PSRTC
Potato Systems Research & Training Center Inc.
"Empowering Communities"

Chronicles of Transformation

BE EMPOWERED

Issue 5; 2021

Inside this issue:

SPSI's Expanded Focus on Empowering More Communities with Proven Technologies and Funding

Sunrise Potato Systems Institute (SPSI) and PSRTC jointly develop appropriate simple yet highly effective technologies and share these with interested farmers on a commercial basis. These has been developed over the past 5 years primarily for the regions around Mt Kanlaon on the Island of Negros. This newsletter is full of such examples highlighting how we have empowered those who want to work hard to better the well being of their families and communities. With the maturation of many of our initial technical and financial initiatives, we are now expanding our empowerment work to other regions of the Philippines as well as to the hill country of Bangladesh.

PSRTC serves as our incubator for continual improvements on how we empower new communities. SPSI is extremely fortunate to have the educated and experienced leadership of Dr. Victoria Demonteverde in doing this work. Her advanced degrees and work experience in biological as well as social sciences are tremendous assets in finding the right course for our community empowerment initiatives.

In this newsletter PSRTC highlights 3 new community empowerment initiatives that are in the hilly or mountain areas of Negros and Guimaras. The PSRTC provides the expertise and leadership in developing these initiatives and supports them with the resources provided by SPSI.

In the Chittagong hilltracts of Bangladesh a similar strategy is being implemented in 10 communities. A large number of projects are being funded with loans. The empowerment strategy is similar yet different as the circumstances are varied.

In SW China our empowerment work has focused on helping mountain potato growing communities with improved technologies as well as assistance with facilitating funding through local banks or government agencies. The strong government support has lead to a rapid transformation in alleviating poverty of these communities.

Food remains essential for life, even during a Covid 19 pandemic. There have been many restrictions and hardships experienced through the past year but where there is a will there is a way! This is the case with the work of our wonderful partners in all 3 countries.

Our collaboration with PSRTC and many other supporting partners makes for dynamic impactful community empowerment programs. The successes are based on what the community leaders and their rural agriculture based members want. Transformation of lives are happening and for this we all are extremely grateful! Enjoy reading the examples illustrated in this newsletter as well as at the www.sunrisepsi.com website.

Peter VanderZaag, PhD.

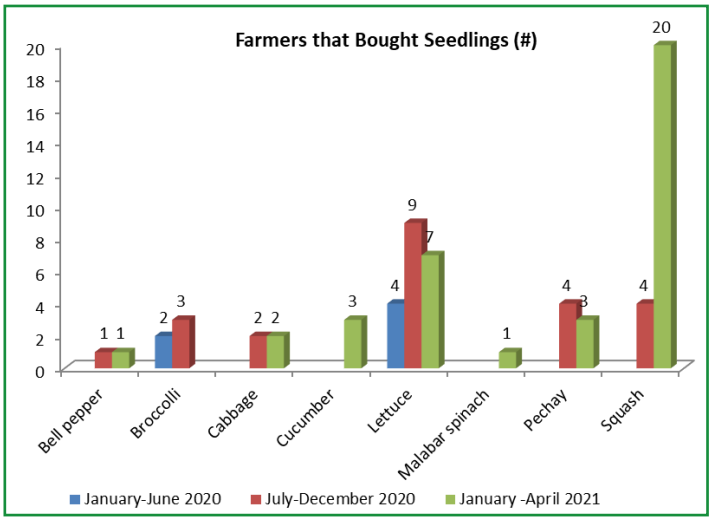
Production of Quality Planting Materials for Farmers in Canlaon City

Planting material quality including that of botanical seed is the most important factor that influences subsequent crop yields. If they are of good quality, there will be good crop stand, higher resistance to pest and diseases and higher yield. According to FAO, producing quality seeds means quality yields. In a study with beans and maize, farmers had doubled their yields by using quality seeds.

One of the problems that beset farmers is the quality of planting materials, its accessibility, and availability at the right time. For potato and sweet potato, farmers use planting material (seed tubers/ vine cuttings) that were grown in the field for several generations. Often these are degenerated due to viruses and soil borne diseases. In the case of other vegetable crops, botanical seeds are mostly sown in the field. In many cases seedling survival is low due to damage caused either by ants, rain, flooding, and/or soil erosion.

To address this problem, PSRTC initiated the production of seedlings of crops desired by farmers for transplanting to their fields. Farmers can order seedlings of various crops. Initially, they are not familiar with this system, but through word of mouth from experience of other farmers, more farmers are requesting seedlings of the desired variety or crops from PSRTC.

During the first phase of this initiative from January to June 2020, there were only 6 farmers that ordered 25,376 broccoli and lettuce seedlings as shown in the table and figure. The figure increases to 23 farmers with almost 96,000 seedlings of 6 crops in July to December 2020. From January to April of 2021, 37 farmers had bought almost 69,000 seedlings of 7 crops. A total of 190,287 seedlings were sold to farmers January 2020 to April 2021 .



Production of Quality Planting Materials purchased by Farmers

	January to June 2020		July to December		January to April 2021		Seedlings sold/crop
Crop	Number of Farmers	Seedlings Produced (#)	Number of Farmers	Seedlings Produced (#)	Number of Farmers	Seedlings Produced (#)	
Bell pepper			1	208	1	1,000	1,208
Broccoli	2	12,272	3	14,513			26,785
Cabbage			2	7,458	2	14,000	21,258
Cucumber					3	5,600	5,600
Lettuce	4	13,104	9	49,377	7	25,600	88,081
Malabar spinach					1	1,286	1,286
Pechay			4	22,998	3	13,500	36,498
Squash			4	1,424	20	7,947	9,371
Total	6	25,376	23	95,978	37	68,933	190,287

Production of Quality Planting Materials for Farmers in Canlaon City continued…

Julito Caballero and family in their pechay field, ready for harvest

One of the farmers that ordered seedlings is Julito Caballero, 37 years old, married with 2 children. He is a skilled welder and a farm worker since age 24. Family income was low so he pondered on farming. He realized farming is hard, but there is money in farming. He decided to farm on his own in his grandfather's lot. He does not have capital but if he borrows from lending institution the charge is 10% interest per month.

Finally, he decided to apply for a loan from PSRTC on January. He ordered 3,500 pechay seedlings and farm inputs. He planted on January 14 and harvested on March 6. The crop stand and harvest were good. He had a gross income of Thirty Thousand Pesos (Php 30,000) and a net income of Twenty Two Thousand pesos (Php 22,000). He was happy with his 1st personal farming venture as they were able to repay all their debts from other people. From henceforth he continued to order from PSRTC seedlings and other farm inputs as needed. Since January he has requested agricultural inputs several more times, transplanting broccoli and squash. The family were very thankful for the opportunity to start farming using inputs from PSRTC. As he expands his area, he is also providing employment to people in the community.

Reneboy and Marites Olacio with 3 children was the 1st family to grow squash seedlings from PSRTC. They planted 200 seedlings that cost P2 each. They also borrowed farm inputs from Farmers Fund. The yields was good and at harvest his family was able to sell it at a premium price. The income of Php 21,000 was used for down payment for a motorcycle and purchase of family needs. Other farmers were impressed as he planted in an unused farm lot. Subsequently, many farmers were encouraged to plant squash.

Marites Olacio getting rooted squash seedlings

Junrey Avila with rooted seedlings

Junrey Avila and wife Pebelyn have 3 children. Junrey is 34 years old and is into farming for 12 years. He has been growing lettuce, beans, spring onion and broccoli. He used to sow broccoli and lettuce in his fields but survival was low because the seedlings were eaten by snails and slugs. Transplant survival in the field is also low because his farm is not well irrigated and after planting the seedlings easily wilts and die. He tried growing lettuce seedlings from PSRTC and survival was good. These are well rooted and survival was good even if water was limited. He also had good crop stand and yield. He also ordered cucumber and another batch of lettuce seedlings from PSRTC. Since 2 years ago he also avails of the Farmers Fund for crop input loans.

Farmers recognized that transplants from PSRTC are of good quality, were sturdier and they are sure that it will survive in the field. It also saves them labor and time compared to sowing the seedlings themselves. Likewise, the terms of payment are easy and affordable.

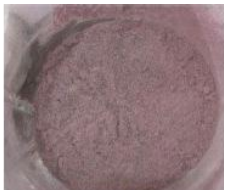
Partnership on Processing of Sweet Potato Based Products











Partnership occurs when a group of people or organization(s) work together and contribute their expertise for the benefit of a shared objective, project, or mission. Working together makes resources and time cost effective and efficient as different groups shared their expertise to achieve a common goal. This is what is happening with Sweet Potato Processing, wherein different organizations worked together to improve the sweet potato industry thru developing post-harvest technologies and add value to sweet potato which is normally boiled and eaten as snacks. It is envisioned to provide additional sources of income for farmers and their families and encouraged people, especially children to enjoy nutritious snack foods. During peak season, sweet potatoes are often dumped if unsold, hence the need to do processing and value adding activities to increase farm profit and help promote proper nutrition among people.

The Carlos Hilado Memorial State College (CHMSC) thru its Extension and Community Services implemented the program "Sweet Potato Processing Skills Training for Upland Farmers of Canlaon City, Negros Oriental". Two initial trainings were conducted namely: Sweet Potato Skills Training 1 conducted on November 22, 2020. This is a Food Safety Training on Food Handlers and Chips Enhancement Training. Different flavors and packaging of chips were introduced. The 2nd training conducted was "Sweet Potato Delights, Smoothies, and Candies Skills Training" on January 30, 2021. The products introduced to the community were based on research output by faculty and staff.

Another Academe Partner, the Technological University of the Philippines-Visayas (TUPV) is doing research on processing sweet potato flour as substitute or additive to wheat flour. Once the technology on making sweet potato flour is developed and refined, a pilot testing of the technology will follow. Right now, CHMSC faculty is doing research on product development using sweet potato flour produced by TUPV. Products developed will be introduced to the community for their production and marketing.

PSRTC serves as the link between the Academe and the community. It also provides other support for the research and the training components. The beneficiaries of the programs are the trainees from the Canlaon Bible Community Church-Lampara and Canlaon Potatoes and Flowers. Initial production and marketing is being done by the group. There are challenges in the production and marketing, however, the group is determined to make sweet potato processing a reality.

This year we look forward to a training on cakes and pastries using sweet potato flour. This is to do value adding activities and encourage integration of sweet potato in the Filipino diet as a substitute or additive to wheat flour. In the marketing world sweet potato is in the "top list of superfoods" because of its sterling qualities including high carotene content (especially the orange flesh varieties) which can prevent Vitamin A deficiency in pregnant mothers and children. It has low reducing sugars and is rich in ascorbic acid, thiamine and riboflavin. We also look forward to trainings on cost analysis, production and marketing which will equip the trainees with knowledge and skills on making sweet potato processing an additional source of income for farm families.

Thank you to our Academe Partners from CHMSC and TUPV. We salute you for braving the pandemic scare to make these joint efforts possible.

Partnership on Processing of Sweet Potato Based Products

Carlos Hilado Memorial State College (CHMSC)

"Sweet Potato Processing Skills Training for Upland Farmers of Canlaon City, Negros Oriental"

&

"Sweet Potato Delights, Smoothies, and Candies Skills Training"

















Guimaras Livelihood Empowerment Program (GLEP)

In line with its thrust on community empowerment, PSRTC extended its reach to Guimaras, the smallest and newest province in Western Visayas, composed of 5 municipalities with Jordan as the capital. The province is blessed with rich natural resources but is also challenged to improve the economic well-being of its communities. Based on the report of the Philippines Statistic Authority (1st semester of 2018), the poverty threshold in the province is Php 10,984 in 2018. During this period, the poverty incidence was 16.2% of the population. Poverty threshold is referred to as the minimum income required for a family/individual to meet basic and non-basic food requirements. Poverty incidence is the proportion of families/individuals with per capita income less than the per capita poverty threshold to the total number of families/individuals. The rural communities will have a higher % of the population living in poverty.

As part of its mandate, PSRTC's goal is to be able to assist in empowering the communities thru technology, sharing of experiences and other forms of support as deemed necessary. Developing a partnership in 2020 is a big challenge during the pandemic. Albeit, due to the persistent desire to help the communities, zoom meetings were held several times until the concept of Guimaras Livelihood Empowerment Program (GLEP) was born. This was formalized thru a Memorandum of Agreement dated January 25, 2021 between PSRTC and the Foursquare Gospel Church of the Province of Guimaras under the leadership of Superintendent, Pastor Roy E. Nunes. The goal is to jointly undertake a ministry that would holistically minister to the communities and families within reach. The spiritual development will be undertaken by the churches while the livelihood and related programs by PSRTC.

Cognizant to the goal of empowerment, the church leaders has the leeway on decision making to proposed projects that are relevant to needs of specific communities. There is local decision making as the leadership discuss with members on the policies, projects and plans to move forward with the program.

Early in the implementation of the program, there are lot of Thanksgiving of Praise to God for giving opportunities to augment family sources of income. PSRTC served as a conduit of these opportunities. Each church were given a revolving fund to be used as a loan to beneficiaries within their communities. The loans once repaid can be used to finance other livelihood projects. The implemented livelihood projects varied depending on needs and preferences of each community from livestocks (pigs, chicken, goats), crops, fisheries (needs of fisherman, selling), and various types of businesses.

The success of this program is due to the team work of church leadership and the community. They represent their interest in a responsible manner and collectively find solutions to their challenges. Success is also influenced by the degree of self- determination and cohesion within a community … this indeed is the essence of community empowerment.

We look forward to more families benefiting from GLEP. We are thankful to SPSI Board, Irene Haupt and Raymonde Boucher for their prayers and valuable support.

Guimaras Livelihood Empowerment Program (GLEP)

The participating local churches and Pastors /leaders are as follows:

1. Bethlehem Foursquare Gospel Church, Cabano:
   Pastor Richard Bayhante
2. Cathedral of Praise:
   Pastora Elsie Gamilong
3. Living Hope Foursquare Gospel Church, Espiranza:
   Pastora Josephine Nunes
4. Maabay Foursquare Gospel Church , Maabay, Sibunag:
   Pastora Eliza Tibus
5. Maranatha Foursquare Gospel Church, Sitio Malbang, Sibunag:
   Pastora Eliza Tibus
6. Reach Out Foursquare Gospel Church, Supang:
   Pastora Melba Torres
7. Rock Foursquare Gospel Chuch, Nueva Valencia:
   Pastor Roy Nunes
8. Shekinah Glory Foursquare Gospel Church, Lawi Jordan:
   Pastora Tessie Gaitan




















Single Node Cuttings: Potential Technology for Sweet Potato Production

The sweet potato is generally grown from 30-50 cm long vine cuttings. Farmers collect these vines from sweet potato fields prior to harvest. As a practice, collected vines are then planted on new fields. The use of several generations of sweet potato vines of a certain cultivar can ultimately lead to decrease in yield due to degeneration caused by viruses transmitted through planting materials. This is the case with C1, the most popular sweet potato grown in Canlaon for several years. According to Alejandro Lorenzo, a retired DA technician, C1 was introduced in the 1980's. In the past 5 years, farmers observed dramatically decreasing yields.

Mario Dela Cerna at Harvest

To resolve this problem of planting material degeneration, PSRTC implemented Rapid Multiplication Techniques to evaluate and disseminate new sweet potato germplasm for multiplication by farmers. Pathogen tested clones from Northern Philippines Root Crops Research and Training Center-Benquet State University (NPRCRTC-BSU) were multiplied in-vitro and planted in the greenhouse. Cultivars Immitlog, Haponita, and Benia Zuma were selections from previous germplasm trials. The local cultivar C-1 was sent to NPRCRTC for virus clean-up and indexing. This clone is already virus free. Additionally the cultivar SP-30 was newly introduced for evaluation.

Forty five in-vitro plants of the 4 sweet potato varieties were planted in the greenhouse as mother plants that serves as source of Single Node Cuttings (SNC). A total of 1,302 SNC were produced in 6 months with an average of 62 cuttings per invitro plant. The most prolific producer of cuttings was Immitlog. Cuttings produced were either planted in the demo farm or in other farmer's field.

Root yield of different cultivars

The use of this method was very useful. An example is the family of Mario and Lorena Dela Cerna from Purok Repolyo, Barangay Malaiba. They were given 5 trays of SNC's of cultivars Haponita, Immitlog, and Benia Zuma. They used the trays as mother plants for taking cuttings for planting in the field. The farmers said the yields were excellent and the taste was good. In total, they were able to plant about 0.25 ha from their 5 trays. Indeed, SNC is a potential tool for farmers to multiply planting materials of new variety in their own farms.

Sweet potato In-vitro plants planted in the greenhouse and cuttings produced from January to June 2020

Variety	In-vitro plants (#)	Total cuttings produced (#)	Cuttings produced/ In-vitro plant (#)
C-1	31	793	26
Immitlog	1	150	150
Haponita	10	203	20
Benia Zuma	3	156	52
Total	45	1302	
Mean		326	62

GMO Research within Conservation Agriculture Practices

Conservation Agriculture (CA) is a farming system that can prevent losses of arable land while regenerating degraded lands. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations promotes the adaption of CA principles namely minimal soil disturbance, permanent soil cover, and crop rotation. These principles are highly applicable on the mountain areas of Negros due to its rough hilly terrain and intensive ploughing of the land that resulted to soil erosion and loss of soil nutrients and biological life. Farmers narrated that in the past, crops and yields were good even without additional fertilization. These days, crops hardly grow and yields are low without added chemical fertilizer and pesticides.

It was in this context that a demonstration area was established at PSRTC to do strip tillage, glyphosate use to control weeds, leave the crop residue on the soil surface, add manure/compost to these soils to improve biological life. After years of doing this, it was decided to also see if along with soil restoration, we could introduce the use of better genetics to improve corn yields. Hence, the trial on use of GMO yellow corn in coordination with the Provincial Agriculture Office.

Planting was during the rainy season on June and harvested on late September and early October. Weed control was perfect and there was only few plants observed to have insect damage. Yields were taken from samples of 3 x 5 meter areas in the field using crop cut method. Computed yields ranged from 9.8 to 14.1t/ha on a dry weight basis of 14% moisture content of the grain. This yield was comparatively high compared to average yield of corn in Canlaon City which is 1t/ha.

The trial using GMO showed that using cultivar that are resistant to glyphosate can greatly reduce the cost of weed control. Likewise, high yielding and resistant varieties can optimize farm productivity. As a reflection, I realized that as a farmer we are missing a lot by not using a genetic breakthrough to improve farm productivity. By law, GMO use is prohibited in the island of Negros. Yet, anywhere you go, you will see that increasing number of farmers are planting "sigue-sigue", a several generations of GMO corn. Many of these farmers are subsistence farmers who do not have capital to purchase farm inputs. The corn are generally small with low yields, yet farmers continue to do so. Why? A farmer related that they prefer to plant white "sigue-sigue" corn because it is less laborious; only plant and spray for herbicide. The yields are acceptable because the cost of production is low and corn are mainly for home consumption. Looking thru the future, "What would happen to the corn industry if farmers continue to use sigue-sigue?

May this present scenario of corn farming be an eye opener for our lawmakers!

Weed control using Glysophate

Observations on GMO yellow corn sprayed with Glysophate

Drying of corn cobs

Drying of corn kernels

Corn grains

The PSRTC Farmers' Fund Amidst the Pandemic

The pandemic has caused considerable losses and uncertainty to all sectors of society including farmers. The Farmers Fund is of great help to farmers during the pandemic as it continued to provide services in times when most farmers were losing money due to lack of market of their products and their resources for agricultural inputs are scarce. The Farmers Fund provided a non-collateral loans for agricultural inputs at minimum interest and payable at harvest.

Amidst the pandemic are stories of hope and inspiration. The 1st is the story of Romy and Maribel Zapanta from Lower Pula. They have four children, 3 of whom are in school. They have been farming since 1996 and although they have large tract of land, they planted only a small portion with tomato, rice and cucumber due to lack of capital to purchase necessary inputs. Sometimes, they borrow from financiers. Their farming practices are limited because of inadequacy of funds.

For them, the "potato" (referring to PSRTC) is a big help. They now grow more crops in larger areas because of the availability of loans for farm inputs for which they repay at harvest. Without the "potato" they cannot expand production. Now, they grow onions, beans, lettuce in bigger areas and are able to hire additional labor. Another benefit is insurance. Personally, Maribel was able to claim indemnity twice. The 1st claim was used to pay her loan in PSRTC while the other claim was used in their farm.

"Farming isn't just a job, it's a way of life"

-unknown

According to couple Percival and Josephine Zapanta, the Farmers Fund has freed them from borrowing from Sales Agent who deducts 10% from their gross income. Now, they have the option to sell their products to whoever will give them a competitive price. They planted cucumber, onions, and pechay using inputs from the fund.

Edgar and Jovy Denosapal used to borrow money to buy farm inputs at 10% interest. Farming was limited. Now, they go to "potato" in times that they need farm inputs. They can apply the right amount of fertilizer and chemicals at the right time, hence better yield.

The 3 testimonials are reflective of the needs and aspiration of most farmers. They have lands to till but lack the necessary farm inputs. They are grateful to the "potato" for the non collateral loans payable at harvest. PSRTC is often called "Canadian" or "potato" . . . a place they go to for agricultural support.

The Farmers Fund was able to increase its number of farmer beneficiaries from 239 in December 2019 to 322 by April 2021. Of this number 227 are active while 95 have fully paid loans. Its Total Assets increased from Php1,607,107 in 2019 to Php1,788,303 in April 2021. The Total Equity was Php372,875 in 2019 and now is Php703,316 by April 2021. The Accounts loaned by the farmers was Php1,197,218 in 2019; Php1,289,918 in 2020 and Php1,442,964 in April of 2021.

Challenges were encountered with delayed or non-payment by some members especially with the onset of the pandemic due to few traders that come to Canlaon City. Grace periods for delayed payments were provided and steps are being undertaken to rectify this situation.

PPVFA Moving Onwards . . .
Providing More Services and Assistance to Members

The Pula Potatoes and Vegetable Farmers Association (PPVFA) has gained recognition as one of the active organizations in the city. On February 2020, PPVFA was awarded a Certificate of Accreditation by the Department of Agriculture as beneficiary of Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) or Rice Fund pursuant to DA Administrative Order No. 09 and was awarded as the Most Outstanding Sectoral Representative by DCCCO Multipurpose Cooperative on March 8, 2020 at Dumaguete City. This is in recognition of PPVFA's endearing program and services to its members. Last year, 25 PPVFA members were also selected as beneficiaries of Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD), a program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) which endeavors to provide support to the poorest of the poor in the community.

PPVFA has gone a long way since its founding in December 12, 2016. From a membership of 27, it has increased to 272. Agribusiness venture within the organization are encouraged. On March 2020, PPVFA started a cash loan program worth Two Thousand Pesos (Php 2,000) each with minimum interest and payable after 3 months. As of April 2021, a total of 53 members has availed of the loan program. Some had renewed their loans twice or thrice. The Php 2,000 may seem like a small amount, however, for the beneficiaries it is of great help. The loaned amount was generally used for labor expense in their own farms especially during land preparation. It is also being used for buying feeds for hogs and chicken. They look forward that in the future, the association will be capable of increasing its loanable amount to its members.

PPVFA has improved financially as it continues to invest on activities that would provide opportunities both to the organization and its members. As of April 10, 2021 PPVFA's Total Assets is Php 129,556; of which Php 30,380 is cash on Bank and Php 99,000 as Accounts Receivable for its cash loan program. Sources of revenue were from membership fees, monthly dues, custom work, and proceeds from Rice Seeds provided by the Department of Agriculture thru the Canlaon City Agriculture Office. PPVFA also earns interest income that is rolled back to support other members.

Meeting of DA program implementers with SAAD members

PSRTC serves as home base of PPVFA. PSRTC provides technical support, training, and establishment of linkages with Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation and other government and non-government organizations.

PSRTC as Underwriter of Philippine Crop Insurance Corp.

In 2019, the labor force in the Philippines totaled 44.7 million persons of which 42.4 million persons (95%) are employed. The Agriculture Sector absorbed 9.7 million persons contributing to 23% to the national employment. In terms of production performance in Agriculture measured as Gross Output in Agriculture (million pesos) the growth rate of crops declined in each of the recent years! Decreases were: 6.8% in 2017, 0.7% in 2018 and 1.0% in 2019. Decreasing output trend was also observed in the overall livestock sectors from 1 to 2% in 2017 and 2018. The only exception was for the poultry sector with improvements in output from 5-6% from 2017 to 2019 (2020 Selected Statistics on Agriculture. Philippine Statistics Authority).

The Agricultural sector is beset with various climatic extreme factors such as heavy rain, typhoons, flash floods and drought, among others. Compounding factors are pest and diseases that could adversely reduce yields. Recently, severe typhoons were experienced in many areas in the Philippines. On times like this, farmers experience irreversible losses in crop yield and income as well as losses on livestock.

In this context, the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC) was created by virtue of P.D. No. 1467 as amended by RA 8175 to provide crop insurance coverage for palay (paddy rice) and other crops, livestock, non-agricultural assets such as machineries and buildings, agricultural credit insurances, and life insurance for the farmers. It provides protection to farmers against losses arising from natural calamities, pests and diseases of crops and livestock. The Department of Agriculture has also implemented the Registry Systems for Basic Sector in Agriculture Program (RSBSA). Farmers registered with RSBSA can have their crops and livestock be insured without charge.

Fortunately, PCIC established an extension office in Canlaon City. This encouraged farmers to be registered with RSBSA and avail of the insurance policy of PCIC. In November 2019, PSRTC signed a Memorandum of Agreement with PCIC as one of underwriters for PCIC to extend insurance services to farmers. Coverage was given for Palay & Corn Crops, Credit and Life Term Insurance, and as Solicitor for livestock, high value crops, and non crop agri-assets.

PSRTC facilitates the application of farmers to RSBSA, insurance application and indemnity with PCIC. Since June 2020 to April 2021, PSRTC had facilitated the insurance application of 75 farmers with a total insurance coverage of Php 1,750,584 and premium of Php 89,814. Crops insured were beans, bell pepper, cabbage, carrots, chili, corn, cucumber, lettuce, pechay, rice, spring onion, sweet potato and tomato. Total livestock (carabao, cow, swine) insurance coverage was Php 386,500 with a premium of Php 19,685 for 33 farmers. Some farmers had already received indemnity claims.

To date, the insurance of crops and livestock is of great help to farmers as it mitigates the impacts of calamities giving farmers peace of mind and opportunity to rise above the losses brought about by uncontrolled circumstances.

Reaching Out in Times of Pandemic

The Canlaon Bible Community Church-Lampara (CBCC) and PSRTC work together to implement a holistic development activity in Barangay Pula, Canlaon City. Developmental activities and bible studies for all ages were used to be conducted regularly on Saturdays. Due to the pandemic, these activities were only conducted on January 2020. Mass gatherings were restricted and children have to stay at home. On the 3rd quarter of 2020, CBCC staff conducted bible studies with families on their homes. The recent surge in Covid cases, however, prevented such house to house visit again.

In support for the families, CBCC-Lampara with its partner Compassion International-Philippines regularly do relief operations for the beneficiaries. Different goods including rice, eggs, meat, and other household needs were provided. Children were also provided with education and medical support, as well as Birthday and Christmas gifts. This act of giving during the times of crises is highly appreciated as it augments the needs of the families.

Thank you Pastor Bert and Sister Herlyn Hernaez, and all the staff for your unwavering support and coming to communities regardless of the threats of Covid 19. God bless and more power.






Site Visit At Dobdob, Valencia, Negros Oriental

PSRTC is expanding its reach to other communities and exploring other possible partnership in community empowerment. One the municipalities visited was the municipality of Valencia, known as "*The Little Baguio of Negros*". In 2007, Valencia was voted as **"*the greenest and cleanest*"** town of the Negros Oriental. This town is 65% mountainous, with elevation averaging from 200 to 500 meters (660 to 1,640 ft.) above sea level, with the top of Mount Talinis at an elevation of 1,903 meters (6,243 ft.) along the municipal southern boundary. The climate is relatively cool especially at higher elevations.

Dobdob is one of the barangays in Valencia. Poverty incidence in Dobdob is 58% while it is only 16% for the entire Valencia. Strongly affected by the typhoon Sendong in the 1990's, farmlands are still widely devastated at the moment. Administrators believe that considering Dobdob's abundant water supply, sandy loam soil and cool climates, the place has a potential to be a primary supplier of selected vegetables and other products to Dumaguete City.

The Department of Agriculture has invited PSRTC to partner with them in this area, specifically on potato production. Hence, a site visit was conducted to this effect. As a start, we had a courtesy visit in the Municipal Agriculture Office. This is followed by a courtesy visit with the Hon. Mayor Edgar Teves. We are thankful for the hospitality and for the relevant information and insights on how to work effectively in Dobdob.

The sight from Valencia to Dobdob is beautiful with mountains full of trees and ferns. Mostly primary and secondary forest. The area is protected by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and cutting of trees is prohibited. There are small hot spring resorts along the way. There is a bridge where you can see and smell sulfuric fumes. From a distance you can see the 2 stations of Palinpinon Geothermal Plant. At some point, only the white smoke is visible. The road is good and there are springs and water cascading from waterfalls.

The scenery changes as we approached Dobdob. Roads were rough and since it is raining, water overflows from the creeks or spillbridge. It is a bumpy ride. Trees were gone from the mountain view and replaced with grasslands. Huge tract of grasslands indeed. Dobdob was once a lush forest but trees were cut for timber and furniture. Dobdob became a barangay of Valencia because during settlement of land boundaries, none of the adjacent cities and municipalities would take it to be part of their respective areas. So Valencia took Dobdob to be a part of this LGU.

A meeting was conducted at Day Care Center of Dobdob with 20 participants (DA and farmers). We learned about Dobdob in general, the Dobdob Farmers Association (DOFA) and other associations operating in the area. Likewise the crops being grown, challenges in growing and marketing crops, and other barriers to farm productivity and profitability.

Site Visit At Dobdob, Valencia, Negros Oriental continued...

The DA introduces the Community Participatory Action Research: Corn Based Farming System Development for Hillyland Areas in Valencia Negros Oriental. We visited the farm of Camila Estrellanes, one of the farmer cooperators. The corn was harvested and corn cobs were stored in the improvised solar dryer near their home. In the field some plots still had corn ready for harvest. Then some plots were planted with sweet potato and also an adaptation trial for potato. The sweet potatoes were partially harvested and potato plants looked good. The minitubers from PSRTC were planted on August 4 and 19. Only chicken manure was applied as basal application. No chemical were spread, yet there was no observed disease, at this moment. Hilling up of plants was recommended.

As we travel back, we were grateful for the hospitality and experience of knowing the Hon. Mayor and other key persons that are interested to assist the community and fellow farmers. Thank you and Mabuhay!

Exploring Opportunities to Empower Don Salvador Benedicto . . . the "Little Baguio"

PSRTC is looking forward to empowering another mountain area in 2022 by way of sharing technology, experiences, learning, and other support deemed necessary. Don Salvador Benedicto, known as the Little Baguio of Negros Occidental was deemed an area where the terrain is mountainous and rugged with a high level of rural poverty. Fortunately, Pastor Ben Pakingking and his wife Nanette visited PSRTC and expressed strong interest and encouraged PSRTC to come and do some baseline assessment of the area to ascertain the feasibility and interest level of the communities. The couple, both retired, decided to try farming rather than stay at home in the city. This indeed is a new challenging path as they do not have farming experience.

The 1st trip in February 2021 included a courtesy visit in the Municipal Agriculture Office to know about existing programs and farmers needs as well as expressed possibilities of partnership. Several farmers' fields were visited to get a glimpse of their situation and agricultural practices. Insights on corn farming and water management were provided. Trial on planting potato and sweet potato was started. Additional visits were made to some churches communities and interviews with key leaders were also done. Thus far, these were exploratory in nature. PSRTC will identify the right communities that are in need and select the key leaders willing to go the extra mile to empower their communities.








Empowered to Empower

Empowerment is about ways of working and supporting someone or communities of like minded people so that they can through their hard work with some support take better control of their own lives. The support must be relevant and desired so as to meet their needs.

PSRTC is grateful to Sunrise Potato Systems Institute (SPSI) for the model of community empowerment that was imparted through walking side by side with PSRTC, molding its vision and aspirations, nurturing leadership, painstakingly evaluating and monitoring progress, suggesting means to overcome obstacles and providing all forms of support. Indeed, in the last 5 years, PSRTC has learned valuable lessons on Community Empowerment.

As we move forward, PSRTC aspires to empower communities by walking beside them in their own livelihood improvements. PSRTC encourages programs that are designed, implemented, and owned by the recipient communities that directly benefit families. Community empowerment depends on their leadership and the willingness of their people to work hard to empower themselves. On our end, we can impart significant valuable lessons learned, technology developed and practiced , and other forms of support when appropriate. PSRTC can mobilize development of linkages and partnership and assist local communities in undertaking activities that will make a significant improvement in their individual and community lives.

The PSRTC team would like to extend our sincere thanks to SPSI, partners, local government units, CBCC-Lampara, academe partners (CHMSC, TUPV), farmers, family and friends for all the support. May God bless our communities and people!

Canlaon visit of Campus Director Mr. Eric A. Malooy, Researchers, and Faculty and Staff of Technological University of the Philippines Visayas (TUPV)

"The ability of a group of people to do remarkable things hinges in how well those people can pull together."

- Simon Sinek

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