



Food and Agriculture Organization
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FAO Philippines Newsletter 2017 Issue 2

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OUR PRIORITIES

The FAO Strategic Objectives



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

Welcome to the FAO Philippines country newsletter!

This second issue for 2017 features some of the most pressing challenges in food security and agriculture, as well as the progress of FAO's work in the country.

As you might be aware, natural and human-induced crises threaten the country's food security and disproportionately affect smallholders who remain to be the poorest members of the population. FAO and the Department of Agriculture (DA) continue to work together to find solutions to reduce risks, manage the effects of disasters, and increase the adaptive capacities of the agriculture sector, which has absorbed up to 37 percent of the economic impacts of natural and climate-related events over the last decade. Building on the success of our past activities, we recently launched new projects to scale up efforts on climate-resilient agri-fisheries, and to develop an integrated decision-support system for enhanced production and risk management in agriculture. These complement the establishment of the FAO-supported DA operations centre for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, which now serves as a hub for assessments, response planning and resilience building.

We have also been increasing our focus on peace and development in Mindanao. This newsletter provides an overview of the role of agriculture in stopping the cycle of conflict, poverty and food insecurity in the region – all of which we see as issues that are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

In June, FAO updated its Mindanao Strategic Programme for Agriculture and Agribusiness (MSPAA) in light of the priorities outlined in the new Philippine Development Plan (2017-2022) and the recently drafted Philippine Government Strategic Framework for Mindanao Peace and Development, the President's Six-Point Peace and Development Roadmap and the vision for accelerated development envisioned under the Mindanao Development Corridors initiative of the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA). We have also been working with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DAF-ARMM) and coordinating with MinDA to augment the government's emergency livelihood recovery assistance to farmers whose livelihoods were disrupted by recent armed clashes in Marawi and Maguindanao.

In the sustainable management of the environment and natural resources, we have been witnessing increased engagement by the government and other stakeholders, especially in improving the governance of tenure, in ensuring the sustainable trade of forest

products and enhancing biodiversity. Our activities in these areas, which are also featured here, include the mainstreaming of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, the FAO-EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade programme, and a new four-year biodiversity project funded by the Global Environment Facility.

We hope that the stories we present in this publication contribute to enhancing your appreciation of the role of food security and agriculture in addressing the broad range of development issues we face. The percentage of poor and undernourished are significantly more pronounced in the rural areas, where majority of the population rely on agriculture, fisheries and forestry for their livelihoods. Where people struggle to earn a living, they resort to unsustainable practices that place more pressure on the environment, and more often, the damage is irreversible. When this happens, livelihoods are further threatened; there is less protection from extreme weather conditions and climate change; value chains are also disrupted; the sector's contribution to the economy is affected; the vulnerable and marginalized become more exposed to risks; and conflict escalates in some cases. The chain goes on.

Clearly, a strong and relentless focus on sustainable agricultural development will open opportunities to provide more enriching livelihoods and better incomes, affordable and nutritious food for all.

We hope that you would continue to support FAO in this journey.

José Luis Fernández
FAO Representative in the Philippines





Women farmers participate in an FAO-supported climate-smart farmer field school in the Visayas.

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DA partners with FAO to upscale efforts on climate-resilient agri-fisheries

Climate change effects such as increasing global temperature and rainfall variability are projected to take a direct hit at the agriculture sector. Heat stress, flooding, drought and the increased prevalence of pest infestation, in addition to more challenging irrigation requirements, could result in a significant reduction in yields of staple food products, including rice, which supplies 47 percent of the daily calorie intake of Filipinos. Food security, rural livelihoods and the economy are at risk of being severely compromised.

Against this background, the Department of Agriculture (DA) has been promoting climate-resilient agri-fisheries (CRA) as a strategic approach to adaptation and mitigation. Its Systems-Wide Climate Change Office (SWCCO) has been at the forefront of investing in CRA capacity building and mainstreaming. It has also been working in close collaboration with FAO on a range of related activities such as the Germany-funded programme called “Integrating Agriculture in National Adaptation Plans,” and an FAO-funded project that is focused on the development of an integrated decision-support system for enhanced production and risk management in agriculture.

Most recently, DA has developed and funded a USD4.1-million project that aims to accomplish extensive smallholder uptake of climate-resilient agri-fisheries strategies. FAO serves as the project’s implementing arm through a Unilateral Trust Fund agreement with the Government of the Philippines.

“Agriculture and fisheries, and the rural sector in general, are most susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change. Also, the fact that the Philippines is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change indicates the urgency of actions and measures to adapt and be

resilient to these impacts so as not to prejudice and overwhelm the country’s development momentum. The new project acknowledges the need for more science-based technologies, decision-support tools, modernized and consolidated training services that will enable us to quickly bring climate-adaptive technologies down to the farm level,” said Segfredo Serrano, DA Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, Research & Development and Regulations. “DA has once again partnered with FAO in recognition of its comparative advantage in technical areas related to the project’s objectives.”

Enhancing climate resilient agri-fisheries in the Philippines

The DA-FAO project, which is expected to run until the end of 2018, is designed to increase the productivity, incomes and resilience of farmers and fisherfolk under the threat of climate change. This will be accomplished through national CRA strategic planning, wide-scale application of decision-support tools and adaptation measures and by operationalizing community-driven climate information services. The project also seeks to increase the productivity and income of risk-prone agriculture and fisheries-dependent communities by strengthening science support in designing financial schemes, developing next-generation farmer advisory tools and formulating commodity investment guides. Crop and farmland management will likewise be enhanced through the introduction of a more appropriate farm fertilization scheme, the institutionalization of an adaptation tool called “crop management expert system,” and the enhancement of the country’s database of soils, farmers and farms. The activities will be coordinated with other ongoing climate change and disaster risk reduction projects of DA and FAO to achieve synergy of information and good practices and avoid the

duplication of efforts.

“This project clearly demonstrates how far the country has come in its fight against climate change, food insecurity and poverty, especially in rural areas. We at FAO commend and support all the efforts and investments that the Government is putting into protecting the interest of its citizens, especially the most vulnerable, by accelerating the uptake of CRA,” said José Luis Fernández, FAO Representative in the Philippines.

Several organizations form part of the project’s Technical Working Group, including the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI), University of the Philippines Los Baños Foundation, Incorporated (UPLBFI), Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC) and key units of DA, particularly the Systems-Wide Climate Change Office (SWCCO), Field Programs and Operational Planning Division (FPOPD), Information Communication Technology Services (ICTS), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), Agricultural Credit Policy Council (DA-ACPC), Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC), Bureau of Soil and Water Management (BSWM) and the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI). Activities are also being implemented in close collaboration with DA Regional Field Offices across the country.



Fisherfolk in Samar learn how to build fish cages using climate-resilient approaches

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Women farmers conduct post-harvest activities in Maguindanao.

FAO strengthens support to peace and development in Mindanao

For nearly five decades, poverty, food insecurity and conflict have been affecting residents in the southern Philippines region of Mindanao. Fragile security has disrupted livelihoods and food supply.

Where conflict erupts and people are forced to flee, much of the area's resource potential is also negated, further limiting economic opportunities and feeding the cycle of insecurity. In recent years, weather extremes and climate change have exacerbated the situation.

The role of agriculture

Despite the recent economic transformation in Mindanao's more progressive cities, the agriculture sector continues to be the main source of livelihood of people in the region. It employs more than 70 percent of its economically active population.

The consequences of conflict on food security and livelihoods last long after the armed encounters subside even when people are able to return to their homes. Smallholders' productive assets such as farming equipment and livestock are reduced by almost 50 percent in times of conflict. And until these families are able to find the means to restore their assets and resume their agricultural activities, continued reliance on external food aid can be expected. The ripple effect is also felt by surrounding communities as access to produce and prices fluctuate when supply falls short of demand. Lack of food and incomes have also sometimes fueled violence.

"Sustainable peace and development in Mindanao will be more difficult, if not impossible to attain, without first addressing the needs of the agriculture sector," explains José Luis Fernández, FAO Representative in the Philippines. "This has strong implications on the

national scale in terms of protecting food availability, the economy and overall security. The region supplies over 40 percent of the country's food requirements and contributes more than 30 percent to the national food trade."

An expanded strategic framework for agriculture and agribusiness

FAO has been actively working with the Government in mobilizing emergency livelihood recovery support to farming and fishing communities affected by conflict and natural disasters.

In 2015, the FAO Mindanao Strategic Programme for Agriculture and Agribusiness (MSPAA), a much larger development assistance framework, was formulated and has since guided the design and implementation of FAO projects in the region.

FAO updated the MSPAA in June 2017 in light of the priorities outlined in the new Philippine Development Plan (2017-2022) and the recently drafted Philippine Government Strategic Framework for Mindanao Peace and Development, the President's Six-Point Peace and Development Roadmap and the vision for accelerated development envisioned under the Mindanao Development Corridors initiative of the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA). It also draws from the United Nations (UN) Convergence Framework for Mindanao. The strategies laid out in the MSPAA were prepared in close collaboration with the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP), as one of the agencies mandated to implement development projects in Mindanao, specifically in ARMM.

The programme, which is expected to be implemented until 2022, will support and accelerate the transformation of Mindanao's agriculture sector into a sustainable, profitable and inclusive environment that will pave the way to

a better quality of life for people in the region. These benefits will be achieved through enhanced production and productivity, enhanced market linkages and improved resilience to natural disasters and climate change. Beneficiaries include more than 81 000 farming and fishing households or over 400 000 people, including indigenous groups and former combatants. Local governments will also benefit from strengthened capacities in delivering training services to their constituencies.

Projects under the USD56.7-million updated MSPAA is currently being proposed for funding support.

...(continued on page 8 - The Marawi crisis and continued support in Maguindanao)



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A woman farmer in Maguindanao Province receives chickens through a New Zealand-funded FAO project



©BFAR

Enhancing the climate-resilience of tilapia production in support of food and nutrition security

A fisher from Pampanga learns how to verify water quality data.

Tilapia plays a significant role in food security and nutrition in the Philippines. At less than USD2.5 per kilogram, it is more accessible than other traditional sources of protein and thus accounts for at least 12 percent of the animal-based protein intake of Filipinos across all socio-economic brackets.

But for almost a decade now, the average rate of production of this most highly consumed farmed fish in the country has slowed down to 0.7 percent annually. An assessment conducted by FAO in partnership with the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) in the three major freshwater pond-based tilapia producing regions of Cagayan Valley (Region 2), Central Luzon (Region 3) and Bicol (Region 5), point to the effects of climate and environmental stress as the main causes of decreasing yields.

"Tilapia farmers have been reporting fish kills, slow growth and erratic breeding success, influenced by extreme temperatures, algal blooms, lack of alternative freshwater supply during dry spells and drought. Meanwhile, during heavy rains, high water turbidity and sudden change in water temperature have also posed challenges," explains Roy Ortega, Chief of DA-BFAR's Aquaculture Division.

"While we cannot control the climate and weather, we can, however, increase farmers' adaptation from the effects of negative externalities. This is the most important step we can take to ensure that pond-based tilapia farming remains profitable and consequently, the supply of tilapia for our growing population is secured," he added.

Increasing climate-resilience in aquaculture

Through a technical cooperation project, BFAR and FAO worked together to enhance the climate-resilience of tilapia farmers, primarily those engaged in freshwater pond operations which have been more exposed to climate risks and are prone to slower recovery. On-farm pilot tests were conducted to demonstrate the efficient use of critical inputs, supported with extension

services that integrated portable water quality testers as well as automatic weather stations that facilitated the production of early warning advisories for thunderstorms, rain probability and extreme air temperatures.

Extensive farm surveys were also conducted to verify the resiliency levels of small- to large-scale tilapia aquaculture operations, including the types of production systems that are vulnerable to climate change.

The project activities, which involved the active participation of tilapia farmers, producer groups and local government units (LGUs), also served as hands-on training for BFAR and LGU staff in evaluating pond production systems and adaptive capacities. They also learned to observe the weather in a two-part community aqua meteorology training, and to properly utilize the automatic weather stations installed and calibrated by the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) of the Department of Science and Technology. This has resulted in increased capacities of the government to monitor and predict local weather conditions in and around the pilot tests areas, and to facilitate technical support to tilapia producers.

A series of farmer-expert workshops were also implemented in order to synthesize scientific knowledge and the actual field experience of farmers, local practices, climate change risks and vulnerabilities.

These exercises not only covered tilapia production but also other commercially important aquaculture commodities.

Key findings then formed the basis of the climate-resilient strategies, weather and climate support services and tools developed under the project for subsequent promotion and mainstreaming.

PAGASA continued to support the

production of BFAR's farm-level advisories, aquaculture technology bulletins and manuals on the impact management of weather systems on tilapia, shellfish, milkfish, shrimp, grouper, seaweed and crab aquaculture. During the 2015 to 2016 El Niño, the project also supported tilapia farmers in the formulation of a tilapia farming advisory, which presented simple explanations of the phenomenon and its impacts to freshwater fish farming systems, including indicators, mitigation strategies and adaptation measures.

From the national to the farm level, both the government and aquaculture producers are accelerating their adoption of the evidence-based, climate-resilient approaches introduced through the project. Having gained more knowledge and access to ICT-based tools and high-quality information enables them to integrate adaptation and mitigation strategies, from planning to actual production.

"The most significant accomplishment under this project is the convergence of aquaculture, atmospheric and meteorological sciences. This is now supporting tilapia farmers in winning the race against climate change, while also contributing to poverty alleviation and food security. The learning, technology applications, policies and knowledge products generated from this FAO technical cooperation with the Philippines has great potential to be extended to other aquaculture enterprises in the country and the Asia-Pacific region," said Miao Weimin, Aquaculture Officer of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.



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Integrated decision-support system for enhanced production and risk management in agriculture

Drone-aided mapping mission to evaluate El Niño affected areas in Iloilo Province

owing to its high exposure to natural hazards, the Philippines has a long history of large-scale disasters such as intense typhoons, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis, among many others. In the last decade, the agriculture sector has absorbed up to 37 percent of the economic impacts of such extreme events, with disproportionate effects on small-scale farming and fishing families who remain to be the poorest members of the population.

The country's agriculture planners and decision-makers at all levels have been contending with limited access to robust and timely information that would enable them to help farmers and fishers prepare for disasters, minimize damage and losses, and manage long-term risks.

While various products, tools and methods been developed over the years particularly for agriculture and fisheries, most of them have not incorporated the data sets necessary for disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA). Moreover, being lodged in different sources and channels, and having differing formats and level of analyses, they pose serious constraints especially in emergency situations.

To support the rapid and systematic analyses of the best available information required for decision-making, FAO and the Department of Agriculture (DA) are working together to establish an Enhanced Production and Risk Management in Agriculture Integrated Decision Support System (EPRiMA). It is envisioned to provide key actors in DA, including national, regional and local-level planners, decision makers and agriculture and fisheries officers, with

comprehensive and near real-time access to crop production, and risk and damage assessment information and tools.

"The resources that will be made accessible by EPRiMA could be translated into products for dissemination to farmers and fisherfolk such as robust farm-level advisories. The system will also improve our pre-disaster and post-disaster assessments, help us increase preparedness for incoming disasters, emergency response and rehabilitation planning," said Ariel Cayanan, DA Undersecretary for Operations and Agri-Fisheries Mechanization.

EPRiMA decision-support system

The project, which is part of FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme in the Philippines, will strengthen the capacity of DA to organize and use DRRM-related information coming from different sources, and to utilize these in their decision-making processes and risk-reduction and response activities.

EPRiMA features a dynamic cropping calendar, a crop management tool that, with the increasing climate variability and weather anomalies and extremes, can aid agricultural technicians to guide farmers in planning their crop planting. It will also provide better guidance on production needs.

Rapid assessment tools such as drones and high-resolution satellite imagery will

also be used to provide critical and timely information before and immediately after disasters. Slow onset disasters from drought will also be addressed by EPRiMA through the establishment of a national drought monitoring system.

Climate and weather forecast products, including for solar radiation and wave height, will also be made available through a partnership with Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) of the Department of Science and Technology.

The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world but it is also one of the most advanced in shifting from reactive emergency response to proactive risk reduction. FAO's DRRM and CCA work in the country 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.



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Christopher Morales, Chief of the DA's Field Program Operational Planning Division, briefs FAO Representative José Luis Fernández and officials from various embassies on the disaster risk reduction activities of DA at the FAO-supported operations centre for DRRM and CCA.



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Rice terraces in Ifugao Province

Working with upland and indigenous communities to conserve and enhance agro-biodiversity in the Philippines

The Philippines features an extraordinary diversity of globally-significant agricultural species. It is home to more than 5 500 traditional rice varieties in addition to a broad array of indigenous and endemic varieties of crops such as eggplants, cucurbits, beans, taro, yam, banana and abaca, among many others.

For centuries, the country's rich agro-ecosystems have been central to the food and nutrition security of Filipinos. They also provide other vital ecosystem services such as water and soil regulation, while forming an important part of local culture and heritage.

Being the gatekeepers of age-old and traditional knowledge, smallholders, family farmers and indigenous peoples have been conserving and enhancing biodiversity at the genetic, species and landscape level. But it is becoming more challenging and complex as the demand for food, land and other resources continues to increase along with overexploitation, deforestation, land degradation, climate change and pollution.

"FAO is supporting the government in enhancing the protection and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity in the Philippines. We see this effort as a way to ensure that the country's abundant natural resources and attributes can continue to provide solutions to the many complex development issues it is confronted with," said FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, further highlights that ensuring food security requires a

holistic approach and complementary actions related to eradicating all forms of malnutrition, addressing the productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, the resilience of food production systems and the sustainable use of biodiversity and genetic resources.

Ensuring a diversity of seeds, plants, farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species is also among the targets of SDG 2. It also emphasizes the need for soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.

Four-year project

Through a USD2.1-million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), FAO the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR), are working together to implement a four-year project entitled "Dynamic conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity in traditional agro-ecosystem of the Philippines."

"This is a multi-

faceted project and it started with participatory consultations during the project development stage to ensure that what it seek to achieve will be inclusive. As part of the project strategy, convergence with other initiatives being implemented in both national and local levels will be done to effectively address cross-sectoral issues," said DA-BAR Direct Nicomedes Eleazar.

The project, which will run until 2019, aims to strengthen the policy, legal and institutional environment to effectively address challenges in agro-biodiversity. It will support community-based management while enhancing knowledge among



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A woman farmer in Ifugao Province shows the traditional rice variety cultivated by their community.

decision makers and resource managers on the application of dynamic conservation practices and their relation to cultural heritage. The project is also envisioned to improve economic opportunities for local communities, safeguard food security and increase the awareness of policy-makers, practitioners and consumers about the full socio-economic value of agrobiodiversity.

The project is expected to reach about 1 000 farming and indigenous households in 17 barangays in Ifugao located in the Cordillera Administrative Region, and in South Cotabato in central Mindanao.

"We believe that this project is beneficial to us because it will help our community to grow traditional varieties of food crops while at the same time, ensuring that we protect our environment," said Chita Sulan, a farmer from Barangay Klubi in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

FAO is an implementing agency of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), an international co-financing mechanism that provides grants to countries to invest in global environmental projects addressing the critical nexus between agriculture and the environment. This includes climate change, biodiversity, land degradation, international waters and chemicals.

For more information, visit the FAO GEF webpage: <http://www.fao.org/climate-change/international-finance/global-environmental-facility-gef/en/>



MOBILIZING AGRO-BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION. A national inception workshop held in Quezon City from 27 to 28 March 2017 marked the commencement of the GEF-funded FAO project entitled "Dynamic conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity in traditional agro-ecosystems of the Philippines." The event was attended by DA Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, Research and Regulation Segfredo Serrano, DA-BAR Director Nicomedes Eleazar and FAO Representative José Luis Fernández. Partner government agencies, non-government organizations, the academe, the FAO headquarters in Rome and Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok were also represented at the event and contributed in drafting the annual workplan. "Biodiversity conservation may be brought about by various reasons such as the socio-economic or culture and values. Conservation takes time and it goes beyond the project cycle. This [project] is a legacy for the generations after us," said DA Undersecretary Segfredo Serrano as he addressed participants.

Local inception workshops were also conducted in Banaue in the Province of Ifugao and Lake Sebu in the Province of South Cotabato on 4 and 11 May 2017 respectively. These served as venues to orient and strengthen partnerships with community officials farmer groups, and local government officials in the identification of traditional crop varieties and on-farm practices and linkages to potential markets.

...(continued from page 4)

The Marawi crisis and continued support in Maguindanao

On 23 May 2017, armed clashes between government forces and members of the Maute Group, a local non-state armed group, erupted in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur Province, leading to the declaration of martial law over Mindanao. Over 300 000 families were forced to flee their homes and abandon their livelihoods to avoid getting caught in the crossfire.

Based on initial estimates by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DAF-ARMM) and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), more than 5 000 rice and corn farming households in Marawi and at least seven other neighboring municipalities in Lanao del Sur are at risk of being affected by the displacement. Newly planted or ready-to-harvest crops have been abandoned and are likely to be damaged.

Similarly, clashes between government forces and various armed groups, including the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, occurred in Maguindanao Province, displacing nearly 4 000 rice and corn farming households in four municipalities. Crops were likewise abandoned and were either destroyed by pests, floods or were stolen.

The complex, varied and dynamic situation in conflict-affected areas in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao requires area-specific responses to address food security and the recovery needs of the displaced population.

"Failure to deliver agricultural inputs to facilitate replanting in the July and September cropping seasons would heavily affect production capacity. The supply of rice and corn and the incomes of the most vulnerable would be further compromised," explained

José Luis Fernández, FAO Representative in the Philippines.

Affected farmers face the challenge of re-establishing their lives and livelihoods, particularly those who have returned to their places of origin. Many have lost their draught animals such as carabaos as well as other livestock and farm tools. As is the usual case, majority are already heavily indebted to loan sharks and other credit institutions after borrowing capital to plant crops that they were never able to harvest.

"Appropriate and timely interventions are needed to ensure the adequate supply of safe and nutritious food for affected families, and to support the immediate resumption of functioning markets and economic activities," Fernández said.

During an interview at the FAO 40th Conference in Rome, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol who served as chairperson of the event said that "In any country, you can take away schools and maybe people will not riot. But you take away food and people will stage riot. Food is that important. You can take away all the other basic services but not food."

At the request of the Philippine Government through DAF-ARMM and DAR, FAO is prepositioning agriculture inputs such as rice, corn and assorted vegetable seeds, fertilizer and farming tools to be distributed immediately to affected households as soon as it is determined that replanting can commence. These resources will complement the government's support to affected farmers in the region. Initial funding is sourced from the FAO Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation (SFERA) through the contribution

of the Government of Belgium, and from the Government of New Zealand under an on-going project in Mindanao. FAO continues to mobilize internal and external resources to provide additional support.

"It was a call that I made on the Director-General [of FAO] to personally and officially thank him for all the support of FAO to my country during our most difficult times when we were hit by the strongest typhoon in history, Typhoon Haiyan. The Filipino people will never forget that. During the conversation, the Director-General also assured me and our Government that FAO will come in and support our Government in the rehabilitation of the conflict areas in the country, specifically the areas where there is an ongoing battle between our Government and ISIS extremists, which literally devastated an agricultural area," narrated Secretary Piñol.

"I would also like to express our deep appreciation to the very active role that FAO in the country, our country representative of FAO is doing in the Philippines, is doing a great job and we really appreciate it very much," he added.

FAO's work in Mindanao is implemented in coordination with the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) and in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries-ARMM, the Bangsamoro Development Agency, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and other pertinent agencies and local government units.

The full video interview of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol during the FAO 40th Conference in Rome can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/xn9MDArmGHI>



A farmer in Aklan Province walks barefoot to his rice paddy.

©FAO/Jake Salvador

Enhancing the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the Philippines

Land, fisheries, forests and other natural resources provide a basis for livelihoods and food security and social, cultural and religious practices for rural people especially vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women, youth, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and internally displaced persons. Pressure on these resources is increasing as areas are sought for cultivation and are occupied by urban expansion, and as people abandon them because of degradation, climate change and conflicts. The governance of tenure is therefore a crucial element in determining if and how people and communities are able to acquire rights and control over these resources, and how sustainably they are used.

Recognizing this, the Committee on World Food Security endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) in 2012. Consistent with international and regional instruments that address human and tenure rights, the Tenure Guidelines place emphasis on vulnerable and marginalized people.

“The Tenure Guidelines are widely recognized as the leading set of international principles and best practices on the governance of land and natural resources tenure. Their objective is to improve governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests so as to help improve food security, enhance sustainable livelihoods and reduce poverty,” explained Marianna Bicchieri, Land Tenure Officer at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

Mainstreaming VGGT in the Philippines

There has been significant successes in land reform in the Philippines as well as in the recognition of the needs and rights of marginalized sectors such as landless farmers and indigenous peoples. The focus on land governance further increased in 2010 with the issuance of

the Land Sector Development Framework, which is geared toward contributing to sustainable and equitable socio-economic growth through the formal recognition of rights, effective management of public and government owned land, effective and transparent property valuation and taxation system and the development of an ICT-based land information system. However, complex institutional issues such as the overlap in the mandates of government agencies related to land governance are now compounded with evolving challenges. More intense and frequent natural disasters, climate change and conflict increase difficulties in land and resource governance. Moreover, the growing demand for housing and other infrastructure competes with the need to preserve agricultural areas and forests. All these hamper progress in ensuring tenure security for all.

“There is clearly a need for a wider engagement in land governance reform in the Philippines and the national government is taking steps to involve a broad range of stakeholders, including local government units, communities and civil society, to support the socio-cultural-economic development process,” said Emelyne Talabis, Director of the Land Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Since 2016, DENR and FAO have been leading the implementation of a technical cooperation project that seeks to enhance land governance in the country through the implementation of the VGGT.

The two-year project, which is set to run until December 2017, will facilitate the updating of the 2010 Land Sector Development Framework in consultation with a broad group of stakeholders including civil society groups, non-government organizations and other relevant government agencies such as the Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Agriculture, Land Registration Authority of the Department of Justice, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the National Economic and

Development Authority.

Local government units will also be trained to address land disputes and conflicts at the barangay and municipal levels in selected areas.

Another important component of the project is the updating the Philippine Valuation Standards guided by the principles of fair, transparent, and equitable property valuation and taxation system set out in the VGGT, which will be conducted in partnership with the Department of Finance. Property valuation and taxation are integral components of administering land tenure to achieve the broader socioeconomic objectives of good land governance. They also influence decisions in land ownership, use and investments, and the overall behavior of the land market.

Through a partnership with the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), the project will also cover issues of small-scale fisheries as well as the links between natural disasters, climate change and tenure.

The results of the project activities will also inform the preparation of core indicators for monitoring the progress of the Land Governance Agenda and the achievement of the country's related priorities specified in the Philippine Development Plan (2017-2022).

FAO has been at the forefront of promoting the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT). It is assisting member nations in achieving transparent and participatory decision-making, in protecting people from arbitrary loss of tenure rights, and in ensuring that no one is subject to discrimination and that issues are resolved before they degenerate into conflict.

Learn more about FAO's work in mainstreaming the VGGT by visiting <http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>



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A new era of sustainable forest management and restoration in the Philippines

Forest rangers patrol a reforestation area in Danao, Cebu.

Philippine forests are of major importance for the country across environmental, economic and social aspects. The forestry sector's average contribution to the national economy, excluding the value of wood furniture, is estimated at USD751 million by the Philippine Statistics Authority. The Philippine furniture industry alone, which is known worldwide for its superior design and quality, provides direct and indirect employment to about 7.5 million people across the supply chain. Further, the Senate Economic Planning Office estimates that 12 to 15 million indigenous people live in the country's forest lands. The nation's forests harbour some of the world's most precious biodiversity and provide an important array of ecosystem services, including protection of watersheds, sequestration of carbon and soil conservation.

Unfortunately, forests in the country were long treated primarily as source from which to extract resources. Forests were subjected to rapid degradation, land conversion, unsustainable logging, and other destructive practices. During the timber rush of the 1970s, the Philippines was the world's leading exporter of tropical timber. In the 1930s, forests covered over half of the country's land area; today, they account for less than 30 percent as a result of this past mismanagement and over-exploitation.

Over the last decade however, there has been a steady, positive shift in the way forests in the country—and their multiple ecosystem services—are viewed and managed. Policy makers and the general public have come to appreciate the importance of sustainable forest management and protection. According to FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment, forest cover increased from

7 074 000 ha to 8 040 000 ha between 2005 and 2015. But forest degradation remains a serious problem, outpacing restoration in many areas. This underscores the need for urgent and synergistic action to curb further losses and accelerate restoration, while simultaneously ensuring that Filipinos are able to secure forest goods and services needed for human development.

"The challenges of sustainable forest management and restoration are not as insurmountable as many have thought," explains Patrick Durst, Senior Forestry Officer at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. "There are very encouraging prospects for reversing the negative trends of the past."

"I have been working with forestry projects in the Philippines since 1978 – with FAO since 1994," Durst noted. "It is satisfying to see that awareness and appreciation of the benefits of healthy forests have grown significantly in the

past decade. The ambitious National Greening Program is a manifestation of this change in mindset and is unprecedented in many respects. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Philippines is committing major funding from its own treasury for forest restoration on a scale rarely seen in a developing or middle income country."

"Foresters are also becoming smarter and more effective in their forest restoration approaches," according to Durst. "Experience in the Philippines and elsewhere with 'assisted natural regeneration,' which emphasizes the protection and nurturing of naturally occurring seedlings rather than planting of costly seedlings produced in nurseries, has cut the cost of reforestation by half in many areas. An added bonus is that the resulting regenerated forests are more biologically rich, comprised of native tree species well adapted to local growing conditions," he said.



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The Philippines hosted the Third Asia-Pacific Forestry Week in 2016, demonstrating its firm commitment to sustainable forest restoration and management.

The FAO approach

FAO helps nations manage forests in a sustainable way through an approach that balances social, economic and environmental objectives so that present generations can reap the benefits of forest resources while conserving them to meet the needs of future generations. This approach acknowledges the crucial roles of forests and trees in efforts to ensure food and water security, mitigate and adapt to climate change, alleviate poverty and address various other development priorities.

In the Philippines, FAO works closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and its bureaus such as Forest Management, Biodiversity Management and Ecosystems Research and Development. Taking a multi-sectoral approach, FAO also stresses engagement with the Department of Agriculture and Department of Agrarian Reform in forestry and agroforestry initiatives.

Key FAO interventions in the Philippines include work in forest restoration and management, through which technical

and policy support is provided to the Government in engaging local stakeholders in forest management and in piloting the forest and landscape restoration approach in priority areas.

FAO also supports forest monitoring and assessment, strengthening of forest governance, and building partnerships with private sector industry groups and local forest advocates such as NGOs, indigenous peoples and farmer groups.

Recognizing the importance of the country's youth in taking sustainable forest management forward in the future, FAO also supports the "Kids-to-Forests" initiative in the Philippines. The innovative youth programme is building awareness and appreciation of the full range of forest benefits and the potential for sustainably managing and using forest resources.

"In 2016, the Philippines hosted the 26th Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission and the Third Asia-Pacific Forestry Week, demonstrating its commitment to sustainable forest management and restoration. The event attracted a record 1 300 participants

from across the Asia-Pacific region. I'm happy to note that the incredible energy and enthusiasm generated by those events are still driving forestry developments in the Philippines and indeed throughout the region. Recent strong economic growth in the Philippines means that the country is also gaining substantial capacity to direct public expenditures toward forest restoration, which should continue to be a national priority," Durst said.

FAO's ongoing forestry-related efforts in the Philippines include support from the FAO-European Union Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Programme (FAO-EU FLEGT), the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD), the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM), the Global Forest Resources Assessment Programme (FRA) and the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP).

Philippines forest sector agrees to roadmap to improve forest law enforcement, governance and trade

A broad coalition of Filipino stakeholders is acting to improve forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT) in the Philippines with support from the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme. At its inaugural meeting, the Technical Working Group on Wood (TWGW) set out a roadmap of FLEGT activities in the Philippines to undertake between 2017 and 2020 to promote the trade of legally sourced timber and wood products, which will contribute to more transparent and responsible domestic forest industries.

Representatives from 16 organizations from government, private sector and civil society attended the meeting, which was presided over by Forester Noni Tamayo, Director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Forest Management Bureau (FMB).

The FAO-EU FLEGT Programme has been active in the Philippines since 2014, and recently renewed its engagement in recognition of the Philippines' commitment to addressing forest governance issues.

"With the newly launched FAO-EU FLEGT Programme in the Philippines, we hope to have wood production nationwide at a standard that is legally harvested, ascertained of its source, with valid documents and eventually traded in both the domestic and export markets," said Forester Raul Briz, FMB Forest Protection Section Chief. The Philippines FLEGT roadmap agreed at the TWGW meeting outlines interventions to address longstanding challenges and barriers

to effective forest management, law enforcement, governance and trade in the Philippines.

"The roadmap's contents were designed by national, regional and local stakeholders," said FAO Forestry Officer Bruno Cammaert. "FAO's role is to support local priorities for improving domestic forest law enforcement, governance and trade."

One of the main priorities for domestic wood processors and furniture producers is to address the national log supply deficit, which was estimated at 3.3 million m³ in 2015 based on data from the 2015 Philippine Forestry Statistics. The Philippines must boost its local timber production to meet domestic demand or it will continue to depend on imported timber and wood products.

Another roadmap priority for 2017 is to address the lack of assurance or control systems, and help exporters in the Philippines to demonstrate the legal or sustainable origin and traceability of their products to facilitate compliance with international market requirements. The Chamber of Furniture Industries of the Philippines (CFIP) is currently finalizing a chain-of-custody guidebook previously developed with FAO support that aims to help exporters reduce the risk of illegality in their domestic and imported timber supplies and also helps their clients in regulated markets to meet due diligence or due care obligations. The guidebook specifically provides guidance to the forest industry on how to source,

procure, transport, process and market legally harvested timber and timber products. CFIP hopes to field test the guidebook in several regions to evaluate the adoption by operators at various points of the timber supply chain.

TWGW members are developing detailed proposals for the activities identified in the roadmap, the first of which is targeted to begin in the third quarter of 2017.

"The TWGW's role need not be limited to the implementation of the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme," said Cammaert. "This multi-stakeholder platform is unique and could serve as a forum to share information, progress and ideas, but also to provide guidance to other projects, initiatives and institutions."

The TWGW receives support from the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme, which is funded by the European Union, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom. The Programme supports projects that encourage legal and sustainable timber production and consumption. The TWGW is managed through a joint initiative between FAO and the DENR's Forest Management Bureau. The FMB chairs the TWGW and handles or manages no project funds from FAO. For more information, visit the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme website at <http://www.fao.org/in-action/eu-fao-flegt-programme/en/> and the DENR-FMB website at <http://forestry.denr.gov.ph/>

Mid-year donor briefing

FAO Philippines held its annual mid-year donor briefing on 7 June 2017 in Makati City. The event served as a venue to update existing and potential donors and government partners on the progress of the organization's work in the country, and potential areas for partnership.

"From our perspective at FAO, if there is a more crucial period to support the country with technical capacities and increased development funding, the time is now," said FAO Representative José Luis Fernández "Increasing our support would ensure that the country makes the transition to becoming fully self-sustaining and a stronger resource partner in trade, peace and development, global food security and resilience."

Present at the briefing were about 60 officials and representatives from the embassies of Australia, Canada, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey (Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency-TIKA), United Kingdom, United States, as well as aid and development organizations, including Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Economic & Commercial Office of Spain, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), Spanish Instituto Cervantes Manila, Delegation of the European Union, Rare, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and World Bank.

From the government of the Philippines, agencies represented were: Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Agriculture and its Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Bangsamoro Development Agency, Department of Environment and Natural Resources and its Land Management Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Health's National Nutrition Council, Department of Science and Technology, National Economic and Development Authority, Office of the President, Office of the Vice President, and the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process and the Philippine Statistics Authority.



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Special committee meeting on food security

FAO took part in the special committee meeting on food security in the House of the Representatives last 17 May 2017. José Luis Fernández, FAO Representative and Tamara Palis-Duran, OIC-Assistant FAO Representative for Programme presented the global initiatives in raising public awareness against food loss and waste and pursuing policies and strategies to combat hunger.

The topic of food loss and waste is relevant to the context of the Philippines today. It affects not only the environment and food security, but also the nutritional status and economic value of food production. Two Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) directly relate to the issue of food loss and wastage. Zero Hunger (SDG2) and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG12).

The Organization has been at the forefront of raising awareness on the fight against food loss and waste. The Organization is also focused on fostering political commitment and accountability, improving capacities and mobilizing resources at all levels to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition.



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Fish forever: A celebration of community-managed fisheries

FAO Philippines took part in an event entitled "Fish Forever: A Celebration of Community-Managed Fisheries" on 20 June 2017. The activity, which was mounted by Rare, an international conservation NGO, was held to recognize the crucial role of communities and local governments in ensuring the sustainability and resilience of the fisheries sector.

"FAO remains steadfast in its commitment to advance responsible and sustainable use of fisheries and aquaculture resources. I believe that if supported and developed in a regulated and environmentally sensitive manner, fisheries and aquaculture have the capacity to contribute significantly to improving the well-being of poor and disadvantaged communities in developing countries, and to the achievement of several of the Sustainable Development Goals," said José Luis Fernández, FAO Representative.

The event, which showcased best practices in coastal resources and fisheries management, was also attended by various government agencies, NGOs, local government units and other development partners.



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