CELEBRATING 40 YEARS IN THE PHILIPPINES
Against the backdrop of the Second World War, the Philippines was among the 34 nations that founded the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in October of 1945 to ensure humanity’s freedom from hunger, increase levels of nutrition, improve the condition of rural populations and contribute toward an expanding world economy.

The Philippines figures prominently in the history of FAO as one of the first countries to support the achievement of its mandates—from the UN Conference in 1943 that decided on the creation of a dedicated agency that would focus on food and agriculture, to its inauguration in 1945.

FAO’s work in the Philippines started in the 1956 when an FAO fisheries expert, a German biologist, trained Government staff in planning and carrying out a research programme in marine fisheries biology.

A few years later, FAO helped control a coconut disease called “cadang-cadang,” which had already decimated some 10 million trees and further threatened the coconut sector, one of the country’s most important sources of income.

Two major emergencies marked FAO’s support to the Philippines in the 1970s: The assistance to control an epidemics disease called schistosomiasis through agro-engineering methods, and the livelihood recovery response after the catastrophic Moro Gulf earthquake and tsunami in 1976.

With an expanding programme, an agreement to establish an FAO Representation in the Philippines was signed on 14 November 1977.

The country office officially opened in January 1978, signaling a stronger partnership between FAO and the Government of the Philippines for the sustainable development of the country’s agriculture, fisheries, forestry and natural resources sectors.

Cover Photo: ©FAO/Joseph Agcaoili
In May 2017, armed clashes in Marawi City forced approximately 360,000 families to flee their homes and abandon their livelihoods. FAO continues to work with the Government to support the recovery and rehabilitation of the agriculture and fisheries sector and the restoration of the food supply chain in affected areas.

In 2015, FAO formulated a Strategic Programme for Agriculture and Agribusiness in Mindanao, which guides current efforts to help small farmers and fishers expand their role in the value chain and contribute to the attainment of durable peace and inclusive development in the region.

From 2013 to 2015, FAO implemented its Typhoon Haiyan Emergency, Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme, reaching over 230,000 farming and fishing families affected by the strongest typhoon on record. A total of 22 projects funded by 14 donors supported recovery and resilience-building interventions in the rice, corn, coconut and fisheries sub-sectors. This also led to the formulation of FAO’s Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Strategy, which served as a framework in further assisting the Government and agricultural communities in responding to disasters and future threats. FAO then supported the establishment of the Department of Agriculture’s DRRM CCA Operations Centre in 2016.

To support the Government’s nutrition programme, particularly in providing an affordable source of protein for the population, FAO implemented a brackishwater development and training project in 1977. Its results can be seen even today with the availability of affordable tilapias and milkfish in almost all public markets in the country.

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Ending hunger and poverty requires addressing socio-economic factors

Agriculture's role in ending poverty and hunger, the main thrusts of SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero hunger), is most crucial in the country’s rural areas where vulnerable farming and fishing communities live and work. In order to address these priorities in a sustainable way, development must take into consideration a broad range of other socio-economic dimensions. These include gender-related issues, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, peace justice and strong institutions, all of which are captured in SDGs 5 (Gender equality), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 10 (Reduced inequalities) and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).

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

FAO and the Government have been laying the foundation for more resilient agriculture since 2009. Much of this early work continues to facilitate progress in improving strategic climate risk management and accelerating the uptake of medium- and long-term risk reduction practices across the policy level, the agriculture industry and down to farming and fishing communities.

In the Philippines, FAO's work is directly linked to almost all the SDGs.

Food and agriculture are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and FAO’s strategic objectives are geared towards tackling the root causes of poverty and hunger, building a fairer society and leaving no one behind.

Today, the environment is no longer viewed as a pure austerity resource. SDG 12 highlights sustainable consumption and production: a call to produce more and better, using less resources and without further degrading the environment. For food systems to contribute to addressing poverty, hunger and a host of other development issues, it is increasingly important to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and clean energy, which are covered by SDGs 6 (Clean water and sanitation) and 7 (Affordable and clean energy). All these are among the many challenges that FAO, along with the Government and the academia are solving together.

FAO's key interventions include, among others, promoting methods to reduce the cost of producing production of crops and aquaculture products while increasing yield. Assistance in water, drought and watershed management are equipping smallholders to gain access to water and manage their water resources, while efforts are also being directed toward developing and mainstreaming bioenergy strategies for enhanced food security.

FAO also helps address antimicrobial resistance and other animal diseases, including those that are transboundary in nature, while increasing capacities for the planning and implementation of sustainable natural resources management.

Enabling sustainable food systems: doing more and better with less

Working together toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable food systems: doing more and better with less

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

FAO and the Government have been working together to develop and implement integrated solutions that will ensure that future generations will have the resources they need to continue on the path to sustainable development.

FAO continues to successfully pursue its mandates in the Philippines by working proactively with partners in the Government, NGOs, technical agencies, other UN agencies, the private sector, academia and research institutions, community-based organizations and producer groups, among others. Partnerships also make it possible to mobilize the best available knowledge and capacities and provide the most effective services in working towards common goals.

Adapting to climate and environmental change

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Viewing the links between climate change, life below water and life on land, which are underscored in SDGs 13, 14 and 15, FAO and the Government are working together to develop and implement integrated solutions that will ensure that future generations will have the resources they need to continue on the path to sustainable development.

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Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol of the Philippines chaired the 40th session of the FAO Conference held in Rome in July 2017, which was attended by 1,150 delegates from 181 FAO member countries.

From addressing food, nutrition and rural development needs after the second World War, to the Millennium Development Goals, and working together to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, FAO and the Government of the Philippines continue to demonstrate a lasting commitment and partnership for peace and development, improving food security, eradicating poverty and building the resilience of the most vulnerable.

Over the past 40 years, FAO has implemented more than 400 national projects in the Philippines, reaching over 504,000 farming and fishing families or over 2.5 million people. In addition, the Philippines also received support through FAO regional and global projects.
Several donors and development partners have contributed to FAO’s national, regional and inter-regional and global projects and programmes implemented in the Philippines, by providing various forms of support, including financial, technical collaboration and cooperation, among others.

*This list includes donors to national projects. Several other donor countries and institutions have supported the Philippines through FAO's regional, inter-regional and global activities and platforms. FAO also extends its gratitude to other donors and development partners for their programmes and contributions toward achieving common goals of eradicating hunger and malnutrition, improving agricultural livelihoods and productivity, increasing resilience to climate change and strengthening capacities to manage natural resources sustainably, among others.