



PBBM's free rice seeds, fertilizers enable farmers to reap bountiful harvest

Fernando Salvador and fellow rice farmers in Barangay Pinili, San Jose City, Nueva Ecija cannot hide their joy over the bountiful harvest they achieved this 2023 wet season.

"Ngayong rainy season nagtanim po kami ng inbred, at dahil sa mahusay na pag-aalaga nakaani kami ng mahigit isang daang cavan kada ektarya, na mas marami kumpara sa mga nakaraang taon," said Salvador, chairman of the 44-member Binabuyan Farmers' Association in Barangay Pinili, San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.

"Sa aking sinasakang 1.7 ektarya, nakaani po ako ng 170 cavan, na naipagbili ko sa P20 kada kilo," he added.

Salvador and his fellow farmers in Barangay Pinili attributed their bountiful harvest and big income to the free certified rice seeds, fertilizers, and technical support extended by the

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DA, FarmFresh offer first taste of instant pakbet, chop suey

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and private agriculture-based company FarmFresh Products, Inc.

officially launched the instant pinakbet and chop suey under the latter's Adopt-A-Town, Adopt-A-Farmer Program on

October 13, at the Bureau of Soils and Water Management Convention Hall in Quezon City.

The said program aims to help enhance food mobilization nationwide by tapping local farmers as suppliers of fresh produce and then linking them to restaurants and other institutional buyers.

"Ang farmers natin, kapag dry season, over ang supply. Kaya minsan nakikita natin sa media, tinatapon ang kamatis, tinatapon ang kalabasa. Hindi na mangyayari iyan dahil ipa-process natin [ang kanilang harvests] all year round. During the wet season, mayroon tayong stocks sapagkat naka-blast freeze lahat ang gulay natin. FarmFresh na ang magfi-

finance at bibili sa farmers natin," said FarmFresh President Jerry Pelayo.

The Adopt-A-Town, Adopt-A-Farmer Program was also designed to help combat malnutrition by producing healthy, affordable meals without any preservatives or additives.

A pack of viand is good for five people. After being put in hot water for about eight minutes, the instant food can be eaten.

"In this day and age, and with the fast-paced way of living of people especially in the urban areas, convenience is indeed becoming a trend. Moreover, the launching of these products is one way of

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Jet Orbida: Advocating organic farming, one farmer at a time

by Alexandra Suñga | Photos from Jet Orbida

The nonstop work in the newsroom and exhausting media industry led a former broadcast journalist, filmmaker, writer and novelist to establish a social enterprise where creativity and care for the environment meets.

Antonio Jesus 'Jet' Orbida developed the PeacePond in Binalbagan, Negros Occidental in 2004. Prior to this, informal settlers used to reside in the area. When he introduced them to organic farming, the land was transformed into a sustainable food oasis, and later led to the foundation of the PeacePond Farmers Association (PFA) in 2007.

"Gusto ng karamihan sa mga sumali, biglaan lang 'yong income. So we really tested

their commitment. And when we were down to around 20 staunch organic agriculture advocates, we registered the group sa DOLE," Orbida shared.

The PFA is composed mostly of women, and even the children of their members are helping in the development and activities of the PeacePond. According to Orbida, PeacePond heavily promotes inclusivity in their farm.

"Inclusive talaga itong PeacePond. Members of the LGBTQIA+ and even Persons with Disabilities are part of the PFA. Hindi lang marginalized sector," Orbida said.

To date, PFA has 24 active members residing in the five-hectare seaside farm.

Being an organic farm, PeacePond avoids use of heavy farming equipment, only uses manual farming methods, and turns farm waste into fertilizers. It also promotes food sustainability by planting its own organic produce such as coconut, corn, lettuce, papaya, and squash.

PeacePond and its advocacies, accomplishments

Solid waste management, organic farming, education, and the arts are the advocacies of the PeacePond. Last August, PeacePond's smoked fish product was provided

with packaging and labelling assistance through the Department of Science and Technology's (DOST) Community Empowerment thru Science and Technology Program.

The PeacePond received the assistance from the DOST, because it addresses 16 out of the 18 United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals. In 2019, the PFA launched the Blastik Project, a recycling project which transforms plastic waste such as plastic bottles and labels, and bottle caps into reformed and reusable items such as plastic bowls, woven plastic pouches, candle holders, tiles and walk pavers.

Orbida conducts workshops and training programs relative to PeacePond's advocacies. He mentioned that although PeacePond has received several awards over time, its biggest accomplishment is sharing what they know with the people. As a non-profit social enterprise, gaining profit is not the goal of PeacePond.

"Hindi yon ang goal ng PeacePond. Not the profit. It's sharing with the people what you know. Sharing your blessings. Profit is not our aspiration. It's all about sharing and teaching people," Orbida stressed

Becoming a NOAB member

Being an organic farmer and President of PeacePond helped Orbida become a member of the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB) in 2020. He topped among four candidates from the Visayas Region during the NOAB selection process.

"I didn't even ask what I'm going to get from it. Hindi ako naghabol ng posisyon. Ang importante lang sa akin ay yong magiging part ako ng policy making body," he said.

In November 2020, Orbida was appointed as the NOAB Small Farmer Representative to the Visayas. He assisted the National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP) in identifying the industry's issues and concerns and enhancing and developing its policies. As a NOAB member,

Orbida was also given several opportunities as an individual and as an organic farmer.


He noted that the networks and contacts he gained during his term as a NOAB member helped him identify groups and agencies that he can communicate with on organic agriculture matters. He was also invited by different sectors to teach and discuss organic agriculture. He added that the networks can provide a lot of business opportunities for the organic industry as well.

End of an era

Orbida applauded the NOAP directions and wished for it to continue focusing on the amendments of the Organic Agriculture Act such as focusing on the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) implementation, assisting and incentivizing small organic farmers, provision of organic fertilizer, and organic seed production. He also commended the projects initiated under the leadership of NOAP Director Bernadette San Juan such as the Organic Agriculture Livelihood Project and the Youth Scholarship Grant on Organic Farming.

Now that Orbida's term as a NOAB member is about to end, he provided a few words for the incoming members of the NOAB. He advised them to focus on the small farmers and the implementation of the PGS to further expand the organic agriculture industry in the Philippines. Further, he urged them to continue going around the regions to consult with the organic stakeholders. He mentioned that personally visiting the organic farmers will provide the NOAB first hand information of the status of organic agriculture at the grounds.

Even after his term, Orbida is still eager to teach organic farming and share his experiences and knowledge to different sectors of the society. His advocacies on organic farming and taking care of the environment will continue even without his designation as a NOAB director because to him, taking care of the environment ultimately means taking care of the people.

"Ang lupa'y hiram lang sa susunod na henerasyon na dapat nating ingatan. Pagyamanin ang inang kalikasan," Orbida said. 



Antonio Jesus 'Jet' Orbida
NOAB member

A woman with dark hair, wearing glasses and a purple long-sleeved shirt, is shown from the side, reaching up to touch a branch of a tree. The tree is covered in vibrant red, spiky flowers and green leaves. The background is a lush green field of similar flowers.

Dacara's Farm and Gardens: A labor of love

by Krystelle Ymari Vergara | Photos by Gian Carlo Luague

“*Ang pag-aalaga ng mga tanim at mga hayop ay isang healing process. Salat man ako sa materyal na bagay pero nakakatulog ako nang mahimbing at wala akong sakit in my old age.*”

ANGELITA LUNA DACARA

Story of the Month

Armed with a degree in Agricultural Education and passion for agriculture, renowned woman farmer-leader Angelita Luna Dacara successfully established Dacara's Farm and Gardens—a 1.2-hectare integrated and diversified farm serving as home to a variety of birds, quails, native chickens, and native pigs.

The 64-year-old from Pili, Camarines Sur is known for her organic agriculture practices, which she started doing in 2005 to lessen her production costs, increase her yield, enrich the soil, and produce safe and nutritious food. She uses animal waste as natural fertilizers for her homegrown crops, which in turn is fed to her livestock and poultry. She even collects rainwater through a series of pipes and drains to water her plants. Being the President of both the Pili Organic Agriculture Practitioners Association and the Rural Improvement Club of Palestina, she passionately shares her expertise and experiences as a woman farmer to anyone who wishes to learn and practice agriculture. She also serves as a member and former Vice Chairperson of the Municipal Agricultural and Fishery Council of Pili and the Treasurer of the Pilinio Federation of High Value Crops Growers.

For Dacara, maintaining a harmonious relationship with the community comes naturally. The Household Head of the Handmaids of the Lord and an active member of the Church, she believes in sharing her God-given blessings to those in need. Dacara organizes eat-all-you-pick activities in her farm from time-to-time on a donation basis, which she turns over to various Congregations. She also donates some of her harvests to religious organizations as her way of thanking the Lord for the bounties of her farm.

However, it is not always sunshine and rainbows for Dacara's Farm and Gardens. Being in a location where destructive typhoons

often hit also means that the farm is at the mercy of torrential downpours. The consecutive hits of Typhoon Quinta, Super Typhoon Rolly, and Typhoon Ulysses in 2020 devastated Dacara's farm and even brought demise to some of her animals.

To prevent a repeat of such heartbreaking damage, Dacara learned to adjust her planting calendar to complement weather changes. She also prunes her trees ahead of time to lessen the damages caused by strong winds.

The African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreak in 2019 also caused the deaths of all her 58 native pigs. Regularly checking updates from the local government and the Department of Agriculture - Bureau of Animal Industry (DA-BAI), she determined the best timeline to restart her native pig production. Dacara currently has four native pigs to take care of.

"Para umasenso, no fast rules. Hindi tayo titigil at iiyak lang, life must go on. Hindi kailangang may pera ka to start a good business. Ang kailangan mo ay puso at passion na gusto mong umasenso, aasenso ka," she shared.

Seeing the potentials in her farm, the DA has been providing technical assistance, animal breeders, and farm inputs to Dacara. She also benefited from the DA-Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC)'s AgriPinay loan program, a P100,000 loan that is payable for five years with no interest.

Dacara also continues to share her knowledge and best practices with fellow farmers as her farm gained its status as a Learning Site for Agriculture in 2017.

Recognizing her outstanding contributions to the community as a woman farmer-leader, Dacara was hailed as a regional finalist during the 2021 DA Search for Outstanding Rural Women. 🌱



“Ang DA ay naging parte rin sa buhay ko. Hindi sila tumigil sa pagtulong. Sa akin nga, financial man o in kind, binigay talaga nila sa akin kaya thank you so much sa DA sa local, regional, and national levels.”

ANGELITA LUNA DACARA

Technology and Innovations



Drought-resistant rice varieties for a food-secure and climate-resilient Philippines

by Ira Cruz | Photos by Alarico Nuestro

El Niño is a climate phenomenon characterized by unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. It typically occurs every two to seven years and increases the likelihood of reduced rainfall, which can lead to droughts in some areas of the country. These dry periods have adverse impacts on agriculture, especially in rice production, as most rice varieties require consistent irrigation.

“When there is limitation in water, there is limitation sa rice production. Noong mga nakaraang El Niño, iyong production natin in terms of rice ay nagdedecrease by around 70% to 80%. Halimbawa ang normal farmer, umaani siya ng 100 kaban, kapag nagkaroon ng El Niño, more or less zero o minsan 10 to 20 kaban lang inaani kapag ang variety na tinanim niya ay hindi adapted sa environment na may limited water supply,” said Christopher Cabusora, Senior Science Research Specialist and Plant Breeder from the Department

of Agriculture-Philippine Rice Research Institute (DA-PhilRice).

To address this situation and help farmers adapt to climate change, DA-PhilRice has been actively developing drought-resistant rice varieties capable of withstanding dry spells and maintaining yields.

But how did they achieve this? Cabusora explained that these varieties were developed by identifying gene donors and inducing stress by placing them in an environment where researchers wanted them to thrive, such as in drought. The plants that survived under these conditions were brought and tested in areas experiencing actual drought, such as Bicol, Ilocos, and the Cagayan region.

“Dito natin makikita iyong totoong performance nila and then doon tayo makaka-identify ng makaka-survive sa drought. The next step will be another round of evaluation pero larger scale na. Ito na iyong tinatawag na National Cooperative Test (NCT) para malaman iyong

actual performance under multiple locations. Kapag nagrelease tayo ng drought-tolerant variety, gusto natin, nationwide. Regardless kung saang region mo siya itanim, basta may drought, makaka-adapt siya. Then, this will be the beginning na marerelease na siya as a new variety,” he stressed.

Cabusora pointed out that one of the challenges they faced in the earlier years, before the country began experiencing severe climate change, was the absence of a market due to lack of technology adopters. Hence, DA-PhilRice conducted various technology demonstrations in provinces, thus gradually increasing farmers' awareness.

These drought-resistant rice varieties can compete with the traditional irrigated lowland varieties that most farmers use. According to Cabusora, the only difference is that when farmers experience drought during production, they will still have a harvest.

“At the end of the day, ang gusto lang ng mga farmer ay mataas ang ani para mataas ang

“Iyong rice breeding before, sa single trait lang siya naka-focus, like drought. Ngayon, nagshift na kami to multiple traits kasi naging napaka-unpredictable ng climate. Minsan sa isang area, hindi lang drought ang nag-occur, minsan bumabaha na rin, so kung single lang ang trait ng mga varieties na ito, wala siyang higher probability na magsurvive. So ngayon ang mga dinedvelop na nating varieties ay towards multiple stress tolerance, including flood resistance, saline resistance, high-temperature and low-temperature stress tolerance, depende sa region kung anong na-experience nilang stress.”

CHRISTOPHER CABUSORA

Technology and Innovations

kita. Kaya ang naging papel ng mga varieties namin would be interventions o as alternatives lang, halimbawa, kapag may El Niño tayo. Kasi iyon naman ang gusto natin, may yield pa rin. May maibebenta pa rin. May kita pa rin kahit ‘di ganun kalaki,” he said.

To date, DA-PhilRice has produced 30 rice varieties since it began developing them in the mid-90s, using traditional and modern methods such as biotechnology, tissue culture, and induced mutation. In 2004, when new rice varieties were already developed, DA-PhilRice began distributing these rice

seeds to farmers.

DA-PhilRice has also collaborated with other primary plant breeding institutions, such as the International Rice Research Institute and the University of the Philippines-Los Baños, to enhance research for development and provide the best rice varieties for farmers.

In preparation for the uncertain and evolving climate in the future, Cabusora noted that the Institute has been gearing up to develop a range of rice varieties with tolerance to multiple stresses. 🌱



Climate-resistant rice varieties developed by PhilRice

DA, Farmfresh offer ... from page 1

addressing the oversupply of vegetables. This nutritious food package aims to be available all year round, readily accessible, and priced at an affordable rate. This is such a great opportunity to showcase the collaborations of the public and private sector for the benefit of the Filipino people,” DA Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban said.

The collaborative project between DA and FarmFresh is also aligned with the food security programs of various government agencies, namely: the Supplementary Feeding Program and Disaster Response and Management Program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); the School-Based Feeding Program of the Department of Education (DepEd); the Feeding Program of 50,000 Inmates of the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor); and the Disaster Relief Operations of the Department of National Defense (DND).

Reiterating that food security is a top priority under the leadership of President and Agriculture Secretary Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., Special

Assistant to the President Antonio Lagdameo, Jr. stressed the importance of a whole-of-nation approach not only to ensure that food is present in every home, but also to protect local farmers, fisherfolk, and marginalized sectors.

“It is crucial that we explore collaborative partnerships between the government agencies and the private sector to pave the way for innovative solutions. Unlocking our collective potential by leveraging our respective strengths and expertise is key to achieving positive and sustainable outcomes,” he expressed.

Also present during the event were DA Assistant Secretary for Operations Arnel de Mesa, DA Regional Field Office VI Executive Director Dennis Arpia, former DA Secretary William Dar, Atok (Benguet) Mayor Franklin Smith, Hermosa (Bataan) Mayor Antonio Joseph Inton, FarmFresh co-founder Raphael Pelayo, farmer-beneficiaries of the Adopt-A-Town, Adopt-A-Farmer program, and representatives from government agencies and the private sector. 🌱 (Krystelle Ymari Vergara, DA-AFID)

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Department of Agriculture thru Regional Field Office in Central Luzon (DA-RFO 3) under the National Rice Program (NRP) and the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) program.

“Nakakagawa po kami ng maraming mainam na bagay sa aming sakahan na nagbunga ng masaganang ani at malaking kita dahil sa gobyernong Marcos partikular na ang DA, na nagbigay ng libreng binhi, abono at pagsasanay,” Salvador said.

“At ipinagmamalaki ko po na PhilGAP (Philippine Good Agricultural Practices) certified po ang aking sakahan,” he added.

In addition to following PhilGAP, Salvador also placed his trust on the quality of rice he planted, namely NSIC Rc 402 during the rainy season and hybrid rice for next dry season. This is a combination which his farmer-counterparts utilize, thus giving them abundant harvests and bigger incomes.

“Dati, sabi ng mga kanayon namin, kami’y magsasaka lamang ng dayami. Pero ngayon, kami ay umuunlad na, umaangat at tumaas na ang aming lebel,” Salvador said.

He said all of them at Binabuyan Farmers’

Association convey their profound gratitude to the tireless efforts of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., who concurrently serves as DA Secretary.

“Nararamdaman po namin ang kaniyang pagsusumikap upang matulungan kaming mga magsasaka. Malaking tulong ang kaniyang mga proyektong isinusulong. Sana po’y hindi siya magsawang magbigay ng gabay at halaga sa aming mga magsasaka,” Salvador said.

Meanwhile, DA-RFO3 rice program focal person Dr. Lowell Rebillaco said that as of October 6, 2023, a total of 71,568 hectares were harvested, with an estimated volume of 354,980 metric tons (MT), for an average of 4.96 MT/ha. The harvested area represents 15.6 percent of the total planted area of 457,782 hectares this 2023 wet season. The bulk of the area will be harvested in the remaining days of October onto November.

For October, Nueva Ecija is expected to harvest 532,980 MT and for November, 153,000 MT, according to estimates by the Philippine Rice Information System (PRISM), based on satellite data in mid-September 2023. 🌱 (PCO)

PITAK FILIPINO

Kahalagahan ng teknolohiyang pang-tubig sa kinabukasan ng sektor ng agrikultura

ni Ela Arciaga

Ang tema ng pagdiriwang ng World Food Day ngayong taon ay "Water is Life, Water is Food. Leave No One Behind." Binigyang diin ng selebrasyong ito ang kahalagahan ng tubig para sa lahat ng naninirahan sa mundo. Tubig ang bumubuo sa halos kalahating porsiyento ng katawan ng tao, instrumental ito sa produksyon ng pagkain, at nakatutulong din ito sa kabuhayan ng mga tao.

Kasama ng Kagawaran ng Agrikultura ang iba't ibang ahensya na suportado ang panawagan ng Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN-FAO)

sa malinis at sustenableng mapagkukunan ng tubig sa mukha ng pagbabago sa panahon.

Ang sektor ng agrikultura ay kumukonsumo ng malaking dami ng kagamit-gamit na tubig (usable water) ng daigdig. Gamit ito ng mga magsasaka upang magpatubo ng mga halaman, magpalaki ng mga alagang hayop, maglagay ng mga pestisidyo at pataba, makalikha ng hydroelectricity, at para sa iba pang mga gawain sa bukid.

Ayon sa World Bank tinatayang nasa 20 porsiyento ng total cultivated land ang irrigated agriculture. Nasa 40 porsiyento din ang kontribusyon nito sa kabuuang food production sa buong mundo. Kaugnay nito, ito rin ay bumubuo sa 70 porsiyento ng freshwater withdrawal ng mundo.

Inaasahang patuloy ang demand sa tubig sa mga susunod na panahon kaugnay ng pagtamo ng seguridad sa pagkain. Dahil dito ipinapanawagan ng

UN-FAO na huwag sayangin ang napakahalagang yamang ito.

Tumutukoy ang water technology sa agrikultura sa mga inobasyong nagpapabuti ng gamit, konserbasyon, at distribusyon ng tubig habang binabawasan ang mga tapon at kasiraan nito sa kalikasan. Kaugnay nito at pagpapanumbalik ng kalidad ng pinagkukunan ng yamang tubig.

Ilan ang Climate Resilience, Precision Irrigation, Water Conservation, Crop Monitoring, at Water Quality sa mga pamamaraan kung saan ang mga water technology ay nakatutulong na lalong mapainam ang agrikultura lalo na sa napipintong dulot ng kapabayaan sa yamang tubig kung ito ay hindi maaagapan.



Batid ba ninyo? Ang Elderly Filipino Week

ni Marites Madera

Ang Elderly/Senior Citizen Week ay ginugunita tuwing Oktubre 1 hanggang 7 sa pamamagitan ng Proclamation No. 470 na inilabas ni Presidente Fidel Ramos noong Setyembre 26, 1994. Layunin nito na bigyang suporta ang kapakanan ng mga matatanda. Pinaniniwalaan na ang mga matatandang Pilipino ay mahalagang miyembro ng lipunan na nangangailangan ng tulong at proteksyon upang mamuhay ng produktibo at masayang buhay. Binibigyan diin ng pagdiriwang na ito ang kontribusyon ng mga senior citizen sa pag-aambag sa pag-unlad ng bansa.

Bilang pakikiisa sa naturang selebrasyon na may tema ngayong taon na "Older Persons: Resilience in National Building," nagkaroon ng seminar sa Kagawaran ng Pagsasaka noong ika-27 ng Oktubre 2023. Pinamunuan ito ni Undersecretary for Special Concerns, Engr. Zamzamin Ampatuan.

Ang seminar ay dinaluhan ng mga senior citizen na kawani ng tanggapan. Ilan sa mga tinalakay na paksa ay ang mga karapatan, benepisyo at pribilehiyo ng mga matatanda o senior citizen at ang mga batas na nauugnay dito. Dito ay nagkaroon din ng pagsasanay hinggil sa "Edible Landscaping," na makatutulong na gawain upang mapanatili ang aktibong bahagi ng mga senior citizen sa sektor ng agrikultura.



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AGGIETRENDS is published monthly by the Department of Agriculture - Agriculture and Fisheries Information Division



PAJ BINH AWARDEE Most Outstanding Newsletter (1991 & 1995)
GAIHAD OSCAR FLORENDO AWARDEE for Outstanding Information Tool for Print (1995 & 1996)

Department of Agriculture, Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City 1100 Philippines

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Printing & Circulation: Romulo Joseco, Perla Flores, Apollo Khris Carolino & Daniel Lito Santos

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