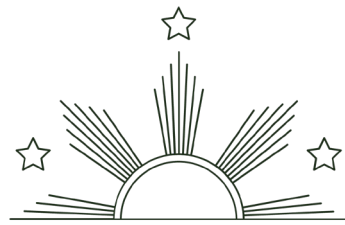




Volume 6 | Issue 3    Online ISSN: 2718-9791



# SAADvocracy

OFFICIAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE SPECIAL AREA FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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SAAD forwards community-driven development with SocPrep guidelines rollout



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# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



As we continue to navigate the evolving landscape of agricultural development, it is imperative that we remain committed to our core mission: empowering marginalized communities and fostering sustainable livelihoods. The Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program Phase 2 has consistently demonstrated its dedication to this cause within the third quarter this year.

In this issue of SAADvocacy, I invite you to delve deeper into some of the key highlights of our recent achievements.

The recent rollouts of the Social Preparation Guidelines (SocPrep) marks a significant milestone in our journey. The SocPrep Guidelines ensure that our interventions are tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of the communities we serve. By prioritizing social preparation, we are laying a solid foundation for sustainable projects that truly resonate with our beneficiaries.

Beyond the SocPrep Guidelines, SAAD has been actively pursuing partnerships to further strengthen our impact. Our collaboration with the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) has resulted in valuable support for fisherfolk and farmers across various regions. From the provision of fishing equipment to the establishment of agri-tourism sites, these partnerships have been instrumental in enhancing the livelihoods of our beneficiaries.

Additionally, SAAD has been committed to supporting farmers' associations (FAs) in their efforts to transform their farms into agri-tourism sites. This initiative has not only promoted sustainable agriculture but has also opened up new opportunities for rural communities to diversify their income sources and attract visitors.

Furthermore, SAAD has been instrumental in providing critical support to FAs. Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. led the turnover of livelihood interventions last July to five FAs in Romblon, demonstrating our commitment to empowering these communities.

I am also expressing gratitude to our regional teams for their enthusiastic participation and dedication. Their engagement has been crucial in fostering a deeper understanding of the SocPrep Guidelines and their practical application in the field.

As we go forward, let us continue to embrace the principles of community-driven development and strive to create a brighter future for our beneficiaries. Together, we can build a more resilient, sustainable and equitable agricultural sector.

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

## 240 SAAD-assisted farmers in Iloilo and Aklan learn GAP, set eyes on productive veggie harvest

To introduce farmers to modern vegetable production, sustainable techniques, and pest management strategies, the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) trained six (6) farmers' associations (FAs) from municipalities of Batad, San Rafael, Tangalan, and Buruanga in Aklan and Iloilo provinces.

From May 23 to June 21, 2024, the consecutive conduct of the six (6) batches of training sessions were specifically aimed at emphasizing the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

GAP, as defined by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), are a "collection of principles to apply for on-farm production and postproduction processes, resulting in safe and healthy food and non-food agricultural products, while taking into account economic, social and environmental sustainability."

As Resource Persons, Mr. Paul Andrew Villeta, Agriculturist I of the DA-High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP), and Ms. Rhea Garduce II, Agriculturist I of the DA-SAAD Program, introduced vegetable cultivation and pest management. They promoted adopting sustainable farming practices to increase productivity and provided training on postharvest handling skills to maintain quality. These efforts aim to improve the farmers' livelihood ventures.

Around 240 vegetable farmers participated in the training and received hands-on lectures on vegetable production where they were tasked to identify the practices they are already actively pursuing or are engaged in which they believe are effective farming methods. This is done to foster a collaborative learning environment while reinforcing content prior to the introduction of the GAP concept.

Emphasizing the importance of GAP in the training would increase the knowledge of farmers on the implications of food safety to achieve fresh produce. Here, the participants

by Cedic Bataga | Region 6



are reminded that prevention of contamination is favorable over treatments to eliminate contamination in their vegetables.

The training program was designed for local farmers which is aimed to improve their capacity for continuous management and sustainability to increase their production of vegetable produce in their communities. The vegetable production training program proved to be a valuable opportunity for local farmers to acquire essential skills and knowledge to improve their vegetable cultivation practices.

By promoting sustainability, efficient water management, and postharvest handling, the training eyes for productive vegetable harvest and the long-term growth of vegetable growers in the community. As ways forward, continued support and follow-up activities will be undertaken to ensure the successful adoption of the learned practices and to monitor the impact of the training on the participants' farming endeavors.



# DA Secretary Laurel leads turnover of livelihood interventions to 5 SAAD Phase 2 FAs in Romblon

by Melissa Lingco | MIMAROPA Region

During his visit in Romblon, Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., led the turnover of livelihood interventions to five (5) farmers’ associations (FAs) assisted by the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program last July 18, 2024.

The turnover activity was facilitated by the DA Regional Field Office MIMAROPA team, led by Regional Technical Director (RTD) for Operations Vener Dilig and RTD for Research and Regulations Dr. Celso Olido.

The Hinag-Oman Upland and Integrated Farmer’s Association, Hinag-Oman Corn, Cassava and Vegetable Growers’ Association from Ferrol, Bonlao Corn Growers Association, Calagonsao Corn Growers Association, and Suong Farmers Association from Alcantara each accepted 120 sacks of corn seeds valued at Php 719,400.

These associations are beneficiaries of the Corn Production Projects under SAAD Program Phase 2, cultivating an average of two (2) hectares each. Funded under SAAD FY 2024, the interventions will benefit 125 corn farmers.

In his message, Secretary Laurel Jr., highlighted his

commitment to understanding and supporting the needs of farmers and fishers.

"We are here to give thorough attention and provide all you need to improve your livelihood, especially in farming, fishing, and animal husbandry," said the DA chief.

He also encouraged the DA MIMAROPA team, stating, "Keep up the good work, and I'll be coming back here more often. I like going to the field to see what is really happening."

The purpose of his visit, along with Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rex Gatchalian and Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Benjamin Abalos, Jr., was also to lead the distribution of over Php 116 million government assistance.

Out of the over Php 116 million worth of interventions from various agencies, more than Php 10 million came from the DA, including machinery, agricultural inputs, fertilizer discount vouchers, ASF indemnification, and more.





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We are here to give thorough attention and provide all you need to improve your livelihood, especially in farming, fishing, and animal husbandry. - DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.





# Agusan Del Norte farmers benefit from Php 1.79M worth of abaca and vegetable projects



Twenty-five (25) members of the San Antonio Farmers Organization (SAFO) received Php 1.79 million worth of livelihood interventions under the FY 2024 Abaca and Vegetable Production Projects of the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) Caraga last June 28, 2024.

The distributed projects were intended to provide sustainable income opportunities for farmers, promote agricultural diversity, and enhance local economic stability.

Before receiving the intervention, farmers underwent training from SAAD Caraga on food production and livelihood, including training on vegetable production, pre- and post-harvest technology for abaca, marketing and enterprise development for abaca and vegetables, and social preparation training focused on values formation.

The turnover ceremony led by the SAAD Caraga team, was attended by Remedios T. Romualdez Municipal Mayor Richard P. Daquipil, Municipal Agriculturist Maria Nenita T. Daohog, and San Antonio Barangay Captain Helario S. Sajolan; and provincial agriculture representatives.

SAFO President Oliver C. Taculayan, expressed his heartfelt gratitude towards the Program. *“Daghang salamat sa DA-SAAD sa nadawat nga inputs, dako kaayo ni nga tabang sa mga mag-uuma sa pag expand sa abaca sa atong area. Labaw sa tanan ang kaalam nga gipadangat pinaagi sa mga trainings sama sa ensaktong pag atiman sa abaca, gulay ug pagpalambo sa organisasyon.”*

(Thank you so much DA-SAAD for the inputs that we received, this is a big help for us farmers to expand our abaca production in the area. Above all, the knowledge imparted to us through training on proper care of abaca, vegetable, and organizational development.)

Mayor Daquipil further encouraged the farmers to be diligent and put effort into managing the projects provided by the DA. These interventions are expected to have a significant impact on the lives of the farmers and the organization.

**Abaca project management**

In abaca project management, the associations targeted 12.5 hectares of production area - each member allocated 0.5 hectares. While awaiting the 2026 harvest, the stripping machine is already operational, offering services to abaca farmers at a service fee of 20% for members and 25% for non-members. This additional income source contributes to the financial growth of the FAs.

**Vegetable project management**

In addition to abaca farming, each FA member also engages in individual backyard vegetable gardening while awaiting the abaca harvest to supplement their livelihood income. The delivery of vegetable seeds is expected within July 2024.

SAFO plans to act as a consolidator and engage in buying and selling abaca. With support from the DA-SAAD Program, the association continues to pursue its goals towards the prosperity of the organization and its members.

## Through the old and the new: Tuwali farmers’ journey to sustainable agriculture



In Mompolia, Hingyon, Ifugao, where the mountains meet the sky, the rhythms of the land have shaped the lives of its people for generations. This community, rich in culture and tradition, is home to the Tuwali indigenous people that has long relied on the bounty of nature.

Now, as members of the Mompolia Small Scale Farmers’ Organization (MoSSFO) and as beneficiaries of the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), the farmers are taking on a new chapter in their lives — one that blends their ancestral knowledge with modern agricultural practices.

The Tuwali farmers have always been resilient. Their ancestors taught them the intricate balance between the environment and sustainable farming practices. However, despite their deep-rooted connection to the land, these farmers have faced numerous challenges — limited access to resources, market isolation, and the constant threat of environmental changes.

For years, they have worked tirelessly to sustain their families and preserve their heritage. Yet, the struggle to modernize and increase productivity in the face of these challenges has been an uphill battle. It was against these trials that the SAAD CAR extended its hand, offering not just aid but also hope for a better, more sustainable future.

With the livelihood projects under the SAAD Program now expected to be turned over in November this year, the seeds of change have already been planted through a series of workshops and training sessions since May 2023 until last quarter. These initiatives, facilitated by the SAAD CAR, have been instrumental in equipping the farmers with new skills and knowledge.

One of the key aspects of the Program is its emphasis on capacity building. The workshops have introduced the MoSSFO to modern farming techniques, post-harvest handling, and value-added processes that can help increase their income. The training is designed not just to impart technical skills, but also to build confidence and encourage innovation among the Tuwalis.

Moreover, the workshops have been a transformative experience for many of the participants. For some, it was the first time they had engaged with such comprehensive training. The sessions were a blend of theoretical learning and hands-on practice, allowing the MoSSFO to apply new techniques in real time.



Jevin O. Nanglihan, a dedicated member of the MoSSFO shared his experience: "We have always known our land and our crops, but the training has shown us how to do things better, how to make our work more efficient."

This sentiment resonates across the community. The MoSSFO have begun to see the potential of combining their traditional practices with modern techniques. For example, the introduction of organic fertilizers and pest control methods has sparked discussions about how these can be integrated with indigenous farming methods.

The road ahead is still long, but the Tuwalis of MoSSFO are positive that the true impact of the SAAD Program will be felt once the livelihood projects are fully implemented. The workshops and training sessions have not only provided practical skills but have instilled a sense of optimism and empowerment among the farmers.

In a community where farming is not just an occupation but a way of life, the SAAD Program is more than just an agricultural initiative — it is a catalyst for preserving and enhancing a way of life. As the MoSSFO continue to cultivate their lands, they do so with renewed vigor, armed with knowledge that bridges the old with the new.

The journey is far from over, but with each step, the MoSSFO are moving closer to a sustainable agriculture where old and new practices can coexist, and a future where their heritage and livelihoods are not only preserved but also enriched.



## Swine farming: a Patnanungan youth's lifeline

by Nicole Zarsuelo | CALABARZON Region

Sandra Teoxon, a 23-year-old from Barangay Busdak, Patnanungan, Quezon, is a testament to the resilience of young rural women. Her journey as a swine farmer, driven by a desire to support her family and contribute to her community, is a tale of perseverance and determination.

Raised in a humble household in the verdant landscapes of Quezon, Sandra grew up immersed in the slow pace of rural life. Her family's backyard swine farm served as a cornerstone of their livelihood, providing a source of sustenance and income. This early exposure to agriculture instilled in her a deep appreciation for the land and a strong work ethic.

After completing Senior High School with a course in cookery, Sandra faced a pivotal decision — to pursue her culinary aspirations in the bustling metropolis or remain in her rural hometown to support her family. While the allure of a vibrant culinary career tugged at her heart, the weight of familial responsibility and the deep-rooted connection to her land ultimately prevailed.

Despite her culinary dreams, Sandra chose to remain in Barangay Busdak and continue her family's tradition of swine farming. With minimal resources but a wealth of determination, she joined the Barangay Busdak Hog Growers' Association (BUHGA), a collective of like-minded farmers united by their shared passion for agriculture.

Sandra's days are a symphony of care and cultivation. She rises with the dawn, tending to her pigs with a gentle touch and a keen eye for their well-being. Her days are filled with the physical labor of feeding, cleaning, and ensuring the comfort of her animals. The tasks may be demanding, but the rewards are immeasurable.

The path of a rural farmer is filled with challenges. Fluctuating market prices, limited access to resources, and the ever-present threat of natural disasters can cast a shadow over the agricultural way of life. Yet, Teoxon's unwavering commitment to her family and her community drives her forward.

Despite the hardships, Sandra, who currently has 1 sow and 3 fatteners with share capital from her parents, remains optimistic about the future.

With a vision of expanding her swine farm and gaining further knowledge in swine production and management, she actively participates in development initiatives supported by the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program Phase 2.

Sandra and her fellow BUHGA members underwent a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) conducted by SAAD CALABARZON last April 17, 2024. Through the PRA, the group was able to assess the current state of swine production in their area, identify the challenges they face, and develop a shared vision for their future.

Finally, the group underwent profiling, which involved collecting information about each member's background, skills, and aspirations. This information was used to develop a personalized development plan for each member, tailored to their specific needs and goals.

For FY 2025, SAAD CALABARZON targets to provide BUHGA farmers with swine production projects that may include hogs for fattening or meat production, feeds, drugs, biologics, farm tools as well as specialized training for pig rearing.

As Sandra herself says, "Tuloy lang sa buhay kahit mahirap, kailangan lang maging matiyaga." [Keep going in life, even if it's difficult, you just need to be patient.] These words encapsulate her philosophy and serve as a reminder to others that perseverance is key to success.



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# SAAD execs push for more partnerships as FAs aim for agri-tourism

by Jo Ann Sablad | Region 10

Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program National Director Ulysses J. Lustria Jr. led efforts to encourage more partnerships, as farmers' associations (FAs) aimed to transform their farms into agri-tourism sites in Camiguin.

According to the Director, some farmers' associations (FAs) showed interest in becoming learning or agri-tourism sites. Two of these associations are the Tangaro Young Farmers' Association (TYFA) in Catarman and the Butay Cut Flowers Association (BCFA) in Guinsiliban. Both towns are part of SAAD Phase 2 in the province.

*"Interesado silang maging learning site. Kailangang mabigyan ng tulong ng ATI. Sana ganyan na makita sa next assessment, may mga learning sites na [ang mga FAs]. At mas marami pang partnerships with the LGUs and other private groups,"* said Director Lustria.

(They are interested in becoming learning sites. They only need the help of ATI. I hope we can see farmers' associations that become learning sites during the next assessment, as well as more partnerships with the LGUs and other private groups.)

Evelyn Macabaya, secretary of the TYFA, mentioned that their association is working on converting their farm into an agri-tourism site. Currently, the TYFA has earned approximately Php 200,000 from their Ready-to-Lay chicken production, vegetable production, and value-added projects like peanut and sweet corn.

*"Naa mi paglantaw kun pananlitan mabiyaan na mi sa SAAD, naa mi ikapalit sa bahog, naa mi ika-sustain sa among manok, naa mi ika-sustain sa amoang vegetable garden, peanut, stingless bee, garden ug sa amoang farm. Himuon namo ni og eco-tourism,"* Ms. Macabaya said.

(We have this vision that if SAAD leaves us, we have funds to buy feeds, and funds to sustain our chicken, vegetable, peanut ventures, as well as our stingless bees, garden and farms. We will turn this into an eco-tourism site.)

On the other hand, SAAD Program Deputy Director Pedro S. Dumaraos Jr. encouraged the women farmers of BCFA to seek help, especially from the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), to turn their farm into a learning site.

This came after the deputy director visited the training center that the BCFA built to improve their association. The center serves as a place for their training and meetings and can also be rented out for seminars.

During the SAAD executives' visit to Camiguin, they mentioned the ATI as an extension and training branch of the Department of Agriculture (DA). The said agency could help successful farmers who want to share their technology by turning their farms into learning sites. ATI could also partner with interested farmers' associations to provide training and practical instruction, adding to classroom learning.







## Grazing new pastures: 200 B'laan, Mandaya, Manobo, Tagakaolo farmers in Davao Region aid in chevon production

by James Brian Flaga | Region 11

Eight farmers associations (FAs) of indigenous peoples from Davao Oriental and Occidental help boost the region's chevon production rates through the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development upgraded goat production project consisting of upgraded goats and veterinary drugs.

The project benefited a total of 200 farmers of B'laan, Mandaya, Manobo, and Tagakaolo descent.

Chevon, or goat meat, is a staple in many Filipino households and has seen rising demand both locally and internationally. However, production rates in the region have not always met this demand.

The introduction of upgraded goat breeds through the SAAD Program is expected to significantly improve productivity, quality, and overall output. Upgraded goats are offspring from pairing native and any meat-type breeds like Anglo-Nubian and Boer. These offsprings pose better commercial yields liveweight-wise when sold, and possess stronger climate survival rates in far flung communities.

*"Salamat sa SAAD kay kami nahatagan ug dugang panginabuhian. Unta mahimo ning sinugdanan nga mas mapalambo pa amoang asosasyon,"* said Mercedita Aguelo, chairperson for Lingkasa Farmers Association.

[We are thankful to SAAD for they've given us an additional source of income. May this be the start of the success of our organization.]

In Davao Occidental, two FAs namely Lingkasa Farmers Association and Dalupan Renewable Energy Community Development Association (DARECDA) received 44 and 43 goats, respectively.

Meanwhile in Davao Oriental, each of the six FAs received 43 goats: Ugnayan Ng Mga Magsakakang Lumad Ng Trese, Matabang-Pagsayawan-Liloan FA (MAPALIFA), Limot Lumad FA, Sergio Osmeña Anti-Communist Brigade Agrivet Association (SOACBAFA), Aliwagwag IP Farmers and Aquaculture Development Association, and Bongcuan Community Integrated FA.

For the B'laan, Mandaya, Manobo, and Tagakaolo farmers, this project is more than just an economic opportunity — it is a means to preserve and enhance their traditional practices while integrating modern agricultural techniques. Their involvement is a testament to their resilience and adaptability.



## Masbate vegetable grower earns Php 600k revenue through SAAD HVC Project

by Raynette B. De Jesus | Region 5

Masbate vegetable grower and member of Samahang Pangkaunlaran ng Tagpu at Nanpisan (SAPANGTANAN) recorded a revenue of Php 600,000.00 from selling marcotted calamansi from the Department of Agriculture – Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA- SAAD) Program Phase 1 Vegetable Production Package.

Jean C. Barberona from Brgy. Tagpu, Mandaon is among the fifty (50) members of SAPANGTANAN, which was established and registered under the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in 2019. Jean actively participates in the association which currently holds a net worth of Php 134,037.00.

SAPANGTANAN, a SAAD Phase 1 beneficiary, was a recipient of the program's vegetable production package from 2020-2022 which included various agricultural interventions like assorted vegetable seeds and fruit seedlings, fertilizers, brush cutters, drums, garden tools, plastic trays, weighing scales, crates, various stainless kitchenware, impulse sealer, root crop tubers, and ginger seed pieces.

Aside from selling fresh vegetables within their community, their group also initiated a rice loan for its members. To make use of the association fund, they buy the milled rice, personally produced by some of the members, and store it in their association shed. The association established a low interest rate (P100.00 per sack) for availing members, while repayment can be made in 3 months.

### Jean's marcot calamansi business

Before Jean's involvement with SAPANGTANAN and the SAAD Program, she started her marcotting business in 2013, which she described as "a rewarding experience". According to her, she first developed her skills in marcotting or air-layering in 2012 through the help of her partner.

In 2021, Jean found an opportunity to support her marcotting through the SAAD's Vegetable Production Project, using some of the seedlings the group had received. With the group's approval, she utilized a small portion of calamansi to sustain her enterprise.

With a selling price of Php 140.00 per piece, she was able to sell 4,200 pieces of marcotted calamansi products amounting to Php 608,000.00 from January 2023 to June 2024. Part of the accumulated income and her savings from previous years were used to buy 0.5 hectares (ha) of land and three (3) carabaos.

On top of her financial success brought by her small business, Jean also works as an on-call farm laborer and occasionally sells value-added products like vegetable lumpia, veggie burgers, and vegetable-mixed fish balls within the community.

Jean remains an active member of SAPANGTANAN contributing well to the group's goals and activities. "Amin pong ipagpapatuloy ang pagtatanim at pahahalagahan ang binigay ng SAAD para lalong umunlad ang kabuhayan ng bawat pamilya dito sa aming lugar", said Barberona.

(We will continue to sustain the project granted to us and work towards prosperity and upliftment of the people in our barangay.)

As Jean plans to buy more land for the expansion of her vegetable production, she continues to motivate and encourage all the association's members to continue with vegetable production to sustain the needs of the family and the community.





## The Bitter Truth: A Farmer's Journey with Ampalaya

by Immaculate Grace Negre | Region 7

In the green fields of Brgy. Bahaybahay, Sikatuna, Bohol, one crop stood out – bitter gourd. This is the story of Danilo C. Vargas, a 51-year-old farmer who made bitter gourd a symbol of hope and hard work.

Danilo has a ¼ hectare farm, where he grew bitter gourd, also known as *Momordica charantia*. This vegetable was tough to grow. It needed good soil, just the right amount of water, and enough sunlight.

Danilo started his day early, walking through his bitter gourd plants to check for any problems. It was a careful job that took a lot of patience. For Danilo, growing bitter gourd was not just about making money; it helped pay for his children's education and supported his family.

His farm didn't just help his wife and five kids; it also supported the local community. Danilo sold his bitter gourd in nearby towns like Corella, Loboc, and Loay, where it was valued for its taste and health benefits. He usually grew around 2,000 kilos of bitter gourd each year, making about Php 160,000.

But growing bitter gourd plants came with challenges. Prices could change, and costs for things like

fertilizers and pesticides kept going up. That's where the Department of Agriculture – Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) helped. Danilo reflected on how hard it was before joining SAAD – from finding land to rent, dealing with unreliable water, and paying for expensive farm supplies.

"Before I joined SAAD, I could only grow a little because I had to buy everything myself. I did all the work because I couldn't afford to pay for extra help," Danilo said.

Even with these challenges, Danilo loved his work. He was grateful for the support from the SAAD program, which helped him buy what he needed and hire workers. To Danilo, the bitter gourd was more than just a crop; it was something he hoped to pass on to his children.

Danilo also learned new ways to improve his farm. He was part of the Cambacan Integrated Farmers Association, where he shared and learned from other farmers to solve problems together.

As the day ended, Danilo looked over his bitter gourd plants with pride. His farm showed the strength and dedication of someone who deeply cared about his work and their land. Danilo's story reminded everyone that behind every crop was hard work and passion. The next time you saw a bitter gourd, you could think of the farmer who worked so hard to grow it, bringing hope and dreams to life.



## Hope sprouts for Alabat farmer through SAAD's livelihood project

by Pamela Faith Garcia | CALABARZON Region

In the agricultural communities of Alabat, Quezon Province, a wave of optimism is rippling through as the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program rolls out livelihood projects based on the target beneficiaries' assessed needs to enhance their agricultural productivity and livelihood. One such beneficiary is Keyward L. Gedrano, a dedicated member of the Villa Esperanza Farmers Association (VEFA), who embodies the SAAD Program's transformative potential.

A multi-generational farmer steeped in tradition, Gedrano's journey began by inheriting a small plot of land from his parents. He remembers the days spent helping his family cultivate traditional vegetables, a practice that instilled in him a deep respect for the land and a commitment to his family's legacy.

As Gedrano matured, he witnessed the agricultural landscape of Alabat evolve. Recognizing the need to adapt, he honed his skills in identifying profitable crops, initially focusing on high-value options like red hot chili peppers. However, his forward-thinking nature extended beyond personal gain. He understood the importance of community and saw the potential for collaboration. This realization led him to join the Villa Esperanza Farmers' Association (VEFA) not long after its inception.

VEFA, established on September 2, 2024, emerged from a shared desire among local farmers to support and empower each other. With a focus on knowledge sharing, collective bargaining, and resource acquisition, the association provided a platform for farmers like Gedrano to learn from each other's experiences and navigate the ever-changing agricultural landscape. His experience and market knowledge made him a valuable asset to the group, and he readily shared his insights and expertise with fellow members, particularly those new to farming.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge for Gedrano and VEFA. Disrupted market access led to financial losses, threatening the livelihoods of many members. However, the association's collaborative spirit proved invaluable. Together, they approached local authorities, advocating for solutions that would benefit the entire community. This collective action, coupled with the municipality's intervention of purchasing their sitaw for food packages, instilled in Gedrano a renewed sense of hope and a deep appreciation for the power of community.

Gedrano recently received training from SAAD CALABARZON on May 28, 2024. This session, delivered by Gerald E. Cortez from Alabat Island National High School, provided insightful guidance on cultivating eggplant, sitaw, upo (bottle gourd), okra, and squash.

The training is a key component of a comprehensive livelihood intervention on Vegetable and Lakatan Production Projects designed for VEFA. This initiative, based on the results of a Participatory Rural Appraisal conducted last year, is funded by a Php 1,207,925 allocation under SAAD Program's Food and Livelihood Production Component in Brgy. Villa Esperanza.

Mr. Gedrano expressed his gratitude for the training, noting that the additional information will greatly benefit his farming activities. Alongside training, SAAD will also distribute informational materials to further support local farmers.

"Bukod sa panonood sa youtube, 'yung pagkakaroon ng ganitong training ay nakakatulong para madagdagan pa ang aming kaalaman sa pagtatanim. Mas nagiging klaro kung paano naming mapapaganda ang aming tanim," Mr. Gedrano shared.

(Besides watching youtube, having this kind of training helps to increase our knowledge on [vegetable] planting. It becomes clearer how we can improve our crop production.) As Mr. Gedrano prepares for the upcoming planting season, the combined efforts of the SAAD program and local government initiatives remain strong in assisting beneficiaries with their farming endeavors.

This collaboration aims to ensure sustained agricultural productivity and improved livelihoods for the farming community in Alabat.





# Eggs to riches: Dabawenyo IP group starts general merchandise store from SAAD’s chicken project income

by James Brian Flaga | Region 11

Pangaleon Farmers Association, a Tagakaolo Indigenous People (IP)-led centric farmers group in Malita, funneled their income from the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program’s layer chicken project to set up a general merchandise store in their community.

Situated in the highlands of Sitio Danao in Barangay Pangaleon, more than 300 meters above sea level, the Pangaleon FA’s general merchandise store features basic living supplies and agricultural supplies catered to the inhabitants, including but not limited to sugar, instant noodles, eggs, herbicides, and pesticides.

The group’s new enterprise sprung out of the income from DA-SAAD’s layer chicken production project delivered last year in September. As of writing, the FA reported more than Php 217,000 in gross income from the livelihood project.

“Nakatigom jud mi sa itlog. Tungod sa kamaayo sa amoang mga miembro, ang among mga expenses sa pagpatukod ug tindahan, wala mi nagkuha sa manukan. Nagplano mi, nagmeeting kabahin aning plano namo sa building, nagshare mi ug Php500,” said Pangaleon Farmers Association chairperson Jerelyn Tumondail. “Nakadesisyon mi nga ang Php100k, among i-withdraw mao amoang i-compra sa mga produkto namo. Among mga gipamalit asukal, noodles, pangsagbot.”

(We have really earned on the eggs. Due to our member’s kindness, we didn’t fund the building of the store from the egg’s income. We planned, met, talked regarding the plans on the building, and decided to chip in Php500 each to cover the expenses. We’ve decided to withdraw the Php100,000 to use

as capital for the products we’ll display. We’ve bought supplies like sugar, noodles, even herbicides.)

“Pagtrabaho ani, wala pud mi nagpa-sweldo, nagbayanihan mi. Kami mga babae ang namanday ani,” added Tumondail.

(For labor, we didn’t pay for it since we’ve done bayanihan. We, the women, built this.)

This year, SAAD Davao Region augmented the existing layer chicken project of the FA through supplementation of additional 144 birds, feeds, and veterinary drugs. The program will support the FA with agri-interventions up until next year then assess the project’s impact for continuation through 2028.

Pangaleon FA has received both animal and crop-based production projects from the SAAD program since 2023 with layer chicken and corn projects. The same production projects are given to the FA this year.

According to the FA, the birds started laying eggs in October 2023. Since then, the FA has supplied their community and neighboring ones with farm fresh eggs.

“Daghan mi ug buyer, ang uban sila na ang musulong diri. Mga taga-lain barangay diri na pud manguha sa amoa ug itlog. Usahay kulangan na mi sa amoang harvest,” Tumondail related. “Among baligya depende sa size, ang pinakadako jumbo.”

(We have lots of buyers, some will even brave the roads here to get the eggs. Those in the neighboring barangays go here as well. Most of the time, our eggs won’t be enough. We have different sizes, the biggest being the jumbo sizing.)

Asked about their implementation processes, Tumondail highlighted the importance of having clear and concise vision, group thinking, and moving as one unit.

“Giplano jud namo. Dili namo gusto nga naay pondo, unya wala mi makita. Unta makita diri, unya mahimo mi nga sumbanan,” she said.

(We really planned for it. We didn’t want the funds to sleep on the bank. We must see something tangible from the money we’ve earned. We hope it is seen here in our community, and we will be set as an example.)

While at a high with their tangible investments, the association likewise acknowledges the reality that they need to prepare for the eventual bird feed expense once SAAD’s feed supply support ends. The project’s sustainability heavily depends on the association’s capability to support the feed requirements for the birds against the income from their egg production.

“Ayuhon namo ni ug dala. Sa pagkakaron, nanagana nami para sa kaonon sa mga manok, kay kung mahurot na ang supply gikan sa SAAD, asa na man mi manguha pangkaon kung wala mi ikapalit,” said Tumodail. “Ang nakaayo, naa na pud mi dugang income ani karon. Makadungag sa amoang banko.”

(We will take the extra care to manage it. Right now, we are preparing for feeds since when the supply from SAAD depletes, we will be the ones to buy the feeds ourselves. Good thing is that we have the additional income now to add to our funds at the bank.)

SAAD’s layer chicken project benefits 17 FAs this year, including the original 14 FAs benefited by the program in 2023.

# Sorsogon farmers generate 47k at Bulusan Eco-Agrifair 2024

by Nonie Lyn M. Nuñez | Region 5

Promoting agricultural sustainability in the form of local commerce and marketing efforts, two (2) farmers’ associations (FAs) of the Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program Phase 2 in Sorsogon participated in the the Eco-AgriFair 2024, as part of the founding anniversary celebration of the municipality of Bulusan last July 19 to 25, 2024 at the Bulusan Municipal Auditorium Compound.

During the week-long event, the two Sorsogon FAs, Tinampo Farmers’ Association (TFA) and San Roque Natural Farming Association (SRNFA) earned a total gross income of Php 47,313.00, to which Php 16,866.70 of the sales belongs to TFA while Php 30,446.50 comes from SRNFA.

TFA and SRNFA showcased various products such as bananas, avocado, cassava, sili, eggplant, squash, cucumber, upo, papaya, pineapple, tomato, kamote, kamote tops, pakó, taro corms, pechay, string beans, okra, bitter gourd tops and bitter gourd.

They also sold value-added products and handicrafts such as atsara, tablea, handwoven mats, caps, and baskets, vermicast, binutong and squash-pili molido; and additional products like coconut, honey, pili, avocado, santol, langka, onion, Italian oregano and basil plants.

The Eco-Agrifair featured various local products from associations and cooperatives, including SAAD-assisted FAs, spearheaded by the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office and the Municipal Agriculture Office of the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Bulusan.

Primarily, this event supported local produce, empowering SAAD FAs to sell their own products grown through the High Value Crops (HVC) and Organic Agriculture (OA) interventions received from the SAAD program in 2023 up to the present.

In addition, the two FAs along with other participating groups set up booths with eco-friendly designs from recyclable materials avoiding plastic bags or non-biodegradable decorations. This fostered creativity and sustainability, showcasing innovative ways to reduce plastic waste while promoting their own products. San Roque Natural Farming Association was awarded the Eco-Agrifair 2024 Best Booth award and won a Php 5,000.00 cash prize, which they plan to include in their group’s revolving fund.

“Sobrang nagpapasalamat kami sa SAAD sa pagbigay sa amin ng oportunidad, maging na rin ang LGU Bulusan na nakasali kami sa Eco-AgriFair,” said Theresita Jao, a member of Tinampo Farmers Association.

(We are very grateful to SAAD and the LGU Bulusan for giving us the opportunity to participate in the Eco-AgriFair.)





*"Nagpapasalamat kami sa interbensyon, sa mga trainings at nagkaroon kami ng dagdag kaalaman. Salamat po SAAD, hindi lang sa pagbibigay sa amin ng mga kagamitan, at kundi mas lalong napapalakas ang bonding naming magkakaibigan at kasamahan sa araw-araw naming pagtatrabaho", she added.*

(Through your interventions and training, we have gained valuable knowledge that has helped us. Thank you, SAAD, not only for promoting sustainability but also for fostering a strong bond among our members.)

The event increased SAAD FAs' confidence in showcasing their products to a wider market, as it provided them with the opportunity to earn substantial income. With plans to collaborate with the municipality for a continuous Friday market for farmers, the FAs are eager to participate in future trade fairs, propelling them towards greater agricultural prosperity.



## Biliran youth finds purpose, fulfillment in farming

by Jessica R. Alvero | Region 8

*"If you love what you are doing, you will not get tired."*



In the town of Cabucgayan, where agriculture is the primary source of livelihood, lives a young farmer whose hands tell the story of a life dedicated to the land. Filicho A. Lipaopao, 26, is a native of Biliran. For him, farming is more than a job; it is a calling—one that he answers with unwavering love.

The 26-year-old native of Biliran views farming as more than a job; it is a calling answered with unwavering love. He follows in his parents' footsteps, guided by a deep-rooted passion for his work.

"If you love what you are doing, you will not get tired," he says with a smile, his eyes reflecting happiness and satisfaction.

Since the age of 14, Filicho has tended his farm with care and patience. Inspired by his parents, he initially planted cabbages, earning Php 16,000. This early success led him to prioritize farming over schooling.

Despite this decision, Lipaopao has no regrets. He earns more than many young professionals. However, farming is not without its challenges. He has endured droughts, pest infestations, and fluctuating market prices. Yet, his love for the land keeps him grounded.

"There was a time when pests destroyed most of my ginger plants," he admits, "but I persevered because this is where I belong."

Lipaopao's passion extends beyond his own farm. As a member of the Cabucgayan Farmers Association, a beneficiary of the Department of Agriculture's Special



Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program, he also mentors fellow farmers. He emphasizes the importance of a positive mindset in overcoming the demands of farming. Currently cultivating corn, onions, cassava, and squash on a 250-square-meter plot, Lipaopao anticipates a bountiful harvest in September. For him, farming is a rewarding passion that provides endless energy.



## Subanen women cultivate progress in Zamboanga del Sur



by Ellaine Quiamco | Region 9

For generations, the women of Lakewood, Zamboanga del Sur belonging to the tribal group of Subanen had toiled the land, and their lives intertwined with the rhythms of nature. Their name is derived from the words "suba" (river) and "non" (people), signifying their historical connection to riverine areas.

Known for their deep reverence for nature, the Subanen have a rich cultural heritage centered on agriculture and animistic beliefs. Their traditional practices, including rituals and prayers before planting, reflect their harmonious relationship with the land.

Recognizing the need for collective action and support, these women formed the Rural Improvement Club (RIC) with 26 members to address their shared challenges and aspirations. Through unity, they strengthened their position within the community to improve their livelihoods.

Despite their significant contributions to the region's cultural fabric, Subanen's path to progress was fraught with challenges, including discrimination and limited access to resources that often relegated them to the margins.

*"Sa una, kung moduol mi sa gobyerno aron mangayo ug tabang, dili gyud mi matagaan ug pagtagad. Ang uban nga mga tawo sa komunidad lain ang pagtan-aw sa amua kung moanhi mi sa poblacion gikan sa bukid, kay ingnon man nga hugawan ug ignorante. Mao nga ang mga ubang programa sa gobyerno dili gyud makaabot sa amua,"* said Syria Humis, Public Information Officer of RIC.

(Before, whenever we approached the government for help, we were not given any attention. People in the community would look down on us when we came down to the barangay proper from the mountains, saying we were dirty and ignorant. As a result, government programs rarely reach us.)

Building upon their resilience, the Subanen RIC continued to seek opportunities for growth and development. A significant step forward came February this year, when the group was selected as a beneficiary of the Department of Agriculture's Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program Phase 2.

For this year, the SAAD Program Zamboanga Peninsula provided the RIC with an integrated corn and vegetable production project. While adopting new farming techniques presented a challenge, the Program's comprehensive approach facilitated the transition.

And as to every new learning, transition was not always easy. For many of these women, adopting new farming techniques meant setting aside some of their traditional practices.

But they eagerly embraced these new technologies and methods, understanding that it was a way to improve their yields and secure a better future for their families. Through social preparation and food production activities, the women improved their farming practices, resulting in significantly increased crop yields.

Beyond the farm, SAAD empowered the Subanen women, boosting their confidence and fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship. Some have ventured into small-scale businesses, selling their produce and generating additional income for their families.

With renewed hope and a strengthened spirit, the Subanen women of Lakewood look forward to a future where their community thrives, their traditions are honored, and their dreams continue to blossom.

## Five SAAD FAs in Northern Samar earn Php12K in sales at agri fair

by Lester Mark Lora | Region 8

Five (5) farmers' associations (FAs) assisted by the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program collectively generated Php 12,780 in sales at the farmers' marketplace during the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Caravan in Catarman, Northern Samar on August 2-3, 2024.

The Victoria Vegetable Producers' Association led the way with impressive sales, earning Php 3,540 from the sale of 44 kilograms of ampalaya. The Sabang 2 Rural Improvement Club (RIC) followed closely behind, generating Php 2,800 from 30 dozen eggs. The Washington Farmers' Association also contributed significantly, reporting Php 2,300 in sales from a variety of vegetables.

Samahan ng OFW Para sa Agrikultura ng Allen (SOPAA) and the Lipata Farmers and Fisherfolks Association further boosted the overall sales figures. SOPAA earned Php 2,400 from 12 trays of eggs, while Lipata generated Php 1,740 from 8 trays of eggs.

Under its Phase 2 implementation, SAAD Program provided comprehensive support to these farmers' associations through provision of farm inputs, capacity-building, and marketing assistance, which significantly enhanced their operational efficiency and market access.

SAAD Eastern Visayas Marketing and Enterprise Development Sub-unit Lead Bethzaida Genesis Girang said the purpose of allowing the FAs to participate in such activities is to help them promote their produce and become known to other consumers.

"This also helps them develop markets and linkages through interactions with other FAs and entrepreneurs," said Girang. Washington Farmers' Association business manager Imelda Suarez, for her part, said: *"Maupay ini nga naapi kami sine nga pagtirok. Dako ini nga bulig saam kay diri na namu kailangan maghanap sin mamaralit kay natirok na sila dinhi ngan nagpapakilala kami sa mga tawo."*

[It's great that we could join this event. It's a big help to us because we don't have to look for buyers—they're already gathered here, and we are also being introduced to everyone.]

Planning ahead, the farmers' associations are enthusiastic about participating in more caravans and trade fairs to reach broader markets. They are also preparing to expand their individual production efforts, driven by the success and exposure gained from the event. This continued engagement is expected to further boost their growth and sustainability in the agricultural sector.



*"Maupay ini nga naapi kami sine nga pagtirok. Dako ini nga bulig saam kay diri na namu kailangan maghanap sin mamaralit kay natirok na sila dinhi ngan nagpapakilala kami sa mga tawo." - Imelda Suarez*



## Two SAAD Central Luzon FAs attend First Lady's "Lab for All" Caravan

by Gennadiy Duque | Region 3

Members of the Maeling Poultry Farmer Association and Cabawangan Corn Farmers Association from the Department of Agriculture-Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) Program Central Luzon attended the 'Lab for All' Program Caravan of First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos at Barangay Addition Hills, Mandaluyong City College of Science and Technology Gymnasium in Mandaluyong City last June 24, 2024.

The two FAs who have joined the said caravan were from Nampicuan, Nueva Ecija where each of them are set to receive a poultry machine sponsored by a private donor, as part of the caravan.

The Lab for All Program aims to bring various government and healthcare services closer to the community. Aside from this, the program aims to implement different projects, one of which is the distribution of agricultural inputs in partnership with private agencies and organizations.

SAAD Director Ulysses J. Lustria Jr., will coordinate with the DA National Livestock Program on the distribution of the said machines. The poultry machine will significantly aid in egg production, resulting in increased income for farmers.

Further, among those who attended the program were the President and Vice-President of the Maeling Poultry Farmer Association and Cabawangan Corn Farmers Association along with their SAAD Coordinators Adrine C. Bulanadi and Leonard C. Suarez Jr.

Jay O. Capili, President of the Maeling Poultry Farmers Association, stated that these programs are encouraging and beneficial for the growth of their association in terms of their egg production.

*"Nagpapasalamat po kami sa Lab for All Program dahil isa ang aming asosasyon sa napili na mabibigyan ng poultry machine,"* said Capili.

[We are grateful for the Lab for All program because our association was chosen to receive the poultry machines.]

"The Lab for All Program is an idea of my husband to bring services closer to the people. The point of all this is to bring government services, even the services offered by the private sectors," said First Lady Marcos, in her opening message at the event.

Together with the First Lady was Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Benhur Abalos Jr., who also graced the event with other local and government officials who also showed their support for the caravan.

The successful implementation of the Lab for All Caravan demonstrates the cooperation of multiple sectors in achieving the goal of improving the lives of Filipinos and even the farmers.

It can be remembered that in the last six (6) months of 2023, the Maeling Poultry Farmers Association was the association that earned over 1 million pesos in poultry farming. Therefore, these machines may further increase their yield in the coming years.



## SAAD 12 moves toward established CBEs, cascades MAED Guidelines

by Vincent Rae T. Porras | Region 12

The Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development Program 12 (DA-SAAD 12) has taken a significant step towards its vision of establishing Community-Based Enterprises (CBEs) by cascading the Phase 2 Marketing and Enterprise Development (MAED) guidelines to its regional counterparts.

The activity was spearheaded by the DA-SAAD National Program Management Office (NPMO), in collaboration with the Agricultural Program Coordinating Office (APCO) Sarangani-General Santos headed by Jocelyn S. Misterio, and the MAED Unit Lead of Region 12, Amorsolo P. Gloria.





Agenda included presentations of the MAED guidelines, comprehensive discussions of activities, and the distribution of necessary templates which aimed at equipping the DA SAAD Officers of the region with the skills and knowledge required to implement these guidelines effectively in their respective areas.

During the presentations, Food Production and Livelihood (FPL) Lead Kit Jasper N. Gopela and Marketing Assistance and Enterprise Development (MAED) Officer Christine Joyce B. Velez provided in-depth insights into the MAED guidelines and activities. Joining them were Information Technology and Database Development (ITDD) Unit and Information System Analyst II Paul John B. Onrubia and NPMO Focal Person for Region 12 Jacqueline Rebusit who offered additional perspectives and technical support.

Applying these, the RPMSO and PPMSO together with the NPMO conducted a field validation and evaluation at Brgy. Datu Dani in Kiamba, Sarangani Province for pilot testing and practical application of the said guidelines. This includes a hands-on approach to ensure that the templates were practical, effective, and suited to the needs of the farmers.

This initiative aligns with the Program's mission to assist farmer beneficiaries in establishing CBEs. By providing the necessary tools and knowledge, the Program intends to identify the level of CBE establishment of the micro-enterprises in the Region.

Following this, regular monitoring will be conducted to address future challenges relative to Marketing and Enterprise Development in various areas in Region 12.



## SAAD NPMO-LED ACTIVITIES



# 1

## TIKA strengthens support for fisherfolk and farmers, commits to ongoing collaboration with SAAD

*Jennifer C. Valcobo and Eloisa A. Mariano*



In a series of meetings between the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), discussions focused on strengthening the fishery sectors and agricultural communities across various regions of the Philippines.

These sessions explored potential collaborations aimed at providing essential fishing equipment and technologies to fisherfolk groups, especially in underserved and marginalized areas. Indigenous communities, which heavily depend on fishing for their livelihood, were also considered as potential beneficiaries.

On September 18, 2024, discussions included key topics on potential provision of FRP (Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic) boats. These boats are more durable and cost-efficient than traditional wooden vessels, offering a safer and longer-lasting option for fisherfolk. Their use could significantly enhance the fishing capacity and economic resilience of these

communities.

Additionally, the need for ice-making machines and fish dryers was addressed, as these technologies would help reduce post-harvest losses and maintain the quality of the fish catch. The Lambaklad project, a large-scale fish trap system, was also considered to help fisherfolk sustainably increase their catch.

In a related meeting last August 13, 2024, SAAD Program Director Ulysses J. Lustria Jr. met with TIKA Country Director Ibrahim Katirci and Project Officer Kyle Christian Manejaro to explore new partnerships for SAAD beneficiaries. Director Katirci announced that ten farmers' associations in Sorsogon would receive a hauling truck from TIKA this year to transport produce from their vegetable production project. This support aims to ensure that agricultural products reach broader markets, benefiting farmers and their communities.

Dir. Lustria Jr. expressed gratitude for TIKA's commitment, stating, "It is always such an honor to have organizations like this that truly understand the needs of our farmers." He also oriented TIKA's new leadership on the goals and operations of the SAAD Program, ensuring alignment in their objectives.

Both SAAD and TIKA see this collaboration as a long-term partnership that could bring lasting benefits to fishing and farming communities. The upcoming turnover ceremony for the hauling truck project is expected to attract dignitaries, including Turkey's Ambassador to the Philippines and officials from the Department of Agriculture.

As the discussions continued, potential project proposals were also explored, aiming to enhance productivity, increase market access, and improve livelihoods for the most vulnerable agricultural communities in the Philippines. Both parties are optimistic about the impact this partnership could have, with the goal of supporting sustainable practices and uplifting the lives of fisherfolk and farmers alike.

The partnership between the SAAD Program and TIKA has been established since 2017 through the TIKAbuhayan Program, showcasing a testament to international cooperation that transcends borders.

# 2

## SAAD forwards community-driven development with SocPrep guidelines rollout

*Christ John B. Gamarcha and Eloisa A. Mariano*

Development projects have often struggled to bridge the gap between the needs of the communities they aim to serve and the realities of their lives. This disconnect has frequently resulted in projects that fail to achieve lasting impact, leaving communities feeling marginalized and their needs unmet.

Recognizing the limitations of traditional top-down development approaches, there has been a growing movement towards more participatory and community-driven strategies. The Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program Phase 2 of the Department of Agriculture is a prime example of this shift, prioritizing community involvement in its projects.

By prioritizing community participation and understanding, SAAD has been able to tailor its interventions to better address the specific needs and challenges of rural communities it serves. This commitment to community-driven development has been further solidified with the formulation of comprehensive SAAD Phase 2 Social Preparation (SocPrep) Guidelines.

On the SAAD Phase 2 setup, SocPrep is categorized as a preparatory tool that identifies the needs of its target beneficiaries and capacitates them in preparation for project implementation of the program. Further, it is treated as a vital component of the program in the assurance of sustainability of its projects.

These guidelines are designed to emphasize the importance of social preparation in achieving the program's goals, and provide a framework for implementing strategies and activities that complement previously released policies.

To ensure the effective implementation of these guidelines, SAAD Deputy Director Pedro S. Dumaraos Jr. together with the Social Preparation and Program Management (SPPM) Sub-unit has conducted a series of rollouts to three regional offices so far across the country.

"Social preparation is the cornerstone of sustainable agricultural development," Dir. Dumaraos Jr. emphasized. "By fostering community engagement and capacity building, we ensure our initiatives directly address the needs of our beneficiaries and create lasting change."

The rollout commenced in Western Visayas last August 12-16, 2024, followed by Cagayan Valley on August 26-30, 2024, and the Bicol Region from September 16-20, 2024.

The team was led by Dir. Dumaraos together with SPPM Sub-unit Lead Marie Abigail dela Cruz; SocPrep Staff Jacquelyn Rebusit; Executive Assistant Engr. Meljun Florece; Operational Planning, Budget, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit staff Jonalyn Racelis and Gio Renzo Caballero; Public Relations and Development Communication (PRDC) staff Christ John Gamarcha and Eloisa Mariano.

"Social Preparation rollout is one of the initiatives of SAAD NPMO which aims to comprehensively





cascade the crafted social preparation guidelines highlighting its forms that will evaluate the progress of SAAD beneficiaries who underwent component activities,” explained Dela Cruz.

The rollout process includes briefings with regional SAAD implementers, which comprise area coordinators, IT officers, Regional Program Management Support officers, and PRDC staff.

“This activity provides capacitation amongst the regional and provincial officers to reiterate the standard activities of the component, specifically the process on how to conduct an assessment of identified beneficiaries based on the current level of the organization after all the capability buildings provided by the program towards sustainability of livelihood projects,” dela Cruz added.

NPMO staff typically discusses the Social Preparation Guidelines, outlining the framework and objectives for community engagement and development. Subsequently, the operational guidelines for Participatory Rural Appraisal and farmers’ association assessment questionnaires are reviewed.

Regional implementers receive guidance and reminders on conducting focused group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII) to assess the identified farmers’ associations to be visited.

A simulation of FGD and KII is often conducted to give SAAD officers a hands-on opportunity to practice facilitation techniques, develop effective interviewing skills, and apply the SocPrep Guidelines in real-world scenarios.

Subsequently, a field visit takes place where NPMO and regional officers assess the capabilities of farmers’ associations (FAs) and gather insights into community dynamics for effective project implementation, utilizing FGD and KII.

The data collected during these field visits are consolidated and analyzed during exit conferences. The insights obtained will guide recommendations for future program enhancements, ensuring that SAAD continues to effectively support the development and empowerment of FAs. Following the rollout, SAAD regional implementers will conduct their own assessments of all farmers’ groups they are assisting.

The next rollout is scheduled in Alabat, Quezon Province for CALABARZON from October 14 to 18, further expanding the reach of the SocPrep guidelines and strengthening community-driven development efforts.

Dela Cruz said SPPM Sub-unit plans to continue the rollout in the remaining 10 SAAD-regions in 2025 to capacitate all regional and provincial implementers. She added that the continued cascading is expected to contribute significantly to the causes that SAAD Phase 2 advances by fostering a deeper understanding of community needs and ensuring that projects are designed and implemented in a way that is truly responsive to beneficiaries’ needs.

## SAAD Program sets strategic path at FY2025 BEDs Workshop in Samar

*Joash David L. Ricanor*

3



The Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program continues to forge its path in alleviating rural poverty through effective resource management and strategic planning.

This was underscored during the FY2025 Budget Execution Documents (BEDs) Workshop held in Marabut, Samar, from September 9 to 13, 2024. The workshop, spearheaded by the SAAD National Program Management Office (NPMO) and hosted by SAAD Region 8, brought together regional officers from across the country to align strategies for the upcoming fiscal year.

Fifteen (15) regions participated in the event, attended by the SAAD Regional Program Management Support Offices (RPMOSs), which worked to streamline budget execution for 2025. As the SAAD Program is set to further enhance agricultural support for marginalized communities, the workshop focused on harmonizing regional efforts with national objectives and ensuring compliance with financial management protocols. The gathering fostered a cohesive and practical approach toward implementing future projects.

SAAD NPMO Director Ulysses Lustria Jr. delivered his opening remarks virtually, highlighting the importance of sound planning. “Our plan should respond to the issues and challenges we encountered and would be encountering. We should also explore and develop partnerships to create more impact,” he emphasized, underscoring the need for strategic foresight in addressing both current and future hurdles.

Also participating virtually were Deputy Director Dr. Pedro Dumaraos Jr. and NPMO-OPBME Unit Head Darwin Pamatmat, both of whom stressed the necessity of synchronized planning and budget execution across all regions to ensure program success.

The week-long event covered in-depth presentations and discussions, from financial targets and projections to regional performance assessments. Representatives from the SAAD regions tackled challenges faced in previous fiscal years and proposed solutions to streamline program delivery for 2025. As the Program expands its reach, ensuring transparency and efficiency remains a top priority for the NPMO and its partners across the regions.

The workshop also serves as an essential precursor to the 2025 implementation period, where budget execution plays a vital role in continuing the SAAD Program’s legacy of providing livelihood and agricultural support to the most vulnerable sectors of society. With the guidance of the NPMO and the commitment of its regional teams, the SAAD Program remains steadfast in its mission to uplift the country’s rural agricultural communities.





As the workshop concluded, Department of Agriculture - Regional Field Office 8 (DA-RFO) Regional Executive Director Andrew Rodolfo T. Orais, DVM graced the closing and inspired the participants with renewed dedication and a strengthened resolve to meet the challenges ahead.

"It's very important na for the past few years na nag-implement tayo ng SAAD, nasa isipan na natin kung anong itsura at mangyayari kapag in-implement na natin ang pondo. Tayo lang ang project sa buong Department na complete ang package na binibigay natin sa farmers," said Orais.

"So, there's no reason *na ang ating* farmers will not change their way of life and will not change their income level. *Dahil sa SAAD, nagtuturo tayo, hindi lang nagbibigay,*" he concluded.

agricultural projects but also to mentor farmer and fisherfolk associations in forming cohesive, self-sustaining, and empowered organizations. Now, the fruits of this initiative are becoming evident in regions where SAAD operates.

For instance, in Siargao Islands, Surigao del Norte, officers from SAAD Caraga recently conducted the "Training on Leadership, Organizational Development, Teamwork, and Facilitation" last September 18 and 19, 2024.

The training, led by selected officers from SAAD Caraga's Regional Program Management Support Office (RPMISO) and area coordinators from its Provincial Program Management Support Office (PPMSO), was provided to about 120 farmers from 12 farmers' associations (FAs) held in the municipalities of Santa Monica and San Benito, respectively.

Acting as resource speakers for the training, the team tasked regional Public Relations and Development Communications (PRDC) Lead Ms. Shena Mae C. Pabia to discuss on "Organizational Development", followed by the topic on "Leadership" by regional Social Preparation and Program Management (SPPM) Lead Ms. Junabelle C. Casio in the morning session.

Meanwhile, Siargao Island area coordinators' Mr. Ariel B. Obillos and Mr. Laurence P. Bandola led the talk on "Teamwork" and "Conducting a Meeting" in the afternoon session, respectively.

Participants, who were leaders and members of various FAs in Siargao, were equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to manage their organizations more efficiently. The training also emphasized teamwork as a vital component in achieving collective goals, especially in becoming a community-based enterprise.

The participants expressed gratitude to resource speakers for the comprehensive training, noting how the lessons learned would significantly benefit their associations. Many leaders stated that the training has given them new perspectives on how to handle their roles and responsibilities, as well as improve collaboration within their groups.

Dr. Dumaraos praised the SAAD Caraga team for their dedication and excellence in organizing and facilitating the training. He emphasized the importance of continuous capacity-building efforts for farmers to ensure the effectiveness of SAAD's interventions in the region.

"This training is crucial in preparing our farmers to lead and sustain their associations effectively. The success of any agricultural program lies not only in the resources provided but in the strength of the associations' leadership and organization, even after the SAAD Program passes," said the deputy director.

He added that this training was an excerpt from the recently concluded Community Organizing towards Social Mobilization - Training of Trainers (TOT) led by the NPMO's Social Preparation and Program Management (SPPM) team.

"I commend the SAAD Caraga officers, and all the graduates of our TOT in community organizing from



every region, for their commitment in the continuous capacitation of our farmer beneficiaries. The success of this training, and many more are a testament to the enhanced capabilities of our SAAD officers for Phase 2," concluded Dr. Dumaraos.

Joining the training on the first day were Abad Santos Farmers Association (ASFA), Bailan Farmer Entrepreneurs Association (BAFEA), Active Farmers Association of Magsaysay (AFAM), United Farmers Association of Sta. Cruz (UFASAC), San Miguel United and Resilient Farmers Association (SMURF), and United Del Pilar Farmers Association (UDEPFASS).

Meanwhile, Consolacion Goat Raisers Association (COGORA), Caridad Vegetable Association (CAVEA), Makugihong Mag-uuma sa Katipunan (MMK), Malipayon ug Mauswagong Mag-uuma sa Mahayahay (M4), Nagkahiusang Gagmayng Mananagat sa Maribojoc, Inc. (NAGAMAMA), and Bongdo SAAD Farmers Organization (BOSAFO) joined the second day.

The Program's commitment to investing in its officers has been key to unlocking the potential of its beneficiaries. It has created a ripple effect of development, enabling farmers and fisherfolk to take control of their destinies and contribute to the country.

The impact is clear - SAAD has not only planted the seeds of development, but is now reaping the fruits of a brighter, more sustainable future for its beneficiaries.

# 4

## Reaping the fruits of investment

*Joash David L. Ricanor*

As Phase 2 of the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program progresses this year, the SAAD National Program Management Office (NPMO) is beginning to see the tangible impact of its investments, particularly in training its officers on organizational development.

This training of trainers, led by Deputy Director Dr. Pedro S. Dumaraos Jr. and the Social Preparation and Program Management (SPPM) unit of NPMO, has proven instrumental in strengthening farmers' and fisherfolk's associations, further enhancing their capacity to thrive as community-based organizations.

A core component of SAAD's approach is its emphasis on social preparation, which begins with nurturing organizational development among beneficiary associations. Understanding that these groups play a pivotal role in rural development, SAAD NPMO has focused on building the capacity of its officers to guide these associations in areas such as leadership, resource management, and decision-making. Since the start of Phase 2, the SAAD Program has trained officers across various regions on effective organizational development practices. The training equips them with the skills to not only manage





## 5 SAAD meets with Development Pathways reps to discuss adaptive social protection

Jennifer C. Valcobero

The Department of Agriculture - Special Area for Agricultural Development (DA-SAAD) National Program Management Office (NPMO) recently met with representatives from Development Pathways to orient the latter on the SAAD Program. Development Pathways has been commissioned by the French Development Agency (AFD) to study and make recommendations on how to improve Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) in the Philippines.

The study looked closely at several government programs, including the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), Kalahi-CIDSS, the Sustainable Livelihoods Program (SLP), and the Disaster Risk Management Bureau (DRMB). These programs supported vulnerable groups, especially in dealing with the impacts of climate change.

During the meeting, they discussed how these programs could work together with the "Walang Gutom" initiative, especially in the context of increasing climate-related disasters and rising food prices which disproportionately impact low-income households.

In the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development as the primary government agency mandated to develop, implement and coordinate social protection and poverty-reduction solutions for and with the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged, partnered with the AFD through Development Pathways to provide recommendations for scaling up the Walang Gutom program and enhancing its linkages with other key social protection programs and entities.

SAAD, as a poverty reduction program of the DA, saw this potential partnership as a way to strengthen its efforts to reduce poverty and improve the lives of farmers and fishers in the most marginalized areas. Furthermore, collaboration could focus on strengthening community-based approaches, leveraging SAAD's local networks to ensure that nutritional assistance reaches those most in need. Exploring these angles offers an avenue for maximizing the impact of both programs in building resilience and improving the quality of life for vulnerable populations. Said discussion remains open for further talks in the future.

The in-person consultative meeting was attended by SAAD-NPMO Director Ulysses J. Lustria, Jr; Operations, Planning, Budget, Monitoring, and Evaluation (OPBME) Head, Darwin A. Pamatmat; Executive Assistant to the Director, Saturnino Palahang Jr., from the Department of Agriculture. Meanwhile, from the Development Pathways were Mesdames Nicol Herbert, Martha Adeke, Cecilia Fantastico, and Olivia Claxton.



# Meet our Team

Let's get to know our SAADvocracy members.

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## about SAADvocracy

SAADvocracy 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 shift is to enhance the overall reader experience, providing a more comprehensive and visually engaging content while maintaining the familiarity associated with SAADvocracy.

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](mailto:saad@da.gov.ph).





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