



Cacao project in Zamboanga to help satisfy demand for *sikwate*



Cacao Island. Farmer Gundino Umos, a member of the Sindangan Farmers Cooperative and Marketing Association (Sindangan-FACOMA) inspects cacao seedlings in a nursery maintained by FACOMA. The association is one of the proponent groups for a startup enterprise on the production and marketing of fermented dried cacao beans under the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP). Similar enterprises, some already on upgrading and expansion, have been proposed in another parts of Mindanao where 90% of the country's total cacao production comes from. Under the PRDP, Mindanao is the only cluster that identified cacao as priority commodity in at least one province in all of its component regions. (Photo by Gian Kristoffer D. Enrique (Mindanao PSO InfoACE Unit))

A stable demand for a local delicacy particularly popular in Mindanao called *sikwate* (thick chocolate drink) is one of the main reasons why a local farmers' cooperative in Zamboanga del Norte decided to expand their production of cacao beans with the help of the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP).

The P13.4-million startup enterprise that initially covers input provision for increased production under its first package will be operated by the Sindangan Farmers Cooperative & Marketing Association (Sindangan-FACOMA).

The second package will include consolidation of wet beans from farmers for fermenting and drying, packaging, and delivery to buyers.

According to Perla Bermudez, member of the FACOMA's board of directors, there was a program on cacao production in the 1980s but no follow-up was made.

"The farmers were just given planting materials consisted of Brazilian cacao variety that turned out to be easily susceptible to aphids. So the trees were not really that productive and the farmers were left on their own to grapple with the problem," Bermudez said, adding that eventually, the farmers switched to other crops.

Bermudez said that the approach in the 1980's project is different from the current approach by the DA in which both the production and marketing aspects are being addressed, citing their project with the PRDP.

The cooperative will serve as the consolidator of wet cacao beans produced by their members, buying the beans at P145.00 per three kilogram, higher than the buying price of commercial traders at P30.00 per kilogram.

Dexter Kim Patron, FACOMA's board secretary said that they opted buying the fresh instead of dried beans to ensure uniformity of quality. This also spares the farmers from the burden of drying the cacao beans after fermentation which would take several weeks.

Read more on p.3 

Misamis FMR: Short but serves well

Stretching across a vast agricultural production area in Panaon, Misamis Occidental, the 2.1-kilometer Sumasap–Villalin–San Andres–Poblacion–Map-an–San Roque farm-to-market road (FMR) connects at least five barangays and serves about 989 households—a relatively big figure compared with the number of household beneficiaries of other FMRs.

For instance, the 6.5 kilometer Siloy–Upper Dioyo Concepcion FMR in Calamba town, only targets 236 household beneficiaries at a bigger budget of P63.28 million. The Sumasap–San Roque FMR only costs P33.88 million.

PRDP economists explained that it is more common to expect that longer roads with bigger budgets serve more beneficiaries; yet this does not necessarily mean that shorter roads with smaller budgets cannot serve as many beneficiaries, if not more.

Among other criteria, the PRDP looks into the number of beneficiaries and per capita

subproject cost as basis for prioritization of infrastructure subprojects.

“The bigger the number of beneficiaries and the lower the subproject cost per beneficiary, the higher the priority,” Cirilo Namoc, the Project’s national deputy director explained.

He stressed, however, that the PRDP considers many other factors such as link in the priority value chain, financial and technical capability of the local government unit and poverty incidence, to name a few.

Unexpected development

Residents say they have never expected that their road would be concreted in their lifetime.

“Once, we were in the middle of a mountain then all of a sudden, there is this “highway” in our midst,” 77-year-old Ella Galindo of Barangay Sumasap said.

Galindo said that seeing the importance of the road, she donated

1,000 square meters of her one-hectare farmland to the Project as right of way, adding that had the Project needed a wider right of way, she would have willingly offered a larger portion of her land.

According to Barangay Sumasap chairperson Nakpil Virtudez, the traders can now directly go to the farmers to buy their agricultural products. Before the construction of the road, the farmers had to pay a laborer P250 a day to help them haul their products near the dirt road.

“That’s not the end of it. The farmers had to hire carabao-drawn wagons to further transport the products to the nearby town—and it’s an additional P450 a day,” Virtudez added.

The FMR primarily supports Cardava banana as identified in the province’s commodity investment plan. Other products supported by the road include coconut, rice, lanzones, mangosteen and durian. (*Alladin S. Diego, NPCO InfoACE Unit*) ■



Just Completed. On April 15, 2017, Region 10 announced the completion of the 2.1-kilometer Sumasap–Villalin–San Andres–Poblacion–Map-an–San Roque farm-to-market road (FMR) in Panaon municipality. The 33.88 million-worth subproject is the seventh PRDP FMR to be completed in the region. The seven FMRs have a total length of 18.76 kilometers, serving about 8,725 households or almost 50,000 residents. *Photo by Kathrino V. Resurreccion (NPCO InfoACE Unit)*

Cacao project... (from page 1)

Patron added that currently, dried cacao beans are sold at P80.00 a kilo but the quality is almost always not consistent. He explained that quick drying would possibly result to higher acidity, making the processed product bitter. Meanwhile, drying too slow would result in molds and off-flavors.

Bermudez stressed that at present, the local demand for

of tablea (choco tablets) used for the local sikwate is high, not to mention the growing international market demand, which has yet to be penetrated.

Adequate local and global demand

The focus for cacao production in the country is Mindanao, which accounts for 90 percent of the Philippine cacao production. Eighty percent of production comes from the Davao region alone, but other

provinces in other regions such as the Zamboanga Peninsula are actively planting new trees.

Bermudez said that even the local market would be enough, considering that drinking sikwate is not limited to Mindanao—it is consumed in rest of the country. She cited the experience of Dapitan City cacao producers who have already penetrated the Manila market for tablea and they are also looking forward to enter this more lucrative market. (Alladin S. Diega, NPCO InfoACE Unit) ■



Ownership: Inspiring Beneficiaries' Accountability

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As the PRDP actively involves rural communities in implementation, it builds a stronger sense of ownership of interventions among them. This sparks a collective mindset that the upkeep of subprojects is also the community's responsibility.

"To avoid damage on the road, we at the barangay council are planning to pass an ordinance protecting this project. Ten-wheeler trucks will not be allowed to pass through the road. We know that the road is only six inches thick. If loaded ten-wheelers are allowed, the road will be damaged."

Isias C. Masendo
Del Monte, Talacogon, Agusan del Sur
Name of Subproject: Construction of Batucan-Malihao-Del Monte Farm-to-Market Road
Length: 2.48 kilometers
Cost: P29.30 million
Beneficiaries: 1,574 households

LUZON A (North Luzon)

PRDP inaugurates two solar dryers in Ilocos Norte

The PRDP has recently inaugurated two solar dryers that will benefit rice, corn, peanut and tomato farmers in Vintar, Ilocos Norte.

Located in Barangays Mabanbanag and Salsalumagui, the solar dryers that cost P1.37 million and P1.15 million, respectively, are expected to increase the farmers' income by reducing postharvest losses. Also, with the facilities, the farmers will no longer have to dry their produce on the road.

The cooperative Zanjera Mantapat Konig will operate the Mabanbanag Solar Dryer, while Zanjera Taguipuro Manayon, another farmers' cooperative, will operate the Salsalumagui Solar Dryer. *(Dessa U. Estrada and Vida V. Cacal, RPCO-1 InfoACE Unit)*

LUZON B (South Luzon)

PRDP-GEF seeks Rare's aid in coastal-fisheries management

The PRDP has sought the assistance of Rare, an international conservation organization with extensive experience in natural resources management planning, for its Global Environment Facility or GEF-supported subprojects.

An earlier planning with stakeholders resulted in the formulation of the Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Resources Management Sustainability Plan (ICFRM-SP). The PRDP's interventions under the plan cover five marine protected areas in Sorsogon and Masbate.

Rare will support the initiative by providing technical assistance including capacity building on participatory formulation of LGU-based ICFRM-SP, and strategic awareness campaign approaches. *(Michelle Angela G. Alfingura, RPCO-5 InfoACE Unit)*

VISAYAS

Construction of Region 8's biggest PRDP-funded road starts

Construction works have started for the 19.4-kilometer San Roque-Bahay FMR, the biggest PRDP-funded road project in Eastern Visayas.

The P229.15 million FMR will benefit at least 2,200 households in 11 barangays in Lilo-an town and three barangays in San Ricardo town.

According to the DA's regional executive director, the subproject will boost the locality's agriculture and tourism potentials with either sides of the road supporting fisheries and crop production areas. *(Rodel G. Macapanas, RPCO 8 InfoACE)*

MINDANAO

Better road frees farmers from transport woes

The concreting of the 1.8-kilometer Mimbule FMR in Salay, Misamis Oriental has freed farmers from transport woes, particularly expensive hauling costs.

According to Teofilo Ubatay Jr., farmers would carry their products relay-like, and haul these on their horses, or on carabao-pulled carriages known as karosa. Now, travel time has been cut in half, with some farmers now able to travel to the market in 30 minutes.

"Hauling costs have been reduced significantly from P60 to P30," Ubatay said. *(Jay M. Rosas, Mindanao PSO InfoACE Unit)*

inFOCUS THIS MONTH

Localizing Project information, Education and Communication (IEC) and Advocacy

As it seeks to expand the Project's IEC and advocacy work at the grassroots level, the PRDP InfoACE Unit convened on April 19–21, 2017 its counterparts from LGUs to identify areas of complementation and draw concrete plans on how collaborate further.

LGU InfoACE Focal Persons' Advocacy Covenant

The Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) promotes a culture of multi-stakeholder participation, a vital element to establish interventions that are truly relevant and responsive to the needs of small farmers and fishers in rural communities.

As PRDP seeks the involvement of various stakeholders, we, the InfoACE Focal Persons designated by our respective local government units take delight as we assume roles in communicating the principles and innovations of the Project.

We commit ourselves to reinforce the message of promoting good governance in the agriculture and fisheries sector, thus, becoming partners for change.

As the PRDP's grassroots communicators, we pledge to leverage our available resources to communicate the Project's emerging benefits and good practices.

In our collaboration with the Project Support Office and Regional Project Coordination Office, we will advocate for the strengthening and institutionalization of science-based policies and strategies that will sustain and gain the Project even after its implementation.

And as members of a national network of rural support organizations, we hereby affirm our commitment to this covenant today, the 20th day of April 2017 in Quezon City.

LGU InfoACE Focal Persons

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