



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO Philippines Newsletter

2019 - Issue #1
January to March

Featured Stories

Pagkain Para sa Lahat: A Public Forum on Food Security and Nutrition Legislative Agenda

Farmers affected by Typhoon Mangkhut receive livelihood assistance from New Zealand, FAO

Communities displaced by Marawi siege receive livelihood support from Australia, CFSI, and FAO

FAO, KOICA launch partnership to support peace and development in Mindanao

Japan, FAO extend support to empower Mindanao farmers, fisherfolk through livelihood and skills training

Philippines improving climate forecasting for farmers and fisherfolk

Mixing tradition and new learning in farming

T'boli weavers: weaving their dreams into reality

The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture

WELCOME

Contents

3	Pagkain Para sa Lahat: A Public Forum on Food Security and Nutrition Legislative Agenda
4	Farmers affected by Typhoon Mangkhut receive livelihood assistance from New Zealand, FAO
5	Communities displaced by Marawi siege receive livelihood support from Australia, CFSI, and FAO
6	FAO, KOICA launch partnership to support peace and development in Mindanao
7	Japan, FAO extend support to empower Mindanao farmers, fisherfolk through livelihood and skills training
8	Restoring food security and enhancing resilience in typhoon-affected communities in Northern Mindanao
9	Philippines improving climate forecasting for farmers and fisherfolk
10	Mixing tradition and new learning in farming
11	Weaving dreams into reality
12	Events / Publication

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

Greetings from the FAO Representation in the Philippines! I am pleased to bring you another issue of our country newsletter. We welcomed 2019 with activities that demonstrate the strength and breadth of FAO's partnerships in the Philippines.

A year after we have launched the FAO Legislative Advisory Group-Philippines (FLAG-PH), a parliamentary alliance envisaged to tackle national food security and nutrition issues, we continue to work with legislators and their legislative staff, civil society organizations, including farmers groups, and other stakeholders to raise awareness of and encourage legislative actions that would impact on the agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and environment and natural resources sectors. FLAG-PH organized a public forum to discuss some of the current related laws and bills with key stakeholders.

This issue also features the distribution of agri-based livelihood assistance packages from the Government of New Zealand to farming households that were affected by Typhoon Mangkhut. FAO joined New Zealand Deputy Head of Mission Tim Stewardson in Tuao, Cagayan, for the distribution activity of agricultural inputs that contributed to re-establishing farmers' livelihoods and food security.

FAO continues its support to communities affected and were displaced by the Marawi siege. With Australian Government's support, and in partnership with the Community and Family Services International, FAO's contribution to Marawi recovery involves the provision of agricultural inputs for production, conduct of trainings on technical production, development of agribusiness value chain, and market linkages for agricultural commodities. Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Steve Robinson led the handover ceremony of agri-based livelihood assistance package held in Marawi City.

Supporting peace and development in Mindanao is a key area of work for FAO in the Philippines. FAO signed a partnership agreement with the Korean Government, through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) that will help enhance agricultural productivity and link farmers to the supply chain of agribusiness firms in major regional centers, thereby also increasing their access to capital, technology, and consumers.

FAO also launched a partnership with the Government of Japan that will help enhance the agricultural vocational skills of farmers and fisherfolks in the Bangsamoro areas and other post-conflict areas in Mindanao. This initiative will help boost productivity in farming and fishing communities and contribute to increasing household incomes and overall economic activity.

Also featured in this issue is our assistance to typhoon-affected communities in Northern Mindanao, particularly in Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur. In 2017, communities in these provinces further experienced threats to their food security not only from the Marawi siege but also from Typhoon Tembin (local name: Vinta). With FAO assistance, farming

households were provided agricultural inputs to help restore their livelihoods, such as certified rice seeds, fertilizers, assorted vegetable seeds, and hand tools. Capacity building activities were also undertaken at the community and local government levels to increase resilience of agricultural livelihoods.

We also highlight our work with the Government of the Philippines to strengthen the country's resilience to natural hazards through initiatives on climate change adaptation and disaster risk management. One of these initiatives is the Integrating Agriculture in National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag) programme, co-led by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and FAO, which aims to integrate climate adaptation measures taken in the agriculture sectors into relevant national planning and budgeting processes. The NAP-Ag programme supports the long-term improvement of the Philippines' climate forecast products for the agriculture sector.

We also feature some of the farmers we have worked with under the Sustainable Intensification of Rice Production component of FAO's Farmer Field Schools in Save and Grow program. The program aimed to improve rice productivity by introducing farming methods that are natural, sustainable and not harmful to the environment. Farmers were hesitant at first to practice new methods introduced by the program, but now they are earning more, are using less harmful chemicals on their farms, and have more income options from their vegetable farms.

FAO's work on agro-biodiversity is also helping change mindsets and perspectives in traditional communities like in the T'boli tribe in Mindanao. Building on and further enhancing the production of heirloom agricultural products, FAO is helping communities such as the T'boli tribe to not only preserve and protect their heritage products but also to maximize their uses to improve lives and those of future generations.

FAO's strong partnerships with the government, donors, development partners, and communities allow us to continue our work at very good pace. On behalf of FAO, I would like to thank once again all our partners for the trust, encouragement and support that you have accorded us through the years. Mabuhay!

José Luis Fernández
FAO Representative in the Philippines



FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández (center) and Dept of Agriculture Senior Special Technical Assistant for National Corn Program Lorenzo Caranguian (right) with local government officials and farmer beneficiaries of FAO-Australian Government assistance for those affected by Typhoon Mangkhut.



©FAO/Jaclyn Grey

Pagkain Para sa Lahat: A Public Forum on Food Security and Nutrition Legislative Agenda

FAO Representative in the Philippines Jose Luis Fernandez (back, center), FAO Regional Office for Asia-Pacific Partnerships Officer Kaori Abe (back, 3rd from left), legislators from the House of Representatives, staff of the Senate Economic Planning Office and the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department, with representatives from civil society, non-government organizations, and farmers groups.

The Philippines continues to face challenges in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition, with 1.3 million families or 8.3 million Filipinos unable to meet their basic food needs in 2015, according to a report by the Philippine Statistics Authority. Moreover, despite the country's economic growth in recent years, poverty incidence remains high at an estimated 21.6 percent of the population. Farmers and fisherfolk consistently rank among the poorest. Incidence of malnutrition, especially in children 0-5 years old, remains prevalent in the most impoverished regions of the country, many of which are in Mindanao.

The FAO Legislative Advisory Group-Philippines (FLAG- PH), an alliance of legislators in the Philippines working towards specific legislative and policy measures to ensure freedom from hunger, was launched in January 2018 to further strengthen the partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Government of the Philippines.

Initially composed of 10 legislators from both Houses of Congress (Senate and House of Representatives), FLAG- PH is an advisory group whose aim is to contribute to addressing national food security and nutrition issues by taking the necessary legislative actions that would impact on the agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and environment and natural resources sectors.

FLAG-PH is a pilot initiative of FAO in the Philippines under a larger effort to build a Parliamentary Alliance in the Asia-Pacific region.

FLAG-PH's activities include consultations with provincial and municipal governments, local legislative councils, farmers, fisherfolks, indigenous groups, and civil society organizations as part of its objective to advance food security and nutrition in the Philippine legislative agenda.

"FAO believes that when public policies and programs are supported by stable and inclusive legislative process, the indicators of malnutrition and food insecurity correspondingly improve," notes FAO Representative to the Philippines Jose Luis Fernandez.

The forum aimed to contribute to raising the awareness of the public on existing and proposed legislations relevant to improving food security and nutrition in the country. It also helped initiate discussions with stakeholders on how the laws or bills will benefit the targeted sectors.

Among the legislators who participated in the forum were Hon. Bernadette "BH" Herrera-Dy, Hon. Teodoro "Teddy" Baguilat Jr., and Hon. Rodante Marcoleta, who presented their respective legislative agenda. The Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department (CPBRD) and the Senate Economic Planning Office (SEPO) also discussed the status of food security and nutrition bills filed and passed during the 17th Congress.

"Hunger and malnutrition are consequences of political decisions, political will, and political commitment. Therefore, as parliamentarians, we have big roles to play towards zero hunger and malnutrition," said Representative Herrera-Dy.

Civil society organization members and people's organization leaders representing farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, and the urban poor, and other development partners, also contributed to the discussions.

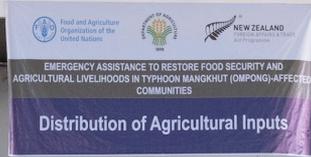
The event was co-organized by FAO, the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), and Catholic Media Network (CMN).

(Published by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Development (ANGOC) - <https://angoc.org/portal/pagkain-para-sa-lahat-a-public-forum-on-food-security-and-nutrition-legislative-agenda-march-26-2019/>)



©FAO/Jaclyn Grey

FLAG-PH organized a forum entitled "Pagkain para sa Lahat: A Public Forum on Food Security and Nutrition Legislative Agenda" to discuss some of the current related laws and bills with key stakeholders. The forum was held on 26 March 2019, at the Ilustrado Restaurant in Intramuros, Manila.



Farmers affected by Typhoon Mangkhut receive livelihood assistance from New Zealand, FAO

New Zealand Embassy Deputy Head of Mission Tim Stewardson (center) led the distribution of agricultural inputs to farmers affected by Typhoon Mangkhut in Tuao, Cagayan. He was joined by FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernandez (4th from right), Dept of Agriculture Senior Special Technical Assistant for National Corn Program Lorenzo Caranguian (3rd from right), DA Region II - Regional Director Narciso Edillo (2nd from left), and local government officials.

Farmers in the provinces of Cagayan and Ilocos Norte who were affected by Typhoon Mangkhut (Ompong) received support from the New Zealand Government through the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to help them recover their livelihoods after the typhoon.

Typhoon Mangkhut battered northern Luzon in September 2018, damaging agricultural lands and farms a few weeks before harvest season. Farmers and fisherfolk bore the brunt of the typhoon, with foregone incomes from missed harvest.

Cristina Vergara, a farmer from the Municipality of Tuao in Cagayan Province, related, “We were looking forward to our rice harvest. When Typhoon Mangkhut made landfall, our rice were at the flowering stage and were supposed to be ready for harvest in a few weeks’ time. We lost most of them because of the typhoon.”

“Typhoon Mangkhut damaged everything – not just our rice, but also the vegetables and other crops we planted,” said Silvino Zingapan, also a farmer from Tuao. “It was one of the strongest typhoons that we have experienced in recent years.”

Immediately following the typhoon, the New Zealand Government provided emergency assistance of Php18 million (NZD 500,000) to help address food security and nutrition needs of farmers with agricultural inputs packages through FAO.

Through the New Zealand assistance, FAO distributed fertilizers to the farming families to complement the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) provision of rice seeds. The project distributed a total of 355 tonnes of urea fertilizer to 3 550 farming households, providing each household with 100 kg of fertilizer.

FAO held a distribution activity for packages of fertilizers for more than 700 farmers in the municipality of Tuao in Cagayan. The event was attended by New Zealand Embassy Deputy Head of Mission Tim Stewardson, FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernandez, DA Senior Special Technical Assistant for National Corn Program Lorenzo Caranguian, DA Region II - Regional Director Narciso Edillo, and local government officials.

“We are thankful for this support from the New Zealand Government, FAO, the

Department of Agriculture, and the local government. Fertilizers are important to keep our crops healthy, but they are also expensive. With this support, we are able to save money because we don’t have to buy fertilizers,” said Silvino.

The New Zealand Government is a long-standing partner of FAO, particularly in enabling immediate support to help farmers resume their income-generating activities and gradually recover from losses following a disaster.

In addition, FAO also provided complementary capacity-building support under its Special Funds for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) through conduct of damage assessment and reporting system-related trainings for partners from DA, provincial and municipal agriculture offices.



New Zealand Embassy Deputy Head of Mission Tim Stewardson (center), FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernandez (2nd from right), Dept of Agriculture Senior Special Technical Assistant for National Corn Program Lorenzo Caranguian (left), talk to farmers Cristina Vergara (right) and Silvino Zingapan (2nd from left).



Communities displaced by Marawi siege receive livelihood support from Australia, CFSI, and FAO

Australian Ambassador Steve Robinson handing over package of Agri-input certificate to Ms. Fatima Lomantong of Marantao for the production of white scallion or Sakurab during his visit to Marawi last March 14, 2019.

Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Steve Robinson visited Marawi City to grace the hand-over ceremony of agri-based livelihood assistance packages for those affected and displaced by the Marawi crisis. The packages were provided through the Marawi Recovery Project (MRP), a AUD2.5 million package of assistance (approximately Php90million) being implemented by the Community and Family Services International (CFSI) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

CFSI's component aims to support protection, psychosocial, and urban livelihood benefiting 4,000 households (20,000 persons) displaced by the crisis in Marawi City, and the Municipalities of Ditsaan Raman, Marantao, and Piagapo in Lanao del Sur. CFSI directly implements the first two components in all areas, and the urban livelihood in Marawi City.

FAO is implementing the agri-based livelihood component benefiting 2,500 households, including agrarian reform communities, in the municipalities of Ditsaan Raman, Marantao, and Piagapo in Lanao del Sur.

FAO's contribution to the MRP involves the provision of agricultural inputs for production, conduct of trainings on technical production, development of agribusiness value chain and market linkages for four agricultural commodities namely abaca, hot chili, sweet potato and white scallion or "sakurab". These commodities offer high potential for agribusiness value addition that would transform subsistence agriculture into a market-driven agribusiness enterprise for long-term sustainability even beyond the project period.



The Marawi Recovery Project is helping provide commodity-specific production and processing skills training, market identification and information, community-based organizing and financial support linkage with government agencies and related stakeholders.





FAO, KOICA launch partnership to support peace and development in Mindanao

Mr. Shin Myung Seop (seated, right), Country Director of KOICA in the Philippines, and Mr Jose Luis Fernandez, FAO Representative in the Philippines (seated, left), signed an agreement for a project that aims to contribute to peace and development in Mindanao. KOICA President Ms. Lee Mi Kyung (standing, right) and UN Resident Coordinator Ola Almgren (standing, left) witnessed the signing ceremony, which coincides with the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Korea and the Philippines.

The Korean Government, through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have launched a partnership that will support efforts to foster sustainable peace and development in Mindanao.

Mr. Shin Myung Seop, Country Director of KOICA in the Philippines, and Mr Jose Luis Fernandez, FAO Representative in the Philippines, signed an agreement for a USD 5.8 million (approx. Php302.4 million) initiative that aims to contribute to improving agriculture and fisheries-based livelihoods, and accelerate agriculture-based enterprises in Mindanao. The launch of this landmark partnership coincided with the visit of KOICA President, Ms. Lee Mi Kyung, in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Korea and the Philippines.

To be implemented from 2019 – 2021 in the provinces of North Cotabato and Maguindanao, the project “Support to Agriculture and Agribusiness Enterprises in Mindanao for Sustainable Development” aims to sustain livelihood and increase income of farming and fishing households, primarily by enhancing agribusiness value chains of key commodities. The project will involve training/capacity building support to improve productivity, link to new market opportunities and enhance

disaster risk reduction and management, as well as provide agricultural inputs (planting materials, fertilizers, etc.), livestock and poultry, fisheries inputs, farm machineries and equipment.

“The development of Mindanao is a priority agenda of the Duterte administration and the Korean government is supportive of peace and development in Mindanao. In this regard, it is meaningful that this project will cover not only Bangsamoro areas but also other areas in Mindanao. We are hopeful that the project will contribute to sustainable peace and development and inclusive growth in Mindanao,” Mr. SHIN said.

“Mindanao, especially its agriculture sector, has a huge potential to further spur economic growth of the Philippines,” Mr Fernandez said. “The region is widely known for its rich and diverse resources. However, its growth has been hampered by decades of conflict and, more recently, increasing severity and frequency of natural disasters.”

“FAO has long been working in the region, assisting farming and fishing households improve their livelihood productivity and resilience. Our partnership with KOICA will enable us to continue and further expand our initiatives by not only enhancing



productivity but also linking the farmers to the supply chain of agribusiness firms in major regional centers, thereby also increasing their access to capital, technology, and consumers. This project ultimately aims to help improve agri-based livelihoods, and ensure food security and nutrition in Mindanao.”

This project is currently the single largest contribution to FAO’s work in Mindanao and it will help establish a Halal training and business center in Cotabato City and corn silage processing plant in North Cotabato. FAO will also provide post-harvest facilities for rice and corn, and production and processing support for high value crops and fisheries. The project will support about 10,740 poor farming and fishing households in five municipalities in Maguindanao, five municipalities in North Cotabato, and Cotabato City.



©FAO/Jaclyn Grey

Japan, FAO extend support to empower Mindanao farmers, fisherfolk through livelihood and skills training

Japanese Ambassador Koji Haneda (front row, right) signed and exchanged notes with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Representative in the Philippines Jose Luis Fernandez (front row, left), for a project that aims to assist farmers and fisherfolks acquire various agricultural vocational expertise in the Bangsamoro region. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Office of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Carlito Galvez, Jr (back row, right) and International Labour Organization Country Director Khalid Hassan (back row, left).

Farmers and fisherfolk in Mindanao will soon receive support from the Government of Japan through agriculture-based livelihood and technical skills trainings that will help enhance productivity, improve efficiency and increase their incomes.

The Government of Japan has partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for a USD 1.76 million (Php92 million) project that will help enhance the agricultural vocational skills of farmers and fisherfolks in the Bangsamoro areas and other post-conflict areas in Mindanao. This partnership is one of the four (4) projects that the Government of Japan will be supporting as contribution to the promotion of peace and development in Mindanao.

Mindanao, particularly its agriculture sector, is a major contributor to the Philippine economy given its vast natural resources. However, Mindanao's agriculture sector continues to face high underemployment rates and low wages. Mindanao's farmers and fisherfolk remain to be among the country's poorest, with limited access to knowledge and skills that will enable them to be more competitive.

Japanese Ambassador Koji Haneda signed and exchanged notes with FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernandez for the project in an event

witnessed by Office of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Carlito G. Galvez Jr.

"The passage and ratification of the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is ushering initiatives to support further development of the region. These include strengthening human capital through capacity building and skills trainings. The support from the Government of Japan is very timely as this will boost productivity in farming and fishing communities and contribute to increasing household incomes and overall economic activity in Mindanao, including BARMM," FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernandez said during the signing ceremony.

The vocational skills training programs, to be implemented in partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and other relevant government agencies, will be designed based on the needs of the farmers and fisherfolk, as well as gaps or skills required by the agriculture industry/sector. The project will use modules developed by FAO, TESDA, Department of Agriculture (DA), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech), and the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice).

The training programs will include lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on activities on crop production, integrated pest management, harvest and post-harvest processing using small farm machineries,

livestock/poultry production, animal health management, aquaculture/fisheries production, food processing, etc. Farm Schools (based on FAO's Farmer Field School) will be used as learning venues for community-based skills trainings, including on financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

The project will assist 2,000 farmers and fisherfolk (including former combatants, indigenous peoples, women and out-of-school youth) from the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Zamboanga Sibugay.

Beneficiaries who complete their training programs and/or are awarded national certification by TESDA and/or DA-ATI will be provided with starter kits (small farm tools, para-veterinary kits, engine repair kits, food processing kit, small farm machinery, etc) and help them start their own enterprise/livelihoods. Small farm machinery kits will be provided to community-based organizations with members who have completed training on small farm machinery operation and maintenance.

The project will contribute to the Peace and Development Roadmap of the Duterte Administration, and the goals and objectives stated in the Peace and Development Framework Plan (2011-2030) of the Mindanao Development Authority.



Restoring food security and enhancing resilience in typhoon-affected communities in Northern Mindanao

FAO held a training on Early Warning Early Action and Social Protection in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Planning to enhance the capacity of local governments in Northern Mindanao to prepare for and respond to hazards affecting agricultural livelihoods.

On 23 December 2017, Tropical Storm (TS) Tembin (locally known as Vinta) hit Northern Mindanao and caused widespread flooding and displaced more than 300 000 individuals, particularly in the provinces of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur. Most of the areas hit by TS Tembin are highly dependent on agriculture (crops, poultry and livestock, and fisheries). Based on the Department of Agriculture's (DA) report, estimated total production loss to the agriculture sector was valued at USD 10.8 million (Php 539, 568,182).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has provided emergency assistance to restore food security and enhance agricultural production and resilience in the areas most affected by TS Tembin in the two provinces, particularly in the municipalities of Munai, Lala, Kapatagan, and Salvador in Lanao del Norte and the municipalities of Buadiposo Buntong, Ditsaan-Ramain, Lumba-Bayabao, Maguing, and Madalum in Lanao del Sur.

With FAO assistance, 1 970 farming households were provided agricultural inputs to help restore their livelihoods, such as certified rice seeds, fertilizers, assorted vegetable seeds, and hand tools. Capacity building activities were also undertaken at the community and local government levels to increase resilience of agricultural livelihoods.

One of the trainings that FAO held was on Early Warning Early Action and Social Protection in Disaster

Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Planning to enhance the capacity of local governments to prepare for and respond to hazards affecting agricultural livelihoods. The training focused on municipal-level disaster risk management planning that will identify and prioritize pre-emptive actions rather than reactive solutions, and included sessions on community resilience, early warning systems (EWS), early warning early action (EWEA), and social protection.

The training builds on and is consistent with FAO's Disaster Risk Reduction/Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Framework in the Philippines which focuses on the integration of preparedness, emergency response, rehabilitation and development into agricultural programmes.

Thirty-eight (38) representatives from partner municipal and provincial governments participated in the training which included Municipal Agriculturists, Municipal DRRM Officers, Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officers, Municipal Planning and Development Officers, and Provincial Agriculture Officers.

The training helped to explain the climate and agriculture indicators for early warning, as well as link social protection to DRRM programming to ensure that the most vulnerable populations are able to cope with possible impacts brought by extreme weather conditions such as drought. Participants also learned how to develop, or further enhance existing, local standard operating procedures (SOPs) for specific levels of action according to the triggers set by the EWS. The training likewise helped identify possible inter-agency coordination and implementation mechanisms at the municipal level.

The participants appreciated the concept of EWEA and the tool provided for the early detection of drought. Following the training, they have further plans of applying the learnings from the training to their responsibilities as municipal officers. The local government units were also encouraged to mainstream DRRM Plan of Action for Agriculture in existing municipal plans, such as the Municipal DRRM Plan or the Municipal Agricultural Plan, to ensure food security and resilience of agricultural livelihoods.





Philippines improving climate forecasting for farmers and fisherfolk

The Philippines' food and economic security is facing growing risks as climate change impacts accelerate.

Climate related disasters in the Philippines are becoming increasingly devastating for the agricultural sector. Between 2006 and 2013, a total of 78 natural hazards, in the form of extreme weather, damaged over six million hectares of crops, valued at USD 3.8 billion. The vulnerability of the agricultural sector means the country's food and economic security is facing growing risks as climate change impacts accelerate. It is therefore essential to harness new innovations and technologies to build resilience to these impacts.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been working with the Government of the Philippines to strengthen the country's resilience to natural hazards through initiatives on climate change adaptation and disaster risk management. One of these initiatives is the Integrating Agriculture in National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag) programme, co-led by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and FAO, which aims to integrate climate adaptation measures taken in the agriculture sectors into relevant national planning and budgeting processes. The programme works in 11 countries and in the case of Philippines, the activities focus on developing a National Adaptation Plans (NAP), and updating the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP).

The NAP-Ag programme supports the long-term improvement of the Philippines' climate forecast products for the agriculture sectors. In particular, the activities target the upgrading and

expansion of the country's climate and weather information systems handled by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Information on weather and seasonal forecasts are critical for shaping climate predictions, necessary to inform decision-making at all levels in the farm and fisheries sectors. FAO supported the development of an application program interface (API) to enhance the dissemination of climate risk information. Farm weather advisories, daily monitoring, and monthly forecasting are now available on PAGASA's webpage. Easier and wider access to these agrometeorology forecast products are now helping agricultural workers to assess local production and livelihood needs more efficiently and accurately.

PAGASA and the Department of Agriculture (DA) conducted orientation and user training for DA regional technical staff on PAGASA's climate products and services, including at the Northern Mindanao Integrated Agricultural Research Center (NOMIARC) in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon Province. Staff were taught to understand and interpret sub-seasonal and seasonal climate forecasts, perform a tropical cyclone tracking exercise, and were briefed on how climate products and services may be used for municipal-level agriculture and fisheries advisories.

PAGASA also conducted an inventory of existing agrometeorological stations, synoptic stations and other surface-based sensors as part of the requirements for upgrading and expanding the agrometeorological forecast coverage for farming and aquaculture systems in vulnerable areas. The agency thus proposes the establishment/upgrading of at least fifteen surface stations under its Modernization Program.

Existing climate information needs to be enhanced to provide more targeted forecasts for farm and fisheries operations. NAP-Ag funding has enabled the national meteorological authority, PAGASA, to develop 10-day municipal-level forecasts for solar radiation and is currently developing solar radiation and sea wave height variables to enable fisherfolk and farmers to improve forecasting of conditions for planting and fishing, respectively.

These 10-day forecasts delivered by the Philippines' Government are an essential first step towards safeguarding crops and other agricultural and fishery assets against extreme weather. Through supporting the implementation of this initiative, the NAP-Ag has uncovered a few lessons on how to make available information on climate relevant to specific needs and audiences. A common understanding of the capabilities of the different agencies involved is essential for more effective collaboration in the delivery of climate and disaster risk information to agricultural stakeholders.

With these insights the NAP-Ag will continue to support the government as well as share these best practices with other countries facing similar exposure to climate change impacts.

Also published in: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/naps/news-events/detail/ru/c/1191683/>



©FAO/ Jacob Cruz

Mixing tradition and new learning in farming

An ordinary day at the farm for Sandy Obsioma – clear blue skies and fresh morning air held a promise of good harvest.

Sandy Obsioma, like many of the younger farmers in Barangay Dumarait, in the Municipality of Balingasag in the Province of Misamis Oriental, learned his farming methods from the “old folks” who have depended on many traditional and, oftentimes, superstitious and inappropriate farming practices. In following traditional practices, Sandy thought that planting was all about putting as many seedlings on soil and increasing the amount of pesticides.

“Retailers would sell me various types of pesticides. I would buy four to five of them and mix them all together like a cocktail before applying them to my field.” This practice is not unusual to many farmers in the country. Cocoy Liamera, an agricultural technologist at Balingasag, admits that farmers who want to increase produce think that getting rid of pests by maximizing the use of fertilizer will improve yield and guarantee a perfect crop.

When the Sustainable Intensification of Rice Production (SIRP) was introduced in the Municipality of Balingasag, through the FAO’s Farmer Field Schools in Save and Grow (FFS-S&G) program, farmers were excited – but at the same time hesitant to practice new methods. The program aimed to improve rice productivity by introducing farming methods that are natural, sustainable and not harmful to the environment.

In the beginning it was not easy to convince farmers to adopt new methods. “According to them, to see is to believe. As they were already earning from their current practices, they couldn’t see any reason to spend more time learning new ways. It was necessary to show them examples, so they could see the benefits for themselves,” Cocoy said.

The FFS adopted a participatory, experiential and discovery-based approach where farmers observed and experienced good farming practices such as seeding rates, planting distances, fertilizer management, water management, pest management, and vegetables farming systems.

Over time, the new methods proved to be more sustainable and profitable. In the old method farmers would spend around 5,000 to 10,000 pesos per hectare for fertilizers alone. Adopting the new approach drove costs down to an average of only 6,000 pesos per hectare.

To control pests, without the use of chemicals, biological agents were introduced. “There are good insects and bad insects. Good insects should not be killed because they help us in the growth of our crops. We just need to know how to identify them,” Sandy said.

Farmer Rudy Daham is one of the more elderly farmers in Barangay Dumarait. He admitted being a bit skeptical at the start of the FFS-Save and Grow training. Having been a farmer for more than four decades, he had relied solely on counting the moon cycles before he would apply his fertilizers and decide when to plant.

In fact, Rudy was one of the first to use natural pest control methods in his community. “It was the only way to learn. One must surrender to learning because it’s the only way to keep an open mind,” he said.

“In the past they would practice monocropping and only planted rice,” adds Cocoy. Four or five months in a year, there would be nothing to harvest because they were only planting rice.

This would also mean that there would be no other source of food. Under the Farmer Field School on Save and Grow, farmers were encouraged to plant in between seasons.

Today, farmers enjoy a rich variety of vegetables, fresh from their own backyard. Sandy says, “We also learned how to properly plant vegetables. Planting vegetables helps us earn additional income. We can tend to the vegetables while working in the rice fields.”

Through the efforts of the local government and the support of their local barangay officials, Balingasag farmers have become more confident that the methods and knowledge shared by the FFS-Save and Grow will bring even better yields in the future as they continue teaching other farmers what they learned from the program.

The local government has had a vital role to play in the reach of this program. The appointment of a dedicated agriculturist to do field visits and implement the program to its full extent is important to the farmers.

Cocoy relates, “A very small number of our participants are college graduates or have taken courses. Many have only reached elementary schooling. It is important that the teaching should not only cover theories but should also be hands-on so the farmers are able to retain what they learned.” The old method came face to face with the new – and the farmers themselves saw the results.

When asked what he dreams for the farmers in his community, Sandy says with a glimmer of hope that little by little when they can balance their profit, he hopes that later, farmers can become self-made entrepreneurs.



©FAO

Weaving their dreams into reality

Chita Isulan demonstrating weaving t'nalak during the Interior and Design Manila event.

The abaca weavers of the T'boli tribe in Mindanao are also popularly known as “dreamweavers.” This is because of their belief that the inspiration for the patterns of their signature T'nalak fabric comes to them in their dreams. The lush landscape of the Municipality of Lake Sebu, which the T'boli call home, certainly seems to inspire dreams, with its picturesque mountains and forests. The beautiful surroundings, unique handicrafts, and the rich tribal traditions regularly draw tourists to the town, which is considered the summer capital of the province of South Cotabato.

What visitors may not see, however, are the struggles of the T'boli to make a living.

Many of the roads leading to the barangays of Lake Sebu – many of which are in the mountains – remain unpaved. Motorcycles are the usual mode of transport but costs are steep, reaching as much as Php300 (USD5.8) per person for a two-way trip. Most of the residents earn seasonal income from farming rice, corn, and fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes and bananas.

The weavers themselves only make money from their work when they get orders, which do not come regularly. When they do get requests, they invest a lot of time and effort into making their handicrafts.

Weaving t'nalak is an intensive process that requires about 15-20 steps, requiring substantial investment in effort and time. T'boli men plant the abaca, and the women weave the final product of fabric. The whole process can take anytime from three to five months, while the “modern” fabrics – woven abaca dyed using commercial products instead of the natural dyes used to make T'nalak – takes about two to three months to be produced. A five-meter roll

of fabric will earn them between Php600-700 (USD11.5-13.5). However, orders are intermittent, and they may get no orders in the space of six months. Furthermore, many of them have not been trained to expand the use of the fabric to other products such as bags, wallets, and clothing, which would have brought them more income.

Adding to the plight of the T'boli is their reserved nature. According to Chita Sulan, one of the women weavers who heads the Lake Sebu Indigenous Women and Farmers Association (LASIWFA), they are not used to selling their products to outsiders. “Di bale nang maghirap [Never mind that we are poor],” she says, referring to their mindset that selling leads to loss of dignity. Eating a full meal once a day is the norm for many of the families in the tribe.

The entry of the Dynamic Conservation and Sustainable Use of Agrobiodiversity in Traditional Agroecosystems of the Philippines, a project supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR), and Global Environment Facility (GEF), has helped paved the way for a change in perspective for the T'boli women weavers. The project aims to conserve globally important agrobiodiversity, including rice, taro, yam, eggplant, banana and abaca, in the Philippines.

Besides providing capacity building activities to abaca weavers in five barangays in Lake Sebu to explore new ways to develop their abaca products, it also provided opportunities for the women to join events such as the Helubong Festival, the International Food Exhibition (IFEX), T'nalak Festival, and the National Technology Forum.

The project also provided them trainings on processing the bioproducts in their community, such as bananas, carrots, yam, taro, and tomatoes, into chips and/or candies.

According to Chita, many of their harvest regularly got spoiled because they did not know what to do with the excess fruits and vegetables they could not eat or sell. They were also too shy to sell these outside their own barangays. Exposure to different marketing and promotion activities sparked their enterprising nature. From being shy, the women are now daring to explore new livelihood opportunities and build connections to improve their quality of life.

Far from offending the elders in the tribe who were used to their old way of life, Chita reveals that they are actually supportive of what the women are doing to make a living. “Naging parang challenge sa mga nakatatanda. ‘Sana ginawa rin namin iyan noon’ [They saw it as a challenge. ‘I wish we did that before],” Chita says, narrating how the elders reacted when they found out about the new ventures the women are exploring to earn.

The women's efforts are anchored on one goal: to ensure a better life for their children. “Gusto namin na hindi danasin nila ang nadanasan namin [We do not want them to go through the same thing that we did],” Chita said. While she is quick to say that they still want the future generations to preserve the unique T'boli culture – including making the T'nalak, which is passed down from mother to daughter – this wish has now been woven with a new vision, one that sees T'boli families rising from poverty and enjoying improved lives. These women are now daring to turn this dream into reality.

Development of national food safety indicators with a One Health approach

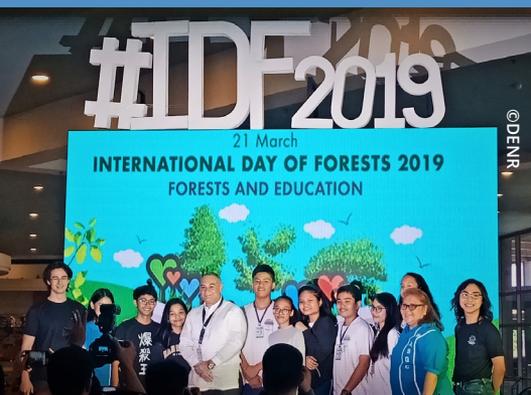


FAO, in partnership with the Philippine College of Veterinary Public Health (PCVPH), the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Department of Health (DOH), is implementing the project “Development of National Food Safety Indicators with One Health Approach” which aims to contribute to strengthening food surveillance systems in the Philippines.

The project is helping to: (a) identify three (3) concrete national food safety indicators; (b) recommend methodologies to measure the indicators; (c) detail the Philippine indicator setting process that can be used as a template by other ASEAN countries; (d) to share the project results in the region; (e) develop content to support communications and advocacy for food safety indicators; and (f) identify relevant trainings to fill the gaps in the measurement of the indicators.

FAO and PCVPH organized a project kick-off workshop on 18-19 March 2019 which was attended by national participants from the government and the private sector. Participants included food safety regulatory agencies of the DA and the DOH who are directly involved in implementing the Philippine Food Safety Act 2013, food safety support agencies, food producers and processors, the academe, local governments, consumer groups, and selected members of the PCVPH.

International Day of Forests 2019: Forests and Education



FAO, through FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernandez, joined the celebration of the International Day of Forests (IDF) on 21 March. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the Forest Management Bureau (FMB), spearheaded the Philippines celebration of the event.

In line with the theme of the IDF in 2010, “Forests and Education,” FMB partnered with OVP Technologies, Inc to conduct a sponsored game of “Paydro Live” to campaign for and promote awareness on Philippine forests. Paydro Live is an app-based trivia game show, in which each game is made up of 11 multiple-choice questions that cover a wide range of topics. Players streaming the game have to answer all 11 questions correctly to get a share in the major prize. For the March 21 game, questions were about IDF and Philippine forests. Through the event, the Philippine Government aimed to engage and educate high school students and young working professionals about the importance of protecting and preserving forests.

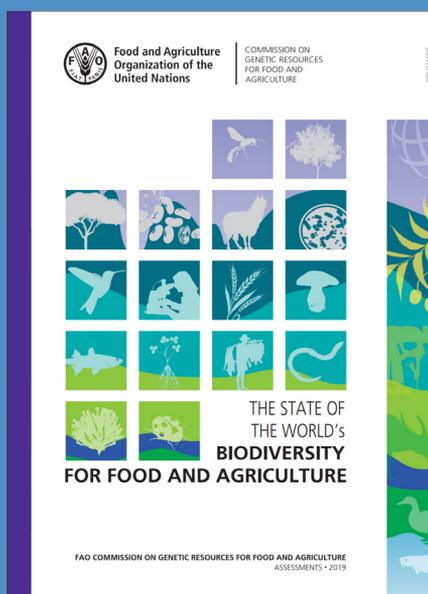
State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture

The first-ever report of its kind presents mounting and worrying evidence that the biodiversity that underpins our food systems is disappearing – putting the future of our food, livelihoods, health and environment under severe threat.

Once lost, warns FAO's State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture report, launched today, biodiversity for food and agriculture – i.e. all the species that support our food systems and sustain the people who grow and/or provide our food – cannot be recovered.

Biodiversity for food and agriculture is all the plants and animals - wild and domesticated - that provide food, feed, fuel and fibre. It is also the myriad of organisms that support food production through ecosystem services – called “associated biodiversity”. This includes all the plants, animals and micro-organisms (such as insects, bats, birds, mangroves, corals, seagrasses, earthworms, soil-dwelling fungi and bacteria) that keep soils fertile, pollinate plants, purify water and air, keep fish and trees healthy, and fight crop and livestock pests and diseases.

The report, prepared by FAO under the guidance of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture looks at all these elements. It is based on information provided specifically for this report by 91 countries, and the analysis of the latest global data. The report is available here: <http://www.fao.org/state-of-biodiversity-for-food-agriculture/en/>



Some rights reserved. This work is available under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence

FAO Representation in the Philippines

Email: FAO-PH@fao.org

Website: www.fao.org/philippines

Twitter: [@FAOPhilippines](https://twitter.com/FAOPhilippines)