



Food and Agriculture Organization
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OUR PRIORITIES

The FAO Strategic Objectives

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Help eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition
- 

Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable
- 

Reduce rural poverty
- 

Enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems
- 

Increase the resilience of livelihoods to disasters

Greetings from the FAO Representation in the Philippines! I am pleased to welcome you once again to a new issue of our country newsletter.

Bringing you stories from the field and updates about the development and challenges in the agriculture sector is always a fruitful experience for all of us in the team. It is through this that we are able to take a moment to remember and fully appreciate that amidst all the complicated acronyms, scientific terminologies and processes, the work that we do at FAO is for and about people—the poorest and most vulnerable sectors, and those who rely on them for food and nutrition. In this respect, the first quarter of 2017 has been particularly eventful for us, with several of our technical activities at the forefront.

This newsletter features stories on how the various disaster risk reduction and climate resilience support tools developed through our projects are being used as a basis for planning and decision-making from the national level down to farm operations. Our proactive collaboration with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration of the Department of Science and Technology has been non-stop since 2011. Since then, we have been intensifying efforts to bring climate and weather information products and services within the reach of agricultural planners, as well as farmers and fisherfolk whose livelihoods are severely affected by weather extremes.

We are also encouraged by the positive feedback we have been receiving from our partner government agencies and local government units who have decided to sustain FAO projects using their own funds. In the Visayas region, the provincial governments of Aklan and Capiz, as well as ten of their municipalities, are now taking over the early warning system for food and nutrition security that we have established through our partnership with the National Nutrition Council of the Department of Health, and with funding from UNICEF.

Across the country, FAO's farm business schools are being replicated by the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Agricultural Training Institute and Agricultural Marketing Assistance Service, the Department of Agrarian Reform and local government units. They are seeing real potential in improving the incomes and quality of life of rural communities by equipping farmers to become entrepreneurs.

There is good news even in disaster-hit areas in Central Luzon. With fair weather conditions from the beginning of 2017,

farmers are now expecting a bumper harvest that would hopefully offset their losses from the long drought and successive typhoons in 2016. FAO has been working with the DA to provide fertilizer and other farm inputs to restore livelihoods and ensure bountiful yields.

In Central Mindanao, we are continuously implementing resilience building efforts such as climate-smart farmer field schools and community-based disaster risk reduction and management. These, in addition to the provision of farming and fisheries production inputs, are facilitating the resumption and sustainability of livelihoods in communities most affected by conflict, drought and flooding. The New Zealand Government's generous support is enabling us to expand the work that we have started in the region.

Also in this newsletter are articles on some of the recently launched FAO technical cooperation projects, including one that is assisting the Government in formulating a national eAgriculture strategy. This effort is envisioned to harmonize and optimize investments in information and communication technology (ICT) in support of the agriculture sector.

In the field of forestry, we talk about the early progress of the renewed FAO-EU FLEGT Programme, which is assisting the Government in addressing illegal logging issues while strengthening forest governance.

Indeed, the Philippines is in a very interesting period of development. It is, in every way, forging a clear path toward sustainable growth, with agriculture playing a vital role. As a middle income economy, it is gradually transitioning to having adequate resources and technical capacities to face a future that is fraught with challenges. In such a setting, its needs for development assistance are quite unique and evolving. But it is also a sensitive and opportune time when sustained support can propel it to finally make that big leap toward becoming a global leader in agriculture and food security. FAO remains committed to see this through and it is my fervent hope that this year brings us more opportunities to work together to make this a reality.

I wish you all the best of 2017.



José Luis Fernández
FAO Representative in the Philippines



Malacañan Palace, 7 March 2017
FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol at the launching of the National Color-Coded Agricultural Guide (CCAG) Map of the Department of Agriculture's Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) programme



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The provincial governments of Aklan and Capiz, and ten of their municipalities sign a memorandum of agreement to sustain FAO's Early Warning System for Food and Nutrition Security project

Local government units in Visayas sign agreement to sustain food and nutrition security efforts

Local government units (LGUs) in the provinces of Aklan and Capiz are experiencing the benefits of evidence-based planning and decision making to address impending food and nutrition crises. Over the past two years, access to timely and reliable information has enabled their chief executives, planners and decision makers to tackle potential problems, and deliver support to households that need it most.

The two provincial governments and ten of their municipalities received assistance from FAO, which worked closely with the National Nutrition Council (NNC) of the Department of Health to establish and operationalize early warning systems for food and nutrition security (EWS-FNS).

The effort, which is known to communities as "Project Inform," capacitated LGUs in collecting, processing and analyzing data on food production, climate, food prices, environmental factors, household food security and dietary diversity. Data encoders were also trained to operate the database developed through the project to support the quarterly data collection in the household and municipal levels.

Barangay health workers and nutrition scholars were also trained to conduct household interviews and measure the height and weight of children aged 0 to 59 months. The data they gather also feed into the Operation Timbang (OPT), the annual weight and height census of the NNC.

To further boost capacities, the project enhanced the OPT system by automating the government's manual process, which used to be time consuming and susceptible to error. Now dubbed as the eOPT Plus Tool, the electronic system automates the determination of nutritional status of children, facilitates the aggregation of data at the municipal level and

the generation of barangay-level master lists for children of pre-school age. FAO again supported NNC in enhancing the eOPT Plus Tool to ensure accuracy of data and wider coverage of children targeted for weighing.

Tangible results

Based on the information generated by the EWS-FNS, FAO assisted local officials in designing interventions to address impending food insecurity and malnutrition. Following the approval of their project proposals, FAO provided targeted barangays with agricultural inputs such as vegetable and rice seeds, farming tools for household food production and kitchen gardens, poultry such as ducks and native chickens as additional source of livelihood. Some barangays received construction materials to improve access to water for both household and agricultural use.

Sustaining the project

Encouraged by the results of the entire process, LGUs have claimed ownership of the project and are determined to continue what has been started by FAO and NNC, this time using their own resources.

All participating provincial and municipal government units signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with FAO, which took effect immediately at the conclusion of Project Inform.

Under the MOA, the provincial local government units (PLGU) of Aklan and Capiz, through their provincial health offices, have committed to lead the quarterly monitoring of the EWS-FNS implementation. They will also chair the Program Management Committee during the quarterly presentation of results and discussion of EWS-FNS related matters. Through their annual appropriations, PLGUs will provide logistics support for the continuing

operation of the management committee and submit updates on the progress of the EWS-FNS to the NNC regional office, which serves as the national oversight of the system.

The municipal local government units (MLGU) of Dao, Dumarao, Ivisan, Jamindan and Tapaz in Capiz Province, and Altavas, Batan, Ibajay, Malinao and Tangalan in Aklan Province have all committed to pass a resolution in support of the EWS-FNS effort.

They will be responsible for designating members of the EWS-FNS Team and other relevant officials to ensure active support in implementation. They will also facilitate the timely conduct of quarterly data collection, meetings and report dissemination to key officials, as well as provide continuing budgetary and logistics support for the sustainability of EWS as part of the local monitoring system.

The MLGUs have also committed continuing leadership to ensure the cooperation of different sectors and departments in implementing the EWS-FNS.

Finally, PLGUs and MLGUs will revitalize their provincial and municipal nutrition committees so that the results of the EWS-FNS are utilized in recommending policies, planning appropriate programmes and in preparing Municipal Nutrition Action Plans to address food security and nutrition problems.

The FAO project entitled "Adopting the Early Warning System for Food and Nutrition Security (EWS-FNS) as basis for local programme planning for timely response to impending food and nutrition crises in 10 municipalities in Region VI (Western Visayas)" was implemented from October 2014 to December 2016 through the funding support provided by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).



Government recognizes FAO's support in developing decision support tools for disaster and climate resilience planning

FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández (third from right) accepts the PAGASA Wind Vane Award on behalf of the Organization.

Natural disasters such as typhoons, flooding and drought have cost the agriculture sector in the Philippines more than USD 4 billion in damages over the last ten years.

As weather extremes and climate impacts continue to threaten food security and the livelihood of about a third of the labour force, the government has demonstrated a firm resolve to boost the sector's resilience. In support of this national agenda, FAO's work in the country has been largely focused on developing and mainstreaming responsive approaches to disaster risk reduction and management and climate change adaptation (DRRM/CCA).

Key to the success of the Organization's DRRM/CCA efforts is its collaboration with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). Since 2011, the two organizations have been providing planners and decision makers from the national government down to local government units, as well as farmers and fisherfolk, with reliable and timely weather and climate information in the form of forecasts, projections, farm-level advisories, early warning systems and tools.

"The right information at the right time is the agriculture sector's best defence against disasters. Our work with PAGASA is therefore very crucial to the success of our larger DRRM/CCA strategy," said José Luis Fernández, FAO Representative in the Philippines. "The decision support information and tools produced through our joint efforts form the basis of plans,

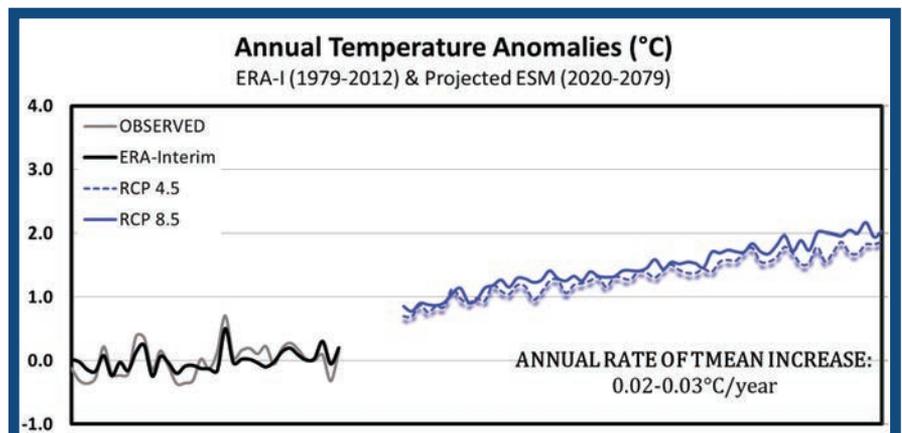
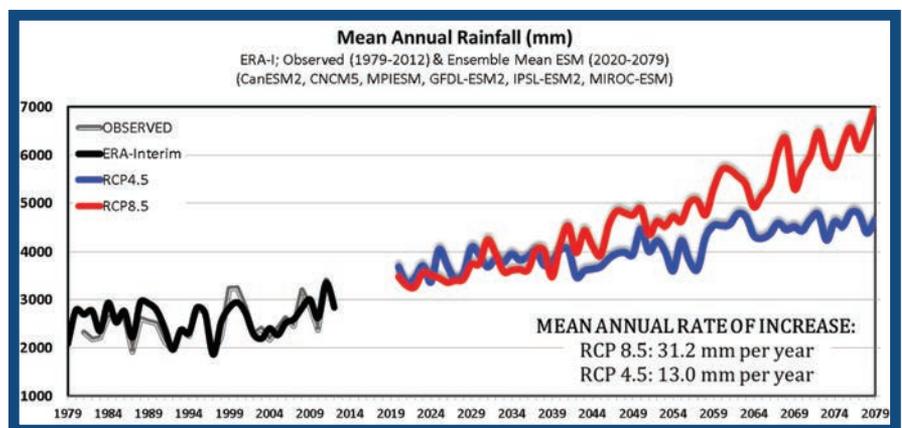
policies, operations and actions that will significantly influence the future of the country's food and nutrition security, its battle against poverty and climate change, among others," he added.

PAGASA confers Wind Vane Award to FAO

On 23 March 2017, PAGASA conferred the Wind Vane Award to FAO in recognition of its contribution and support to the achievement of the

institution's mandates. The awarding ceremony was one of the highlights of PAGASA's 152nd anniversary and National World Meteorological Day Celebration. FAO is the first UN agency in the country to receive the award.

"PAGASA, through this development partnership with FAO Philippines, has shown that weather and climate information and products can be mainstreamed and localized with



Rainfall and climate change projections from 2020-2079 were generated by PAGASA as a result of its collaborative partnership with FAO

the support of local government units, national and regional government agencies and academic institutions. Benefits from the use of weather and climate information are being proven by multi-disciplinary science,” said PAGASA Administrator Vicente Malano.

He added that “FAO has also been appreciative of PAGASA for the issuance of quick and timely early warnings, especially for populations such as upland farmers and indigenous people who live in vulnerable ecosystems highly susceptible to heavy rains and flooding.”

FAO's work with PAGASA

Analiza Solis, Officer-in-Charge of the Climate Monitoring and Prediction Section (CLIMPS) of PAGASA explains that the cooperation between the two organizations are all anchored on PAGASA's mission to protect lives and livelihoods from disasters combined with FAO's mission to eradicate hunger and increase the resilience of the agriculture sector. These projects “promote climate-smart agriculture, reduce disaster risk through the use of weather and climate information and services, and capacitate PAGASA's technical personnel to enhance products and services for the agriculture sector,” she said.

“Assessments of Climate Change Impacts and Mapping of Vulnerability to Food Insecurity under Climate Change to Strengthen Household Food Security (AMICAF)” was one of the earliest projects implemented under the FAO-PAGASA partnership. It ran from 2011 to 2014, with funding from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan.

“Among the major outputs of this project are the climate change projections, which were then provided to different planning institutions of the government, private sectors and others. These served as basis for climate change adaptation plans and studies. Local government units also benefited from this data to formulate their local climate change adaptation plans,” Solis said.

With the success of AMICAF, FAO and PAGASA continued working together from 2012 to 2015 under the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department's Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO). It was a larger effort to consolidate capacities for disaster risk reduction in agriculture in Southeast Asia. In the Philippines, the project focused on the Bicol, Southern Mindanao and CARAGA regions, and provided an opportunity for PAGASA to extend its expertise to the agriculture sector once again. Short-range and long-range climate forecasts that were developed for the Department of Agriculture's (DA) regional field offices and local government units under the programme continue to be a vital resource, especially the municipal and farm-level forecasts that are still used by farmers and fisherfolk. PAGASA also generated nine-day climate forecasts to support farmer operations in over 25 municipalities. The Administration continued to expand their work after

the programme closed and has so far produced forecasts for over 100 municipalities nationwide.

DIPECHO also paved the way for the Philippines to establish its leadership in the realm of climate change and disaster resilience by sharing its knowledge with neighboring countries.

“DRRM and CC technologies developed in the Philippines have been gaining traction internationally. There have been a lot of requests to learn from what PAGASA is doing, as many of these are considered cutting edge,” explained Claudius Gabinete, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Specialist at FAO Philippines.

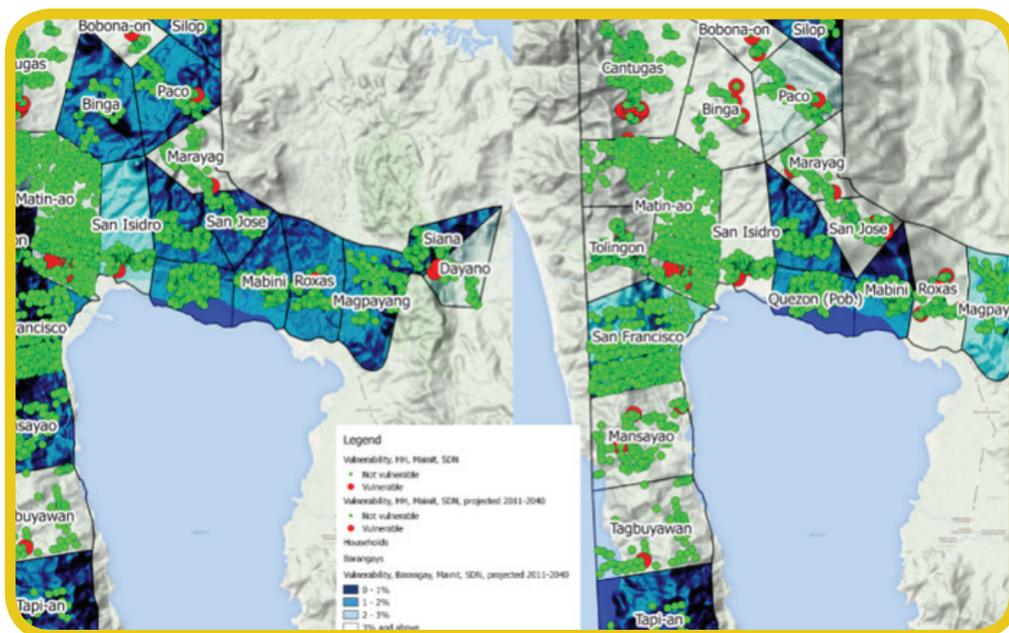
PAGASA and FAO further expanded their support to the fisheries and aquaculture sub-sectors through a partnership with the DA's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR). The project was originally designed to enhance the climate resilience of tilapia production in the provinces of Pampanga, Nueva Ecija and Camarines Sur. But with the proactive collaboration among the

able to do this without the critical collaboration with PAGASA and the support of FAO,” explained Roy Ortega, Officer-in-Charge of BFAR's Aquaculture Division.

National adaptation plans

Integrating Agriculture in National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag), a recently launched FAO global project, has opened a fresh opportunity for FAO to support PAGASA in strengthening its capability in sub-seasonal to seasonal forecasting, and to develop forecast products on sea wave height and solar radiation that would cater to farmers and fisherfolk.

NAP-Ag is funded by Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety through its International Climate Initiative and is implemented in eight countries including the Philippines, Kenya, Nepal, Thailand, Uganda, Uruguay, Viet Nam and Zambia.



Through the AMICAF Project, FAO assisted government partners in conducting inter-disciplinary analysis and mapping climate change impacts on staple crops such as rice and corn, surface water availability for irrigation and farm gate price of rice. This data serves as a basis for the analysis of impacts and household vulnerability to food insecurity. This example shows, current (left map) and projected (right map) prevalence of malnutrition of households and barangays in Mainit, Surigao Del Norte on the northeastern side of Mindanao.

three agencies, coverage was expanded to 11 aquaculture products including cage and pond cultured tilapia, milkfish, grouper, seaweed, shellfish, shrimp and crab. Several climate information tools and products were developed with the help of PAGASA, including manuals on the impact management of weathers systems for each of the 11 products. These were successfully launched as part of the National World Meteorological Day Celebration.

“How farmers make sense of climate information are in these manuals, as well as adaptation measures for farmers during inclement weather conditions and long-term conditions like drought or La Niña. This bridges climate and weather information with aquaculture and fisheries. BFAR would not have been

In the Philippines, Nap-Ag interventions are tailored to enhance strategic climate risk management and accelerate the uptake of medium- and long-term risk reduction practices across the policy level, the agriculture industry and down to farming and fishing communities. The project is also implemented in partnership with DA and builds on the results of past DRRM/CCA projects.

“It is a great privilege for FAO to be a partner of the Philippine Government in intensifying the agriculture sector's ability to face the future head on,” reiterated Fernández.



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A new breed of entrepreneurs

Farmers from Nueva Ecija and Nueva Vizcaya learned entrepreneurship and marketing skills through FAO's farm business schools

The daunting task of producing food for a population of over 100 million people falls on the hands of farming families in the Philippines. Despite their crucial role and contribution to the country's economy and food security, majority of them are mired in poverty.

Against this background, FAO, the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) and Agricultural Marketing Assistance Service (AMAS), and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), banded together to equip small-scale farmers to transition from subsistence farming to being full-fledged farmer-entrepreneurs.

A business school for farmers

Through a technical cooperation project entitled "Capacity building of small farmers in entrepreneurship development and market access," FAO and its partners worked hand in hand to implement a pioneering training concept called "Farm Business School (FBS)" in the provinces of Nueva Ecija and Nueva Vizcaya. Between July 2012 and December 2014, FAO trained over 100 agriculture extension workers from DA-ATI and DAR who then replicated the schools on the community level. This resulted in the conduct of over 72 season-long FBS, giving rise to over 1 600 farmer-entrepreneurs from 26 municipalities.

"We were taught about planning, recording, and harvesting. It was in the FBS that I saw just how big of a difference record keeping makes," said Rudy Paranis, a farmer from Nueva Vizcaya.

Maria Elena Desisto shared that when she computed the break-even price for garlic, she realized that she had been trading her produce at a very low price. "We

would sell our garlic at low prices because we did not know how to compute the break-even price. This is my most valuable learning from the FBS."

Improving market access and changing mindsets

Linkages between and among producer groups, private agricultural service providers, financial institutions and market outlets were also facilitated through the project. As an example, farmers in Nueva Vizcaya traded an initial 2.2 tonnes of vegetables to new markets, such as supermarkets and restaurants.

Johanny Apil, a farmer from Nueva Vizcaya, learned that they must plan based on demand before actual production. "It was through the FBS that I learned that you have to know your market, what vegetables they need, before you even start to plant," he said.

Farmers also realized that negotiation skills are important in business.

"Even if your product is high-grade, if you and your trader do not arrive at an understanding, you will not be able to sell it for a good price," said Benjamin Vab-oyan.

Some farmers had a limited view of themselves prior to attending the FBS. Rudy Paranis of Nueva Vizcaya shared that being a farmer made him think that he was confined to routine tasks such as planting, sustaining and harvesting his crops, then taking them to the market. "Now I am proud that I am no longer just a farmer. I have now done away with the 'just.' Now I say I am a farmer and a businessman," he said.

As a female farmer, Amelia Guzman believes that the FBS also had a hand in

empowering women in their community. "I am encouraged to plant as my farming area has expanded and I have learned to practice record keeping. I now see my expenses, my income and my actual inputs. Without the FBS, I would still be ignorant about these things," she said.

Uplifting farmers across the country

There was a strong demand for FBS in the two pilot provinces that some schools exceeded the expected number of participants. Local chief executives were very receptive to the project and the idea of a business orientation in agriculture that they encouraged farmers in their constituencies to participate.

"With the kind of response that we are seeing from our counterparts in the Government, the FBS approach has a real chance to improve the quality of life of farming families and to help break the cycle of rural poverty in the Philippines," said Gumercindo Tumbali, FAO project team leader.

Building on the positive outcomes, ATI expanded the implementation of the FBS to 15 regions of the country, with additional Government funding.

After the FAO project closed in 2014, farm business schools continued to multiply across the country. In 2015, it became part of ATI's regular menu of training modules for its nationwide public extension programme. DAR has also been replicating the schools in agrarian reform communities, while local government units have been allocating funds to implement the schools.



ICTs such as drone-aided mapping technologies are increasing the speed of surveying agricultural areas before and after typhoons

ICT at the forefront of agricultural development

Technology is changing the way countries are addressing food security, agriculture, and rural development. With their accessibility and relative cost-effectiveness, information and communication technology (ICT) platforms have the potential to significantly enhance and accelerate the flow of information across a complex network of stakeholders and throughout the value chain.

“The information gap between agricultural extension, outreach services and farmers has widely been attributed as one of the leading challenges in sustainable food production. ICTs provide a way to bridge this gap and to more effectively address issues related to climate change, economic growth and overall agricultural productivity and trade,” explains Gerard Sylvester, Knowledge and Information Management Officer at FAO’s Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

The Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of the Philippines has underscored the need to “modernize the agriculture and fisheries sectors by transforming these sectors from a resource-based to a technology-based industry.” Since it was signed into law in 1997, both the government and the private sector have taken advantage of emerging technologies. For instance, the Department of Agriculture (DA) created an e-learning platform and a web-based agriculture and fisheries market information system.

“ICT is seen as a vital instrument that will greatly aid in stimulating agriculture, enhancing food security, provide easier access to markets and information sources that will support rural livelihoods,” said Director Nestor

Bongato of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT).

National E-agriculture Strategy

To help ensure that ICT-related investments in agriculture are optimized and harmonized, FAO and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the lead UN specialized agency on ICTs, are supporting the formulation of a National E-agriculture Strategy in the Philippines. DA serves as the lead implementing agency and is supported by DICT.

“Setting in place a national e-agriculture strategy is an essential first step for any country planning on using ICTs for agriculture. This initiative is the first in the world and FAO has the advantage to take the lead in these efforts together with other partners,” Sylvester added.

The National E-agriculture Strategy is envisioned to rationalize resources and holistically address ICT opportunities and challenges in agriculture in a more efficient manner while generating new revenue streams, improving livelihoods and contributing to the achievement of broader national plans. Having a strategy and ensuring its alignment with other government plans will also prevent individual e-agriculture projects and services from being implemented in isolation.

The strategy for the Philippines will include an e-agriculture vision, an action plan and a framework by which results can be monitored and evaluated. FAO and ITU will also conduct activities to strengthen the

capacities of the government to identify, test and implement ICT solutions and services.

“In a world where broadband is becoming everyone’s tool, the Philippines being no exception, the value addition that ICTs bring to the agriculture sector is potentially transformative. Examples of popular ICT solutions include market information systems, agriculture extension, monitoring, weather-related information, agriculture disaster warning, GIS mapping, drones and sensors for monitoring, big data analytics, mobile applications platforms, mobile money, among others,” said Aurora Rubio, Head of the ITU Area Office for Southeast Asia.

Speaking on behalf of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol during the project inception workshop in December 2016, Director Clint Hassan of DA’s Information and Communications Technology Service expressed appreciation to FAO and ITU. “I’m positive that we will achieve the objectives of this project with the collaboration of other government agencies such as the DICT, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Interior and Local Government, as well as the other agencies that may extend their collaborative effort to realize the vision of this project parallel to the agenda of the DA and the Office of the President. The aim is to make ICT, through this National E-agriculture Strategy, support the required services to make food available and affordable to the people,” he said.

The technical cooperation project is part of a larger FAO-ITU partnership to strengthen the e-agriculture environment and develop ICT-mediated solutions for countries in Asia-Pacific, specifically in Bhutan, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Sri Lanka.



Cotabato farmers and fishers on the path toward long-term recovery

Climate-smart farmer field school in Aleosan, Cotabato Province

Before 2011, Mindanao was seldom hit by strong typhoons. The region was branded as a prime location for agricultural production and has attracted several large international agribusiness firms. Conditions have been changing drastically over the last five years. Typhoon Washi (local name: Sendong), the strongest storm to hit the country in 2011, made landfall in Northern Mindanao. In 2012, Typhoon Bopha (local name: Pablo) ravaged the south, flattening banana and coconut plantations. Almost every year thereafter, extreme weather events continued to severely disrupt rural livelihoods and food security.

Most of the farmers and fishers in the area who never had to contend with such natural disasters now find themselves vulnerable to the “new normal.” In Central Mindanao, the struggle is even greater as sporadic armed clashes have been forcing families to flee their homes and abandon their livelihoods.

“Our livelihoods are greatly affected every time there is fighting. We have to evacuate because it is the most dangerous for our community. When we evacuate, we also have to leave our farms and crops like rice and corn,” explained Talamid Madaliday of Barangay Agriculture, Midsayap Municipality, Cotabato Province.

“We were also affected by drought and sometimes we are not able to plant on time because there is not enough water. During the rainy season, sometimes our crops are damaged too when we cannot control the flooding,” added Noli Calapate, a farmer from Barangay Bagolibas in Aleosan Municipality.

To help affected communities restart and protect their livelihoods from

future shocks, FAO is working with the Government to provide training in disaster risk reduction and management in agriculture, as well as in preparing for slow-onset climate impacts such as drought.

This effort is part of a USD3-million FAO project funded by the Government of New Zealand, which supports livelihood restoration and resilience building in agricultural communities affected by calamities in Cotabato Province. Not only is Cotabato one of the most vulnerable areas to both natural and man-made disasters; it also consistently ranks as one of the poorest provinces in the country.

Cotabato farmers get climate smart

FAO's climate-smart farmer field schools are changing the way communities approach the production of rice, corn and vegetables—crops that have been greatly compromised during the recent drought and flooding.

The “schools” are designed to promote rapid technology transfer through applied learning. Sessions include on-farm training, use of climate information and local weather advisories, take-home seeds and planting materials, technology demonstration, field interaction and field days. Practicum exercises make up 50 percent of the curriculum. This way, trainees are able to observe first hand, brainstorm and analyse agro-ecosystems, and as a result, make decisions and solve problems related to multiple hazards.

“We learned new methods like when we went to Kidapawan for the seminar about disasters. We were taught how to use the rain gauge, how to fight pests, which really affects our farms like rats, black bugs, and many other pests that destroy our crops,” explained Marie Fe Valeroso.

Addressing farmers in the Municipality of Midsayap, New Zealand Embassy



Farmers in Midsayap, Cotabato Province, receive free range chickens as part of FAO's livelihood recovery assistance

Deputy Head of Mission Matthew De Wit said, “The most important thing we think is part of this project is education. Focusing on taking advantage of all the information, lessons and knowledge that both FAO and the experts can share with you about how to change agriculture for the better here, and then taking those lessons and sharing it among the community as well, and creating a culture of sharing and learning—that’s a really important part of the development and the long-term success of the project.”

Speaking on behalf of the Philippine Government, Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary for special concerns Ranibai Dilangalen thanked FAO and New Zealand.

“We look forward to our continuous collaboration, cooperation to attain rice self-sufficiency, and of course for us to have food security,” she said.

Livelihood recovery

In addition to disaster risk reduction and climate resilience training activities that have so far reached over 500 farmers, fishers, government planners and extension workers, FAO is also working with DA and local government units to distribute production inputs that will help restart the livelihoods of 10 475 farming and fishing families in the municipalities of Aleosan, Pikit, Midsayap, Kabacan and Pigcawayan. This includes rice, corn and vegetable seeds, fruit tree seedlings, fertilizer, drying nets, small farm

machinery, post-harvest equipment, livestock and poultry, tilapia fingerlings and gillnets.

“Now we are thankful to FAO for bringing us the help from New Zealand. We were taught how to improve our farming and they gave us inputs like rice, corn, chicken and many others,” Talamid said.

“Instead of buying the seeds with our money, we can plant with the seeds that FAO gave us so we can somehow recover from the hardships that El Niño brought to our barangay, Marie Fe added.

FAO’s New Zealand-funded project is expected to continue until October 2017.

“We would like to extend thanks to FAO and the government of New Zealand who are considering North Cotabato as their project area. We are very lucky. To farmers, please take good care of everything so we can continuously reap all the benefits of this programme,” expressed DA Region 12 Executive Director Milagros Casis.

FAO’s work in Mindanao

FAO’s activities in the region since 2015 have been guided by its Mindanao Strategic Programme for Agriculture and Agribusiness (MSPAA). The strategy focuses on increasing the production, productivity, competitiveness and profitability of small-scale agriculture; promoting appropriate and climate-smart technologies; enhancing

diversification and value-adding on- and off-farm processing; intensification of post-harvest technologies; and strengthening governance and institutional frameworks for accessing technologies, credit and markets.

To further support region-wide development, FAO has been assisting the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) in designing projects that are responsive to the urgent and long-term needs of the agriculture sector, which can contribute to the achievement of lasting peace and development in the region.

“We are off to a good start in 2017 in terms of advancing our work in Mindanao. We hope that our development partners would continue to consider supporting the rest of the projects set out in FAO’s MSPAA. Investments in the region’s development will be crucial in attaining lasting peace, prosperity and long-term food and nutrition security throughout the country,” said FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández.

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 MinDA and works closely with DA, the 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.

New Zealand and KOICA officials visit FAO projects in Central Mindanao

Officials from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the New Zealand Embassy visited Central Mindanao on 7 to 9 February and 20 to 22 March 2017 respectively. Both delegations observed FAO project activities, met with key Philippine Government partners and interacted with farmers and fishers to better understand the needs of the region’s

agriculture sector. During the New Zealand visit, Deputy Head of Mission Matthew De Wit led the distribution of free-range chicken, certified rice seeds, assorted vegetable seeds and urea fertilizer to farmers in the Municipality of Midsayap in Cotabato Province. He also observed the conduct of a climate-smart farmer field school in the Municipality of Aleosan.



KOICA officials observe fish pond operations

“It’s a real pleasure for me to come and meet the people here in Mindanao who are so important to the lifeblood and the future of the country, and in particular the work that we can do with you to support your development. We think it’s a really fundamental part of the way to the future of this country, and Mindanao needs to develop in order to achieve long-term success, and long-term livelihood and sustainability,” he expressed.

The New Zealand Government is currently funding an FAO project aiding the livelihood recovery and building the resilience of more than 10 475 farming and fishing families in five municipalities. KOICA, on the other hand, has been actively looking into areas of collaboration with FAO to support the Government’s development priorities in the region.



New Zealand Embassy officials lead the ceremonial distribution of farm seeds, fertilizer and chickens to residents of Barangay Agriculture in Midsayap, Cotabato Province



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Region III farmers optimistic on recovery after widespread destruction

As livelihood recovery efforts continue, farmers in the rice-producing provinces of Aurora and Nueva Ecija are optimistic that the upcoming harvest can help them rebound from the devastating impacts of Typhoon Sarika and Super Typhoon Haima (local names: Karen and Lawin).

At least 4 300 families that were able to replant their damaged farms with assistance from the Department of Agriculture (DA) are currently receiving supplemental fertilizer and other farm inputs from FAO.

“Proper fertilization will help improve the volume and quality of their yield. Fertilizer can be costly and many farmers are unable to do the required follow through at certain stages of crop growth, especially when they are already stuck in a cycle of debt,” said FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández.

“Without timely and adequate support, the production capacity of rice farmers could be compromised. This would result in lower incomes and overall reduced supply of staple food at the end of the current cropping season,” he added.

The two typhoons, which swept at least 31 provinces in seven regions of the country last October, left USD233 million in production losses to the agriculture sector. More than a quarter of affected farmers are in Aurora and Nueva Ecija – communities that are still struggling to recover from successive typhoons, dry spells and droughts from 2015 to 2016.

“We lost about 80 percent of our palay this time. This was painful for us since our family only relies on this for all of our needs. The burden is even greater for us as women because we have to worry about how our families will eat three

times a day,” narrated Gilda Agustin, a farmer from Barangay Palayag, Cabanatuan City.

“Now that the weather is good, we have hope. We are doing our best to fertilize our crops. This is why the fertilizer that FAO is delivering is very timely. It will increase our yield come March or April and there’s a chance that we can fully recover for as long as we can sustain this,” added Florentino Policarpio of Barangay Palayag.

Approximately 8 600 bags of urea fertilizer are currently being distributed to eight hard-hit municipalities to help ensure that the most affected and vulnerable farmers would be able to harvest rice by April 2017. This includes Maria Aurora, Dipaculao, Baler and Casiguran in Aurora Province; and San Jose, Muñoz, Sta. Rosa and Cabanatuan City in Nueva Ecija. The fertilizer support is also supplemented by about 4 300 sets of assorted vegetable seeds and farm tools to address some of the immediate food and nutrition needs of affected families.

Strengthening resilience and response capacities

The DA, with support from FAO, launched drone-aided post-disaster mapping missions in areas affected by typhoons Sarika and Haima. The information gathered by field teams was subsequently processed at the FAO-supported Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Centre in Quezon City, and used by the government for response and rehabilitation planning.

As part of its livelihood recovery response, FAO will also conduct training programmes for provincial and municipal agricultural technicians, extension workers and local farmer trainers on resilient rice-based farming systems. The training modules will then be integrated into the government’s regular extension activities and technical advisory services for farmers. Technical assistance will also be provided at the regional level to strengthen the disaster response capacities of DA staff.



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(Left) A farmer in San Jose, Nueva Ecija, receives two bags of urea fertilizer from FAO. (Right) Ceremonial distribution of inputs in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija



Forest rangers on patrol in a reforestation area in Danao, Cebu

Strengthening forest law enforcement, governance and trade in the Philippines

Illegal logging continues to result in biodiversity loss and degradation of the world's remaining forests. It has direct impacts on poverty and conflict, especially within indigenous communities and those who rely on forest products for their livelihoods.

In the Philippines, the Government has sustained its efforts in the last four decades to address illegal activities related to harvesting and trading timber. Over a dozen logging bans and moratorium policies have been issued since the 1970s, in addition to the implementation of various reforestation and community-based forest management initiatives.

Challenges remain in governing forest resources, including the need to ensure that laws do not hamper the growth potential of the furniture industry, which provides direct employment to an estimated 2.1 million workers, in addition to 5.4 million indirect jobs servicing the supply chain.

To further strengthen the governance of forest resources, FAO has been working with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and its Forest Management Bureau (FMB), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and private sector stakeholders in implementing the FAO-EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FAO-EU FLEGT) Programme in the Philippines.

"The FAO-EU FLEGT Programme

is supporting the Philippines in undertaking strategic, locally-defined solutions to forest governance challenges," said Bruno Cammaert, Forestry Officer at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. "In addition to promoting improved forest governance and the legal production and trade of timber in the Philippines, the lessons learned from these experiences will inform other parallel processes in the Asia-Pacific region."

FAO-EU FLEGT Programme

The global FAO-EU FLEGT Programme, which is funded by the EU, the UK and Sweden, supports the implementation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan, which sets out a range of measures to combat illegal logging and strengthen forest governance while encouraging sustainable economic development in countries that produce, process and trade timber products. The programme also finances demand-driven initiatives by government institutions, private sector and civil society organizations.

The FAO-EU FLEGT programme has provided support to the Philippines since 2014, including the development of a Chain-of-Custody (CoC) Guidebook, which aims to provide simple guidance on the requirements for forest-based industries in the Philippines to comply with public procurement policies of consumer countries like the EU or US, where it is illegal to import illegally-produced timber and timber products. The programme has also supported capacity building activities on training and auditing

on CoC Systems, which focused on developing qualified Filipinos to aid the timber industry in implementing a credible CoC system. These projects were also accomplished through FAO's engagement with the Technical Working Group on Wood. The group was initiated and chaired by the Chamber of Furniture Industries of the Philippines and co-chaired by DTI's Export Marketing Bureau, DENR-FMB, the Philippine Wood Producers Association and other important forest sector stakeholders.

The renewed FAO-EU FLEGT programme in the country, which will run from 2017 to 2020, builds on these results. It will strongly focus on promoting private sector and civil society involvement in the development of strategies, and in achieving legality and sustainability in forest production and commerce.

A multi-stakeholder workshop was conducted in January 2017 to support the formulation of the National FLEGT Roadmap and the identification of an adequate multi-stakeholder national platform or Technical Working Group on Wood to guide its implementation.

The country roadmap will also outline priority projects and activities that will require FAO-EU FLEGT funding support.

The programme will also put in place a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation, which will provide a clear picture of the country's baseline situation and help measure improvements in forest governance.

76th session of the Executive Committee of the Asia-Pacific Fisheries Commission



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Officials and representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam gathered in Makati City from 21 to 23 February 2017 for the 76th session of the Executive Committee of Asia-Pacific Fisheries Commission (APFIC). The regional meeting served as a venue to discuss the APFIC's ongoing work, trends, issues and opportunities in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and the road map to develop the 2018-2023 APFIC Strategy, among others.

José Luis Fernández, FAO Representative in the Philippines, welcomed participants on behalf of Kundhavi Kadiresan, Assistant Director-General of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP).

"Asia-Pacific is home to around 87 percent of people with fisheries and aquaculture-based livelihoods. The APFIC has a key role in supporting its members in their efforts to sustainably manage fisheries resources and in the sustainable intensification of aquaculture," he said.

APFIC works to improve understanding, awareness and cooperation in fisheries issues in the region. The Secretariat, which provides support and assists member states in implementing their identified priorities, is hosted by the FAO RAP in Bangkok, Thailand.

Press launch of climate information products



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On 23 March 2017, FAO, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) of the Department of Science and Technology and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture jointly launched climate information products and services in support of the agriculture and fisheries sector.

The event, which was among the highlights of the 152nd national commemoration of World Meteorological Day, was the first public presentation of various weather and climate information products, forecasts and projections generated through projects implemented by FAO in partnership with PAGASA. Also featured were several manuals on the impact management of weather systems in aquaculture through a project involving BFAR.

"FAO Philippines has continuously provided assistance to the country in pursuit of development objectives through the promotion of agricultural adaptation and mitigation to climate change, reduction of risks through the use of weather and climate information, from weather forecast through climate projections," said PAGASA Administrator Vicente Malano.

International Day of Forests 2017



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To mark the International Day of Forests on 21 March 2017, FAO supported the Forest Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Energy in mounting a photography competition and exhibit carrying the theme "Forest and Energy."

The activity, which was held in Quezon City and sponsored by Canon, gathered photo enthusiasts across the country aged 18 and above.

"I am confident that this event will strengthen the inclusive process and encourage us all to reflect on our role as development workers and citizens in conserving and further enriching our forests," said José Luis Fernández, FAO Representative in the Philippines, during the opening ceremonies.

"Our partnership with DENR has come a long way and I am positive that it will continue to flourish as we work together in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals," he added.

The International Day of Forests aims to raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests and trees for the benefit of current and future generations. On the global level, FAO commemorated the event by also highlighting how forests can contribute to improving water availability, which is becoming increasingly important in the face of climate change.



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