



Food and Agriculture Organization
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<http://www.fao.org/pulses-2016/en/>

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 FAO Philippines, and welcome to our third newsletter for 2016.

We have witnessed significant milestones in the past quarter. As the Philippines transitioned to a new Government administration, we, as a development organization, have also been working to ensure that our efforts remain aligned with current priorities in order to better support the country.

In July, the end of El Niño was officially declared over by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA). While we have been experiencing frequent typhoons, the threat of La Niña has subsided. But this does not mean that we can be complacent. As we have seen at least in the last five years, large-scale disasters strike when we are least prepared. We have also seen how the poorest and most vulnerable members of our population suffer the most.

We are taking every opportunity to prepare the agriculture sector for what lies ahead. As we look into disaster risk reduction, we also integrate resilience-building through climate change adaptation, which would ensure sustainability in its truest sense.

We acknowledge the important role of food and agriculture in the ambitious pursuit of achieving the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and thus, we take our role in it seriously. Both the 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.

While FAO's broad priorities in the 2030 agenda are more directly related to ending poverty, hunger and malnutrition; enabling sustainable development in agriculture, fisheries

and forestry; and combating and adapting to climate change, most of our work in the Philippines cuts across at least 13 SDGs. These include SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Clean water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Clean Energy), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reducing Inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), SDG 15 (Life on Land), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

In this newsletter, we present stories about our most recent efforts in these areas. While working hand in hand with the Government of the Philippines, our donors and partners to solve the most urgent demands and challenges in agriculture and food security today, we also look far into the future in order to help ensure that the current and succeeding generations will have access to all the resources they need to never go hungry and not fall into poverty. We, as an Organization, are committed to doing the best that we can so that by 2030, we can hand over a better world to the next generation, with the confidence that we have also prepared them to nurture it and build on what we have started.

We thank you for being a part of this journey and look forward to stronger partnerships and collaboration with you.

Mabuhay!

José Luis Fernández
FAO Representative in the Philippines



FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández with Climate Change Commission (CCC) Secretary Emmanuel de Guzman (second from right). Also in photo are (from left) CCC Climate Change Office Deputy Executive Director Rommel Antonio Cuenca, FAO Agronomist Jaime Montesur and FAO Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Specialist Claudius Gabinete.



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An aerial shot shows the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in a coconut farming community. The category 5 typhoon swept through the Central Philippines in November of 2013, affecting over 600 000 hectares of farmland.

Strengthening climate change adaptation in agriculture

Climate change is among the major threats to global food security. The risk is even greater for middle-income or developing countries such as the Philippines, where the crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry sectors bear over 20 percent of the economic impact caused by climate-related disasters.

Taking a stronger resolve to cushion the agriculture sector from climate change impacts, the country has joined the Integrating Agriculture in National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag) programme, an international initiative that seeks to strengthen the capacities of governments to plan, fund and operationalize climate response strategies.

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

NAP-Ag in the Philippines

NAP-Ag interventions are tailored to country-specific needs. In the Philippines, implementation is supported by FAO in close consultation with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and other relevant Government agencies. The programme will focus on

boosting 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.

"Climate change is no longer a distant threat. The strong typhoons and droughts we have experienced in recent years have given us a preview of the severe implications it will continue to have on the agriculture sector and the related issues of national interest such as food security, economic growth and

the eradication of rural poverty," said FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández. "We also acknowledge that agriculture and climate change adaptation are crucial to the achievement of 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by UN member countries."

Through NAP-Ag, FAO has started working with DA, the Climate Change Commission and the Department of Science and Technology's Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

...(continued on page 5)



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The Philippine delegation at the FAO-UNDP Global Capacity Development Workshop on NAP-Ag at the FAO Headquarters in Rome in April 2016 (from left: Christopher Morales, Director of DA's Field Operations Service, Charmion Feliciano of UNDP, Roberto Sandoval, FAO DRR/CCA Specialist and Alicia Ilaga, Director of DA's Systems-wide Climate Change Office)



©FAO/ Adonis Luciano

FAO expands El Niño response in Mindanao

FAO Project Manager Mario Corado hands over certified rice seeds, corn and vegetable seeds and fertilizer to farmers in Maguindanao Province

For 18 months, farmers in the Philippines have had to contend with dry spells and drought resulting from a strong El Niño that left USD 325 million in damage to crops. Generating food and income was a challenge for over 400 000 affected farming households, more than half of them from poverty-stricken areas in Mindanao.

Following the initial phase of its El Niño response in Central Luzon and Central Mindanao, FAO has expanded its operations to reach an additional 5 500 agriculture-dependent families from four provinces in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Region XII-SOCCSKSARGEN.

"We have just completed the distribution of certified rice seeds, corn seeds, fertilizer and vegetable seeds in the provinces of Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao," said FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández. "These inputs will allow them to re-start their livelihood activities and grow food for household consumption."

The Department of Agriculture (DA) estimates that in these four provinces alone, 101 000 ha of crop areas were affected by El Niño, resulting in USD 17.9 million worth of production losses between February 2015 to July 2016.

The expanded FAO response, which was mobilized at the request of the DA's Regional Field Office XII and the Department of Agriculture and

Fisheries of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DAF-ARMM), complements Government efforts to address the impact of El Niño across 16 regions of the Philippines.

"We were affected by drought especially because the El Niño was so long and it happened at the same time as the rat infestation. Many of the farmers here experienced a 30 to 40 percent reduction in yield," narrated Rahib Mamaluba, a farmer-technician from Mamasapano, Maguindanao.

Building resilience

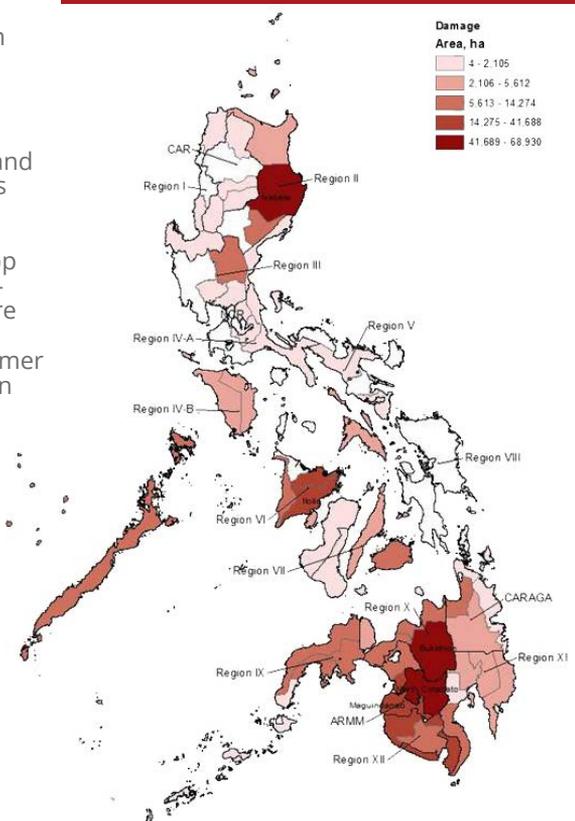
To build the disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation capacities of beneficiary communities, FAO is also conducting training activities on drought management, improved crop production and resilience to climate-stress. This is expected to equip more than 100 DA and local government agricultural technicians and local farmer trainers to replicate the workshops in their respective barangays.

"This is giving us the courage because even before a calamity strikes, we already have an idea how we should prepare," explained Jalani Pagital, a farmer from Datu Salibo, Maguindanao.

In an earlier project that ended in June 2016, FAO also worked closely with DA and DAF-ARMM to provide similar assistance to 5 000 farming and fishing households in Maguindanao and North Cotabato whose livelihoods were disrupted by a combination

of natural and man-made disasters, including displacement due to armed conflict, drought and flooding. Women were also trained

Areas affected by El Niño 556 721 ha February 2015 to July 2016



**Data Source: DA & GADM, July 2016

in alternative livelihoods such as water hyacinth crafts production, as well as post-harvest and value-adding techniques that would help them supplement their families' incomes to fast-track household-level disaster recovery.

"Because of the assistance we received and what we have learned from the training, hopefully someday there would no longer be poor farmers in our community," Rahib added.

To date, FAO has assisted a total of 54 300 farming households in Luzon and Mindanao whose livelihoods were affected by drought and strong typhoons associated with El Niño. In addition to FAO internal funding of almost USD 1 million, the response was also made possible by the USD 1.6 million combined contributions of the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium (through FAO's Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities) and reprogrammed savings from other FAO emergency response and resilience projects funded by the governments of Ireland, New Zealand and Norway.

More support on the way

Under an on-going USD 3 million-project funded by the Government of New Zealand, FAO is set to provide crop, livestock, poultry and fisheries production inputs to an additional 10 475 farming and fishing households in North Cotabato. Communities will also benefit from training in climate-smart practices, disaster preparedness,

alternative livelihoods and product value-addition. The delivery of assistance will be phased until October 2017.

FAO in Mindanao

FAO supports the Government in restoring the livelihoods and increasing the resilience of farmers and fishers in Mindanao's conflict-affected and El Niño-hit areas. This includes the provision of

farm and fisheries inputs, value adding technologies, start-up resources, and training on farm-level vulnerability assessments and risk reduction planning. FAO is also currently implementing its strategic plan for agriculture and agribusiness that will maximize distinct and unique agribusiness opportunities both in key cities and rural, conflict-sensitive areas.



Farmers in the Municipality of Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat sing the national anthem before receiving farm inputs from FAO that will help them re-start their El Niño-hit livelihoods. .

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NAP-AG continued from page 3

The initial stage of the programme of the programme initial will involve re-evaluating and recalibrating current agricultural development strategies and budgeting processes with the objective of minimizing exposure to and losses from climate change risks. Efforts to map vulnerability to food insecurity will likewise be expanded, in addition to promoting risk-reduction mechanisms in agricultural and coastal communities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will also provide policy guidance in mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and management in the Philippines' Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Plan. Participating countries will also receive assistance in accessing climate financing from the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund.

"How well the agriculture sector performs in terms of contributing to the economy will be strongly linked to the amount of investment put into national climate change adaptation," said Alicia Ilaga, Director of DA's Systems-wide Climate Change Office, which implements the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture.

"We acknowledge that implementing climate adaptation measures, especially those that will entail systemic changes, may require external support in addition to what our national budget can cover. We will also explore such options under the NAP-Ag programme. This includes instruments within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, specifically those under the 'Common but Differentiated Responsibility,' which mandates developed nations to assist developing

countries through the Global Environmental Facility and, recently, through the Green Climate Fund," she added.

Building on gains

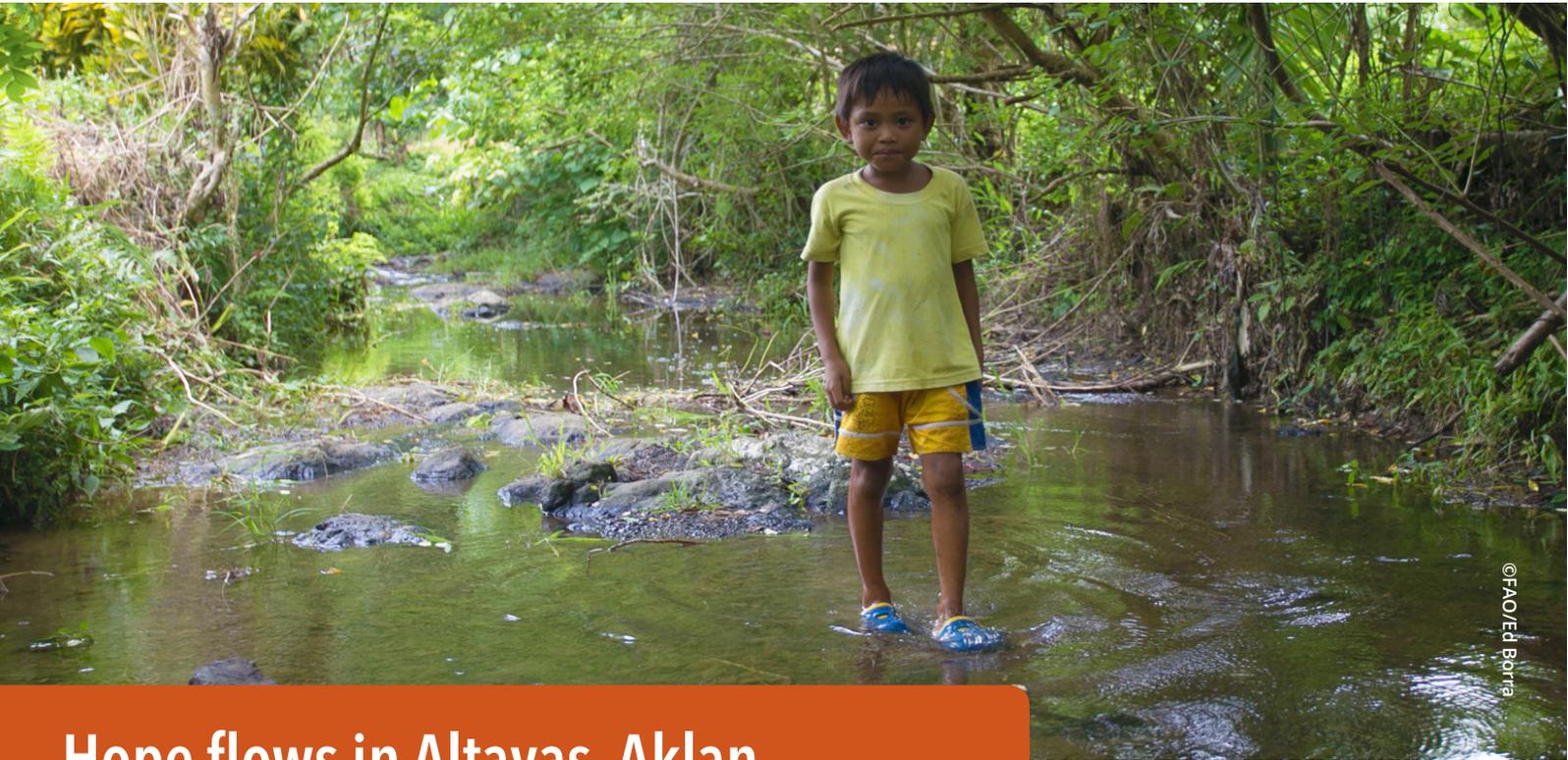
In spite of being one of the most disaster-prone countries, the Philippines remains to be a leading example in building institutional capacities for managing and reducing risks of natural hazards and climate change.

NAP-Ag will build on the results of several resilience projects jointly implemented by FAO and DA since 2009, including climate change adaptation capacity-building in the Cordilleras under the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund; the Japan-funded analysis and mapping of impacts under climate change for adaptation and food security; climate risk management strengthening in the Bicol Region under a technical cooperation arrangement between FAO and the Government; and more recently, the formulation of a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategy under a multi-year programme financed by the European Commission Human Aid and Civil Protection Department, and a National La Niña Action Plan for the agriculture and fisheries sector.



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At the NAP Expo held in Bonn, Germany in July 2016, Claudius Gabinete (left), FAO Philippines DRR/CCA Specialist, presented the experience of the Philippines in determining the criteria and processes for prioritization as well as the best available methods and tools for assessing crop production.



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Hope flows in Altavas, Aklan

A child in Altavas, Aklan, strolls through the river that flows from Gando Falls, the main water source for over 4 000 residents.

Nestled atop a mountain in the remote Municipality of Altavas, in the Province of Aklan, is Gando Falls, one of the most important resources for nearly 4 000 residents of barangays Lupo and Catmon.

The area is relatively isolated and is accessible only to those who are willing to take an hour-long trek up a steep and winding trail – the same path that villagers, primarily women and girls, traverse several times a day to fetch water.

This arduous journey is about to end, for very soon, water from the spring will flow directly to their homes and schools, and irrigate their rain-fed farmlands, the main sources of their

food and livelihood.

Thanks to a partnership between the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), FAO and the Department of Health’s National Nutrition Council (NNC), the construction of a water impounding system is now underway as part of a project on Early Warning System for Food and Nutrition Security (EWS-FNS). The provision of this reservoir was proposed by the local EWS-FNS team of Altavas based on the results of their quarterly monitoring of the status of food and nutrition security in the municipality. The survey indicated the high prevalence of malnutrition in barangays Lupo and Catmon, which could be addressed by improving water access.

Poor water access affects the most vulnerable

Collecting water for household consumption is not an easy task for the women of Altavas. On regular days, they walk and climb to the spring at the bottom of the waterfall where they would fill their buckets with water for cleaning and washing. Drinking water is sourced from an open-pit well in the same vicinity. In the summer, the spring and well run dry, forcing them to negotiate the perilous mountain trail to reach the main source, but this, too, dries up on extremely hot days.

“At the height of the El Niño, my neighbours and I were competing for water. There were times when I had to fetch water in the middle of the night or very early in the morning, when there are not so many people trying to get water,” narrates 64-year-old Luzvilla Buliag.

This situation is not unique to Altavas. In many developing countries, women and girls bear the responsibility of fetching water. A recent report by a high level panel of experts on food security and nutrition highlighted its adverse impacts on their health and nutritional status. This also affects how much time they spend on educational activities and fulfilling other perceived gender-specific roles such as child care.

Health, food security and livelihood impacts

In addition to the poor water access, water quality has also been affecting the health of people in Altavas.



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(Left) For more than 35 years now, Luzvilla Buliag, 64, has been collecting water for her family’s consumption. (Right) At the height of summer, the spring dries up, forcing many residents to drink water from unsafe sources.

Droughts also resulted in short supply.

"I have a grandchild who is two months old. We buy bottled water for him but my granddaughter who is already six years old drinks water from the well just like the rest of us. Sometimes we get sick. At my age, I still get diarrhoea," Luzvilla said.

"When the well dried up, we were forced to drink the water from the spring," said Sanel Andres, a farmer from Barangay Lupo, describing how they consumed water from a less potable source.

Agriculture-based livelihoods and food supply in the area were also badly hit by El Niño. Relying only on rainfall to water their vegetables, banana and rice, farmers experienced a two-month delay in planting.

"We normally plant every May and harvest by August or September. But because there was no water, we were only able to plant at the end of July," laments Luzvilla.

Water scarcity affects 40 percent of the global population, while preventable water and sanitation-related diarrhoeal diseases take the lives of approximately 2 million people each year. Such diseases are also among the major causes of death in children under five.

"The lack of adequate infrastructure and management to support water and sanitation efforts could result in larger health, economic and environmental impacts that would undermine any progress in building prosperity and a sustainable future," explains FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández. "Ensuring that everyone, especially the vulnerable and marginalized gain access to water is a requisite to achieving the entire range of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030."



©FAO/Ed Borra

FAO, NNC and local government staff traverse this difficult path to the village, the same path that villagers, primarily women and girls, negotiate several times a day to fetch water.

Water and sanitation as a key foundation for healthy, food secure and resilient populations is further underscored by Goal 6 of the SDGs adopted by member countries of the United Nations in 2015.

Water impounding system

The long wait is almost over for the residents of Altavas. By December 2016, they will be completing the construction of their very own water impounding system, using tools and materials from FAO and UNICEF.

Residents are also investing sweat equity into this project. Many have volunteered to work to help construct the reservoir, dig the ground and lay the pipes.

"Most of us are trained carpenters and masons," said Eliser Buliag, president of the barangays' community association. "We only needed the materials to get us started."

The reservoir is designed to collect water from the rain, as well as from Gando Falls. It will be equipped with pipes that connect to more than 300 households in barangays Lupo and Catmon.

Aside from providing water for drinking and other domestic needs, the water impounding system will also be used to irrigate farms. It will also provide water

access to two public elementary schools, which will benefit more than 150 children aged 12 and below.

For the women, having water distributed directly to their homes means less time away from their children and opportunities for more productive endeavours.

"Finally, I will be spared from having to walk long distances just to get water," Luzvilla declares. "It would be nice to have water by just turning on the tap."

The water impounding project is part of FAO's larger effort to improve food and nutrition security in Western Visayas (Region 6).

Through the funding support provided by UNICEF, FAO has been working closely with NNC, the Provincial Health Office and local government units of some of the poorest municipalities in the region to implement projects that address food insecurity and malnutrition issues identified by the communities.

According to FAO's EWS-FNS Project Team Leader Maria Cecilia Pastores, "one of the major components of the project is to support interventions to mitigate food security and nutritional status risks. It is important that the community recognizes its risks, knows what needs to be done to alleviate these, and actively participates in providing solutions."



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(Left) Residents of Barangay Lupo and Catmon are working together to construct a water impounding system, using the tools and materials provided by FAO in partnership with NNC and with funding support from UNICEF. (Right) Men in the village are preparing to lay in the pipes.



©FAO/Philippines

Electronic tool for monitoring food and nutrition insecurity

FAO and NNC are working together to automate the annual height and weight census among young children. The process has been conducted manually since the 1970s.

In a country such as the Philippines, which is regularly hit by natural and human-induced disasters, the need for early warning systems is paramount. This ensures that vulnerable communities have the capacity for evidence-based and timely decision-making even before a crisis arises. Highlighting the link between agriculture and nutrition, one of FAO's key priorities is to strengthen and support information and early warning systems for food and nutrition security.

The Electronic Operation Timbang (e-OPT) Plus tool

The Operation Timbang (OPT) Plus is an example of an existing information system at the barangay level that provides data on the status of food utilization in a community. Specifically, it provides information on the ultimate outcome of food insecurity in a community: the prevalence of malnutrition among vulnerable young children. The OPT Plus is the annual weight-and-height-taking activity conducted by the National Nutrition Council (NNC) through its network of Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS). The BNSs are volunteer health workers who serve at the frontline of nutrition service delivery nationwide. Since the 1970s, data from this annual activity has been collected from each barangay, usually within the first quarter of the year, and these are aggregated at the municipal, provincial, and regional levels. Upon collection at the barangay and municipal levels, data from the OPT Plus should ideally be transmitted immediately to local chief executives and nutrition councils so that these can be used for planning and response.

A key step in data collection for OPT Plus is the determination of each child's

age in months, calculated manually by the BNS from the child's birthdate and the date of the visit. After weight and height measurements are taken, the nutritional status is also determined manually – one child at a time, using reference tables based on the WHO's Child Growth Standards. Information from each child is then recorded on standard paper forms. Given the large number of children who are included in the survey, the process was tedious, time consuming, and susceptible to computational errors. Consequently, there have been criticisms on the overall quality of malnutrition prevalence rates derived from the OPT Plus.

In 2010, the National Nutrition Council developed a prototype of an Excel-based electronic tool – the 'BNS Tool' -- that aimed to address the difficulties in manual calculation, recording, and reporting. However, the original version had some limitations. Despite this, FAO recognized the electronic tool's potential to improve the efficiency of the OPT Plus process.

Through its UNICEF-funded Early Warning System for Food and Nutrition Security (EWS-FNS) project in the provinces of Capiz and Aklan, FAO saw an opportunity to field-test the electronic tool. Over a period of 18 months, the tool was tested and valuable feedback elicited from local partners as well as from NNC. The electronic tool acquired a number of new features that automated the calculation, nutritional classification, reporting, and masterlisting functions. It also automated the creation of a segregated list of children who were severely malnourished, thereby facilitating their follow up care. Now dubbed as the e-OPT Plus tool, the electronic system has become an important component of FAO's broader

EWS-FNS project in Region 6. To enhance data quality, the tool also includes a number of error-checking features, such as checks for double-counting and out-of-range values due to data entry errors. Perhaps the most appreciated feature among its current users is the tool's ability to consolidate OPT Plus data at the municipal and provincial levels in a relatively short period of time. This makes reports much easier to prepare, more timely and accurate. It now also includes pre-formatted and ready-to-print reports and formats for different users, designed to encourage greater use of data at the local level.

"Improving the reliability of the OPT will also boost its use for planning and decision-making. In the broader context, greater awareness and appreciation for these types of data, especially at the barangay level, will allow local governments to make early forecasts, plan accordingly, and provide timely interventions so that communities can improve their chances for better food and nutrition security" said FAO Food and Nutrition Security Monitoring Systems Specialist, Dr Celestino Habito, Jr.

To further mainstream the use of the e-OPT plus tool, FAO is providing technical assistance to NNC in drafting a reader-friendly manual that contains step-by-step guidance in using the tool. In recent months, more and more municipalities have started to use the e-OPT Tool. In Capiz and Aklan, for example, provincial health officials have started to disseminate the e-OPT tool province-wide. Orientations for more local government staff have also been conducted in preparation for next year's OPT Plus survey. Hand-in-hand with NNC, FAO envisions to eventually see this tool adopted nationwide.



Forest inhabitants in Occidental Mindoro are intercropping indigenous tree species with food crops to address both forest restoration and food security needs

FAO and DENR work together to restore forests and other landscapes

Forests have a crucial role in supplying multiple ecosystem services, strengthening food security and combating climate change. Just in the last decade however, the country has lost more than 7 million ha of forest cover to logging, upland migration, agricultural expansion and conversion of forests to other land uses. While reforestation efforts both by Government and the private sector are contributing to recovery, degradation continues at an average rate of more than 157 000 ha a year.

The degradation of forests and other landscapes have adverse impacts on the country's biodiversity and far-reaching consequences that affect the livelihoods of at least 12 million people who depend on forests as their primary sources of food and income. This underscores the need for urgent and synergistic action to curb further losses and accelerate restoration

without compromising human development needs.

"Losing forests affects the production of goods and ecosystem services and contributes to increased greenhouse gas emissions," said Ricardo Calderon, Director of the Forest Management Bureau (FMB), of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Forest and Landscape Restoration: Engaging local communities to restore forests

The forest and landscape restoration (FLR) mechanism was established by FAO during the 22nd session of the Committee on Forestry in June 2014. It is defined by the Global Partnership on FLR as "an active process that brings people together to identify, negotiate and implement practices that restore an agreed optimal balance of the ecological, social and economic benefits of forests

and trees within a broader pattern of land uses."

Emphasizing the importance of engaging local communities and their roles in shaping landscapes, this approach fosters community ownership and stakeholder participation in the decision-making process, which would then contribute to the sustainability of reforestation efforts and of the proper long-term management of natural resources.

The Philippines is one of the six pilot countries selected to scale-up, monitor and report on FLR activities to meet global targets for the restoration of degraded forests and other lands. These efforts include enhancing stakeholder capacity in land degradation assessment and sustainable land management and planning. FAO and DENR are also leading the promotion of policy- and action-oriented focus on the adoption of participatory approaches to forest and biodiversity, and in encouraging enhanced commitments to addressing land, water and forest degradation and integrated watershed management.

In addition to supporting the implementation of FLR in priority areas identified by DENR, FAO is also currently providing technical support to DENR in the preparation of a National Forest and Landscapes Restoration Action Plan for 2016 to 2018, which employs integrated land use planning exercises.



Demetrio Ignacio, Jr, DENR Undersecretary for Field Operations, speaks at the national inception workshop on promoting the forest and landscape restoration mechanism in the Philippines.



©FAO/Philippines

Promoting internationally-accepted voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure

The relationship between people and land is deeply imbedded in most cultures. Then and now, access to land, forests and fisheries resources is intrinsically linked to social and economic stability, food security, health and human dignity. Security of land tenure and how land rights are governed are therefore important aspects of equipping people, especially the vulnerable and marginalized, with the means to contribute to sustainable development.

“Land tenure governance is one of the most complex challenges for governments to address, given the long history and sometimes controversy surrounding land disputes,” explains Francesca Carpano, FAO Land Tenure Specialist.

The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT), a set of guidelines for the governance of tenure for land and other natural resources, was officially endorsed and adopted by the Committee on World Food Security in 2012 to support the overarching goal of poverty alleviation and achieving food security for all. Since then, implementation has been encouraged by G20, Rio+20, the United Nations General Assembly and the Francophone Assembly of Parliamentarians.

FAO has been at the forefront of promoting these Guidelines and in 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.

The VGGT were developed in a broad,

multi-stakeholder and participatory manner and draw from the experiences of civil society organizations, governments, the academe and international organizations. They offer a unifying framework for various sectors in strengthening the governance of natural resources, including responding to climate impacts and emergencies.

Challenges in tenure governance in the Philippines

The Government of the Philippines has passed asset reform laws and related policies in an effort to ensure that all citizens gain fair and equitable access to land, forest and coastal resources. This includes the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law for landless farmers and farm workers; Indigenous Peoples Rights Act for indigenous peoples and their ancestral domains; Forestry Code; National Integrated Protected Areas System; Fisheries Code; Local Government Code and the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act. But such is the magnitude of the challenge of resolving the web of tenure issues that even with a broad range of laws in place, there remains an overwhelming number of disputes arising from overlapping claims, overlapping jurisdictions of implementing government agencies, divergent interpretation of the laws and contradicting beliefs on the use of legal instruments to achieve security of tenure and rights to fisheries and forest resources.

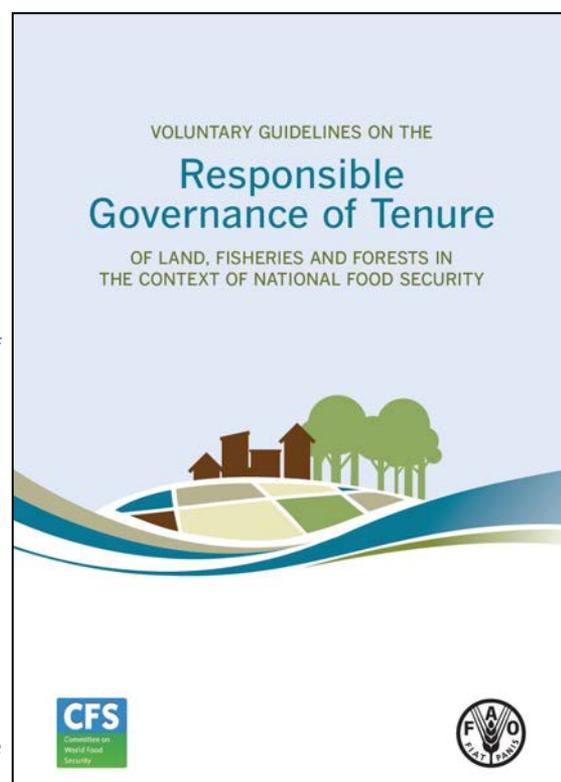
As an example, Chito Afable, a sugarcane farmer from Batangas narrates his struggle in securing ownership of the parcel of land that he and his family have been cultivating for over four decades.

“Our land was covered by CARP

Many farmers in the Philippines are shareholder tenants in land that they have been cultivating for decades.

[Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program] in 1994. As of now, we haven't received our certificate of land ownership from the Government,” Chito said.

The CARP, which falls under the purview of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), was started by the government in 1988. It involves the redistribution of public and privately owned agricultural lands to landless farmers and farm workers to give them the opportunity to



The VGGT manual is available for download at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>

have a better quality of life.

Issues arose when Chito and his fellow farmers learned that the estate to be divided amongst them was classified as an untitled privately-claimed agricultural land (UPAL). This meant that the years of negotiation with DAR would no longer stand. The estate, they were told, falls within the jurisdiction of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Further down the road, another issue came up: They learned that the coordinates in the certificate of title held by the original landowner did not correspond with the location of the landholding, which has led to more years of legal work with the Regional Trial Court.

After 20 years of negotiations with various government agencies and a court battle, Chito's family and 3 000 other farming households in the sugarcane estate remain shareholder tenants and continue to pay a lease rate equivalent to a large portion of their harvest.

"There is a need to formulate strategies to address inter-sectoral issues due to the increasing number of issues arising from overlapping policies governing land and natural resources," said Nathaniel Don Marquez, Executive Director of the Asian Non-Government Organizations Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC).

Mainstreaming VGGT in the Philippines

FAO has partnered with ANGOC to promote VGGT in the Philippines. The multi-stakeholder initiative utilizes VGGT discussions as a platform for identifying priorities and gaps in rationalizing and improving national policies, laws and administration procedures in tenure governance. The effort also aims to catalyse action and cooperation for policy advocacy, as well as establish monitoring and implementation mechanisms.

As part of the initial mainstreaming process, ANGOC recently conducted a training of trainers for non-government and grassroots organizations in order to more quickly disseminate and promote the

adoption of VGGT principles in the country. The workshop has provided knowledge and understanding of VGGT as internationally accepted standards. It also enabled participants to assess their situation, identify main actors and processes and translate VGGT principles to key messages that reflect local conditions. The exercises highlighted themes such as human dignity, equity and justice, gender equality, sustainability, rule of law and evidence-based mechanisms, among others.

"Effective tenure governance and enabling communities to gain equitable access to productive resources will require closer and more open collaboration amongst various sectors, including smallholder farmers and farm workers, fishers, indigenous peoples and women. We want to ensure that they are not left out," said FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández.



Training of trainers on VGGT for civil society organizations and grassroots organizations in the Philippines

Philippines hosts four international study tours and missions in Q3

Seeking to learn about effective agricultural technologies and statistical systems applied in the Philippines, government representatives and sector experts from Bangladesh, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India and Rome conducted study missions in the country between July and September 2016.

18 to 22 July 2016: Study visit on agricultural statistics

Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Food, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department and the Space Research and Remote Sensing Organization of the Ministry of Defence of Bangladesh visited the Philippines to understand the different aspects of food grain stock assessment in the country. The delegation also looked into Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) legislative framework for statistics, methods and systems, among others.

The study visit was part of the Strengthening Agricultural Market Information Systems (AMIS) project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and implemented by FAO in Bangladesh to enhance capacities

in the assessment of crop production estimates as well as the system of periodic crop monitoring and forecasting, and generating estimates of stocks of food grains.

21 to 30 August 2016: Study tour on integrated crop-livestock farming

Delegates from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea visited the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, Laguna, the Department of Agriculture (DA) - Bureau of Animal Industry's National Swine and Poultry and Research Centre, as well as agrotourism, livestock, poultry and dairy farms to learn about integrated farming systems and modern farm technologies. The study tour allowed participants to gain insights on the country's experiences and practices in mainstreaming gender in agricultural development.

30 August to 5 September 2016: Mission to support a case study on investments in sustainable energy interventions in the agri-food sector

Alessandro Flammini, FAO Natural Resources Officer, travelled to the Philippines to collect information and data about the potential, cost and

viability of energy technologies for the rice value chain. He also researched on the benefits associated with the deployment of these technologies at the country level. The Philippines will be used as case study that will help draw general recommendations on the enabling environment necessary for the market development of specific energy technologies.

19 to 22 September 2016: Study visit on agricultural statistics

About 15 delegates from the Indian Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution participated in a study tour to understand the activities of PSA. The study visit is part of the AMIS project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and implemented by FAO to support the Indian Government in improving its agricultural market information systems through innovative methods and digital technologies.

Forest policy makers, land use planners and disaster risk reduction and management practitioners from eight Southeast Asian countries gathered in Antipolo, Philippines for the regional workshop on forests and disasters in Southeast Asia from 24 to 25 August 2016.

The workshop highlighted the role of trees and forests in mitigating impacts and reducing risks associated with hydrometeorological hazards, such as tropical cyclones, flash floods, landslides and droughts.

FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández emphasized that, “our region is particularly at risk. Many institutions, including FAO, are giving increasing attention to how we can minimize the impacts of natural disasters, increase resilience, and support more effective recovery and rehabilitation.”

The activity aimed to enhance technical and coordination capacities in mapping risk areas, designing tree and forest protection systems and preparing readiness and response plans as part of broader land use planning. Inputs and recommendations will also be used in the formulation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy on Forests and Natural Disasters.

The event was organized by FAO’s Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the Environmental Science for Social Change, in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.



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55th annual convention of the Philippine Association of Food Technologists

The Philippine Association of Food Technologists, a voluntary, non-profit association promoting food science and technology, held its 55th annual convention from 27 to 29 July 2016 in Taguig City.

This year’s theme, “Food technology, the next leap forward: Food safety, food security, food defense, food regulation and innovation interconnected,” paved the way for knowledge sharing on the sustainability of the food supply chain; food and nutrition security; challenges of harmonization of food safety standards in ASEAN; improving food safety systems of small and medium industries; and climate change and food security, among others.

“The role of the private sector in investing on research and development can help lead to the development of a variety of tools and mechanisms that would transform raw materials into higher-quality consumer goods,” explained Aristeo Portugal, FAO Assistant Representative for Programme, during his presentation of FAO’s work in the Philippines in view of the role of food technology in food and nutrition security.

He also explained that within the food value chain, improvements to the food processing industry have the most significant multiplier effects. “The relevance, utilization and significant contributions of food technology in agricultural production and food processing lie in their capacity to help the country achieve its development goals, including, of course, the attainment of food security.”



@FAO/Tamara Pails-Duran

Asian Land Forum: Shaping the land agenda in the Philippines

Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals: Defending land rights of communities to achieve food sovereignty in the region was the focus of the Asian Land Forum on shaping the land agenda in the Philippines held on 5 September 2016 in Mandaluyong City. The event, which was attended by representatives of civil society organizations in Asia, government representatives from Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines, as well as representatives from international development organizations, served as a venue for the sharing of experiences and best practices in land tenure governance.

“Recognizing how issues on the security of land tenure can further hinder agricultural development for the vulnerable and marginalized, FAO includes among its priorities the realization of land rights. People can be exposed to a life of hunger and poverty if they lose their tenure rights to their homes, land, fisheries and forest resources,” José Luis Fernández, FAO Representative in the Philippines said in his opening remarks. He also discussed FAO’s work in strengthening the governance of land tenure, as well as its links to food security and eradicating rural poverty.

The forum was organized by the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in collaboration with the International Land Coalition and the Philippine Development Forum’s Working Group on Sustainable Rural Development.



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