Featured Stories

Abundance after the drought: a bumper harvest for Mindanao farmers after the 2015-2016 El Niño

FAO, DA unveil operations centre for DRRM and CCA in agriculture

Crowdsourcing technologies for real-time crop forecasting

FAO and New Zealand partner to support conflict and drought-affected municipalities in Cotabato Province

Enhancing resilience, sustainability and production in fisheries and aquaculture

Philippine agriculture and the Sustainable Development Goals
Welcome to the fourth FAO Philippines Newsletter for 2016. The year has been immensely fulfilling, marked by several developments both on the global and local levels.

For FAO Philippines, 2016 was an opportunity to rigorously test our core expertise and capacities to provide solutions to some of the most immense challenges of our time: hunger, poverty, diminishing natural resources.

In this newsletter, we present some of our milestones in the past quarter.

Our work in the area of disaster risk reduction and management and climate change adaptation (DRRM and CCA) in 2016 was punctuated by the positive results of our El Niño emergency response and the launch of the new DRR Operations Center at the Department of Agriculture.

2016 was indeed a year for climate action and the COP22 in Morocco has further emphasized the urgent need to work together to mitigate and minimize the impacts of climate extremes. This could not be more relevant to the agriculture sector in the Philippines which has absorbed, on average, 27 percent of the economic impacts caused by natural hazards and disasters from 1995 to 2013. According to Government data, losses from disasters jumped to 37 percent from 2010-2013.

Improving the flow of information and forecasting is becoming more important and urgent as crop production cycles are affected by several factors, including climate change. Taking advantage of new technologies that are largely untapped in agriculture, FAO forged a partnership with the Philippine Statistics Authority to study the potential of crowdsourcing via SMS or text messaging to strengthen agricultural market information systems.

In the past quarter, we have also been greatly involved in strengthening the fisheries and aquaculture sector hand in hand with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR). Together, we have been working toward enhancing the climate resilience and improving feed formulations, which could potentially improve the production of milkfish and tilapia – the two major sources of protein of Filipinos.

In Mindanao, we continue to work with various partners to help restore the livelihoods of farmers and fishers affected by conflict and natural disasters. Recently, I have had the honour of meeting bilaterally with Sec. Datu Abul Khayr Alonto, Chair of the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) and we expect greater collaboration in 2017 and beyond.

Several other activities in the past three months have also allowed us to align our work and priorities with our key partners both in the Government and the international community. Among these is a technical workshop on the Sustainable Development Goals, which we also feature in this newsletter. As many of us are aware, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has taken off in a very encouraging way. Through this common vision, we will be able to address 17 interconnected priorities, while seeing clearly how each of them are essential to the achievement of all the others. We also held a donor briefing in December to apprise our development partners about the progress of our work and our strategic directions for the coming year.

I would like to personally thank our donors and partners for allowing us to take on these significant tasks. Their generous support, mutual respect and partnership has enabled FAO to contribute to improving the sustainability of agriculture, fisheries and forestry, all of which are now seen as fundamental parts of the solution to the range of challenges we face today.

I sincerely hope that the new year will continue to bring greater possibilities and resources for us to work together.

I wish you the best of 2017.

José Luis Fernández
FAO Representative in the Philippines
A bumper harvest punctuated the end of the year for farmers assisted by FAO in 25 municipalities hit hardest by El Niño.

This is a long-awaited moment for families whose agricultural livelihoods and incomes were severely disrupted by dry spells and drought that lasted 18 months.

“The effect of the drought on our livelihood was extreme and the situation was very worrying,” recalled Jose Cordero, a rice farmer from Tacurong Municipality in the province of Sultan Kudarat. “We experienced crop failure because there was not enough water. We were planting but we weren’t earning. Our expenses only increased when we attempted to save our crops by renting water pumps.”

Daisy Pama who is also from Sultan Kudarat recalls the rice shortage in their town. “We had to fall in line to buy rice. Each family would only be allowed to purchase 5kg per family per week. This was not enough. Our family of six normally consumes more than 7kg of rice each week.”

El Niño swept the Philippines from February 2015 to July 2016, leaving USD 323.5 million in damage and production losses in the agriculture sector.

Sixteen of the country’s 18 regions across the country’s three main island groups were affected. The impact was strongest in Mindanao, the second largest island group.

**FAO’s emergency response**

In response to a request from the Government, FAO supported the livelihood recovery of 5,500 farming households in four provinces, which were all placed under a state of calamity: Lanao del Sur, Sarangani, Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat. Affected crop areas in these provinces were reported at 92,000 hectares, or about 16 percent of the total crop areas affected in the country.

FAO’s emergency response project provided farm production inputs such as certified rice seeds, corn and vegetable seeds and fertilizer to enable the immediate resumption of livelihood activities and food production.

Within three to four months of receiving assistance, communities celebrated their first harvest after the prolonged drought.

“We had no income for more than eight months so we were very ...(continued on page 5)
A new DRRM/CCA centre to enable progress in the preparation and use of early warning forecasts, modern decision support tools, climate information and prediction systems and more capable institutions.

On 5 December 2016, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and FAO inaugurated the country’s first Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center (DRRM) for agriculture.

Envisioned to be a monitoring hub for natural calamities that pose a threat to the agriculture sector, the centre will serve as a crucial platform for decision makers and experts to enhance national preparedness and to coordinate response activities related to agriculture.

“In 2015, DA and FAO took a major step together in formulating the country’s first Strategic Plan of Action for DRR in Agriculture and Fisheries. In 2016, we launched the Integrating Agricultural Sectors in the National Adaptation Plan (NAP-Ag) Programme, which seeks to enhance the country’s institutional capacity to operationalize climate adaptation and disaster response strategies. It is in this Operations Center that we will see these plans and strategies action,” said FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández.

The facility, which is located at the DA compound in Quezon City, was renovated, fitted and furnished with essential risk and disaster monitoring and assessment tools and equipment through funding provided by FAO and its development partners, including the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection or ECHO, among others.

Also present at the inauguration ceremonies were DA Undersecretary for Operations Ariel Cayanan, DA Undersecretary for Administration, Agribusiness and Marketing, and Regional Engagement Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, DA Chief of Field Programs Operational Planning Division Christopher Morales, representatives of the embassies of Canada and New Zealand, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Facing disasters head on

“Our country is vulnerable to disasters and natural calamities. We have experienced some of the worst cases of strong typhoons here such as Pablo [Bopha], Yolanda [Haiyan], and the recent Typhoon Lawin [Haima] and El Niño, which heavily affected agricultural industries and production,” said DA Undersecretary Cayanan, who delivered a message on behalf of DA Undersecretary for Policy, Planning Research and Development and Regulations Segfredo Serrano.

“The establishment of the DA DRRM Operations Center through Special Order No. 816 is a testament that DA is seriously working on a more precise, substantive and effective DRRM in agriculture and fisheries. [The center] will ensure that all of DA’s DRRM-related activities, plans and programmes are properly implemented and sustained, as well as effectively managed and institutionalized,” he added.

In the Global Climate Risk Index 2017 published by GermanWatch, the Philippines ranks as the fifth most affected country in the world by climate-related disasters between
Earlier assistance in El Niño affected areas

FAO’s work in disaster response and resilience-building

FAO’s disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) work in the Philippines focuses on building the resilience of vulnerable farming and fishing communities to both natural and man-made disasters, and enhancing the Government’s capacity to address threats and respond to crises.

In recent years, FAO worked closely with DA, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, local government units and other relevant agencies in restoring agriculture and fisheries-based livelihoods affected by El Niño, typhoons, flooding and conflict. FAO has also been at the forefront of promoting best practice options, climate-smart methods, early warning systems and tools, innovative multi-hazard protocols, multi-stress tolerant crop varieties and modern geospatial technologies such as drones for pre-and post-disaster assessments. FAO also provided technical assistance in the formulation of the National La Niña Action Plan for the agriculture sector and the national Strategic Plan of Action for DRR in Agriculture and Fisheries, among others.

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Specifically, the centre will enable progress in the preparation and use of early warning forecasts, modern decision support tools, climate information and prediction systems and more capable institutions.

El Niño response (from page 3)

happy after the harvest,” expressed Daisy.

“We would not have been able to recover from debt if FAO and the government did not come to help us. Now we have rice for the family and we were able to sell the rest of our harvest,” she added.

Based on average yields reported by partner local government units, FAO estimates that beneficiary households harvested at least 16,500 tonnes of paddy rice. This is expected to generate 9,900 tonnes of milled rice, which is enough to feed approximately 87,000 people for one year.

Facilitating longer-term recovery

FAO’s El Niño response was also designed to build the disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation capacities of beneficiary communities. Through the project, about 100 local agricultural technicians and farmer-trainers are being equipped to train their respective communities on drought management, improved crop production and resilience to climate-stress.

Earlier assistance in El Niño affected areas

FAO’s assistance in El Niño-hit areas began in June 2015 and has so far reached nearly 60,000 farmers in Luzon and Mindanao.

From June to May 2016, FAO worked with the Government to address the livelihood recovery needs of 5,000 farming households in the provinces of Maguindanao and Cotabato that were affected by a combination of conflict, flooding and drought.

In Central Luzon, FAO also supported 43,890 farming households hit by drought followed by two successive strong typhoons in the last quarter of 2015.

Today, an additional 10,475 farmers and fishers in the Province of Cotabato are receiving assistance through a New Zealand-funded FAO project.

“FAO’s strong partnership with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, local government units and other government agencies allows us to ensure that timely assistance is provided to affected communities in the aftermath of disasters,” said FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández.

Technology’s Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).
Crowdsourcing technologies for real-time crop forecasting

C ould farmers with cellular phones be key to improving the speed and reliability of crop production forecasts? This is the subject of an ongoing pilot exercise being carried out by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) with support from FAO, which aims to assess the potential of crowdsourcing technologies to strengthen agricultural market information systems.

As a largely agricultural country where mobile technologies have deeply penetrated the countryside, the Philippines is an ideal location to test how effectively farm-level, real-time information could be collected through SMS or text messaging, and how this could help the government produce reliable crop production estimates. Such forecasts are vital in protecting national interests from food security to the state of the economy.

How does crowdsourcing work?

Crowdsourcing is essentially gathering information or resources from a crowd of people through the use of technological platforms such as cellular networks and devices, the internet or social media.

This mechanism has been in existence for over a decade and offers vast opportunities to improve the flow of information but has been largely untapped by the agriculture sector.

Pilot exercise

The FAO-PSA project will test various schemes for crowdsourcing via text messaging in Pampanga. This rice-growing province was selected because of its accessibility and its consistently good participation in the monthly rice and corn situation reporting system.

Farmers who are part of the control group are expected to monitor and send information on standing crops for harvest, production area, production volume, and the type of ecosystem being planted on (i.e. irrigated, rain-fed).

The data will be consolidated and transferred to an Excel-based system that automatically computes forecasts. These are updated in real-time as data comes through. The system output will then be reviewed, processed and analyzed.

Crop production forecasts play an important role in planning and policymaking. Therefore, timely forecasts are crucial in avoiding breakdowns in the food value chain. Addressing food needs and maintaining normal market behavior also requires knowing the expected availability of produce in a country.

“FAO recognizes the significance of timely crop forecasting as a vital tool in addressing food price volatility, which has strong implications on the economy and is very closely tied to issues such as hunger and poverty,” said Aristeo Portugal, Assistant FAO Representative for Programme. “At the end of this study, we, along with PSA, hope to find that the system works and proves to be the solution we have been looking for. This will not only help the Philippines but also economies that are largely depend on agriculture.”

This project is part of a larger multi-country FAO project funded by the Bill and Malinda Gates Foundation entitled “Strengthening Agricultural Market Information Systems globally and in selected countries using innovative methods and digital technology.”
Farming and fishing families in Mindanao are no stranger to both natural and human-induced disasters. For over four decades now, their lives and livelihoods have been disrupted by recurrent displacement as a result of periodic armed clashes. In the past five years, strong typhoons and widespread drought have worsened their struggle.

National accounts reveal that 11 of the 20 poorest provinces are in this primarily agriculture-dependent region. Some three-fourths of the population of Mindanao or about 12.6 million people fall under levels 2 (mild chronic food insecurity), 3 (moderate chronic food insecurity) and 4 (severe chronic food insecurity), on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. Of them, 1.96 million were found to be suffering from severe chronic food insecurity in 2015.

“Equipping farming and fishing communities with skills, knowledge and resources to recover from crises, to minimize losses from future disasters, and to eventually rise from poverty is among the most important programmes of FAO in the country,” said FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández.

Since 2015, FAO has been working with the Government to address priority agricultural development issues in the region through its Mindanao Strategic Programme for Agriculture and Agribusiness (MSPAA). While yet to be fully-funded, the MSPAA has served as a framework for the implementation of at least five projects in areas most severely affected by natural and man-made calamities.

**New Zealand funds USD3-million FAO project**

Through a USD3-million grant from the New Zealand Government, FAO is currently supporting the recovery of 10,475 farming and fishing households in the Province of Cotabato.

The project, which will operate until October 2017, aims to restart agricultural livelihoods and improve the coping abilities and resilience of smallholders in five municipalities: Aleosan, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pigkawayan and Pikit.

The distribution of farm and fisheries inputs is currently underway. This includes rice, corn and vegetable seeds, fruit tree seedlings, fertilizer, drying nets, small farm machinery, post-harvest equipment, hand tools, livestock and poultry, tilapia fingerlings and gillnets.

To complement these resources, FAO is also conducting climate-smart farmer field schools and other livelihood skills trainings, training on basic planning for disaster risk reduction and management in agriculture including in agriculture hazard and vulnerability mapping and analysis, good practice options and technologies, and early warning and disaster preparedness.

“FAO’s work in Mindanao is implemented in close partnership with the Government through its various agencies on the national, regional and local levels. FAO also coordinates with the Mindanao Development Authority and works closely with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao the Bangsamoro Development Agency, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and other pertinent agencies and local government units.

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Improving the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture is especially relevant in an archipelago like the Philippines, where millions of families rely on the sea for daily sustenance and income.

With capture fisheries in a very critical state, efforts by FAO in partnership with the Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) aim to harmonise human development requirements with the urgent need to protect and effectively manage coastal resources. Strengthening local capacities to formulate and implement science-based fisheries resource management plans are complemented by projects under FAO’s Regional Initiative on the Sustainable Intensification of Aquaculture for Blue Growth (RIBG), which balance growth and conservation, and industrial and small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture.

Recent projects in the Philippines include the promotion of sustainable fisheries, livelihood recovery, and enhancing the potential of aquaculture, such as tilapia and milkfish production, to contribute to food security and provide sustainable rural livelihoods.

FAO’s work in fisheries and aquaculture contributes to the achievement of Goal 14 (life below water) of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

**Improving feed formulation and feeding management**

Aquaculture is making significant headway as the fastest-growing food sector. Among the sub-sectors in fisheries, it provides the most potential to reduce hunger and improve nutrition, alleviate poverty, generate economic growth, and ensure better use of natural resources.

For Filipinos across all socio-economic brackets, milkfish and tilapia are among the aquaculture products that serve as the main sources of protein. But to make them more available, accessible and affordable, the industry must address rising production costs and feeding management issues.

Feed comprises roughly 50 to 70 percent of the cost of aquaculture production. Proper nutrition of stocks and feeding management are also very crucial to production. Unfortunately, most fish farmers do not have access to quality feeds due to lack of capital. Moreover, poor feeding management adversely affects profitability and is one of the leading causes of water pollution in mariculture areas.

FAO has been working with BFAR to promote enhanced feeding and feed management standards in tilapia and milkfish production by developing alternative feed formulations to lower costs, address the gap in aquaculture nutrition and minimize impacts to the environment.

Feed trials have recently been concluded for both milkfish and tilapia. Proper feeding management protocols were also introduced to promote higher yields and prevent possible
environmental impacts, including fish kills, that could result from the improper administration of feed by growers.

**Strengthening resilience**

Continuous climate and environmental-related strain on tilapia fishpond operations have led to production trends to fall below the low-growth scenario projected in the 2006 Comprehensive National Fisheries Industry Development Plan.

To address this, FAO and BFAR have been introducing climate-adaptive farming technologies that are suited to local conditions. These include the pilot-testing of climate-resilient tilapia grow-out ponds and the establishment of information systems, farm-level weather advisories and automatic weather stations in the provinces of Isabela in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley), Pampanga in Region 3 (Central Luzon) and Camarines Sur in Region 5 (Bicol). Potential livelihood diversification options, crop insurance and financial systems are also being explored to further increase the resilience of tilapia farmers.

Under the project, development plans of municipal local government units will also incorporate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures.

**Addressing disease**

Shrimp farming is a major segment of the local aquaculture industry in the Philippines. However, growers in the Philippines and other shrimp-producing countries have been beset with a number of diseases that have caused serious declines in shrimp production. In recent years the Acute Hepatopancreatic Necrosis Disease (AHPND), commonly referred to as the Early Mortality Syndrome (EMS), has been plaguing the industry.

FAO is involved in global efforts to reduce and manage the risks of AHPND in cultured shrimp. In the Philippines, FAO and BFAR have been conducting consultations for the formulation and implementation of the AHPND National Action Plan.

**Livelihood recovery and improving incomes**

FAO assists fisherfolk affected by natural disasters and armed conflict to re-establish their livelihoods and become more resilient to future shocks. This includes the provision of fishing gear and production inputs, introduction of safety at sea practices, post-harvest and value-adding methods and strengthening entrepreneurship skills and market linkages. In recent years, FAO supported fisher families affected by Typhoon Haiyan and the armed clashes in western and central Mindanao.

**Sustainable fisheries**

Recognizing that capture fisheries faces serious threats to sustainability, FAO continues to implement projects on fisheries management to promote sustainable fishing. FAO is currently working with BFAR, local governments and fisherfolk communities bordering the Samar Sea, an important fishing ground in the Visayas Region, which has already experienced a significant degradation of marine resources.

As part of its assistance to 11 coastal municipalities, FAO provided support in preparing a catalogue of fishing gear and methods in the Samar Sea. The document serves as an inventory of fishing gear and provides a basis to evaluate prevailing fishing activities in the area. It also identifies issues concerning conflicts in the utilization of coastal resources.

Information gathered through the catalogue exercise was also used in formulating the Samar Sea Fisheries Management Plan (SSFMP). Local stakeholders, local executives, NGOs, and community members are now taking ownership and are actively engaged in implementing the plan.

Through the project, around 400 fisherfolk also received fishing gear and mussel culture materials, and were oriented on the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM). FAO in partnership with the the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center also raised awareness on EAFM among national and regional policy makers, leaders, executives and decision makers, who are involved in planning and policy making for fisheries management.

**Moving forward**

In order to achieve substantial impacts at the country and regional levels for the RIBG, FAO has identified innovative farming practices, which can significantly contribute to the sustainable growth of aquaculture.

FAO Philippines is also in the process of mobilizing a new aquaculture project to scale-up innovative rice-fish farming and climate resilient tilapia pond culture practices. The Philippines is included in the implementation of this two-year technical cooperation, along with Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, and Viet Nam.
On 25 September 2015, 193 member states of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – committing the international community to end poverty and hunger and achieve sustainable development over the next 15 years (2016-2030).

With food and agriculture at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, FAO’s work on the global level supports the entire range of global goals. In the Philippines, the Organization’s work directly contributes to at least 13 of the 17 SDGs.

Ending hunger and poverty requires addressing socio-economic factors

Agriculture’s role in ending poverty and hunger, the main thrusts of SDGs 1 and 2, is most crucial in the country’s rural areas where the most vulnerable farming and fishing communities live and work. But in order to address these priorities in a sustainable way, development must take into consideration a broad range of other socio-economic dimensions. These include gender-related issues, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, peace justice and strong institutions, all of which are captured in SDGs 5, 8, 10 and 16.

FAO programmes in the Philippines have a strong focus on promoting investments in rural development, bringing in the best technical knowledge and internationally recognized methods that are also suited to local conditions in order to effectively improve agriculture-based livelihoods.

Farming and fishing communities are being equipped with skills and tools to help them bounce back from crises, increase production, minimize post-harvest losses, add value to their products and tap larger markets while contributing to environmental sustainability and economic growth.

FAO is also working with the Government to ensure that policies support fair agribusiness transactions and uphold the rights of the marginalized.

With greater capabilities and opportunities, farmers, fishers, and indigenous peoples increase their potential to become part of the solution to ensuring that adequate, nutritious and affordable food continues to be accessible to a growing population.

Enabling sustainable food systems: doing more and better with less

Today, the environment is no longer viewed as a purely extractive resource. SDG 12 highlights sustainable consumption and production: a call to produce more and better, using less resources and without further degrading the environment. And for food systems to contribute to addressing poverty, hunger and a host of other development issues, it is increasingly important to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water clean energy, which are covered by SDGs 6 and 7.

All these are among the many challenges that FAO, along with the Government and the academia are solving together.

Key interventions include, among others, the Regional Rice Initiative, which promotes methods to reduce the cost of producing rice while increasing yield.

In fisheries and aquaculture, FAO helps address diseases in marine species, develop more optimal feed formulations for fish production, and capacities for planning and implementation of coastal resource management strategies within an ecosystem perspective.

FAO’s efforts in water, drought and watershed management are equipping smallholders to gain access to water and manage their water resources, while efforts are also being directed toward developing and mainstreaming bioenergy strategies for enhanced food security.

Adapting to climate and environmental change

Climate change is perhaps one of the greatest challenges that confront the agriculture sector. In the Philippines, its impacts have been more pronounced in recent years with record typhoons and prolonged droughts.

FAO and the Government have been laying the foundation for more resilient agriculture since 2009. Much of this early work continues to facilitate progress in improving strategic climate risk management and accelerating the uptake of medium- and long-term risk reduction practices across the policy level, the agriculture industry and down to farming and
Viewing the links between climate change, life below water and life on land, which are underscored in SDGs 13, 14 and 15, FAO and the Government are working together to develop and implement integrated solutions that will ensure that future generations will have the resources they need to continue on the path of sustainable development.

Engaging partners
On 19 October 2016, FAO Philippines organized a technical workshop to increase the awareness government agency partners on the crucial role of food and agriculture in achieving the SDGs as well as FAO’s capacities to support the implementation and monitoring progress. The workshop served as a springboard for future collaboration and SDG 17 (partnership for the goals) as 19 key national agencies and line agencies actively engaged in the identification of challenges and issues faced by the government in achieving SDG targets, and in identifying possible areas of support from FAO. Participants also cited several FAO project experiences and good results that they can draw from in designing and mobilizing SDG-related work.

Areas that emerged as common priorities for FAO assistance are advocacy and awareness; capacity building and promotion of best sustainable practices; technical assistance in improving governance, data systems and preparing frameworks and plans; and livelihood support.

New FAO publications

**2016 Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Insecurity – Investing in a Zero Hunger Generation**

In the first post-MDG report of its kind, FAO warns that progress in reducing hunger and improving nutrition has slowed in more recent years and many countries must pick up the pace in order to meet the SDG global goal of zero hunger by 2030. The report reveals that, region-wide, nearly one in three children suffers from stunting. Download a copy at http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6481e.pdf

**The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2016**

SOFA assesses issues on agricultural and rural development in the context of global food security. The 2016 SOFA report centres on the double challenge of food security and climate change presenting alternatives to tackle the two as a whole. Download a copy at http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6030e.pdf

**Multi-sectoral study on Agribusiness Venture Arrangement policy and implementation under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program**

The study presents interesting findings on the state of agribusiness venture arrangements (AVAs) between agribusiness firms and agrarian reform beneficiaries in the Philippines. It focuses on leasehold and contract growing arrangements in the Mindanao region, particularly those that involve banana, cacao, oil palm and pineapple production. Download a copy at http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6239e.pdf
FAO Philippines held its annual end-of-year donor briefing on 7 December 2016 in Makati City where it presented its key activities in 2016 and its strategic directions for 2017.

“FAO in the Philippines is accelerating efforts to promote scientific, internationally-recognized solutions and to address natural resource conservation and management needs. We are also working more closely with the Government to strengthen the institutional environment, which will inevitably dictate how fast we can charge forward in implementing solutions to the problems of the agriculture sector,” said FAO Representative José Luis Fernández. “As we endeavor to respond to the impacts of crises, we are also working to manage climate risks on a national level, as well as on the farm level, while we continue to promote mechanisms and forge linkages to help farmers and fishers improve their incomes and get out of the cycle of poverty once and for all.”

The event was attended by high level representatives from the donor community, including the embassies of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, the Russian Federation, Singapore, South Africa, the delegation of the European Union, Agence Française De Development (AFD), Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the European Union’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and World Bank.

Also in attendance were senior government and counterparts from the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Agriculture (DA) and its Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (DAF-ARMM), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Health’s National Nutrition Council (DOH-NNC), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Office of the Vice President, and the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP).

World Food Day

To commemorate the 36th World Food Day, the Department of Agriculture (DA), in close collaboration with FAO, organized a series of public events to draw national awareness to the theme of “Climate is changing, food and agriculture must too.”

The week-long celebration, which was held at the DA Complex in Quezon City, Philippines, opened with the annual nationwide mosaic poster-making contest and the launch of the National Photo and Product Exhibit on 10 October.

Festivities culminated with a ceremony on 14 October at the Quezon City Memorial Circle, where the officials and staff of DA and all its attached agencies joined together for the annual candle-lighting and recited the World Food Day pledge.

“Climate change is one of the most complex challenges of our time, but it is not without a solution. The agriculture sector in the Philippines is particularly at high risk, given the country’s geographic location,” said FAO Representative José Luis Fernández.

Speaking on behalf of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, DA Undersecretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said that, “The DA has been proactively pushing for solutions and measures that seek to boost resilience of the Filipino farmers against weather extremes, including prolonged droughts and severe floods.”

The following week, FAO Representation in the Philippines also held a week-long exhibit at the RCBC Plaza in Makati City, featuring winning entries to the World Food Day poster-making contest and several videos on climate change and disaster response. Also at the culminating ceremonies were United Nations Resident Representative Ola Almgren and UN World Food Programme Country Director ad interim Martin Bettelley.

Philippines Development Forum

Along with other members of the UN Country Team (UNCT), FAO participated in the 2016 Philippines Development Forum (PDF), which was held at the SMX Convention Center in Davao City from 8 to 9 November 2016. Attended by different stakeholders from the private and public sectors, this year’s multi-sectoral dialogue focused on the theme, “Poverty Reduction through the Vigorous Implementation of the 10-point Socio-economic Agenda.”

FAO Representative José Luis Fernández represented the UNCT as a panelist in the Sustainable Rural Development working group. During the event, he spoke about the UN Sustainable Development Goals as they relate rural development in the Philippines. He also discussed key challenges and constraints, particularly in addressing poverty as well as the agriculture sector’s potential to better contribute to the rural economy, addressing land tenure management and malnutrition.

Proposed options and solutions were also presented, including support for inclusive agricultural growth for improved livelihoods and food security, promoting responsible agricultural investments (RAI) to encourage active participation of rural communities, and the passage of key legislative actions, among others. In view of working to manage climate risks on a national level, as well as on the farm level, while we continue to promote mechanisms and forge linkages to help farmers and fishers improve their incomes and get out of the cycle of poverty once and for all.”

The PDF is the primary mechanism of the government for facilitating substantive policy dialogue among stakeholders on the country’s development agenda.