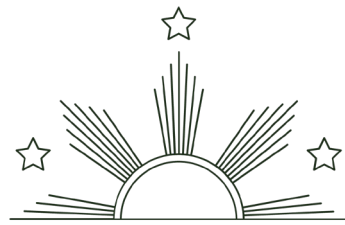




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SAADvocracy

OFFICIAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE SPECIAL AREA FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Dear Readers,

I am delighted to share with you the exciting developments that have unfolded in our program over this second quarter. It has been a period marked by significant milestones and impactful events that have shaped our journey towards greater excellence and community empowerment.

In this edition of the 'SAADvocacy', one of our significant stories was the National IO Conference, where minds converged, ideas flourished, and collaborations were forged. This gathering not only showcased our Program's dedication to fostering innovation but also reaffirmed our commitment to pushing the boundaries of excellence in every aspect of our work.

Furthermore, the DevCom Training initiative stands as a testament to our belief in equipping our team with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of development communication. Empowering our communicators ensures that our message reaches farther and resonates deeper within the communities we serve.

The culmination of our Social Mobilization Training of Trainers was another significant milestone this quarter, where leaders emerged, equipped to guide and inspire change at the grassroots level. This event underscores our commitment to building sustainable capacities and fostering leadership that empowers communities to drive their development.

Lastly, the successful rollout of the MAED initiative marks a pivotal moment in our efforts to harness technology for social good. MAED promises to streamline our processes, enhance our outreach, and ultimately, amplify our impact on the ground.

As we reflect on these achievements, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each one of you—our dedicated team, partners, and stakeholders—for your unwavering support and commitment. Together, we continue to write the next chapter of our program's success story, where every milestone achieved is a testament to our collective vision and determination.

Thank you to the people behind this news magazine for giving us an inspiring compilation of stories that will hopefully be etched in agricultural development in the poorest areas of the Philippines. Here's to a future filled with even greater accomplishments and transformative impact.

Ulysses J. Lustria, Jr.
ULYSSES J. LUSTRIA, JR.
Director, SAAD-NPMO

SAAD farmers in Dinagat Islands take alternative, makes Php 977K from selling eggs

by Shena Mae C. Pabia | REGION 13



In Dinagat Islands, the Department of Agriculture – Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Caraga has been instrumental in providing crucial support to mixed-crop farmers, as six (6) farmer associations (FAs) fetched a gross income of Php 976,999.50 in January 2024 from their chicken layer project, as an alternative while waiting for sweet corn harvest.

Recently, the six FAs supported under SAAD Phase 2 namely: Pangie Farmers' Association, Justiniana Edera Livestock Grower Association (JELGA), Malinao Poultry Raisers Association (MAPORA), Mabini Multipurpose Cooperative (MAMULCO), Doña Helen Sewing Women's Association (DOHSWA) and Bayanihan Makugihong, Mag-uuma, Mangingisda Asosasyon (BMMMA), received fertilizers and fish nets valued at Php 158,850, aimed at bolstering their agricultural endeavors.

These supplies serve dual purposes – the fish nets are utilized to safeguard chicken housing, ensuring the safety of layer chickens from diseases and predators, while the fertilizers support the sweet corn project undertaken by the farmers. Concurrently, SAAD Caraga has been closely monitoring



the progress of the FAs' poultry income alongside the status of their sweet corn crops. These efforts are part of the Integrated Sweet Corn and Chicken Layer Project under SAAD Phase 2, benefitting FAs across Libjo, Tubajon, and Dinagat Islands. The FY 2023 total project cost for the said FAs amounted to Php 3,248,084.

Chicken layer project

The journey into poultry farming commenced for these farmers in July 2023, when they received chickens and embarked on a communal poultry farming venture. Through diligent efforts and monitoring by SAAD implementers, the FAs have made significant strides.

By January 2024, they already collected 174,370 chicken eggs and sold them at Php 5-6 per piece (pc), fetching a gross income of Php 976,999.50 (Table 1).

Sweet corn project

In addition to poultry farming, each FA is actively involved in cultivating sweet corn on communal lands, with harvest expected in March 2024. Through collaborative planning, preparation, and ongoing support activities, the FAs are geared towards long-term sustainability and prosperity.

Before distributing the fertilizers and fishnets, the FAs had the chance to enhance their knowledge and skills through crop and poultry production training and market-related support activities for long-term project sustainability.

JELGA chairperson Felimon Cape shared that with the program's assistance, *"Tungod sa suporta nga gihatag, padayon mi maningkamot ug pag amoma sa mga proyekto nga among nadawat gikan sa DA-SAAD program. Usa sa among gi target nga ang grupo mahimong supplier sa tibuok probinsya sa Dinagat."*

[Through the support from the DA-SAAD program, we will continue to strive hard and nurture the assistance provided from the program. Our association aims to be one of the suppliers to the entire province of Dinagat.]

The distribution of additional projects' support, led by DA-SAAD in collaboration with local government units, highlights the collective effort towards agricultural development in Dinagat. These efforts, coupled with integrated farming practices, are promoting inclusive growth and improving production, setting a thriving agricultural sector in the area.



Scan QR to see FAs egg sales report of chicken layer project as of July 2023 - January 2024 in Dinagat Islands



From fields to market: Tubigon Vegetable Growers Association's Php 61K initial earnings from DA-SAAD's vegetable project

by Melissa Lingco | MIMAROPA Region

In the green fields of Barangay Tubigon in Ferrol, Romblon, the Tubigon Vegetable Growers Association (TVGA), consisting of 25 farmers, accumulated Php 61,026 gross income from selling their fresh vegetables. This livelihood support under the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Phase 2 was received by the FA in September 2023.

Provided to the group were vegetable seeds, plastic drums, crates, plastic mulch, seedling trays, farm tools, and a pump and engine set, all amounting to Php 762,102.

“Yoong una kasi may nangako sa amin (ng programa) pero puro lang sila pangako, wala namang nadating na tulong sa amin. 'Yong SAAD biglang dumating sa amin, akala namin ay puro pangako na naman ulit. Mabuti masigasig 'yong pumunta sa amin na kagaya ninyo na talagang tinupad ang pangako sa amin. Bumalik kayo at may dalang tulong, kaya maraming - maraming salamat sa inyo.

Prior to the distribution of project inputs, TVGA members were prepared for project management and sustainability through a series of training on capacity-building, production techniques, and marketing strategies.

In October 2023, covering a consolidated area of two hectares (ha), each member planted short-term crops like squash, bottle gourd (upo), eggplant, okra, green chili, pole sitao, and bitter melon (ampalaya) on their respective farms.

After implementing proper crop management techniques, the farmers began harvesting a variety of fresh vegetables from their fields. From October 8, 2023 to February 10, 2024, the group sold a total of 1,213 kilograms (kgs) at a price ranging from Php 23 - 100/kg (Table 1).





Scan QR to see TVGA's vegetable production income from October 2023 to February 2024

Their produce attracted direct buyers, easing marketing worries. Additionally, they established sales channels by supplying not just the local market, but also the neighboring municipalities like Odiongan.

The group has agreed to set aside at least 10% of their earnings from each production cycle to create an association fund. This fund will provide extra capital for their future farming projects.

Peldrin Visca, the association's president, commended the SAAD Program for its unwavering support and dedication. Reflecting on their journey, he acknowledged initial skepticism due to past experiences with other programs. However, SAAD's consistent assistance and diverse interventions quickly earned the trust and gratitude of the association members, solidifying their belief in the program's positive impact.

[Before, someone promised us [a program] but it was all just promises; we didn't receive any help. Then SAAD came to us, and we thought it would be just promises again. It's good that someone like you came to us and really fulfilled the promise. You came back with assistance, so thank you very, very much.]

TVGA plans to commence their second cropping season in May. To further enhance their productivity and sustainability, SAAD MIMAROPA will be providing them with additional support this year, including vegetable seeds, fertilizer, a plastic container tank with complete accessories, and a hand tractor.



Burning ambition: Guimaras charcoal farmers find success in vegetable growing alternative

by Cedic Bataga | REGION 6

In the green fields of Barangay Tubigon in Ferrol, Romblon, the Tubigon Vegetable Growers Association (TVGA), consisting of 25 farmers, accumulated Php 61,026 gross income from selling their fresh vegetables. This livelihood support under the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Phase 2 was received by the FA in September 2023.

Now recipient of the Vegetable Production Project, the group cultivated the seeds they received in a 1.5-hectare (ha) communal area. Composed mostly of rice farmers whose livelihood depends solely on rice farming and charcoal making, the group has seen the potential of vegetables which could help augment their existing venture, which is not stable and does not always guarantee reliable income.

After three months, SNASFA started harvesting from the short-term crops. Their 0.75ha eggplant plantation yielded 417 kilograms (kgs) in four successive harvests (within 14 days), while their 0.37-hectare squash area produced 85kgs of squash fruit. They earned Php 29,144 by selling eggplants for Php 60-70/kg and made Php 1,234 from squash sold at Php 10-15/kg.

Almost all members have attested to the additional earnings they have generated and the benefits one can reap from vegetable production such as providing their nutritious day-to-day meals coming from the surplus - sold at a much lower price, and sometimes shared free among members. With this, most of them have made the switch and devoted most of their time to cultivating vegetables in their communal garden.

With the assistance of members who sought local buyers, they sold their initial and subsequent harvests within their sitio. Selling online also helped them market their products easily.

However, selling larger quantities from later harvests posed a challenge. As a solution, the Municipal Agriculture

Office (MAO) of San Lorenzo invited them to the municipal hall grounds and provided them a space to display their products together with the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) Program.

With their Php 30,378 accumulated gross income, the group agreed to open a bank account and deposit 45% of their net income. The landowner will receive 10%, while the remaining 45% will be divided among active members based on their attendance and days worked. of pepper, and ampalaya in the remaining plots which measure approximately 500 square meters.

As part of the group's marketing strategy, they also created a Facebook page where they posted all their vegetable products and hope to reach public markets in Alibhon, Jordan, Guimaras, and the province's central and pilot site for the Department of Tourism's market tourism program where most locals directly go for wholesale buying.

They also intend to target hospitals, government offices, and restaurants as potential markets for their agricultural produce.

Tangible capital, intangible returns

On March 5, 2019, a group of friends organized the SNASFA after noticing the absence of a farmers' association in their area. Despite facing initial challenges and a pause in operations due to the pandemic in 2020, they persevered and were officially registered on June 22, 2021, under the

Department of Labor and Employment.

With 27 active members, SNASFA aims to support small farmers in their community by providing livelihood opportunities. Their vegetable venture has not only helped meet their daily needs but also strengthened their bond as one farming community.

They uphold the tradition of dayaw or communal effort, which fosters teamwork and shared purpose. This collaborative approach has made their field activities smoother and more efficient.

President Julio Ramos Tanaleon emphasized the importance of unity and love for their work, stating that tasks become lighter when they work together.

"Ang sikreto namon ngaa padayon kami nga nagahirinugpong kag hinangpanay kay tungod man sa higugma namon sa kada isa kag sa amon ginaubra. Mas mag-an ang ubra kung nagabinuligay," he shared.

[Our secret why we continue to work as one team is our love for each other and to our work. One task becomes lighter if we work together.]

While they plan to continue vegetable farming for its capital-raising potential, their long-term goal is to venture into rice and charcoal trading. This cyclical approach aims for sustainability and economic stability throughout the year.

SNASFA's experience highlights the power of teamwork in achieving success and personal growth. Beyond tangible benefits, such as increased production, the camaraderie fostered within the group is vital for project success and sustainability.



Mangyan FA champions cassava farming

"Masaya po kami dahil patuloy na tumataas ang aming kita. Dahil sa inyo, may regular nang bumibili ng aming mga balinghoy, kahit mahirap ang pinagdadaanan namin lalo sa paghakot ng mga sako mula sa bundok hanggang sa ibabaw ng kalsada, masaya kami kasi may kita. Mas pag-iigihin pa namin ang pagtatanim lalo na kung magkakaroon kami ng maayos na daan."

Mangyan farmers, an indigenous community in the country, are renowned for their strong ties to the land and their dedication to agriculture. Through generations, they have preserved traditional farming methods, sustaining their communities and contributing to the agricultural heritage of regions like Occidental Mindoro.

In Paluan, 58 farmers predominantly representing the Iraya tribe formed a group registered as Sitio Hinugasan Cassava Planter's Association (SHCPA). Residing in a remote sitio, they relied their livelihoods on growing cassava, banana, rice, and purple yam (ube). Before receiving support from SAAD, they lived in poverty and struggled to get by every day. Their harvests barely provided for their families, as they had difficulty earning enough income, mainly because of their remote location and lack of capital for farming.

In 2019, they were selected as beneficiaries of the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for



by Melissa Lingco | MIMAROPA Region

Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Phase 1 for cassava production project. The members received 62,400 cassava planting materials, processing equipment, machineries, multipurpose drying pavement, and shallow tube well. They cultivated the stalks individually to a consolidated 153-hectares production area.

Cassava cultivation typically spans 8-9 months from planting to harvest. Members of the association plant their crops around June and then harvest them by February of the following year. This pattern repeats for each cropping cycle, ensuring a consistent schedule for cultivation and harvesting.

After harvesting, they chip the cassava and sun-dry it for three to five days.

To market their product, SAAD MIMAROPA assisted SHCPA by establishing a dependable market connection with an assembler for their yearly harvest.

Cassava production income

In 2020, they started selling chipped and dried cassava at a price ranging from Php 8-9 per kilogram (kg). From their initial harvest up to the recent one, the group recorded a consolidated 77,738kgs sold, accumulating

Php 662,974 gross income (Table 1).

After each harvest, they set aside funds to finance preparations for the subsequent cropping, ensuring they have the resources needed for planting, maintenance, and other expenses associated with cassava farming.

To sustain the FA, the members agreed to give back one (1) sack of cassava or its equivalent value to the association. This fund is intended for production and postharvest expenses such as transportation, fuel, labor for transporting cassava from the mountain to the road, food, and other needs.

SHCPA chairperson Orly “Alex” Reyes said SAAD’s assistance, like technical help and market connections, has boosted their livelihoods. Now, they are more confident and determined to grow and sustain their cassava project.

[We are happy because our income is increasing. Because of you, we now have regular buyers for our cassava, even

though it’s tough for us, especially hauling sacks from the mountain to the road. We’re happy because we’re earning. We will work even harder if we have better road access.]

They said the program helped them worry less about daily expenses during tough times, and now they feel secure with enough income between cropping seasons.

After the completion of SAAD Phase 1 implementation, SAAD MIMAROPA transferred the supported associations in Occidental Mindoro, including SHCPA, to their respective local government units (LGUs) in December 2022. Despite this transition, SHCPA maintains communication with SAAD MIMAROPA, expressing gratitude for the program’s assistance.

Moving forward, the SHCPA hopes for more government assistance, aiming for a farm-to-market road that improves transportation and boosts the sustainability of cassava farming. They also aim to start their delivery service, giving them direct access to markets and better prices for their cassava.

Scan QR to see SHCPA's consolidated cassava production income from 2020 - 2024



Supple as the tiger grass: An Ilocana’s journey from overseas worker to thriving farmer

by Pearl Lovedyn A. Dacuag | Region 1

The soft broom, known as “buyboy” in the Ilocano language, holds a special place as a popular souvenir for tourists visiting the provinces of Northern Luzon. Crafted from tiger grass, which grows abundantly in the hilly regions of La Union, Ilocos Sur, and the Cordillera region, these brooms thrive despite the ever-changing weather conditions.

Though seemingly ordinary, the tiger grass carries a story of resilience and resourcefulness, embodied by the women of Sitio Sinabugan in Barangay Tio-angan, Bagulin, La Union. One of these remarkable women is Dina Pascua, the president of the Sinabugan Farmers’ Association, Inc.

Dina, a 62-year-old mother of five, has an inspiring journey. She was once a substitute teacher and ventured abroad as an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) in countries like Cyprus, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Israel. For 23 years, she endured being away from her family to provide for their needs. However, after the passing

of her long-time employer, Dina made the courageous decision to return home in 2015.

Upon returning from years of working abroad, Dina initially felt a sense of uncertainty, unsure of where to begin and how to rebuild her life in her homeland. Settling back in their family home in Rosario, La Union, alongside her husband, she sought solace in gardening, planting fruit-bearing trees in their backyard to occupy her time.

However, as the coronavirus pandemic gripped the world, imposing strict movement restrictions and creating a surge in demand for food, Dina made a bold decision. She returned to Sitio Sinabugan, determined to cultivate the land her late father had left behind.

With unwavering determination, she embarked on a journey of growing various crops such as bananas, calamansi, sweet potatoes, ginger, peanuts, and corn. Additionally, she took on the responsibility of managing animals, including cattle, goat, swine, and poultry.

Despite being in her senior years, Dina humorously remarked, “I do not like to keep still,” showing her indomitable spirit and zest for life.

“Saanak a naruam nga awan ti ar-aramidenna uray no senior citizen-akon. Sapsapulen latta ngamin ti bagik ti agtalon gapu ta isu ti inkaubingak. Mahiligak idi nga agmula iti prutas ta mayat iti rikna a no adda ti immulan, addanto ti burasem. Isu a maikawaak idi agsubliakon ditoy,” she said.

[I do not like being idle even if I am already a senior citizen. My body always looks for something to do in the farm because it used to be our life back then. I loved planting fruit-bearing trees - it made me feel happy knowing that if you plant now, you will soon have something to reap. That is why it felt odd when I came back because I missed the trees.]

As Dina continued the redevelopment of the one-hectare lot, she harbored a plan to establish her own association. Little did she know that her dedication and efforts had not gone unnoticed. The barangay captain, recognizing her commitment and leadership qualities, approached Dina with an offer that took her by surprise. In 2023, she was asked to serve as the president of the Sinabugan Farmers Association (FA), Inc.

At that time, the Sinabugan FA was not as active as it is today. With limited support from external sources, members were hesitant to embrace government programs, opting to work individually rather than collectively.

Recognizing the untapped potential within the group, Dina saw an opportunity to provide the guidance and direction needed for their growth. Embracing the challenge, she accepted the role of leading the

association. It was during this time that the group was selected as one of the pilot areas for the implementation of the Department of Agriculture – Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA - SAAD) Phase 2 Program in the Ilocos region.

Under Dina's leadership and with the assistance of the SAAD Program, the Sinabugan farmers experienced a remarkable transformation. Dina expressed her gratitude, stating that since receiving the livelihood project from SAAD, which included 33 upgraded cattle and various vegetable seeds, the farmers have become more united and efficient in their work. They diligently care for the animals and tend to the crops, actively participating in the training provided by the program. The addition of cattle to their livelihood projects has been a dream come true for the association, expanding their income opportunities beyond soft broom production and rice farming.

In addition to her role as president, Dina takes on the responsibility of caring for two of the 33 cows. She diligently forages leaves and grass for them and fetches water at the break of dawn. Just like herself, Dina describes the women in their barrio as being “all around” - versatile and dependable. They are capable of managing various tasks, from household chores to farm work. Despite being labeled as the “weaker sex,” these women defy stereotypes and engage in physically demanding activities on the farm, such as herding cattle and irrigating crops on steep mountain slopes.

“Ditoy Bagulin, amin a babbai ket kabaelanda ti agtalon ken agpastor. Awan ti taga-balay laeng ditoy, uray adda ti anakna ket mairapinda ti mapan agsibog ken agpakan iti dinguen,” Dina said.

[In Bagulin, women possess the skills and capabilities to engage in farming and cattle herding. No woman



in their community is limited to staying at home alone, as even mothers with young children find the time and opportunity to contribute to agricultural work.]

Dina's journey has taken her from being a substitute teacher to venturing abroad as a migrant worker. However, she has now found her way back to her true passion - farming. Despite the challenges faced by the Sinabugan FA, Dina remains confident that they are on the right path to improving their association with the guidance provided by SAAD. In just a short span of time since joining the program, the FA has already

begun to see the results of their hard work. They have successfully harvested and sold cucumbers and tomatoes, while also preparing to sell 16 of their castrated large ruminants.

Her enthusiasm and dedication not only inspire her fellow farmers, but also serve as a reminder for them to stay focused on their ultimate goal - to establish a dairy farm and become recognized as a successful association. With their collective efforts and unwavering determination, Dina and her fellow farmers are determined to transform their dreams into a tangible reality.

Farm to fresh cuts: Leyte farmers find new income stream thru SAAD meat processing project



by Justine May A. Delloro | Region 8

The fertile lands of Barangay San Antonio, Tunga, Leyte, have long nurtured bountiful harvests of vegetables. But for a group of dedicated farmers, their agricultural journey has taken an exciting turn. Pagkaurosa han Parag-uma Pinaagi han Organiko (PAPO), once solely focused on raising crops, has transformed into a thriving enterprise specializing in processed meat products.

This remarkable shift, driven by the farmers' own initiative and the livelihood support of the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program Phase 1, highlights the potential for Tunga farmers to expand their operations and find new avenues for success.

In 2022, PAPO became a recipient of DA-SAAD's Equipment Support for the Establishment of the Meat Shop Project worth Php 562,900. This grant provided them with the necessary tools to launch their venture, which officially began in December in the same year. This equipment grant included essential items like meat processing equipment, weighing scales, refrigeration units, a mobile cart, and even solar power – a complete package to set up a professional meat shop operation.

PAPO farmers, with their strong foundation in agriculture, saw the potential in expanding their horizons. Traditionally, they sold raw produce, but with DA-SAAD's support, they embraced the chance to take control of the entire value chain. This shift allowed them to diversify

income streams, embrace innovation, and prioritize food safety.

By processing meat, PAPO wasn't limited to selling just vegetables. They created a wider range of offerings, including embutido, longganisa, burger patties, and ready-to-cook pork cuts. This diversification provided a safety net and opened doors to new markets.

PAPO didn't stop at the basics. They continuously experiment with flavors and product variations, keeping their offerings fresh and exciting for customers. This focus on innovation ensures long-term success.

Understanding the importance of hygiene, PAPO adheres to strict sanitation procedures throughout the processing operation. This commitment guarantees customer safety and builds trust in their brand.

Alongside their ongoing cultivation of vegetables, the introduction of meat products has contributed significantly to their income. In the period from January to December 2023, PAPO farmers achieved a gross income of Php 446,169.10. After deducting expenses amounting to Php 254,134, their net sales amounted to Php 192,035.10. This substantial increase in revenue highlights the positive impact of diversifying their product offerings.

DA-SAAD's support extended beyond just equipment. The program recognized the need for knowledge and partnered with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to provide PAPO with training in meat processing. This training equipped them with the skills and knowledge to produce high-quality products consistently. The SAAD Provincial Project Management Support Office in Leyte also played a crucial role in connecting

PAPO to the bigger picture. They facilitated connections with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), ensuring

product compliance with regulations. Additionally, they assisted PAPO in marketing and branding their products, helping them establish crucial market linkages.

Rosebelle Candiente, auditor of PAPO, emphasized how the efforts of SAAD contributed to their organization and how the program became an avenue for their group to enter meat processing.

"Dako gud an naibulig han SAAD kay tinagan kami hin mga kagamitan para han meatshop. Tungod hine, nakagtikang kami pagbaligya hin mga agricultural products sugad han mga utanaon, manok and kame hin baboy," she said.

[SAAD hugely helped us through the provision of the establishment of our meatshop. Because of this, we were able to start selling agricultural products like vegetables, chicken and pork meat.]

"Tungod hine na meatshop, natagan kami hin oportunidad mabaro han pagproseso hin mga kame. Usa pa, dako an nabulig hine ha amon kay nagkaada kami hi pakabuhì," Candiente added.

[Because of this meatshop, we were given the opportunity to process meat. This is a big help to us because we were given another source of income.]

PAPO's story serves as a beacon of hope for other farming communities. It exemplifies how DA-SAAD's strategic interventions can empower farmers to move beyond traditional practices and embrace value-added opportunities.

With the right support, knowledge, and market linkages, PAPO farmers not only increased their income but also became key players in a strong and reliable food system that can last for years to come.



ZaNorte yellow corn farmers earn Php 178K from over 11,000kg yield

by Aimee Lou D. Madjus | Region 9

"We follow this policy so that our association has funds. But this amount can only be collected as long as we're done selling. It's not too heavy for us to give back to the association with this amount compared to when we buy this fertilizer from the market, which is very expensive."

In Jose Dalman, Zamboanga del Norte, 23 farmers from Tapon Integrated Farmers' Association (TIFA) transformed their cornfields into profitable ventures, yielding 11,137 kilograms of yellow corn and earning Php 178,200 gross income in just four months of operation.

TIFA's bountiful yellow corn harvest is a result of the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program's Integrated Project on Cattle and Corn Production funded under the FY 2023 implementation.

For the members of TIFA, farming is more than just a means to make a living; it's a way of life. Their primary crop is corn, but they also cultivate upland and lowland rice, coconut, and engage in livestock rearing, demonstrating their resilience and dedication.

The DA-SAAD, recognizing their needs during the Beneficiary Needs Assessment (BNA)

conducted before delivering interventions, responded with a comprehensive support package worth Php 1,567,750. The project consisted of 50 bags of yellow corn seeds, 100 bags of inorganic fertilizers, 75 pieces of pesticides, and 25 units of knapsack sprayers. The farmers also received eight cattle, along with vitamins and minerals to support their corn production.

The livelihood assistance package was distributed from April to August last year, and a technical training on yellow corn production was conducted in June. Armed with knowledge and resources, the TIFA members meticulously cultivated 27 bags of corn seeds in their individual cornfields, covering a total of 10 hectares from September 21-30, 2023.

Four months of diligent work resulted in an abundant harvest, with the farmers gathering a total of 11,137 kilograms of yellow corn kernels from January 6-28, 2024.

The Marketing and Assistance

Development (MAED) unit coordinated with the identified buyer, enabling the farmers to consolidate their produce in one area. The corn kernels were sold at Php 16 per kilo, earning them a gross income of Php 178,200.

The association implements a sustainability scheme where inputs are distributed on an individual basis, based on the size of each member's area. Under this scheme, members are required to reimburse the association for the fertilizers they received, at Php 250 per bag.

Led by President Marilyn Ballano, TIFA is committed to collective prosperity and community resilience.

The remarkable success of TIFA has set the stage for their next objective: opening a bank account to ensure the secure management of their group's funds. Moreover, they are preparing for financial management and entrepreneurial mindset training, laying the foundation for establishing a community-based enterprise.



Turning waste into a valuable livelihood: SAAD Program trains N.E. farmers on Corn Husk Craft-making Workshop



by Gennadiy C. Duque | Region 3

In a bid to provide additional income opportunities for farmers, the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development Program (DA-SAAD) of Central Luzon conducted a training on Corn Husk Craft Making to the Cabawangan Farmers Association (FA) in Nampicuan, Nueva Ecija last April 11-12, 2024.

Fifteen enthusiastic members of the Cabawangan Corn FA participated in the training, eager to acquire and apply the newfound skills to enhance their income opportunities. The group is the sole corn recipient of the SAAD Program in Nueva Ecija.

Associate Project Officer Rommelyn Quinto spearheaded the training together with Provincial Coordinator of Nampicuan, Aldrin Bulanadi and Area Coordinator Jacinto Bernardo Ongtangco.

Traditionally, farmers would sell the harvested corn cobs and kernels while discarding the husks.

This training helped the farmers learn the art of crafting using corn husks which was discussed by Ms. Elizabeth Tresvalles, owner of Likha — a craft making-company who served as the resource person during the training.

"Kadalasan kasi naibebenta namin ang busal kasi ginagawa itong tray ng itlog, pero itong balat itinatapon na lang po namin," said Lourdes Galang, a farmer from Brgy. Cabawangan, Nampicuan.

[Most of the time, we sell the cobs because they're used as egg trays, but we just throw away the husks.]

Tresvalles provided a comprehensive, step-by-step demonstration on how to transform husks into exquisite flower crafts, employing various dyeing techniques to achieve a stunning array of colors. Hence, learning to make productive use of the husks from their harvest becomes invaluable for the farmers.

Further, this initiative aims to minimize wastage from farmers' produce and provide them with invaluable knowledge on how to transform husks into a sustainable livelihood.

This workshop represents a significant step towards harnessing the full potential of agricultural resources, turning what was once considered waste into highly valuable livelihood. By empowering farmers with such skills, the SAAD Program not only bolsters their economic well-being but also the sustainability in agricultural practices.

Siquijor FAs earn more than Php 356K from DA-SAAD's chicken egg production project

by Jessica R. Alvero | Region 7



Eight farmers' associations (FAs) supported by the Department of Agriculture – Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) generated a total gross income of Php 356,179.08 from selling 49,981 eggs from December 2023 to February 2024.

Within a three-month period, three (3) FAs recorded the highest income from selling chicken eggs collected, starting in Maria, Siquijor, Olang Women's Association which gathered 11,830 eggs, earning Php 91,449.88; followed by the Orchid Rural Improvement Club who sold 15,206 eggs, making Php 101,245; and Purok Sudlon FA from San Juan who also collected 13,162 eggs, earning Php 99,775.

Meanwhile, the Can-asagan Rural Improvement Club sold 1,047 eggs for Php 7,092. The Ponong Farmers and Women's Association from Larena made Php 4,717 from 1,045 eggs, and the Bintangan El Paraiso FA earned Php 31,845.20 by selling 4,038 eggs.

In the municipality of Enrique Villanueva, the Parian Small Coconut FA reported Php 14,143 in sales from 2,532 eggs, and the Balolong Livelihood Association earned Php 5,912 by selling 1,121 eggs.

In November 2023, the Bintangan El Paraiso Association, Olang Women's Association, Orchid Rural Improvement Club, and Purok Sudlon FAs reported a combined gross income of Php 157,672, five months after they received the Chicken Egg Production Project in June 2023.

See previous article here:
<https://saad.da.gov.ph/2023/11/siquijor-farmers-earn-more-than-150k-gross-income-from-chicken-egg-production-project>

Meanwhile, the other four (4) FAs received the poultry project in December 2023. Each of the FAs received six (6) modules or 288 chickens worth Php 414,000 and other inputs which include chicken



feeds, knapsack sprayer, disinfectant solution, shovel, wheelbarrow, range net and garden hose. With 200 farmer-beneficiaries in total, each member rotates responsibilities daily, including feeding and providing clean water to the chickens, cleaning and collecting manure, and harvesting eggs.

By supplying fresh eggs to local consumers, the poultry projects have also created a new income stream for the farmers.

"Dako among pasalamat sa DA-SAAD sa among nadawat na RTL project kauban sa mga interventions na gihatag kanamo. Hinaot na magpadayon pa ang amo income sa itlog aron makatabang mi puhon sa among mga pamilya," said Jesusima Tamala, chairperson of Pari-an Small Coconut Farmers Organization.

[We are thankful to DA-SAAD for the RTL project and the interventions they provided us. We hope our egg income continues to grow to help our families in the future.]

Purok Sudlon FA shares 70% of its overall revenue evenly among its members, with the remaining 30% being saved as the association's fund. Bintangan El Paraiso Association divides 50% of their money to

members and allocates the other half for project expansion plans. The rest of the FAs keep all of their profits in the associations' savings.

Ellen Balambao, Olang Women's Association chairperson, also expressed her gratitude to the SAAD Program for the livelihood projects received. *"Dako kaayo among pasalamat nga napili mi hatagan og RTL projects kay dako kaayo ni nga tabang kanamo karon. Hinaot unta nga magpadayon pa ni nga income sa among grupo aron makatabang pud kanamo tanan."*

[We are thankful for being selected for the RTL projects because they are a big help to us now. We hope our group's income keeps growing so it can help all of us more.]

Siquijor FAs sell the chicken eggs at Php 200 per tray for peewee size, Php 210 for small, Php 230 for medium, Php 250 for large, Php 270 for extra large, and Php 280 for jumbo.

This year, SAAD Central Visayas plans to provide additional support, including egg trays, egg-hauling crates, and plastic drums. They also aim to help establish community-based enterprises (CBE) among the Phase 2 beneficiary groups.



SAAD Catanduanes FAs participated in the Presidential initiative *"Katuwang sa Diwa at Gawa para sa Masaganang Ani at Mataas na Kita (KADIWA) ng Pangulo."*



Catanduanes FAs earn 20K from Kadiwa Ng Pangulo sales

by Jovinel M. Gianan | Region 5

Five (5) FAs in Catanduanes who participated in the Presidential initiative “Katuwang sa Diwa at Gawa para sa Masaganang Ani at Mataas na Kita (KADIWA) ng Pangulo” or “KNP” accumulated a total of Php 20,251.00 from selling bananas, cucumbers, pole sitao, red and yellow watermelons, and fresh eggs last March 20-21, 2024.

Empowering the farming community by establishing a direct and efficient farm-to-consumer food supply chain, the activity showcased products from public and private sectors, agencies, and different organizations in the province, including five (5) Farmers’ Associations (FAs) of the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program from the municipalities of Bato, Baras, and Panganiban.

The participating FCAs were Panay Poultry Raisers Association, Samahang Magsasaka ng San Nicolas, Sibol Farmers Association, Bitaoagan Poultry Farmers Association, and Pursigidong Samahang Manukan ng Danao (PSMD), each exhibiting their locally-produced products.

The KNP in Catanduanes was conducted in partnership with the different local government units of Catanduanes, the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). Such activity has become a constant avenue for SAAD’s Phase 1 and Phase 2 beneficiaries in the Bicol Region to market their products, boosting their marketability and enhancing their economic status within the community.

Attesting to this is PSMD President Louie T. Ogalinola, saying, “Malaking tulong ang ganitong mga aktibidad ng gobyerno, hindi lang dahil sa abot-kayang presyo kundi dahil nakikilala ang aming mga lokal na produkto. Kami ay umaasa sa mga susunod pang mga aktibidad at inisyatibo ng SAAD program para mas matulungan pa kaming mga mahihirap na umasenso.”

[Government activities like this are beneficial to the people, not just because of the affordable prices, but also because it helps promote our local products. We look forward to other activities by the SAAD Program, as they play an important role in supporting those in need and empowering us to achieve greater success.]

In the succeeding months, KADIWA ng Pangulo stakeholders will organize a series of activities highlighting the variety of local products cultivated by the farmers in the province. Through this, SAAD FAs will have more opportunities to showcase their product and establish connections with potential buyers.



SAAD NPMO-LED
ACTIVITIES

April - June
2024

1 Spreading the Seeds of Success: SAAD NPMO's MAED Guidelines boost Regional Agricultural Sustainability

By: Eloisa A. Mariano and Joash David L. Ricanor

The Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program Phase 2 is paving the way for the establishment of community-based enterprises (CBEs) for its beneficiaries. Through the Marketing Assistance and Enterprise Development (MAED) Sub-Unit, the Program has launched a nationwide rollout of the MAED Guidelines, bringing crucial support to regions across the Philippines.

In a coordinated effort, the National Program Management Office (NPMO) deployed a team from the Operations, Planning, Budget, Monitoring and Evaluation (OPBME), alongside the IT and Database Development (ITDD) Unit across 15 regions, ensuring that the guidelines and activities reach every corner of the country.

The rollout commenced in 2023 in Central Visayas from October 17 to 20, followed by Region 10 on November 14 to 17. For this year, the cascading continued in Region 6 last January 31 to February 3, Region 9 on January 30 to February 2, MIMAROPA on February 5 to 9, Bicol Region on February 5 to 8, and in Davao and Central Luzon Region simultaneously last May 14 to 16.

During these MAED activities, NPMO staff meet with the personnel of the Regional and Provincial Program Management Support Offices (RPMO and PPMO). These meetings focus on sharing the parameters, tools, and activities essential for the MAED component in SAAD.

Discussions delve into the field application of the MAED tool, encompassing lectures, workshops, field interviews, independent surveys, and informal discussions with farmers' cooperatives and associations (FCAs). These sessions also involve validating market outlets and processing field data.

One of the pivotal aspects of these activities is the on-site market study. This involves engaging with a SAAD-assisted farmers' group to identify existing and potential markets, assess road network access, and explore possible product forms for trade.



SAAD-NPMO OPBME Unit Head Darwin Pamatmat emphasized the importance of these market studies, highlighting their role in addressing marketing gaps and planning for sustainable CBEs.

"The data can be a good source of information which can be shared to the Management. Through this, we can determine where the market outlets are, the volume of demand needed and how the FCAs can come up with plans to address the gap," said Pamatmat.

Following field activities, workshops are initiated for market data processing and report generation using the provided templates as guide. Hence, a market map is created which identifies outlets and channels of distribution within the location of FCAs.

Guided by specific parameters and related forms appended as tools, SAAD Program can now begin to identify the level of CBE establishment of the micro-enterprises and measure the FCAs' performances.

The cascading and pilot testing of the guidelines and tools are just one of the many initiatives of SAAD to standardize the whole MAED processes and make necessary development and adjustments, if so, in its related forms and on its policies to improve the overall program implementation.

By leveraging market insights and providing comprehensive support, SAAD aims to ensure the long-term success and impact of the program as it continues to help its beneficiaries create sustainable livelihoods through the establishment of CBEs.

The MAED rollout, a series of SAAD-NPMO initiated activities, took place across the provinces served by the program, beginning on October 17, 2023, and culminating on May 16, 2024.





2

SAAD National Information Officers' Conference: A Collaborative Beginning, Uniting Efforts for Better Communication

By: Jennifer A. Valcobero

The conduct of the National Information Officers' Conference, held from May 6-10, 2024, was a noteworthy achievement. It played a vital role in uniting officers to enhance information, education, and communication, with a particular focus on benefiting the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) beneficiaries of the Department of Agriculture.

This collaboration involved key offices such as the Agriculture Fisheries Information Division (AFID), the Regional Agricultural Fisheries Information Section (RAFIS), and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)-Information Fisheries Coordination Unit (IFCU).

The collaboration between AFID, RAFIS, BFAR-IFCU, and the SAAD focused on refining communication plans and exploring partnership

opportunities. Highlights included presentations of communication strategies, identification of partnership areas like joint campaigns and content sharing, and the development of a Terms of Reference (TOR) to formalize collaboration.

The goal was to enhance coordination and effectiveness in information dissemination within the agricultural and fisheries sectors.

A collaborative beginning

The conference which took place in Subic Zambales was attended by over 80 information and development officers to discuss how to improve their efforts in supporting SAAD beneficiaries. The theme, "*Magkatuwang sa pag-panday ng epektibo at makahulugang impormasyon at komunikasyon tungo sa paglaban sa kahirapan, alay sa ating magsasaka*

at mangingisda" guided all the activities and discussions.

SAAD National Director Ulysses J. Lustria, Jr emphasized the importance of working together to manage information efficiently, ensuring that it reaches and benefits SAAD beneficiaries effectively.

"We need to craft very useful and comprehensive guidelines and communication plans to help advocate the SAAD's vision of socio-economically empowered farmers and fisherfolk," said Dr. Lustria, Jr., referring to the finalization of Phase 2 Communication Guidelines.

Mr. Joash David Ricanor, Unit Head of the Public Relations and Development Communication national office furthered that, "Our goal is that we want to harmonize and synergize our SAAD communications," referring to the purpose of the activity. Meanwhile, DA-AFID Chief Cheryl C. Suarez also underscored the critical importance of communication planning to the participants.

"Communication planning is very important in project implementation especially for neophyte-communicators as this will guide them in the effective and efficient implementation of SAAD's activities and projects," she noted.

After the conclusion of the activity, the information officers shared their insights regarding the inaugural event.

"For me, it was a brilliant idea to converge information officers [IOs] from different regions and of different offices; as well as seasoned and neophyte IOs. The conference upheld everyone's voices, and those voices and perspectives were leveled and found its common ground to serve everyone's sensibilities which is a good thing because at the end of the day, the guidelines, the communication plans, etc. will be implemented by the IOs hence being part of the process of creating it will somehow give them or us full understanding about it," shared Sean Belen, IO of

DA-SAAD Caraga.

"Since SAAD is a government program focused on development, strengthening our communication efforts is crucial to effectively promote development to the people. This first-ever IO conference allowed us to network and share experiences with colleagues, where we learned about best practices and tools we can leverage for effective communication," expressed Justin Aquino, PRDC Unit Head in DA-SAAD SoccsKSarGen.

DA-SAAD MIMAROPA IO Melissa Lingco also shared, "I am thankful to SAAD NPMO and the PRDC Unit for organizing the first-ever SAAD IOs National Conference. Thank you for recognizing the contributions of the IOs in extending the mission and goals of the SAAD Program to a wider audience. This conference has not only strengthened our partnership but also further inspired us to fulfill our duties as SAAD Regional IOs."

Meanwhile, Ms. Cedio Bataga, IO from DA-SAAD Western Visayas is optimistic that the activity will become an annual event moving forward.

"I was not only able to gain insights into the various aspects of SAAD PRDC but listening to other regions' communication plans allowed me to learn things that are organic and unique to theirs, which can be replicated for the continuous improvement of our information campaigns. The insights I have gained far exceed any other conference I have attended to date and with that, I hope that we get to conduct and participate in it annually."

Overall, through rigorous dialogue and strategic foresight, the groundwork has been laid for innovative solutions and enhanced partnerships across various sectors. The IOs remain committed to leveraging collective expertise to empower communities, foster transparency, and drive sustainable development.

The first-ever National Information Officers' Conference on May 6-10, 2024 initiated by SAAD-NPMO PRDC, brought together 80 participants from 15 regional offices to foster integrative and complementary efforts among the Agriculture and Fisheries Information Division (AFID), Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section (RAFIS), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Information and Fisherfolk Coordination (IFCU) Unit and regional information officers. This collaboration aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of information, education, and communication, particularly at the SAAD beneficiary level.



3 Putting Focus on DevCom: SAAD Hosts Training for IOs, ACs

By: Christ John B. Gamarcha and Joash David L. Ricanor

Two years in its progression for its Phase 2, the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) is putting its focus once again on development communication, to carry out its goal of contributing to the poverty alleviation of identified marginalized communities in the country.

Bridging the Gap

“There is a long-standing need to capacitate our SAAD officers on concepts and practices of DevCom that will deepen their understanding on farmers’ perspective, create tailored information for them, and ultimately ensure the successful implementation of our interventions on the ground,” said NPMO Director Ulysses Lustria Jr.

In doing so, a goal was set by the Program to bridge the gap between policy implementation and grassroots realities.

Led by the Public Relations and Development Communication (PRDC) Unit of the SAAD National Program Management Office (NPMO), the Program recently concluded a series of successful Development Communication Training for more than 180 SAAD officers – which unfolded in three vibrant editions held in Laoag, Ilocos Norte; Albay; and Dumaguete City from May to June, this year.

To ensure the highest quality of training, SAAD partnered with Central Luzon State University (CLSU), a renowned institution in agricultural education and development communication. CLSU provided expert resource speakers who shared their knowledge and experience with the participants, offering valuable insights into the intricacies of development communication.

Three Editions, One Goal

The first cluster, held in Paoay, Ilocos Norte from May 27 to 31, catered to information officers and area coordinators from DA and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in regions Cordillera, 1, 2, 3, and 7. Dr. Chrystl Avegeil N. Vallejo and Ms. Zorille DC. Villaflores served as resource persons for this cluster.

The second cluster convened in Legazpi, Albay from June 3 to 7. Participants from DA and BFAR in regions CALABARZON,

MIMAROPA, 5, 10, and 11 attended the training led once again by Dr. Vallejo and Ms. Villaflores.

Dumaguete City, Negros Occidental hosted the third and final cluster from June 24 to 28. This session addressed the needs of information officers and area coordinators from DA and BFAR in regions 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, and CARAGA. Dr. Andrea May Malonzo and Mr. Jomar Garabiles facilitated the training in this edition.

The training program equipped participants with a step-by-step process for effective communication. This began by establishing a solid understanding of the theoretical foundations of DevCom. Participants explored key concepts, models, and approaches that guide successful communication practices in development contexts.

Emphasis was also placed on the importance of incorporating communities into the development process during the training – a clear reflection of the lessons tackled during SAAD’s training on Community Organizing towards Social Mobilization.

The training further focused on crafting compelling Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials specifically tailored for farmers and fisherfolk. During the culmination of sessions, participants crafted compelling IEC materials tailored for farmers and fisherfolk.

Participants actively participated in creating their own “baranganic” IEC materials using readily available resources. This fostered collaboration and showcased diverse perspectives in IEC development.

Every training in each cluster culminated in a presentation showcase, where participants proudly presented their handcrafted IEC materials. Resource persons and SAAD NPMO Deputy Director Pedro Dumaraos Jr. provided valuable feedback, ensuring participants left the program with the ability to develop impactful IEC materials that effectively support SAAD initiatives.

“I hope everybody appreciates this training as it is directly related to community organizing and organizational development where we are in as SAAD officers,” said Dr. Dumaraos.

Continuous capacitation

The success of the three editions of the DevCom Training underscores the importance of continued efforts in capacity building and knowledge sharing. As the participants return to their communities,

they carry with them the tools to inspire, educate, and mobilize others, ensuring that the seeds of progress sown during the training will bear fruit in the years to come.

“I see this training activity a very good opportunity to come together as SAAD officers, and work on how you can unify your creativity, share your ideas and best practices so that from all across the regions, you create one strong voice that will effectively and efficiently advocate to all farmers and stakeholders the SAAD Program,” shared APCO for Ilocos Norte Medardo B. Pablo.

The SAAD Program's commitment to further empowering agricultural advocates through development communication training is a testament to its dedication to sustainable agricultural development.

“As we move forward in Phase 2, we are committing for the continuous capacitation of our SAAD officers which in return will foster a more informed and engaged agricultural and fisheries community, poised to drive positive change,” concluded Dir. Lustria Jr.



From May 27 to 31, June 3 to 7, and June 24 to 28, a series of Development Communication (DevCom) trainings were conducted across three clusters, covering 15 regional offices. Area coordinators and information officers actively participated in these sessions aimed at enhancing their communication skills and strategies. The training focused on improving practices in information dissemination, community engagement, and advocacy to better support their communities and stakeholders.





4

“Alab sa Puso, Alay sa Bayan: Tuloy ang Laban sa Kahirapan” SAAD NPMO successfully completes nationwide ComOrg ‘Training of Trainers’

*By: Eloisa A. Mariano and
Joash David L. Ricanor*

"The goal was to ignite a fire within us – a fire to serve, to lead, and to make a difference. We are ready to take on the challenge and bring positive change to our communities."

These were the words of Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program Deputy Director Dr. Pedro S. Dumaraos Jr., as the Program reached a significant milestone with the successful conclusion of its Community Organizing towards Social Mobilization Training of Trainers (ToT).

Conducted across 15 regions, the ToT brought together development workers, regional implementers, and participants from the SAAD National Program Management Office (NPMO).

To fan the flame

Over 235 participants from the SAAD national and local levels were trained this year, which includes 105 area coordinators and 130 other SAAD officers. This training was conducted in

six (6) DA clusters from January to April 2024.

Through a series of interactive workshops and practical exercises, the training provided a valuable platform for participants to deepen their understanding of community organizing.

Spearheaded by Dr. Dumaraos Jr., together with resource speakers from the NPMO and SAAD CALABARZON, the sessions emphasized people-centered approaches, participatory strategies, and holistic perspectives which aimed to empower trainers to make a tangible impact in addressing poverty in the Philippines.

As the training concluded, the Deputy Director expressed his satisfaction as the SAAD implementers are now equipped with the knowledge and tools for community organizing, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing the needs of the poor farmers and their commitment to fighting poverty.

"With the conclusion of the Training of Trainers for Community Organizing towards Social Mobilization, the pathways have been concretized for SAAD Community Development Workers to understand fully what Social Preparations is all about in the

SAAD program," said Dumaraos.

"They have now the fire in their hearts to do what they are supposed to do in doing their respective roles under the SAAD program particularly on organizational development and organizational strengthening particularly in engaging with the poor farmers and FAs. As SAAD Officers we have that social responsibility to the beneficiaries," he added.

Dumaraos furthered that, "As I said many times to the trainees, 'Ang pag-unlad ay para sa lahat lalo na sa mga nasa baba. Kaya kung tutulong tayo sa kanila tulungan mo na hanggang dulo.' Maintaining that empathy to the poor character and putting these farmers "first" and always in whatever they do is always my reminder to the trainees. On my part as a resource person and initiator of this training course, I am so happy. As I retire from the service a few months from now, that sense of fulfillment is here in my heart. Mabuhay kayong lahat. Tuloy ang laban sa kahirapan!"

With the theme, "Alab sa puso, alay sa bayan: Tuloy ang Laban sa Kahirapan", the SAAD Community Organizing program has effectively instilled a sense of commitment and service among its participants.

This commitment and dedication of the trainers



and participants is instrumental in the success of the program, laying a strong foundation for sustainable community development. As a result, this training foresees an observable shift in the way community development workers of SAAD approach challenges and opportunities with their farmers association (FAs), with an increased emphasis on collaboration, inclusivity, and proactive problem-solving.

To empower and inspire

The success of the SAAD Community Organizing training serves as a testament to the power of capacitating individuals as the impact of this program extends far beyond the realm of skills training, transcending into a movement of community empowerment and sustainable development.

SAAD Director Ulysses J. Lustria Jr. congratulated the trainers and the graduates stating, “The series of trainings has just been completed. And the true measure of its success can only be seen after the beneficiaries have also been trained and are using the learnings.”

“However, I know that this objective will be achieved. The training has been professionally and passionately conducted by Dr. Dumaraos, the SAAD’s own social development expert, together with SAAD NPMO’s Social Preparation and Program Management (SPPM) Sub-unit head Abby de la Cruz and Jackie Rebusit, and resource persons from SAAD CALABARZON,” added the Program Director.

Furthermore, certificates of completion awarded to participant delegates from the Regions certify their readiness to apply their knowledge and emotions into practical action, embracing the commitments that lie ahead.

Following the successful conclusion at the DA clusters, the NPMO cascaded the training for the first cluster for the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) - SAAD. This session saw the participation of forty-three (43) area coordinators and regional implementers from the BFAR - National Project Management Support Office (NPMSO) and BFAR regional offices in Cordillera, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, Bicol, and Western Visayas. The event took place from June 17-21, 2024, at Hotel Dominique in Tagaytay City, Cavite.

The second cluster of BFAR-SAAD Training of Trainers (ToT) is scheduled for July 15-19, 2024, and will be attended by DA-BFAR SAAD Officers from Regions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and Caraga.

The success of ToT reinforces SAAD’s unwavering commitment to empowering communities and fostering inclusive development. Through collaborative efforts and a shared commitment to driving positive change, DSAAD continues its journey of

empowerment and collaboration.

“The SAAD’s vision is to help empower farmer and fisher groups, socio-economically. This training supports this vision by making them socially prepared to manage their enterprises,” concluded Lustria Jr.



Setting a Familial Culture: NPMO chief leads series of visits to SAAD beneficiaries

By: Joash David L. Ricanor

Suiting up to a greater calling can be daunting; to some, maybe too much to handle and manage. But that is not the case for the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program, specifically to National Director Ulysses J. Lustria Jr., who immediately knew the culture he wanted to set as the Program entered its second phase.

A culture of “family”. A culture relatively common in every working environment, but a much needed one in Philippine agriculture.

Recently, the NPMO chief embarked on a series of visits to SAAD regional beneficiaries in Romblon, Negros Oriental and Ilocos Norte, reinforcing the Program’s commitment at the grassroots level.

To listen and bear

On April 16, Director Lustria Jr., first visited three (3) farmers associations (FAs) in Alcantara and Ferrol, Romblon to monitor progress of corn and poultry projects covered by SAAD. These FAs are the San Isidro Livestock and Poultry Producers Association (SILLPA), the Suong Farmer’s Association (SFA), and the Tubigon Planters Association (TPA) who are engaged in projects such as chicken production, corn cultivation, and egg production.

In his dialogue with the farmers, the director expressed his interest in hearing their stories and experiences as SAAD beneficiaries, ensuring that their chosen

projects aligned with their needs, and assessing whether the program benefits them.

“Masaya ako na kasama sa SAAD ‘yong Romblon kasi mas maraming matutulungan. Kaya naman ako nag-iikot dito kasi gusto ko ring makita kung may nangyayari ba talaga sa SAAD. Marami namang nangyari noong Phase 1, itong Phase 2, sana tuloy-tuloy na may mangyari,” said Lustria Jr.

SFA chairperson, Marcos Miñano, expressed gratitude to the SAAD Program for its positive impact on their farming operations. “Yong unang – unang pagtatanim namin is traditional na pagtatanim, kaingin, tapos yong SAAD nagbigay sa amin ng mga makabagong makinarya, makabagong paraan ng pagtatanim ang itinuturo sa amin,” he stated.

The director wrapped up his Romblon visit at TPA, where members shared their shift from housewives to skilled contributors in communal farm development. He also emphasized the importance of committed individuals in driving project progress and acknowledged the essential support from the local government. Despite starting just last year, both farmers and the local government already see the positive impact of the program in Romblon.

On May 29, Director Lustria Jr., went north and visited the Riverside Greeners’ Association (RISGA) in Barangay Kalaw, Dumalneg, Ilocos Norte, together with Deputy Director Pedro S. Dumaraos Jr.

RISGA, comprising 38 farmers, is a beneficiary of SAAD’s

FY 2023 Cattle and Ginger Production Project worth Php 4.120 million, which include 32 cattles, 2,000 kilograms of ginger rhizomes, farm equipment, and machinery in June and October 2023.

Prior to receiving the interventions, separate training sessions on ginger and cattle production as well as capacity-building for RISGA members were provided to prepare them both for organizational and livelihood project management. Director Lustria and Deputy Director Dumaraos assessed the project's current standing and gauged RISGA's implementation efforts firsthand.

"We are here at RISGA to witness firsthand the progress of the Cattle and Ginger Production Project and listen to your SAAD story - how you started and how we can continue developing. This project is a prime example of SAAD's dedication to empower our marginalized farmers and foster agricultural growth among our covered communities," shared the Director.

RISGA President Ruby Lagoc also replied, highlighting the project's impact on the association's members. "We at RISGA are thankful for SAAD's assistance," she said. "The project has provided us with the resources and knowledge we need to improve our livelihood and contribute more to our community. We are committed to working hard and making the most of this opportunity."

And on June 25, Director Ulysses saw things up close at the cattle and sweet corn raisers in Barangays Basak and Janay-Janay, Negros Oriental. He met with local farmers to discuss and observe the progress of their agricultural projects. The cattle raisers showcased their improved breeding and animal health practices, while the sweet corn farmers highlighted

improvement in growing high-quality crops.

In a dialogue with the officers of the Barangay Basak Farmer's Association and the Janay-Janay Farmer's Association, Dir. Lustria Jr., asked about the difficulties they faced, specifically on project implementation, how the region's topography affects farming, and the problems with marketing their products. The farmers shared their experiences, mentioning limited access to resources, the impact of uneven terrain on agriculture, and difficulties in finding stable markets for their produce.

He furthered that, *"nandito ako hindi para kwentuhan kayo about SAAD, nandito ako para maikwento niyo sakín ang inyong istorya - kung paano kayo nagsimula as an association, paano kayo natulungan ni SAAD, at kung ano ang impact nito sa buhay niyo."*

To lead and inspire

While the visits have highlighted many success stories, they have also brought to light the challenges that remain. However, the SAAD chief's presence and willingness to listen have reassured the beneficiaries that their concerns are being heard and addressed.

As the SAAD Program continues its journey to Phase 2, the chief's commitment to fostering a familial culture will undoubtedly inspire and guide its path, ensuring that no one is left behind and that every voice is heard. Through these visits, the message is clear: together, as a family, we can achieve greatness.

(With contribution from: Ms. Melissa F. Lingco - SAAD MIMAROPA, Ms. Jennifer A. Valcobero & Mr. Christ John B. Gamarcha - NPMO PRDC Unit)

Meet our Team

Let's get to know our SAADvocacy members.

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about SAADvocacy

SAADvocacy is previously a monthly newsletter produced by the SAAD Program to provide an overview and information on the program's important activities and events toward realizing its goal of contributing to poverty reduction of farmers and fisherfolk groups in the 56 provinces (619 municipalities with 5th-6th income classification, and top third with highest poverty incidence rates) covered by SAAD.

This 2024, the Program is transitioning from a newsletter to a magazine format, all while retaining the same name but instead of monthly, changing it to quarterly. The motivation behind this potential shift is to enhance the overall reader experience, providing a more comprehensive and visually engaging content while maintaining the familiarity associated with SAADvocacy.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to edit and finalize all stories prior to publication.

For comments and suggestions, reach us at (02) 8929-7349 or via email address at saad@da.gov.ph.





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