

Chronicles of Transformation

Be Synergistic

June 2023 Issue 6

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For 7 years, PSRTC developed appropriate technologies that would improve food security and raise income of farmers and all those involved in the food value chain. In the last several years these technologies are empowering mountain communities both on Negros, Guimaras, as well as in Bangladesh. A special locally operated loan fund has allowed communities to adopt these new innovations.

The impact of our work was and is being carefully evaluated by many national agencies and this has lead to some interesting partnerships and formal agreements with Academia and national and provincial extension agencies and others as highlighted in this newsletter. Becoming a "national training center" allows the impact of our applied research work into new sustainable creative technologies to be shared with many participants in the agricultural world for students, to farmers, to leaders in extension and teaching.

In view of the need for PSRTC becoming self supporting by 2026, this requires formalized agreements assuring that PSRTC is properly funded for these training activities. The immediate requirement of SPSI was to fund the new training facility and dormitory that meets the national standards set in the Philippines.

This newsletter highlights some of the activities that I touched on and shows also the progress in the almost completed training center.

I believe that the success of this training center will be not only due to the new facilities and the model 8 hectare farm, but also the excellent leadership of Victoria Demonteverde with her team and cooperators. Her biological and social science credentials along with her humble heart for all people speak volumes into the lives of all who set foot on the farm at Pula! The participants who experience the training activities at PSRTC will have measurable impact in transforming their home communities.

Pleased to partner with this great team at PSRTC!

Peter VanderZaag,
Executive Director, Sunrise Potato Systems Institute (SPSI)

Synergistic Collaboration to Empower Communities thru Education

Cognizant of its Vision of **“Empowering Mountain Communities”**, PSRTC developed meaningful working relationships with other organizations to jointly implement trainings to develop/or augment capabilities in different sectors of the agricultural communities. Examples of collaborative activities/ trainings conducted at PSRTC, highlight the diversity of these activities and how the whole value chain is being addressed.

Training on “Potato Ice Cream Process Standardization, Good Manufacturing Practices, Pricing, and Costing.”



This training was conducted on October 17-18, 2022 by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Dumaguete City in order to enhance the sweet potato ice cream being produced by the Food Processing Team. This is a collaborative activity of DTI, CP&F, PSRTC and City of Canlaon. There were 15 participants.

At present, village level production of ice cream and other sweet potato-based products are on-going and the Team is finding ways to develop this into an income generating project. Different local government units are helping in promoting the products through displays in trade fair or in their various offices.



Technology Validation with the Technological University of the Philippines-Visayas (TUP-V)



This was conducted on Oct 25, 2022 to validate under local conditions the sweet potato flour technology developed by TUP-V. If the technology is viable, the sweet potato flour can be a good substitute or additive to wheat flour. It is also nutritious and locally available, thus, can promote livelihood activities in the community. The training consisted of Basic Food Safety, Technology Demonstration on SP Flour and use of multi-crop grinder. There were 54 participants composed of farmers, representatives from DOST, High School, Department of Social Work and Development Services, and CP&F.

TUP-V through its IP and Technology Transfer Office, conducted a “Business Mentorship and Planning Activities with PSRTC food processing team on June 13, 2023 to assist in making plans for the production and marketing of sweet potato-based products.



Lecture and demonstration on the use of multi-purpose grinder



Participants learning how to prepare sweet potato for making flour



Skills Demonstration on Organic Agriculture Processes

This is a community-based training conducted by the Technology and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for the Indigenous People at Barangay Pula. Two trainings were conducted.

The 1st was on November 18th for adult farmers and the 2nd day was for farmers' children ages 18 and above. It was activity-based learning as participants learned from each other and the Trainer. There was a total of 69 adult and 76 youth learners. Seven competencies were taught namely: preparation of organic vegetable seedling materials, preparation of organic animal stuff, organic extract and concoctions, and integrated management practices. Likewise, awareness of sustainable agriculture, solid waste management, and drug awareness. This is a joint undertaking with PSRTC, City of Canlaon, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Province of Negros Oriental, Provincial Training Center, and Department of Agriculture.



Carpentry NCII Course of TESDA conducted at PSRTC

The Provincial Training Center of TESDA selected PSRTC as one of the sites for its Skills Training Program. The Skills Training Programs were designed for Barangays in Canlaon City. The training course for Carpentry II was conducted at PSRTC from Dec to Jan 2023. The 25 scholars (24 male, 1 female) who availed of the program were taught the basic of carpentry to allow them to find a carpentry job in the future. As an output, the class built a canteen that is now utilized by PSRTC for training activity of participants.



Carpentry Students working (below) and their output (above)



Sweet Potato Ice Cream Processing for People with Disabilities (PWD)

This training was conducted by PSRTC on Dec 27-29, 2022 in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Office-Canlaon City and Local Government Unit of Canlaon City, and Office of People with Disabilities. The participants were 22 PWD's. The assistant department head of DSWD was present during the commencement program. The PWD group are planning to make ice cream making as a livelihood project. The City of Canlaon provided freezer and other equipment that can be used for the ice cream making project.



Product Profile and Needs Assessment for ARB Beneficiaries.

This is a joint activity with several agencies, primarily the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Public Employment and Service Office (PESO), Canlaon Potatoes and Flowers, and the local government of Canlaon City. There were 26 participants mainly agrarian reform beneficiaries in Barangay Pula who are members of Pula Potatoes and Vegetable Farmers Association and Pula Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries and Farmers Association. Ms. Andrea Canoy, the City Agriculturist gave the Message and informed the participants on the status of the agriculture industry of Canlaon City and the opportunities and the support of the local government for farmers.



Ms. Glenda Badon, the ARPOI of DAR, Dumaguete City did the profiling and needs assessment. This data are relevant for the preparation of any intervention by DAR for the farmers. This is also the beginning of the partnership of PSRTC with DAR, which is an added dimension in its community empowerment efforts.

Trainings Geared Towards the Production and Marketing of Farm Products

The Dumaguete Cathedral Cooperative (DCCCO), conducted a series of meetings and Trainings with Pula Potatoes Vegetable Farmers Association at PSRTC. This is in line with its Business Development Service to support farmers in the production and marketing of specific crops. This initiative is strongly supported by the local government of Canlaon City and the City Agriculture Office.



The 1st meeting was on Business Development whereby participants were taught to do environmental scanning and SWOT evaluation of their selected products.

The 2nd training was on Value Adding and lecture on Layer Production. A 2-day Training on Farm Planning and Farm Management was conducted at PSRTC by DCCCO and the Department of Agriculture on May 23-24, 2023.

As part of its Business Development Service, the cooperative will provide an interest free loan and marketing support to the initial 14 farmer beneficiaries. Other relevant trainings will be conducted in the future. Project implementation will commence by July.



On the Job Training: Learnings, Experiences, and Fun

A Memorandum of Agreement was signed with Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) - Guihulngan Campus. specifically for the partnership with College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries. PSRTC and CP&F served as a laboratory for its students who will study various aspects of crop production and other related topics. The engagement started on May 16, 2023 with the deployment of 37 Senior college students (31 female; 6 males) as On-the-Job (OJT) trainees.

The students were divided into 4 groups and were assigned different daily tasks. Lectures and hands on activities were done to provide essential technical knowledge and skills. Students had lecture and hands-on activities on tissue culture, vegetable seedling production, operation of farm machineries and tools (tractor, rice floater, grass cutter, corn mill, corn sheller), field planting, control of sweet potato weevil, and on processing sweet potato into chips and ice cream. There was also a demonstration on drip irrigation. Students were also assigned as officer of the day to give them an experience on office management and on how to facilitate workshops. Students also participated in the seminar/workshop spearheaded by PhilMech and Technological University of the Philippines-Visayas.



On the Job Training: Learnings, Experiences and Fun continued...



An On-the-Job Training Assessment for Bachelor of Science in Agriculture 4th year (BSA-4) was conducted on May 26 and each group had presentations on their activities, insights and learnings. Present during the assessment were Dr. Von Bruun Pelletero, Asst. Campus Director for Academic Affairs, Research, and Extension, and other University Officials and Professors of the College of Agriculture. Dr. Pelletero expressed their appreciation and thanks for allowing their students to learn at PSRTC.



The OJT Culmination Activity was conducted on June 13, 2023. This was a momentous event for the OJT's as they marched along and received their hard-earned certificates of completion. The presence of PD Joel Villagrancia, TESDA's Provincial Director and Ms. Emelia Demafilis, PESO/CTEC of Canlaon City, Mr. Allan Faburada, Dean of the College of Agriculture and faculty members added to the importance of this event. The 3-member Team Evaluators also provided valuable critique and insight for the group reports and future endeavor.



The OJT experience was further enriched by the City Tour sponsored by the city government. It was sealed with their swimming experience in the famous inland resort whose pool water emanates from a cold spring. We will miss the OJT's as they have been and always be a part of the PSRTC and CP&F families. We look forward to the Summer practicum and OJT students who will be with us in the future.



May the Lord continue to bless this partnership!





Canlaon Potatoes and Flowers Co. Registration as TVI by TESDA



The Canlaon Potatoes and Flowers, an Integrated Diversified Farm, was recently registered as a Technical Vocational Institution (TVI) by Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for Agroentrepreneurship NCII and Grains Production NCII.

TESDA is the government agency tasked to manage and supervise technical education and skills development in the Philippines by virtue of Republic Act 7796, otherwise known as the “Technical Education and Skills Development Act of 1994”.

The said Act integrated the functions of the former National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC), the Bureau of Technical-Vocational Education of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (BTVE-DECS) and the Office of Apprenticeship of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).



TESDA’s vision is to be “the transformational leader in the technical education and skills development of the Filipino workforce.” TESDA sets direction, promulgates relevant standards, and implements programs geared towards a quality-assured and inclusive technical education and skills development and certification system.

The certificate of accreditation was awarded at TESDA’s office in Dumaguete City by Provincial Director Joel Villagrancia to: TVI Head, Victoria Demonteverde; Trainers Roy Serion Jr. and Ryan Jasper Solinap and Registrar Vickie Joy Demonteverde. As a TVI, CP&F together with PSRTC will do its best to provide knowledge, skills, and competencies to learners that they can apply in their daily lives.

At present, 25 learners are enrolled in Agroentrepreneurship NCII and classes are held at PSRTC, Barangay Pula, Canlaon City. As it moves forward, CP&F and PSRTC together would implement programs that will have long term benefits to farmers and their communities.

Pilot Testing of Philmech-Kameco Corn Mill



PSRTC signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) regarding the Philmech-Kameco designed Corn Mill. This technology intervention is Philmech's COVID 19 response to uplift the lives of Filipino farmers during these hard times. The machine is composed of destoner, destoner cleaner, and corn mill.



A Business Planning Workshop for the Utilization of Philmech-KAMICO Corn Mill for Profitable and Sustainable Agribusiness Enterprise was conducted on May 30-June 1, 2023 to provide vital information and equip PSRTC on the business side of the corn mill.



Participants prepared various recipe from corn grits and powder. Support from LGU-Canlaon City and the City Agriculture Office is highly appreciated.

Revitalizing the Potato Seed Production at Sitio Cabagtasan

The Cabagtasan Livelihood Empowerment Program (CLEP) which started last year is working towards revitalizing potato seed production in their farms. The group lost their seeds in the previous years due to unfavorable conditions. They replanted remaining planting materials and are now multiplying their seed stocks. At present, they are multiplying CPF 27, CPF 15, Choi Violet and Cagayan. The group are also multiplying sweet potato clones, NSIC-30, Immitlog, Pacac, Haponita and 70-Days.



They are also giving planting materials to other interested farmers. PSRTC provided this group of farmers 10 pheromone traps for the control of sweet potato weevil. Members indicated that these traps from Visayas State University are effective as the number of collected insects decreased over time.

Holistic development is being provided in partnership with Pastor Ben Pakingking. This is in line with PSRTC's thrust of implementing holistic program approach in empowering communities. We look forward that CLEP will become a prime mover in providing potato seeds to other farmers.

“An Empty Bottle A Day Has Gone a Long Way”

On December 3, 2021 I received an email with the subject “Love Money”. It stated, “please send confirmation. As you know this money is from empty bottles that I collect daily for refund. So this is for you and your farmers. Take care and I love you. Irene”. Brief and concise. It touched our hearts!!! What a genuine act of kindness and how her work with empty bottles has touched and changed many lives.



I met Irene, Raymonde and The Ambassadors while I was working in the University. Since then she initiated several initiatives to help support our Community Extension Program by sponsoring the shipment of a container van with goods for the churches, poor communities, and indigenous peoples groups in Negros Occidental and Guimaras. They also sent several times funds to support livelihood projects for indigenous people and poor communities.

Our friendship continued when we became Farmers in Canlaon City. Irene and Raymonde visited in February 2014 when we are just starting the farm and saw the risk and challenges, we took to become what God had led us to be. The Potato Systems Research and Training Center was built which conducted research and community empowerment initiatives with several farming communities in Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, and Guimaras. It also opened its door for students and academe for research works and training of students and farmers. With her support, a Hino Truck was purchased to market farmers products to other cities and is very useful for many hauling activities. The fund they sent was used to purchase an oven which is now being used for the processing of several food products. From time to time, she sent support for various intended activities.

Irene's funds sent to us were given through Sunrise Potato Systems Institute (www.sunrisepsi.com), a charity in Canada whose vision is to “Empower Mountain Communities”. The funds from Empty Bottles have helped support programs in Philippines, China, and Bangladesh. She helped also support my trip to Dublin, Ireland for the World Potato Congress and for the Community Development Program for Hill tracts Underprivileged Peoples in Bangladesh. We are very grateful for her prayers and support. Indeed, Great things happen when a series of small things are faithfully done with love.

God bless and more power!

A Testimonial: Victoria Demonteverde

The Guimaras Livelihood Empowerment Program (GLEP): Updates



GLEP started as a livelihood program jointly implemented by the Foursquare Gospel Church of the Province of Guimaras and PSRTC since January 2021. In spite of the challenges brought about by COVID 19, 8 churches started the program of providing a non-collateral loans for livelihood projects within the community. Each church leadership was responsible for the disbursement of funds, selection of projects and beneficiaries as well as monitoring of their respective projects. Projects varied from crops, livestock and small businesses. The Bethlehem Foursquare Gospel Church was able to set up a facility whereby they can provide tutorship services to students, especially the slow learners.

On December 7, 2021, PSRTC partnered with Guimaras State University (GSU) – Baterna Campus, specifically College of Agricultural Sciences. GLEP was integrated in their program: CagS Builds (Builds, Unifies, Intensifies, Leads, Develops and Sustains): Gearing Towards Agriculture and Economic Sustainability. Interventions were based on the needs identified by the communities. Several trainings were conducted by GSU to provide additional knowledge and skills to the beneficiaries. Thank you to the Dean, all faculty members, and students that made all these trainings possible.

On May 15, 2023 , a Tripartite Agreement was signed by GSU, PSRTC, and the Foursquare Gospel Church as represented by Dr. Margie Dela Cruz, Dr. Victoria Demonteverde, and Rev. Carlos G. Gamilong respectively. This is an added dimension to the GLEP as the 3 organizations will work together to provide additional livelihood opportunities to the different communities.

Dr. Vergara also conducted a training in “Organic Feed Formulation and Utilization” that was designed to provide a technology for production of feeds using locally available materials. Participants were taught the pros and cons of making their own feeds to provide quality feeds at minimum cost. Likewise to address the dire need of household animal raisers who are struggling due to high cost of commercial feeds and low cost of animal products.



The Guimaras Livelihood Empowerment Program (GLEP): Updates continued...

Present during the signing of the MOA was Dr. Vergara, Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences, faculty members, students, and church members of Maabang Foursquare Gospel Church.

At present, there are 9 communities that participates in the program and they expressed their appreciation and thanks for these interventions. One of the groups, The Living Hope Empowered Farmers Association, whose members are Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries, is already accredited by the Department of Labor and Employment and is already forming linkages with other organizations. Their major challenge was the lack of irrigation water during dry months. PSRTC provided a grant to purchase a water tank. The members helped each other to set up the water tank and provide pipes going to their respective farms. At present, members already have access to irrigation water to grow their crops on summer.

Indeed! Working together . . .each doing his share for the common good, is the real essence of Empowerment.



PSRTC Moving On with Additional Training Facility

Cognizant to its goal to have a National Training Center for Theme 3 in years 8-10 of its Thematic Program, a training center with a dormitory is being constructed since February 20 of this year. On-going is the construction of a 4x21 meters training center with a 4-dorm rooms on the 1st floor and a lecture hall in the 2nd floor. This facility is envisioned to provide more training opportunities for students, farmers, and agricultural practitioners.



Trainings will be jointly implemented primarily with Canlaon Potatoes and Flowers Co., an accredited Learning Site of Agricultural Training Institute and a Technical Vocational Institution (TVI) of TESDA.

PSRTC is very grateful for the support of Sunrise Potato Systems Institute from Ontario, Canada, particularly its Board of Directors Peter and Carla VanderZaag, Ralph and Yvonne Kikkert, Larry and Anne Kell, Ken and Geri Rounds, Ray VanderZaag, Ruth Ploeg, and Andy VanderZaag.



Expanded Production of Quality Vegetable Seedlings



CP&F has a successful small program of producing excellent seedling transplants for farmers. This program is seeing increased demand. Fortunately the Agricultural Training Center (ATI) Region VII has now provided a grant to Canlaon Potatoes & Flowers Co (CP&F) for the “Construction of Greenhouse for Quality Planting Material Production”. This will allow a greater opportunity to increase the accessibility and availability at the right time.



Growing seedlings in trays inside the greenhouse allows the farmers to buy strong well rooted transplants that will have excellent survival once transplanted to the field. Farmers can order seedlings of various crops at a specified volume. Initially, they are not familiar with this system, but through word of mouth from experience of other farmers, more farmers are requesting and buying seedlings of the desired variety or crops from CP&F.

These seedlings are grown in sterilized medium composed of sand, compost and carbonized rice hull. Farmers testified that seedlings produced in the greenhouse is of higher quality as survival and growth in the field are better compared to those sown in the field.



Looking Forward . . . DOST's CEST Program



PSRTC is one of the recipients of the Community Empowerment through Science and Technology (CEST) Program of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). The partnership will be on “Community Empowerment Through Science and Technology for Sustainable Crop Production and Improvement of Soil Health with focus on Potato Production, Processing and Marketing”. This project was conceptualized to address various problems in farming communities such as soil degradation, lack of quality planting materials, crop production, marketing, health and nutrition with potato and sweet potato as major crops.

The 2 main components of the project are Propagation/ On Farm Trials and Food Processing. A collaborative approach will be adapted with several cooperating agencies from the different government and non-government agencies, academe, and farmers organizations. Likewise, a Production and Marketing component to be able to provide assistance to farmers.

In the end, we look forward to the introduction of Conservation Agriculture to minimize soil degradation and improve soil health. Second, to have clean planting materials of new germplasm of potato and sweet potato that are socio-economically acceptable under local conditions. Likewise, to develop commercially viable processed food products and conduct awareness campaign on health and nutrition. Finally, to propel the development of various agri-enterprise in the communities.



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Synopsis for Year 8: Be Synergistic

Synergy is achieved when the combined power of a group working together is greater than the total power achieved by each working separately. Teamwork at its best, results to synergy that can be very productive.

Synergistic is acting together. People, groups, or companies working together in a creative, innovative, and productive manner. It is usually used in the context of people working together in a special, almost magical way. A synergistic relationship occurs when two people/ organization create a greater contribution together than they would independently. They work objectively, constructively and fairly deal with each other; hence, their combined capability increases exponentially.

PSRTC's thrust for Year 8 is **Synergistic collaboration** wherein it would seek partnership and networking towards realization of an Empowered Farming Communities. PSRTC with CP&F will serve as catalyst for making possible collaboration with different organizations with common interest and goals. With synergistic collaboration, all would work hand in hand towards need and impact based projects that could propel holistic growth in communities.



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Synergy does not mean giving up what we want.

It means joining to co-create so each is able to receive ever more of what attracts through joining rather than opposing.

-Barbara Marx Hubbard

