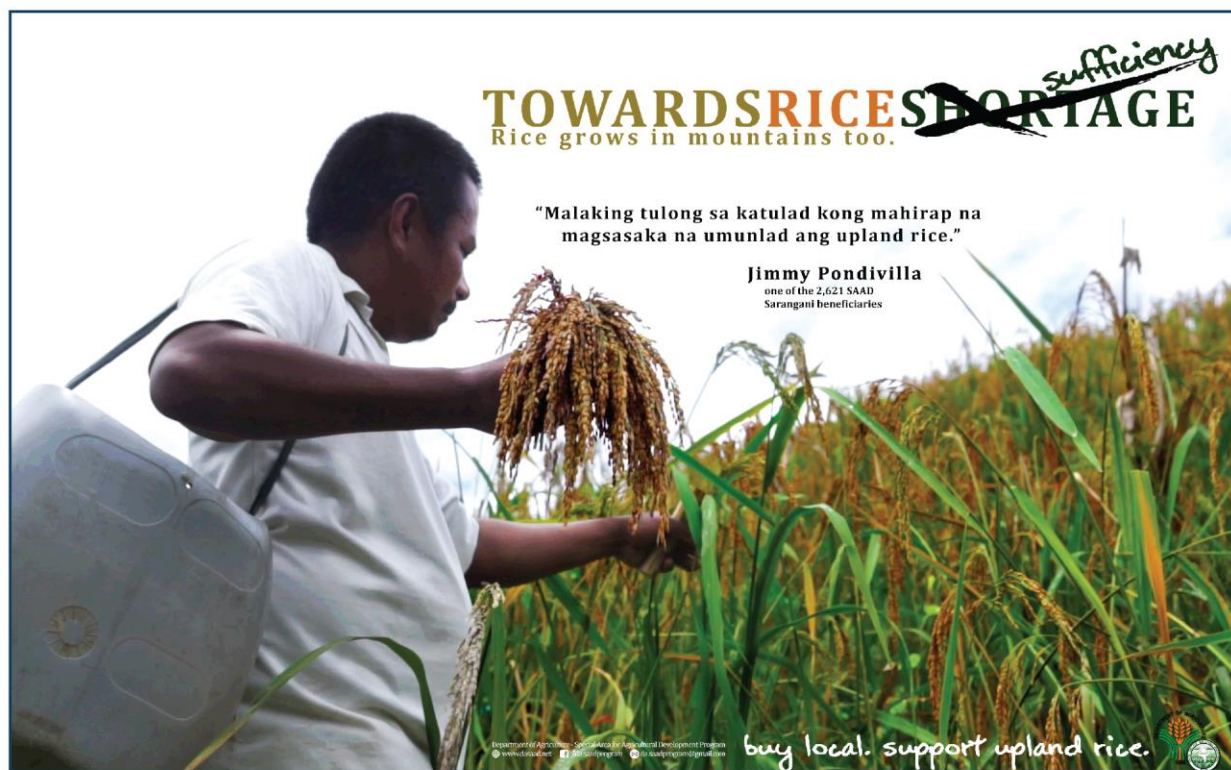


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SARANGANI UPLAND RICE: HITTING TWO GOALS WITH ONE SPROUT



August 24, 2017

By Crystal Jane L. Alviela

Rice has always been vital to the Filipinos. Not only it feeds millions of people, but it also contributes greatly to the growth of the Philippine economy. The production of rice, along with other major crops, is crucial in boosting the Philippine Agriculture, which is the number one economic driver in the country. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority

(PSA), the rice output for the first half of 2017 is relatively higher than of January-June output in 2016 by 12.06%. This is through the joint effort of the Department of Agriculture and the various local government units in providing agri-inputs to the farmers during their cropping seasons.

However, despite the significant increase in production, rice supply in the country still remains unequal to the growing demand of the Filipinos. In Sarangani alone, where 559, 455

people reside, the lowland rice produced only met barely half of the requirement resulting to merely 35% rice sufficiency in the province in 2015. This is due to various constraints such as less irrigation and lack of production facilities/equipment plus the pests that munch on the plants which limit the production. In cases like this, where shall we get the resources, enough to supply all the demands in rice?

Upland rice is seen as the best solution to increase the supply in Sarangani. This variety of rice shows more resiliencies against abrupt changes in the climate, and less reliability to irrigation hence making it the perfect alternative to lowland rice.

While others simply resort to importing rice from the neighboring countries, Sarangani is venturing to its upland areas for additional supply. Upland areas make up most of the province's terrain which is suitable for planting upland products.

Aside from increase in the supply of rice, upland rice industry targets to reach out to the Indigenous People (IPs) and local farmers living in the highlands of Sarangani. These people are mostly poor despite owning large farmlands. This is mainly because of the lack of access to market their products as well as the absence of proper knowledge in maximizing their upland farms.

The Department of Agriculture – Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program aims to suffice the need of the upland farmers in order to produce more not solely for the province to have enough supply, but first

and foremost, to be able to sustain the needs of the farmers, be able to provide food on their own plates and live out of the poverty line.

With the help of the Provincial Government of Sarangani, the DA-SAAD program targets to develop the upland rice and corn in the province. Last May 2017, the 125 farmers of New Aklan in Glan Sarangani received 80 kilograms of upland rice seeds which they are now harvesting. Series of training on organic farming and other farming methods were as well conducted to seven municipalities in Sarangani (including Glan). Other inputs such as fertilizers, farm and garden tools, vegetable seeds, and livestock have been and will still be distributed to provide additional livelihood to the beneficiaries while waiting for the harvest season.

While the problem in rice is being responded, the IPs and poor farmers are also being catered; hence the DA-SAAD is definitely hitting two goals with one sprout. We can also support this kind of campaign towards rice sufficiency not only in Sarangani but in Mindanao as well and soon in the whole Philippines by simply buying local and supporting the Sarangani's upland rice. ###





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