



World Bank Lead Rural Development Specialist Ms. Carolina Figueroa-Geron delivers her special message to the NPCO I-PLAN Component during the pilot test launch held on March 29, 2021.

## DA-PRDP launches pilot test for the enhancement of its I-PLAN Operations Manual

In order to fully integrate the Department of Agriculture's (DA) various climate change vulnerability, resilience, and adaptation tools, and strengthen the quality and strategic nature of investments,

the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) officially launched the pilot test of the Enhanced Operations Manual (eOM) of the Local and National Level Planning Component (I-PLAN) on March 29,

2021, following the preparatory briefing held last March 15, 2021.

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## DA-PRDP launches pilot-test... (from Page 1)

The said event, which is the second part of a three-stage pilot test, brought together representatives from DA-PRDP Components and Units at the National Project Coordination Office (NPCO), Project Support Offices (PSOs), Regional Project Coordination Offices (RPCOs) of regions 2, 4A, 7, and 10, the national office of the Department of Agriculture Climate-Resilient Agriculture Office (DA-CRAO) together with their counterparts from the aforementioned regions, and partners from Local Government Units (LGUs) of participating provinces to discuss the conduct of field tests that will run until the end of April 2021.

The launch, spearheaded by the NPCO I-PLAN Component, aimed to be a venue for clarifications from the PSOs, RPCOs, and LGUs regarding the scope, content, process, and expectations from the pilot test. Breakout sessions were conducted in the afternoon to brief the LGUs on the provision of inputs in certain

stages of the Commodity System Investment Planning (CSIP) process.

The province-level pilot test will be conducted in Isabela, Quezon, Bohol, and Bukidnon to represent the four clusters. The activity will serve as a field test of the I-PLAN eOM through the updating of the Provincial Commodity Investment Plans (PCIPs).

In her opening message, NPCO I-PLAN Component Head Asec. Agnes Catherine T. Miranda pronounced the pilot test as the culmination of the strategic development of the Operations Manual.

“To triangulate the pertinent response gathered through several consultations and iterations on the I-PLAN enhanced Operations Manual, we have designed the six-week pilot test, comprising of three stages, to demonstrate and field test the said enhancements, as reflected in the Operations Manual in the four pilot provinces,” Asec. Miranda said.

World Bank Lead Rural Development Specialist Carolina

V. Figueroa-Geron noted that the enhancement of the OM, delivered through pilot testing, will incorporate lessons learned in implementing planning initiatives for PRDP, with emphasis on climate risks and adaptation.

“I think with this initiative of improving the PRDP I-PLAN manual, it would further refine the process, make your planning process between the DA and the Local Government Units be more meaningful, be more relevant, and also be able to respond to other national concerns and national initiatives,” Figueroa-Geron said.

The third and final stage, to be conducted in the third week of April, will see the summarization of lessons learned from the pilot test and the discussion of the next steps for the nationwide rollout of the eOM. Commencement of rollout activities will begin as soon the eOM is finalized with the integration of experiences and recommendations gathered from the pilot test. *(Iconn Mel D. Cayabyab, NPCO InfoACE)* ■



World Bank Lead Rural Development Specialist Carolina V. Figueroa-Geron reminds the participants that the I-PLAN is the heart of the DA-PRDP and congratulates the team for their initiative to update the operations manual.



NPCO I-PLAN Component Head Asec. Agnes Catherine T. Miranda delivers her opening message during the official pilot test launch of the enhanced operations manual on March 29, 2021.



## BEATING THE ODDS, RISING GRANDER: Caridad swine raisers opt to upscale PRDP livelihood enterprise in Cadiz



Behind every ground of success are stories of humble beginnings, countless challenges, and lessons learned through the process. One of which is the Caridad Hog Raisers Association (CHRA), which has encountered numerous setbacks before finally emerging as one of the successful enterprises in the Visayas at present.

Starting as backyard raisers, the community-based farm workers association located in Hacienda Caridad Uno of Barangay Luna, Cadiz City, Negros Occidental aimed at improving their lives and augmenting their families' income when they first resorted to swine fattening. However, in 2013, Super Typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan), left huge damages to their livelihood, immensely affecting their productivity due to the ruined breeding pens.

Guided by its battle cry of enabling communities and expanding opportunities, the Department

of Agriculture's Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) assisted CHRA and helped the association start anew in 2017. With the PhP563,040-worth of financial aid awarded to them, the group was able to put up new pens and complete two cycles in one year after the subproject implementation.

"We only started with 30 members and gradually grew to a 51-member organization after three years. The first two cycles in 2017 have been a big help in sustaining our daily needs and in supporting the education of our children. In fact, we gave as high as P6,000 dividend for each member during our first-year operation," said Wilma Dignos, Project Manager of CHRA.

While the operation has been doing well, another challenge came in 2018 with the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in the country. There was a scarcity of piglets which resulted in a decrease in the

number of live hogs being sold by the association.

"During this year, the market of our liveweight fatteners declined due to the ASF scare. The traders bought them in a really low price. This is when our group decided to open up a meat shop in order to cater our own produce," shared Dignos.

She said they have ensured the provision of quality products and services to the buyers, so they held a customer service orientation among their meat shop staff. This posted a favorable outcome as they were able to gain regular customers.

"Fortunately, we were able to secure regular patrons who frequent our shop because of the quality meat we sell. We also made sure to equip our staff with strategies in delivering the best service among our customers through an orientation."

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# FMR, a huge relief to the residents of Camarines Sur



Farmer-beneficiaries of the Batang-San Gabriel FMR transfer their harvest to the mobile service of one of their retailers. (Photo by: Michelle Angela G. Alfigura, DA-PRDP RPCO V InfoACE Unit)

“Mas lalong magaan ang buhay mi ngayon na may magayon na kaming tinampo na naaagihan. Digdi samo halos pag-uuma saka pagtatanom ning gulayon ang kabuhayan. Kadto nagtitiyaga kami na mag-agi sa laboy, ngayon dai mi na kaipuhan magduman sa luwasan ta mismong mga paratinda asin mga parabakal na an nadidigdi samuya ta magayon na po tinampo,”

(Our lives are now getting better because of the road. Most of the livelihoods of the residents here are rice and vegetable farming. Before we used to walk in the mud just to sell our goods but now, retailers and consumers are already coming here because the road is already paved)” Manding Alayan, resident of Barangay Batang, said.

Alayan is one of the farmer-beneficiaries of the 6-kilometer Road Opening and Concreting of Batang – San Gabriel FMR in Pamplona,

Camarines Sur. Like other residents, planting and selling vegetables are their main source of livelihood.

The poor road network and the high cost of hauling and transportation of the processed products and the raw materials are some of the difficulties faced by the residents. Before the construction of the FMR, the farmer-beneficiaries had to walk the muddy and slippery road, or even rent a carabao just to deliver their harvest to the nearest market. But now that their road is paved, their livelihood has also been well and convenient.

“Puon kan nagkaigwa nin tinampo digdi samo mas napadali po ang samuyang trabaho asin mas nagkaugwa pa po kaming oras para magtanom o magibo pa ning ibang bagay na pwede mi pa pong pagkakitaan. Kaya dakulaon po talaga ang pasasalamat mi sa PRDP para po sa proyekto na ini, dakulaon

po talaga ining tabang samuya,”

(Ever since the road was constructed, it makes our work easier and convenient, we even find time to plant or do other things that can help us earn additional income. That’s why we are really thankful to PRDP for this project, it really helps us a lot)” Alayan added.

The Road Opening and Concreting of Batang – San Gabriel FMR aims to increase the agricultural production with safe and easy economic access, reduce travel time and vehicle operating cost, reduce the hauling cost of all the inflows and outflows of the agricultural commodities, minimize the labor cost in the delivery of the agricultural products to market and open opportunities for basic services such as health, education, and communication. (Michelle Angela G. Alfigura, DA-PRDP RPCO V InfoACE) ■



### BEATING THE ODDS...(from page 3)

The opening of the meat shop also pushed their business to get back on the grind in 2019. However, such a feat seemed to pass them by, as the global health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, struck the country in 2020. This posed another challenge for them to increase their number of sows to supply the demands for their meat shop.

"It is truthfully challenging to continue our operations in the midst of the pandemic. We are short in supply of the fatteners, so we opted to buy from other backyard raisers in our neighboring towns for our meat shop," Dignos emphasized.

When the organization became one of the suppliers of the local hospital used as quarantine facility in Cadiz City, it was able to generate sales amounting to PhP9 million; with PhP7M paid to the swine raisers at the backyard level, where the live hogs were procured.

When the ASF outbreak resurfaced in the same year, and displaced the market system of the swine industry in most parts of the country, the association's gross sales increased but their net income remained low. To address such concern, a new business plan was submitted to the PRDP for the upscaling of the existing Swine Fattening Enterprise into Caridad Swine Production and Marketing of Pork Products. Reincorporated in the plan are the breeding, auction of fattened swine, and marketing of pork products where the fattened swine will be slaughtered to be sold as choice pork cuts in the city of Cadiz.

"The upgrading of this enterprise will address the interventions identified in the Provincial Commodity Investment

Plan (PCIP) of Negros Occidental. We already have target markets for this and we are hopeful that we could uplift the living and socio-economic conditions of the members of this association who are mostly sugarcane workers and women with the implementation of this subproject," said Dr. Narissa Lemoncito, Head of the Provincial Project Management and Implementing Unit (PPMIU) in Negros Occidental.

The proposal has initially got a nod with the issuance of No Objection Letter 1 (NOL 1) and is currently waiting for the issuance of NOL 2. Lemoncito said the upgrading of the project is expected to benefit the entire country amid the current situation, most especially those ASF-stricken areas.

"Once we receive the NOL 2, we will proceed with the procurement and downloading of funds for the first tranche of the subproject implementation. This will be of great help in alleviating the impacts of this pandemic and the ASF outbreak in other regions or provinces. We could not only help the province of Negros but also the whole country, particularly Metro Manila and Cebu," she added.

Dignos assured that they are observing the biosecurity measures in line with the spread of ASF to secure the swine industry in the province.



Dr. Narcisa Lemoncito, Head of the Provincial Project Management and Implementing Unit in Negros Occidental

"Now that ASF is nearing in our portals, it is important that we observe the biosecurity measures. From the beginning, we do not do swill feeding and only give the quality feeds to our fatteners. We also procure our fatteners from our nearby towns," she explained.

Currently, the association is on its 11th cycle since the onset of the PRDP project and has recently held the groundbreaking of their office space, feeds storage, and fattening area as their infrastructure equity for the upscaling of their enterprise which is worth P15-M. A total of P118,000 were also availed by the members as dividends distributed during their general assembly this year.

CHRA as well plans to become a cooperative as they are now applying for registration at the Cooperative Development Authority to further strengthen their association.

"For us who were able to sail through after all the unfortunate events, I believe that our commitment, honesty, integrity, and transparency as an association will lead us through in surpassing all the circumstances. We are wholeheartedly thankful to the PRDP for the trust and rest assured that we will continue to unite in order to cultivate our enterprise in the years to come," Dignos said. (April Grace Padilla, RPCO 6 InfoACE) ■



The area which will be utilized as fattening area, feeds storage, and office space of CHRA for the upscaling of their enterprise.

## North Luzon

### RPAB approves PhP815-M worth of SPs for 2021

The Regional Project Advisory Board (RPAB) of Central Luzon approved non-farm-to-market road (FMR) infrastructure subprojects amounting to PhP815 million (M).

During the deliberation held on February 19, 2021, the RPAB, chaired by Regional Project Coordination Office (RPCO 3) Regional Project Director Eduardo L. Lapuz, Jr., expressed optimism that the presentation of proposed subprojects will be given a fair chance to be considered for funding.

"I hope that this meeting will be a fruitful one knowing the active involvement of our local government units in presenting projects designed to support their respective priority commodities," Lapuz Jr. added.

Orani Municipal Mayor Efren Pascual, Jr., Bongabon Municipal Mayor Allan Xystus Gamilla, Provincial Project Management and Implementing Unit (PPMIU) of Nueva Ecija Focal Person Dr. Jovita B. Agliam and Engineer Vicky Cruz-Lucero of the Municipal Government of Talavera individually presented their respective proposed subprojects.

The four (4) other infrastructure development subprojects that were presented to the board were the following: Construction of Fish Landing and Trading Facility in Brgy. Pantalan Bago, Orani, Bataan (PhP199,000,000); Construction of Nueva Ecija Cold Storage Facility at Science City of Munoz in Brgy. Bantug Science City Munoz, Nueva Ecija (PhP204,000,000); Construction of Cold Storage in Brgy. Vega, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija (PhP206,000,000); and the Construction of Cold Storage in Brgy. Bantug Hacienda, Talavera, Nueva Ecija (PhP206,000,000).

The RPAB members, composed of the Departments of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Agrarian Reform (DAR), Trade and Industry (DTI), Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Agrarian Reform, and the Regional Agri-Fishery Council (RAFC), approved the four subprojects after probing and weighing essential factors in each presentation.

Dr. Lapuz, Jr. commended the participation and enthusiasm of the local government units in urging the approval of these subprojects that are beneficial to farmers and fishers.

All four subprojects are set to be endorsed to the National Project Coordination Office for the issuance of No Objection Letter (NOL 1). *(Ma. Reina Len G. Luna, RPCO III InfoACE)*

## Mindanao

### PRDP completes PhP17.9-M cacao enterprise in SoCot

The cacao industry in South Cotabato will soon be a booming industry because of the PhP17.9-M enterprise subproject of the DA-PRDP.

Recently, the RPCO 12 and the Provincial Local Government Unit of South Cotabato turned over the subproject, signifying its completion and full implementation, consisting of infrastructure, logistics, and production support to farmers.

The subproject, which benefits 199 farmers and covers 150 hectares, is headed by the Tibud Sa Katibwasan Multipurpose Cooperative (tibud SK MPC) in Polomolok, South Cotabato.

It is supported by five (5) cluster members, namely: Cacao-

Cocoa Growers Association (Koronadal City); Glamang Small Coconut Farmers Association (Polomolok); TUBAGA Producers Cooperative (Tupi); Lambayong Diversified Farmers' Cooperative (Tampakan); and Palo 19 Farmers' Association (Tampakan).

Junbard Mahinay, the general manager of Tibud SK MPC, expressed that this success is the fruit of their sacrifice during the tedious process of application, validation, and approval of their enterprise.

"We would like to thank every stakeholder who contributed for this success... this is the result of our sacrifice and perseverance for more than three years," Mahinay noted.

Mahinay added that because of their learning experience during the process, they are committed to ensuring that this project will improve the productivity of farmers by producing quality cacao beans.

Director Arlan Mangelen noted in his message during the turn-over ceremony that the cacao farmers in South Cotabato are blessed to have already experience the prioritization of commodities pioneered by PRDP.

"Right now, the DA is mainstreaming the prioritization of commodities per province, and in cacao industry in South Cotabato, you have already the edge because you availed PRDP... it has already been a practice," Director Mangelen added.

The PRDP enterprise entitled 'Integrated Cacao Production, Processing, and Marketing of Fermented Cacao Beans' aims to increase the income of identified farmer-members through sustainable cacao production, processing, and trading activities, ultimately operating into a sustainable and vibrant enterprise in the province.

With the interventions now fully given to the hands of the cacao cluster, the operation will improve farmer's productivity by producing quality beans at one metric ton per hectare on the 1st year of harvest and a 20% increase gradually until reaching the maximum of five metric tons per hectare every year.

Generoso Saboso Jr, a farmer-member of Tibud, attested to the increased harvest and income.

"Before, without the project we didn't have the technology and the logistical support to increase our harvest, but after the PRDP interventions were given, our harvest and income are up," Saboso disclosed.

He added that the technology they learned because of the training conducted by DA and PRDP and of the local government contributed to the soaring of their harvest and income.

"Our income also increased since the co-op directly picks up our produce in our farms. We are no longer thinking of the transportation cost," the farmer-member said. *(Joy Montecalvo, PSO Mindanao InfoACE)*

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