



Rise with Rice!

A Compilation of the Filipino Rice Farmers'
Stories of Success



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Message



Engr. Christopher V. Morales, CESO II
Undersecretary
Rice Industry Development

It is with great pride and deep respect that I offer my heartfelt congratulations to our country's rice farmers who have shown success not only in high productivity and income but also in serving their communities.

They are our food heroes sparking a renewed hope for agriculture and inspiring many to support local production for our food security. The publication of "Rise with Rice!" is a testament to their unwavering dedication

and resilience in the face of many challenges.

Rice farming is more than a livelihood. It is a legacy that supports millions of lives and serves as the foundation of our agricultural economy. The stories written here reflect the core of Filipinos' agricultural spirit.

Our farmers are the backbone of our national food security, the pillars of our rural communities, and the pioneers of sustainable agriculture. Their commitment to excellence and sustainability ensures that we can feed every Filipino family while preserving the environment for future generations. The Department of Agriculture, through the National Rice Program, commits to fully support our rice farmers with strategies focused on climate change adaptation, clustering and consolidation, value chain approach, and digital transformation through convergence.

"Rise with Rice!" not only celebrates the fruits of our rice farmers' labor but also the deeply rooted passion and unwavering determination that define them as modern-day heroes. These success stories serve as a beacon of inspiration, guiding the path for the future of generations of farmers.

To every rice farmer featured in this book, and to all those who contributed tirelessly to our agricultural sector, we extend our heartfelt gratitude. Your effort nourishes our physical well-being and strengthens our country. With your hands, you have the power to sow seeds of progress and prosperity.

Mabuhay ang mga magsasakang Pilipino!

Message



Hon. Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr.
Secretary
Department of Agriculture

The Department of Agriculture pledges to work diligently to provide rice farmers with the support they need to be more productive, competitive, resilient, and prosperous. The directives of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. are clear. We have to prioritize increasing our local production so that we can lower the prices of our basic agricultural commodities, especially that of rice.

We will intensify our distribution of essential farm inputs, machineries, and equipment; double our efforts to establish much-needed infrastructure, including farm-to-market roads and irrigation systems, and continue the promotion of climate-resilient technologies and practices, among other strategies.

The publication of the “Rise with Rice! A Compilation of the Filipino Rice Farmers’ Stories of Success” showcases the fruits of the collaborative efforts of the national government, regional offices, local government units, and farmers and their associations and cooperatives. While it acknowledges the rice sector’s recent accomplishments, it also reflects the DA’s commitment to continue serving the country’s rice industry.

May these stories celebrating the triumphs and tenacity of our farmers and their incredible journeys serve as inspiration to others to take part in our endeavor to achieve a food- and nutrition-secure and resilient Philippines, with empowered farmers and healthy consumers.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the contributors of this publication and to all our rice farmers and stakeholders who have shown optimism and sparked change by letting their voices be heard through these stories. Your success is a source of national pride and a powerful example of what can be achieved through perseverance and innovation.

Let us rise with rice. May we continue to work together para sa Masaganang Bagong Pilipinas.

A man with short dark hair, wearing a pink short-sleeved button-down shirt with a small dark pattern, stands in front of a wall made of vertical wooden slats. The lighting is bright, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit indoor setting. A yellow rounded rectangle is overlaid on the bottom half of the image, containing text.

Levelling-up: Completing the Rice Value Chain with Agri-services

Story from the Cordillera Administrative Region

Farmers' groups play a vital role in increasing the access of members to agricultural inputs, equipment, and other services to boost their productivity. Better prices for the farmer's produce are also offered for bigger groups through collective marketing or consolidation.

This is the ultimate vision for the Malayugan Rice Granary Farmers Association (FA), an assisted farmers' group by the Department of Agriculture (DA), in barangay Malayugan, Flora, Apayao.

The group was organized in 2009 but due to challenges primarily on road networks and transportation, the group did not remain active. It was revived in 2013 with 35 members with the leadership of Oliver Duque. During this time, the High Yielding Technology Adoption

(HYTA) Program, a subsidized hybridization program of the DA for organized rice farmers' groups, was introduced.

Following the counterparting scheme in implementing the HYTA, the association earned sufficient funds to buy a truck and a tractor. Seeing their determination to improve and assist their members and their rice farming community, the DA-CAR provided them with additional interventions primarily transplanter, reaper, tractor, water pump, and closed van to hasten their production, harvesting, and marketing activities.

Seeing the benefits and services provided including the lending of low-priced inputs and rental of materials and equipment, more farmers joined the association and it now has 252 members.



In 2021, the association started the consolidation or collective marketing of agri-products such as palay or unhusked rice and corn with priority given to their members. It also buys agri-products at 10-15 centavos higher than the private traders. The association dries the palay using the circulating dryer provided by the DA-CAR.

The consolidated palay procurement activity spreads out not only in Malayugan but also in nearby barangays namely, Mallig, Sta. Maria, Allig, and Balluyan. According to DA-CAR Regional Rice Coordinator Edwin Joseph Franco, the association bought an estimated 250,000 tons of palay from farmers since it started consolidation. Their major market is currently in Amulung, Cagayan and they continuously look for additional big wholesale buyers near the Apayao province.

“The Malayugan Rice Granary Farmers Association has gone a long way as far as its development towards the DA’s clustering approach. In fact, that organization shows the capacity to improve and support its members as reflected by the outputs and good results from the DA interventions, particularly from the Rice Program,” Franco said.

Implementing the consolidation activity is but a learning in progress. The officers admitted that they are learning along the way. At one point, they suffered a great loss from corn due to its different grading specifications from rice, which they were not familiar with back then. However, they were able to bounce back from their loss through the profits gained from selling rice not only through consolidation but also through the KADIWA.

At present, the Malayugan FA is in the process of becoming a cooperative with the hopes to provide more services through capitalization to its farmer-members.

“ Thank you ti DA kadagiti adu nga nait-ited a projects ken ti anos yu nga mangtulong kadakami (Thank you to the Department of Agriculture for the interventions that you provided including your patience in assisting us). ”

Oliver Duque



A Successful Farmer's Wisest Pursuit: Sowing Good Seeds

Story from the Ilocos Region

Nelson Domingo, a 55-year-old farmer from San Joaquin, Balungao, Pangasinan, is a graduate of mechanical engineering, but decided to pursue farming because of his immense background in the field.

Since he started farming in 1995, Domingo has actively participated in meetings and training sessions related to farming. In 1998, he became an inbred seed grower after being convinced by a friend from the local government unit (LGU).

Domingo has served as a chairman of the Pangasinan Organic Seed Growers and Nursery Multipurpose Cooperative located in San Vicente, Urdaneta, Pangasinan since 2013. The cooperative boasts 281 active members and through his leadership, livelihood opportunities have been available to farmer-laborers in their community that led to increased income. He has also advocated for other municipalities to receive government interventions and represented the concerns of his fellow farmers during national activities.

Domingo's cooperative partnered with the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) to supply





58,476 bags of certified seeds, weighing 20 kilograms each for the Department of Agriculture (DA) Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Seed Component program.

With support from the DA, the cooperative received valuable assistance, including four circulating dryers that are crucial for seed growers, a transplanter, harvester, and training sessions.

Domingo expressed his gratitude to the agency for its unwavering support and acknowledged that without the provision of machinery, their progress would have been hindered. He is thankful to the agriculture department for not neglecting their needs and for the opportunities they have been provided with.

When asked about his success as a farmer, Domingo humbly expressed that he is content with what he does.

“Ang masasabi ko lang, masaya ako sa ginagawa ko, nakatutulong ako sa kapwa ko magsasaka,” he said.

He finds fulfillment in helping his fellow farmers and he has achieved personal milestones such as purchasing his desired vehicle, a four-hectare land and a tractor, and sending his daughter to a good university.

Domingo continues to serve as an exemplary farmer in his community, dedicated to his work, and passionate about assisting his fellow farmers to also succeed.

“*Salamat sa DA kasi hindi sila nagpabaya. Nagbigay sila sa amin ng counterpart hanggang sa fully subsidized ang mechanization. Hindi kami umunlad kung 'di sila nagbigay ng mga machinery, kaya nagpapasalamat kami sa Department of Agriculture na hindi kami pinabayaan.*”

Nelson Domingo





Cultivating Hybrid Rice with Math and Science

Story from the Cagayan Valley Region

“ Nagkukuliglig ako sa palayan ko, nagre-retubator, nag-ii-spray, at gumagawa rin ng mga organikong pataba. Bilang isang babaeng magsasaka, ang gusto ko ay walang iwanan—hindi lang dapat ako ang uunlad. Naibabahagi ko ang lahat ng aking mga natutunan sa mga kapuwa ko kababaihan at sa farmers dito sa amin at gumaganda naman ang kanilang buhay.”

Thelma Alabon

Thelma Alabon hails from the first-class municipality of San Mariano in the province of Isabela. She previously worked as a casual employee at the National Tobacco Administration (NTA), an attached corporation of the Department of Agriculture (DA), before shifting to full-time farming in 1998.

Armed with a degree in Mathematics, Alabon successfully navigated the world of farming by utilizing Math to predict crop growth and yield. She calculates her return on investments, production costs, the amount of time saved, and the amount of labor spent to ensure optimal results. She also studied weather patterns, soil quality, nutrient availability, and market trends, among other factors.

Hybrid rice, corn, bananas, coconuts, and vegetables grow abundantly in her 2.1-hectare (ha) farm named

Althea’s Integrated Farm. To maximize her profits, Alabon processes her harvests into milled rice, red rice cakes, banana cue, chili oil, and carbonized rice hull to maximize her profits. She also raises almost a hundred heads of pigs, native chickens, ducks, cattles, carabaos, and goats.

To improve the productivity of her farm, Alabon practices the no-burning policy, zero waste techniques, vermicomposting, and the 4Rs: Reduce, Re-use, Recycle, and Recover. She also makes use of organic fertilizer and chemical-free concoctions to help regain and maintain the nutrients in the soil.

Alabon’s hybrid rice production makes up 1.2 ha of her farm. Her record-breaking harvest of 8.5 metric tons (mt)/ha is a far cry from the average yield of traditional and inbred rice, which Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) estimates at 5.01 mt/ha. She earns an annual net profit of P134,164 from hybrid rice, on top of her income from value-added rice products. This was more than enough to encourage her fellow rice farmers to plant hybrid rice varieties in their own farmlands.

Determined to capacitate herself even more, Alabon attended various capacity-building initiatives by the DA, the DA-Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), and the Provincial and Municipal Agriculture Offices. She learned more about agricultural production, post-production, value-adding and processing, and operating mechanical implements and machinery.

To help her community, Alabon shared her newly acquired knowledge on fertilizer management, pest and water management, organic farming, and farm mechanization to the local farmers. She also received her certification as a grower of inbred rice seeds from the DA-ATI Regional Training Center II.

With these achievements under her belt, the DA-Regional Field Office (RFO) II offered her an opportunity to train more farmers as a Farmer-Led Extensionist and later on Local Farmer Technician (LFT) in 2006. Althea's Integrated Farm became a Learning Site for Agriculture and Farmers' Field School with more than 400 rice farmer-graduates. She was also recognized as a "Magsasakang Siyentista" by the DA-ATI for successfully using science-based technologies at the farm.



Water and Nutrient Management Practices for Successful Harvest

Story from the Central Luzon Region



The Masalipit Small Water Impounding System Association, Inc. (SWISA) based in Barangay Masalipit, San Miguel, Bulacan continues to live up to its reputation as one of the country's most outstanding SWISA.

It serves as a model for applying the established climate-resilient technologies and practices in rice production including rainwater harvesting, alternate wetting and drying (AWD), and balanced fertilization strategy, among others.

The Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Soils

and Water Management (DA-BSWM), constructed the Masalipit Small Water Impounding Project (SWIP) in the early 1990s. The SWIP is a structure for rainwater harvesting and storage that provides supplementary irrigation during the dry season and helps with soil and water conservation and flood control.

In 2022, the Masalipit SWISA almost had nothing to harvest because of the limited water supply, but they survived thanks to AWD. The water management strategy helps reduce water consumption by 16–35 percent,

aids in proper crop growth, optimizes soil nutrients, and lessens use of inputs contributing to lower costs.

The AWD is a controlled irrigation practice, wherein the rice field is alternately flooded and non-flooded following the right timing. It complements the SWIP for increased farm inputs efficiency and water conservation.

“Iyong one week na patay tapos one week na alternate na hinto ang tubig, naka-survive po kami doon.



Umani ng maganda ang palay. Napagkasya namin ang tubig namin, napasobra namin,” Masalipit SWISA President Bernardo Lusano shared.

He added that the palay will not wither with AWD and will thrive instead.

According to Lusano, those who usually harvest 65–80 cavans were able to produce up to 125 cavans, attributing this success with the cooperation and unity of the SWISA members.

“Napatunayan namin, ang tubig, pag kulang at nagkaisa ang member, napagkakasya,” Lusano said.

The Masalipit SWISA established a five-hectare farm for the pilot demonstration of the adaptive balanced fertilization strategy under the government’s Abonong Swak campaign. Abonong Swak promotes the proper use and combination of organic and inorganic fertilizers for a cost-efficient and sustainable rice production, while ensuring high yield and reduced cost with savings of up to P4,000 per hectare.

The farmers can also use Leaf Color Chart (LCC), Minus-One Element Technique (MOET), Rice Crop Manager Advisory Service (RCMAS), and Soil Test Kit (STK) as guides for fertilizer application.

The Masalipit SWISA was recognized as one of the country’s six most outstanding SWISA for the 2019 Rice Achievers Awards (RAA) organized by the DA in November 2020.

Lusano advises other farmers to coordinate with their local Municipal Agriculture Office, organize into a cooperative or association, select good leaders, and participate in the programs offered by the local government units and national government agencies.

“*Napag-aralan namin ngayon hindi pala puwede iyong isang sabog lang (ng abono) dahil maraming nasasayang. Maganda pala unti-unti lang walang nasasayang. Nakukuha lahat ng palay. Saka nagiging kompleto iyong palay.*”

Bernardo Lusano





Humble Beginnings Flourish with Perseverance

Story from the CALABARZON Region

Rico Bayani began working in his uncle's rice field to support his family. In 2012, after two years of serving as a farmworker, his uncle gave him the opportunity to rent up to one hectare of land to cultivate.

Being a farmer for many years, Bayani decided to register with the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) through the Department of Agriculture IV-CALABARZON (DA-4A). In 2019, he became a member of the Masaganang Magsasaka ng Barangay Talahiban 1st and 2nd in San Juan, Batangas.

As a member of the association, Bayani benefited from the interventions provided to the group such as a rice mill, transplanter, solar dryer, and irrigation machinery. The members were also given free seeds and fertilizers for their farms.

When he was not yet registered as an association member, his planting inputs and resources were limited and he had to shoulder the costs on his own. By enrolling with RSBSA, he now has better access to government aid and support. Additionally, by becoming a member of a registered farmers' association, he can participate in training and avail of services for his rice fields through the machinery and equipment provided to the group.

Starting with a yield of 70 sacks from his initial one-hectare farm, Bayani now harvests between 120 and 127 sacks from the hybrid seeds provided to them, and rents over two hectares of farmland.

Through farming, he was able to support his family. He bought a tricycle and a carabao with the help of his wife, who also works in their town. He was able to send his two children to school, one in college and the other in high school. He can confidently say that their standard of living has improved through rice farming due to their high yield.

With the training he attended and the support provided by DA-4A, he had no difficulty adapting to the use of hybrid seeds and improving their production.

“Maraming salamat po sa DA at nawa po ay hindi sila magsawa sa pagtulong sa amin at madagdagan pa ang suporta upang lalong patuloy na tumaas ang kita naming mga magsasaka,” he said.

Indeed, small beginnings can lead to great outcomes as long as there is perseverance and determination. A person’s potential is revealed through their consistent efforts to self-improve and capitalize on opportunities.

“Ramdam ko ang kaibahan ng pagiging kabilang sa isang samahan. Malaki at mas malawak ang tulong at interbensyon na maaaring ipagkaloob at mapakikinabangan namin.”

Rico Bayani





Kubota
L4018



Malad Farmers' Association Expands with Government Support

Story from the MIMAROPA Region



Re-established in 2019 after being inactive since 2010, the Malad Farmers' Association (FA) started with a fund of approximately P50,000. Malad FA President Joel Pentinio shared that over the years, their association's fund has grown to P1.6 million and now has 147 members with a total of 311 hectares of farmland located in Barangay Malad, Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro.

Before the association was formed, farmers used to buy their seeds individually. However, after becoming an association, they received various forms of assistance from government offices including the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The Malad FA members were given free seeds, machinery, fertilizer voucher discounts, and subsidies, which greatly helped reduce their farm input costs and increased their income.

They also received a harvester from DA-MIMAROPA under the Rice Program.

"Malaki ang naitutulong ng DA dahil nagbibigay sila ng libreng machineries, binhi, at fertilizers. Malaki ang nababawas nito sa aming gastusin sa pagsasaka. Gamit ang machinery, napapabilis nito ang aming paghahanda sa pagpapalayan," Pentinio said.

The majority of the rice harvested by the members is used for business, sold to traders, or used for their own consumption. To distribute the interventions to the FA members, Pentinio calls for a general meeting to fairly allocate and manage the interventions they have received.

"Sa pamunuan po ng DA, maraming-maraming salamat po sa tulong na inyo pong ibinababa sa amin. Malaki pong bagay 'yon para sa kapakinabangan ng mga magsasaka hindi lamang sa Malad Farmers Association," Pentinio expressed.

Despite the interventions and support, the Malad FA still faces challenges including limited seeds for their large number of members, poor germination of rice, and delayed arrival of vouchers, which they cannot use immediately during the appropriate planting season. As the president of the association, Pentinio promptly addresses these issues to avoid misunderstandings among the members.

“Maraming-maraming salamat po sa lahat ng biyaya at ayudang ipinagkakaloob ninyo sa amin lalong lalo na sa aming maliliit na magsasaka. Malaking tulong po ito sa gaya kong nakikibukid lang, nakaka-less po kami sa gastos at nadadagdagan ang aming kita.”


Leny Ramirez Alcones

Malad FA secretary and member Leny Ramirez Alcones encourages fellow farmers to continue to work hard and use the blessings they received properly, especially the financial assistance.

With the continued development of their association, their leadership has also carried out community activities such as outreach programs and supplemental feeding programs in areas that are in greater need.







Bicolano Rice Farmer Achieves 15.78 mt/ha Yield of Hybrid Rice

Story from the Bicol Region

“Sunod sa layaw ang palay ko kaya binigyan din ako ng magandang ani. Kung magtatanim ka, dapat may target ka rin na harvest.”

Genaro Tamon

Rice farmer Genaro Tamon made waves on social media when he harvested 263 cavans of hybrid rice (60 kilograms (kg) per cavan) from his one hectare (ha) irrigated farm in Barangay Sta. Lucia in Magarao, Camarines Sur.

His bountiful harvest last April 22, 2024 was equivalent to 15.78 metric tons (mt) and was the highest in the Bicol Region. It was three times more than the 4.41 mt/ha average yield in irrigated rice areas in Bicol based on the 2023 data of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

He sold the fresh palay at a local store/trader at P21.50/kg giving him a gross income of P339,270. With his expenses from land preparation to harvesting amounting to approximately P130,000, he obtained a net income of P209,270.00 from just one hectare of rice.

Tamon attributed his high production to the combination of organic fertilizer (chicken dung) and

inorganic fertilizer. He also used 15 kg of US 88 hybrid rice variety from SeedWorks Philippines, Inc., a private seed company.

According to Tamon, he first prepared a 300-square meter seedbed, which he conditioned with 10 bags of rice hull. After 10 days, he applied 10 kg complete fertilizer (14-14-14) to the growing rice seedlings. He also prepared a one-hectare farm to be planted with hybrid rice by applying 100 bags of chicken dung which he bought at P100/bag. Ten liters soil conditioner was then applied after harrowing.

He transplanted the 20-day old palay seedlings at a distance of 15 centimeter (cm) by 20 cm to permit root and canopy growth and to keep all leaves active in photosynthesis.

“Each one square meter area should have 30 single rice seedlings,” Genaro said.

Every 15 days, he applied fertilizer in granular and



foliar forms. He performed the first application of fertilizer on the fifth day after transplanting, using three bags of complete fertilizer (14-14-14) and two bags of urea. The second application of fertilizer was done after 15 days using three bags of urea and two bags 16-20-0. Another application was done 15 days after using three bags of 17-0-17. The fourth application was after another 15 days using two bags 0-0-60 (potassium) and another two bags of potassium after 15 more days.

He also sprayed foliar fertilizer three times during the tillering, booting, and flowering stages of the plant.

Genaro advised that application of sufficient fertilizer is the key to good yields in hybrid rice.

“Compared to inbred rice, sa hybrid talagang

napakataas ng ani kung susundin mo ang tamang farm management na akma sa hybrid rice. Nakita ko na iba talaga ang grains at panicles ng hybrid na umaabot sa maximum of 500 grains per panicle, at average of 400 grains per panicle. Samantalang sa inbred ay maximum of 200 grains per panicle lang. Subalit ito ay mahirap ma-achieve kung hindi ka maglalagay ng sapat na fertilizer,” he emphasized.

Genaro is a long-time local farmer technician of the Department of Agriculture (DA) Bicol and was the 2018 regional Gawad Saka outstanding rice farmer. At the age of 61, he is currently the president of the Sta. Lucia Farmers Association with over 92 rice farmer members tilling approximately 210 ha of rice farms in Magarao, Camarines Sur.









Reaping the Gains of Mechanized Farming

Story from the Western Visayas Region

To address the challenges faced by small and marginal farmers, the 22 barangay associations in Mina, Iloilo formed the Mina Municipal Federation of Farmers Association (MMFFA) on May 10, 2013. With over 1,700 members, MMFFA connects farmers with government programs and services, despite limited resources.

Supported by the Municipal Agriculture Office,

MMFFA has linked farmers to Department of Agriculture (DA) initiatives that tackle issues like rising input costs, high labor expenses, and weather-related losses. Registered with the Department of Labor and Employment in September 2013, MMFFA regularly communicates DA programs through meetings, farmer field schools, and workshops, significantly improving farmers' production. By



keeping farmers informed about the inputs, technologies, and other interventions available from the agency, the MMFFA has been instrumental in enhancing farmers' production performance.

The MMFFA began receiving mechanization support from the agency, starting with 989 laminated sacks and 17 collapsible dryers received from the DA in 2013.

"We would not have been able to acquire farm tractors without the DA mechanization program and the Iloilo Provincial Government's provision of 15 percent equity. We are grateful that in that year, five barangays in Mina were granted one hand tractor and one rice thresher each," MMFFA founding and current president Helen Bolivar said.

Eventually, the MMFFA became a pilot beneficiary of the Farm Service Provider (FSP) program, which served as a springboard to advance rice mechanization in the municipality and transform the mindset of conventional farmers. To ensure the project's sustainability and positive community impact, the DA trained MMFFA members and operators on proper utilization, maintenance, and troubleshooting of the machines, as well as farm recording and bookkeeping. In January 2015, a four-wheel drive tractor and one rice combine harvester worth P3.2 million (M) were turned over to them.

The receptiveness of the Mina farmers to the DA farm mechanization program encouraged the association to invest more in modernized tractors, which help counter the dwindling number of farm laborers and reduce production and harvesting expenses. They began operating the rice combine harvester in March 2015, just in time for the dry season harvest. Using the income generated from initial tractor operations, the MMFFA

provided a counterpart for another rice combine harvester unit from the DA.

"Others thought that the DA's FSP Program would displace farm laborers. But with proper planning and supervision by the agency, we proved that modern farm tractors benefit farmers and provide the Federation with an income-generating project," Bolivar said.

By July 2015, the MMFFA procured another combine harvester worth P1.8 M and a four-wheel drive tractor worth P1.2 M from the income generated from tractor operations.

Employing their best management practices as an FSP beneficiary, the MMFFA secured adequate funds to procure additional tractors and service vehicles, accommodating their growing number of clients in Mina and nearby municipalities. This further solidified the trust and confidence of their stakeholders and partners in them as a model implementer of the FSP program in the region.

With an impressive track record for over 10 years, MMFFA received additional farm machinery and equipment from the agency, allowing them to efficiently serve up to 1,413 hectares (ha) of irrigated rice areas and 748.91 ha of rainfed land.

The MMFFA currently serves as the leading farmers' organization in the municipality, coordinating clusters of farmers' associations to efficiently utilize farm machinery and tractors for expedited land preparation and crop establishment during the wet planting season. As a strong partner of the DA and the Municipal Agriculture Office, the Federation acts as an intermediary, enhancing farmers' access to information on interventions and technologies provided and promoted by the DA under the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program.

Hybrid Rice Varieties Defying El Niño

Story from the Central Visayas Region

John Anthony Paculanang of Barangay Tanglad, Tayasan, Negros Oriental harvested an average of 3.75 metric tons (mt) per hectare for his US 88 hybrid rice and 4.84 mt for the Habilis **plus** hybrid rice. Each variety was planted on half hectare land, despite the El Niño phenomenon.

The data was based on the crop cutting conducted by the Provincial Agricultural Technology Coordinating Office-Negros Oriental (PATCO-NegOr) of the Department of Agriculture-Central Visayas (DA7) in partnership with the Municipal Agriculture Office to determine the farmers' actual yield in an area.

Paculanang, a first-time user of hybrid rice seed varieties and one of DA7's beneficiaries, was amazed by the result of the hybrid rice.

"I am one of the beneficiaries of the DA's Hybrid Rice Program, and I can say that it has been a big help to rice farmers like me," he commented.

He expressed his gratitude to the DA for the interventions, noting that he achieved a higher yield compared to the usual inbred rice varieties he used, such as Rc18 and Rc216.

As a first-time user, Paculanang thought that his rice fields during the milking and mature stages would be heavily affected by the lack of water due to drought, but he believes that God's grace protected his crops.

Hybrid rice results from crossing selected rice varieties, offering enhanced traits like better growth rate, higher yield, improved disease resistance, and enhanced fertility. Utilizing high-yielding technologies, such as hybrid rice, is an effective strategy to optimize limited production areas, ensure food security, reduce production costs, and boost farmers' incomes.

Acknowledging the role of hybrid rice seeds in boosting farm productivity and farmers' income, the DA Hybrid Rice Program supplies high-quality National Seed Industry Council (NSIC)-registered hybrid rice seeds to eligible farmers in key rice-producing municipalities.

Seeing the positive results, Paculanang plans to shift from planting inbred to hybrid rice and even promote it to his peers. With the estimated increased harvest, Paculanang also expects to reap better income.





“The current harvest using hybrid is more than half of my previous harvest using inbred.”

John Anthony Paculanang







Biliran Breaks Ground with P20/kg Rice and Complementary Program

Story from the Eastern Visayas Region

The municipality of Biliran in the province of Biliran is a small town that is beaming with pride as its residents enjoy accessible, high-quality, and affordable rice, while its local farmers get the support that they deserve. This scenario may seem impossible for many communities in the country, but the fifth-class municipality shows it can be a reality.

Inspired by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s goal of bringing rice prices down to P20 per kilo, the Biliran local government unit (LGU) through the Municipal Agriculture Office, with the assistance of the Department of Agriculture (DA) Regional Field Office 8, developed its food subsidy and complementary program on rice production and marketing.

“Naniniwala po kami sa sinabi ng Pangulo na kaya pong ibigay ng gobyerno. Maaaring hindi pa kaya sa pangkalahatan, pero doon sa tinatawag nating may poverty incidence, kayang-kaya po siyang ibigay ng gobyerno sa paraan na complementary,” Biliran Municipal Agriculturist Limuel Antonio said highlighting the need for convergence among stakeholders.

Dubbed as “Myra CARES (Comprehensive Assistance to Revitalize Economic Sectors) Food Subsidy Program



KEEL LAYER MA...

GUARTE...
CRUDE PROTEIN
CRUDE FAT
CRUDE FIBER
MOISTURE
PHOSPHORUS
CALCIUM
STORAGE: KEEP IN A DRY AND COOL PLACE
INGREDIENTS:
YELLOW CORN A FULL FAT SOYA, SOYBE...

VITARICH
HOG BREEDER PE...

PREMI...
FEED
HOG...
alvino.ph



after Biliran Mayor Myra Abrigo, the initiative benefits farmers, indigent families, and all sectors of the community by addressing concerns on poverty, inflation, food security, malnutrition, and livelihood sustainability, among others.

The game plan involves the DA-National Food Authority (NFA) buying fresh palay at P19 to P23 per kilogram (kg) from the rice farmers, while the LGU provides P5 additional incentive per kg of palay. Thus, the Biliran rice farmers can sell their produce from P24 to P28/kg. In addition, they get training, marketing, insurance, and production support from the DA.

In return, the farmers pay it forward by selling affordable rice to the community.

“Tumutulong din kami sa kanila sa pamamagitan ng pagbebenta ng bigas at P20/kg. Halimbawa kung nabigyan



kami ng gobyerno ng tatlong sakong abono, magbebenta rin kami ng tatlong sakong bigas at P20/kg. So malaki na ang tulong sa amin diyan kasi ang isang sakong bigas namin, magkakaroon kami ng P1,000 plus isang sako ng abono. Ang isang sakong abono, nagkakahalaga ng humigit kumulang dalawang libo. So malaki ang naitutulong,” Sitio Lumbia Farmers Association President Manuelito Rosales said.

He added that the farmers are also involved in identifying indigent families who can avail of the low-priced rice. In partnership with the LGU, they give food subsidy booklets to qualified beneficiaries who are entitled to purchase up to five kilograms of the P20/kg rice every week.

On behalf of the farmers in Biliran, Rosales said that they are committed to continue helping the government in their food security efforts as long as it supports them as well.

For Antonio, sustaining the program is easy as long as the key players such as the farmers, the DA, the LGU, and other government agencies exist, enhance related programs through convergence, and continue to work together.

“Kung nagawa ng Biliran, a fifth-class municipality, kung titignan po natin iyong class, mahirap po ang aming bayan. Bakit nagawa? And we have only 700 hectares of rice area,” Antonio encourages other LGUs to also implement the program.

“Maraming maraming salamat po sa binigay ninyo sa amin na tulong dito po sa P20 na kilo ng bigas. Dahil sa ganitong tulong, nakakaluwag-luwag na ho kami sa ganitong pamamaraan.”

Vida Cabaltierra



A man with dark hair, wearing a yellow polo shirt, stands in a lush green field. The shirt has a circular logo on the left chest with a blue water drop and green hills, and the text 'REGION 1' below it. In the background, there are palm trees under a bright sky.

Diligence equals Success

Story from the Zamboanga Peninsula Region

“The DA has been a great help to our seed growers industry. We have availed much of its agricultural services and programs. We benefited from its credit, technology transfer, farm management skills and marketing linkages.”

Alonto Marcaban

Full of determination and perseverance, Alonto Marcaban at the age of 13 would get up at dawn to help his father and siblings cultivate the family's 0.75-hectare (ha) rice field. Young Alonto was determined to help his family and send his siblings to school.

"I started farming with my father and brothers at a very young age because we had a big family and we were very poor. I wanted myself and all of my siblings to go to school and graduate. I worked in the morning and went to school at night. Our hard work paid off because we all graduated from college," Alonto said proudly.

"My father always encouraged us to study and work hard. His words were clear when he said that if we sow diligence, we reap success," Alonto recalled.

In 1984, he married Jocelyn and they were blessed with 12 children. Building his own family, Alonto tripled his hard work in farming. From his 1.3 ha, he rented the available spaces of his neighbors.

In 1987, he encountered several challenges even if he worked very hard. He cultivated a rainfed area, and he would only harvest 2–3 tons/ha.

There were also days when the field was infested by pests like stem borer and black bugs, causing devastating damages.

"We are grateful to the Department of Agriculture (DA) for helping us suppress and control the pest infestation and for conducting training on Integrated Pest Management (IPM)," he added.

The farmers in Labangan decided to cut off the water supply and observe synchronous planting. With the

synchronous planting and the use of cropping calendar patterns, their harvest and production increased. They also availed the irrigation project under the DA-National Irrigation Administration (NIA). As such, their harvest reached 5–6 tons/ha.

Alonto adopted planting hybrid rice which he claimed to be a very smart move because his rice production increased. Even when heavy rains and typhoons came, he got a good harvest.

He also found the potential to be a rice seed grower and started expanding his area. He rented eight hectares from his neighbors in Labangan, Zamboanga del Sur and managed the 12 ha field of his brother in Tawagan Sur, Pagadian City. He kept expanding his area every cropping season. He then became one of the biggest seed growers in Labangan and in Tawagan Sur.

At 60, Alonto is very proud. He has become a farmer leader in Tawagan Sur, and the chairman of the Regional Federation Operators Association, the Regional Farmers Action Council under the DA-National Food Authority (NFA), and the Mindanao - Regional Farmers Network, Philippines. He is also the Secretary of the Zamboanga del Sur Seed Growers Association and the Zamboanga Peninsula Federation of Seed Growers Association and a Board of Director (BOD) for Labangan Farmers First Consolidated Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LAFFICO-MPC).

Under his leadership, he was able to request and avail flatbed dryers, a hand tractor with kuliglig, and a rice thresher for the Tawagan Sur Farmers Irrigators Association.

Approaches to Profitable Rice Farming

Story from the Northern Mindanao Region

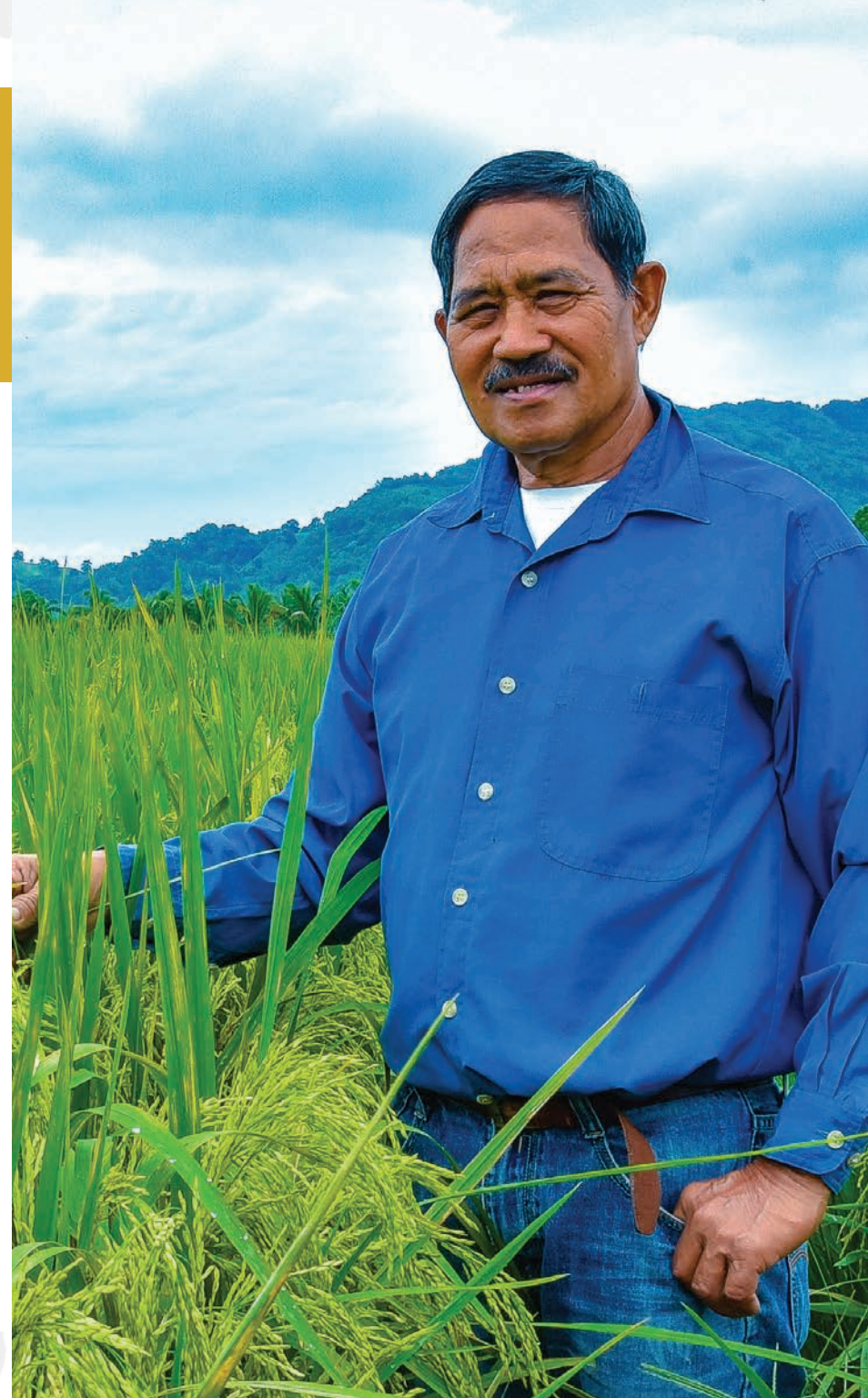
For Felix Cordero, the right mindset and the ability to make sound decisions are crucial traits that set a successful farmer from one who struggles.

With over three decades of farming experience, Felix is a highly respected rice farmer in Kahaponan, Valencia City, Bukidnon. He previously served as treasurer of the nationally recognized Kahaponan-Valencia City Irrigators Association (KVCIA), which earned the Outstanding Irrigators' Association award at the 2019 Rice Achievers Awards.

Felix has gained attention for his impressive yield of 10 tons per hectare (t/ha) using the “Bigante” variety of hybrid rice.

“Every year, the Department of Agriculture (DA) provides free rice seeds and fertilizer. I take advantage of these resources, and we were given Bigante rice seeds. I decided to give the seeds a try and ended up harvesting 10.2 t/ha,” he said.

Rice farming has always been Felix’s primary source of income, providing for his family’s livelihood and supporting his three children’s education. His children are now professionals in finance, health, and agriculture.



“At first, integrating the technology was challenging, but as we continued practicing and adapting, we eventually mastered it over time.”

Felix Cordero

“Thanks to rice farming, we were able to acquire properties such as our house and several parcels of land, which now serve as our rice fields. We started with seven hectares but have since expanded to 10 ha by purchasing land from neighboring farmers,” Felix revealed.

Felix said he has been planting hybrid rice since the Hybrid Rice Program was introduced to them by the DA.

“When I first started farming, we knew very little farming technology, so we relied on traditional methods. However, the city, provincial, and regional agriculture offices introduced us to new farming technologies. Since then, our production has steadily increased each cropping season, which is why we adopted modern farming technologies,” he remarked.

By planting hybrid rice, he disclosed that he would harvest an average of 9.5 t/ha in his 10 ha fully-irrigated rice field, accounting it to the varying land topography.

As a farmer with humble beginnings, Felix commended the DA’s ongoing support for rice farmers. He believes that the fertilizer and rice seed subsidies provided by the government significantly contribute to their ability to earn a profitable income.

“I am grateful to the DA-Region 10 for providing rice seeds and fertilizers. These resources have significantly reduced our expenses. I hope this program



continues and reaches many other farmers, helping them succeed in their agricultural endeavors,” he added

With the government’s assistance, he encouraged his fellow farmers to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to their farming efforts.

“As farmers, we need to put our best foot forward. It’s not enough to simply plant our crops. We must provide them with the best care until harvest. The success of our farming is ultimately determined by the outcome of the harvest season,” Felix stressed.



FORD RICE COMBINE HARVEST
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Warning
Read and understand the operator's manual before operating the machine.
Always use proper operating procedures.
Do not drink alcohol or use drugs before operating the machine.
Do not operate the machine if you are tired or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
Do not operate the machine if you are wearing medication that affects your vision or reaction time.

Warning
Do not touch the PTO shafts or other rotating parts of the machine.
Do not touch the PTO shafts or other rotating parts of the machine when the PTO is engaged.
Do not touch the PTO shafts or other rotating parts of the machine when the PTO is engaged.

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From Arms to Farm

Story from the Davao Region

A soldier who spent his years in the combat area turned into a farmer and now loves to spend his time in the rice field. At 45, he is considered as one of the productive hybrid rice entrepreneurs in Bansalan, Davao del Sur.

Mhar Baclay once served in the Special Forces of the Philippine Army. He was assigned to far-flung and risky war zone areas in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Sarangani Province, Zamboanga Peninsula, Caraga Region, and Paquibato District in Davao City.


In his desire to find peace in both his heart and mind after 21 years of service, he opted to retire from being a soldier at the age of 39. Following his heart's desire to produce his own food, he was able to buy land using his retirement money. Only then his farming career started.

Today, he grows vegetables in one-hectare area, banana (lakatan) in a five-hectare area and hybrid rice in an almost eight-hectare area.

He is the present treasurer, social media manager, and machinery officer of the Sto. Niño New Clarin Communal Irrigators Association.

Mhar recalls that he started farming when he was only 10 years old, often accompanying his father to the farm. At his very young age, he was already skilled in rice field work.



A man wearing a green long-sleeved shirt, grey pants, and a grey cap is sitting on a red Kubota tractor. The tractor is parked under a metal roof structure. The man is looking towards the camera. The tractor has "Kubota L5018" written on its side. The background shows some greenery and a building.

“With the outpouring of blessings and assistance I received through farming, I can testify that there is income in rice farming.”

Mhar Baclay



When the Department of Agriculture in Davao Region (DA-11) promoted hybrid rice in his municipality in 2015, he was one of the chosen beneficiaries who received free seeds and had first-hand experience on hybrid rice farming.

Following proper farming practices, he attained a good harvest, making him certified hybrid rice farmer in his area.

“Hybrid rice is observed to be suitable in our area. It is climate change- and pest-resistant,” he said, comparing his production to his previous rice seeds.

Mhar reached his highest yield of 8.5 metric tons per hectare (mt/ha) in 2023 producing 103 bags at 70 kilograms per sack. This gave him a gross income of P130,000 in one hectare, which is way beyond the provincial average yield of 5.6 mt/ha.

He said one of his best practices is following a rice planting distance of 15 x 20 centimeter and a strict

application of fertilizer. He applies fertilizer in his farm five times every after planting with a 7–10 days interval every application and religiously monitors the field to observe the crops’ growing conditions. To minimize production expenses, he does not use pesticides.

Mhar usually sells his fresh palay at Sinarangan, Matanao, Davao del Sur, which is the nearest marketplace to his farm. He also supplies rice at the Medical Center of Digos Cooperative Hospital and Bansalan market priced at P2,600 per 50 kilograms.

Mhar said that his community is also his market. Oftentimes his neighbors would go directly to his house to buy rice as his produce always runs out in the market because of its high demand.

Aside from free hybrid seeds, Mhar also received DA’s Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) program and fertilizer discount voucher.



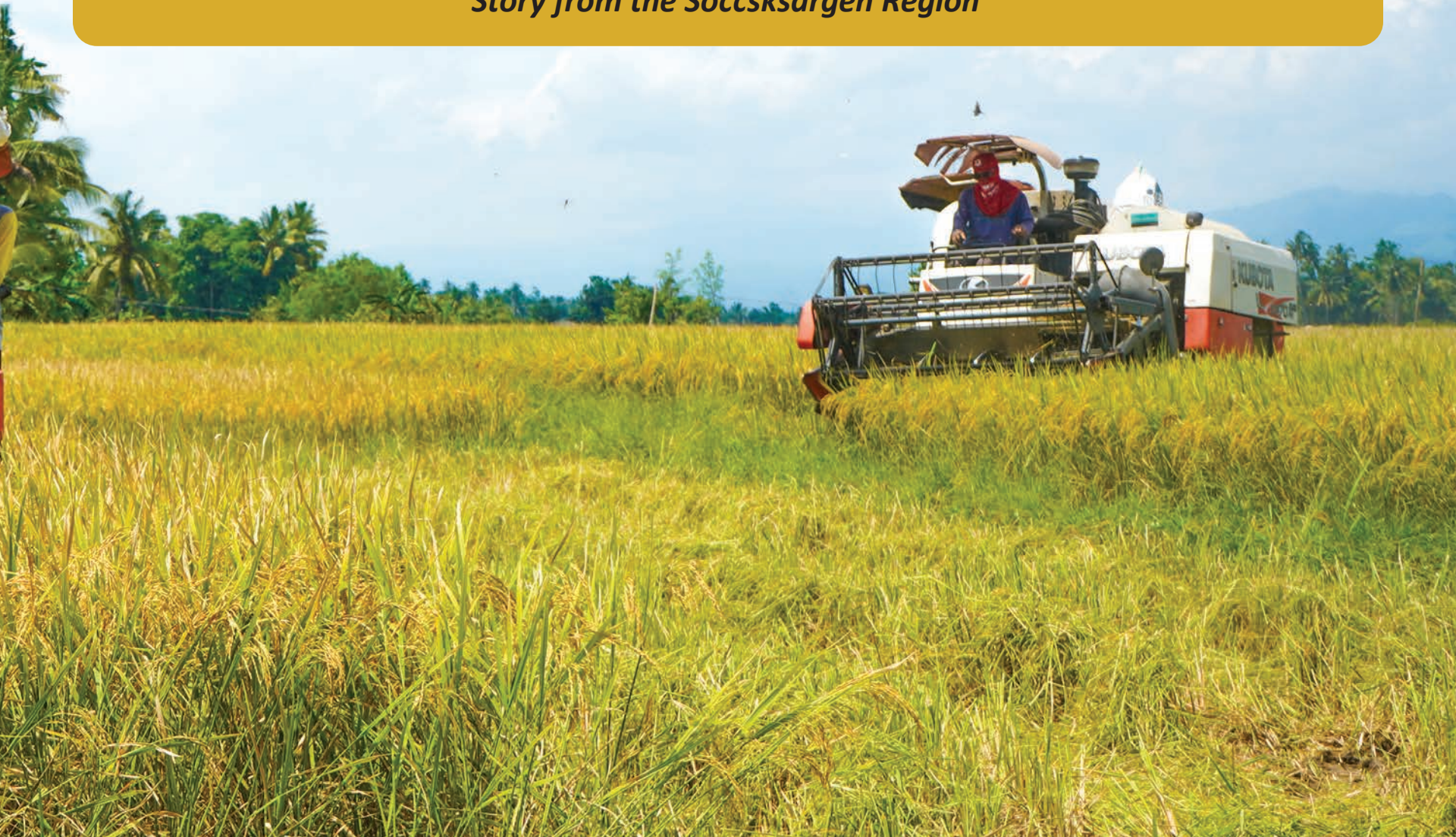


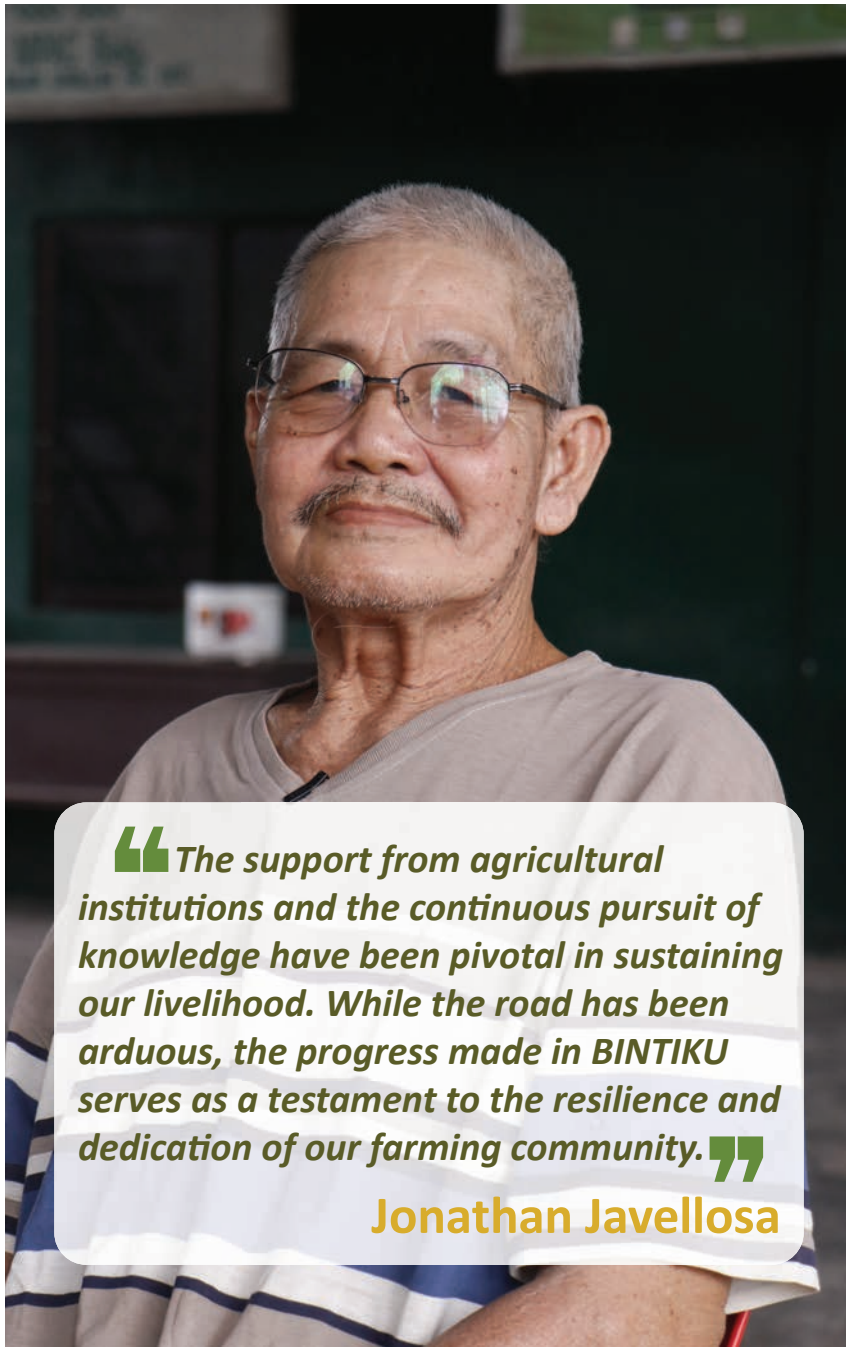
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The Journey of Dedicated and Resilient Rice Farmers

Story from the Soccsksargen Region





“The support from agricultural institutions and the continuous pursuit of knowledge have been pivotal in sustaining our livelihood. While the road has been arduous, the progress made in BINTIKU serves as a testament to the resilience and dedication of our farming community.”

Jonathan Javellosa

Jonathan Javellosa, chairman of the Binhi-an ng Timog Kutabato Multipurpose Agricultural Cooperative (BINTIKU) has been farming for 35 years in Surallah, South Cotabato. He started with eight hectares (ha) of owned land and four ha of rented land. His farm now spans 18 ha. Before, he used the “sabog” method for its lower costs but later decided to use transplanter to produce high-quality seeds after becoming a certified seed grower.

Despite the challenges like low rice prices and high input costs, he remains dedicated to rice farming, constantly seeking ways to reduce expenses and enhance production.

“Regular seminars and discussions organized by the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Provincial Agriculture Office, and the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) introducing new technologies and farming methods have been crucial,” Javellosa said.

PhilRice’s annual introduction of new technologies and rice varieties, along with the recommendations from the DA-Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), has significantly improved their yields. As certified seed growers, BINTIKU farmers can command higher prices. The support from the DA, including mechanization tools like harvesters, transplanters, rice mills, and flatbed dryers, has greatly improved efficiency.

Javellosa's journey reflects the resilience and dedication of the BINTIKU farming community, driven by a desire to ensure better yields and improved quality of life for all farmers.

BINTIKU member Randy Joloro, on the other hand, began his rice farming journey after moving from General Santos City to Surallah in 1998. Initially facing challenges due to lack of experience and financing, Joloro persevered and learned from seminars.

"Attending a seed growers meeting and seminar spurred my interest in rice farming, particularly given that rice is a staple food and our region is well-irrigated," he said.

His farming methods evolved from direct seeding to transplanting, which, despite requiring more labor, offered better weed management and pest control.

For him, the support from the DA, including free fertilizers and seeds, has been invaluable in improving productivity and crop management.

Joloro's story highlights the resilience and adaptability required in agriculture, the importance of continuous learning, and the support from governmental and agricultural bodies in achieving sustainable rice production and food security in the region.



“ I urge my fellow farmers to focus on planting rice to ensure our community's self-sufficiency. With the right techniques and support, rice farming can continue to thrive, meeting the dietary needs of our growing population.”

Randy Joloro



Unity in Cultivation: The Baan Farmers' Story of Transformation

Story from the Caraga Region

For Edwin Alwag, chairman of the Baan Integrated Farmers Association (BIFA), collective efforts ignite greater achievements. He believes that what the group has accomplished is a manifestation of their lifelong dedication to changing their lives for the better.

“When I assumed the chairmanship of the group in 2018, I had only one goal: improvement. I utilized my negotiation skills to lobby for assistance from various agencies, and that’s when the Department of Agriculture (DA)-Caraga became aware of us,” Alwag said.

Even before Alwag’s tenure, the then 30-member group had been adopting hybrid rice technology, attending numerous farmers’ field schools, and participating in rice-related activities to enhance their credentials as an association.

“We began receiving different interventions from various agencies, ranging from machineries to technical assistance including training. The group’s membership surged to 130 members, with a cumulative planting area of at least 260 hectares (ha) here in our Barangay,” he added.

Leading a mechanized farmer group, the association became the cornerstone of mechanized farming system in Butuan City.

From rice transplanters and four-wheel tractors to harvesters, solar and mechanical dryers, water pumps, and

even irrigation dams, the group embraced a comprehensive approach to modernize their agricultural practices.

To fully maximize the interventions provided by the DA, the group devised a rental business for its machinery. BIFA profits from this endeavor while simultaneously offering the services at a much lower rental price to farmers from other areas.

Adopting hybrid rice technology is not new to the association, as some members started as early as 2011. However, due to concerns about the cost, some were undecided about making the shift. This changed when the association received free hybrid rice seeds from the DA.

Marivic Garcillano, one of the members whose area was selected for a free technology demonstration of hybrid rice, shared that her farming life changed after adopting the technology.

“Before, my 1.5-ha area usually yielded around 120 bags, but I was shocked during the harvest of the technology demonstration as it reached 216 bags. We were extremely happy at that time, and that’s when I decided to fully embrace hybrid rice technology,” she said.

Apart from the technology demonstration, the DA has also provided them with free fertilizers, biological control agents, soil ameliorants, and technical assistance.



Felicita Bagtilay, a farmer who has been with the group since its inception, believes that no one can ever achieve greatness without continuous learning.

Bagtilay also emphasized that practicing and implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) has changed her approach to tending her crops, significantly boosting her production.

“ By joining the association, I have been exposed to different rice farming methods that are beneficial to my farm, such as the Palay Check System. I was unaware of this before—its importance and how it affects my yield. But I am grateful for the opportunity to apply these methods on my farm.”

Felicita Bagtilay

Leveraging each other's strengths, collaborating, and striving towards a common goal—served as the foundation of Edwin and his team's success.

Moving forward they aspire to be a Big Brother under the DA's Farm and Fisheries Clustering and Consolidation (F2C2) Program and accommodate two other associations from neighboring barangays for a cumulative 400 ha of planting area.



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Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund
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