



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO Philippines Newsletter 2015 Issue 1

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Welcome to the first issue of the 'FAO - Philippines Newsletter'. The aim of this newsletter is to keep you updated with the programmes run by the FAO-Philippines country office.

In view of this first issue and of my recent arrival, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I have more than 20 years of international experience in development and humanitarian assistance, with more than 14 of those years with FAO. During this time I have worked both at headquarters and in the field providing managerial, strategic policy advice, operational and technical capacity to FAO as well as to international NGOs.

I was appointed as FAO-Representative in the Philippines in May last year, having spent the last seven years based in Senegal managing the FAO Regional Emergency and Rehabilitation Office for West Africa and Sahel region. The Philippines is a challenging and exciting experience for me and I very much look forward to maintaining and further strengthening the excellent and successful relations with national government counterparts, donors and other partners.

As we've now marked the one year anniversary of the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda in the Philippines, I'm proud to say that FAO, in collaboration with national counterparts, has made significant headway in the recovery and rehabilitation efforts in the major livelihood sectors concerning agricultural and coastal communities in the affected regions in the country.

With the support of our donors, FAO was able to complement the government's effort to relief and recovery and respond to the needs of the affected farming and fishing communities by setting the path to restore resilient livelihoods.

Over 14 months on, we now want to reconfirm our commitment to the communities we are seeing through the relief, recovery and rehabilitation phases. Our work with the affected families will continue as rehabilitation efforts are focusing increasingly on sustainable development and resilience-building in the long term.

At FAO, we use the word resilience for a very important reason. We know that the Philippines is prone to natural disasters like successive typhoons, and we know this presents a challenge. FAO is engaged to continue supporting farmers and fishers to get back on their feet as quickly as possible and to rebuild their lives. During my time in the Philippines, I have been fortunate to meet with some remarkable families receiving assistance through our projects and see first-hand the resilience of the Filipino people, who are gradually getting back on track with their lives after suffering great losses.

In addition to Haiyan recovery and rehabilitation projects, FAO continues to support the development needs of the agriculture sector through projects on food security information systems, early warning systems for food and nutrition security, assessment of climate change impacts on household food security, entrepreneurship development and market access of small farmers, and improving aquaculture feeds, among others. FAO is also helping restore the agricultural livelihoods of conflict-affected family farmers in Maguindanao Province of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to our donors. Without the team efforts between the Government, the donor community and partners, we would not have been able to continue to make a real and positive difference for hundreds of thousands of farmers and fishers.

Thank you for your valuable support and I wish you all a very productive 2015.

José Luis Fernandez
FAO Representative to the Philippines



FAO Representative to the Philippines, José Luis Fernandez meets with Haiyan rice and corn beneficiaries

FAO and national counterparts distribute agricultural inputs to farmers affected by Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda)



Typhoon Haiyan—One year on

One year after Typhoon Haiyan devastated coastal and farmland areas in the central Philippines, farmers and fishers are well on the road to recovery and building more resilient livelihoods. FAO, in close collaboration with the government of the Philippines, is reaching out to communities in severely affected areas through some 22 projects across the MIMAROPA, Western, Central and Eastern Visayas regions.

Typhoon Haiyan's record force decimated crop fields, orchards, fishing boats and gear—virtually all productive assets that rural and coastal families base their lives upon—causing losses to agriculture across the nine affected regions and threatening the nation's food security. Within hours of the Typhoon making landfall, around 1.1 million tonnes of crops, 44 million coconut trees suffered severe damage, as did fishing communities along some of the country's most productive shores.

In response to a request by the Government of the Philippines, within weeks of the disaster, FAO began distributing rice production packages in time for the December 2013/January 2014 planting season, enabling farmers to bring in their first crop without skipping one harvesting season. These rice farmers have already sown their fields for the second time with the certified rice seed and are now harvesting the second time since the typhoon.

"Farmers have been key responders in this emergency", said FAO Representative to the Philippines José Luis Fernandez. "We helped them source seed to plant in time. They, in turn, filled local markets with rice four months later. Without their perseverance, food aid and other forms of humanitarian assistance would have been required much longer and for many more people."

Since December, FAO has provided more than 100 000 rice and corn farming households (some 500 000 people) with certified rice seed, corn seed, fertilizer and hand tools. In order to further build resilience and make accessing markets easier, FAO is also providing water-and-pest-resistant storage containers to protect farmers' seeds, along with drying nets and post-harvest equipment, and is training farmers in how to reduce post-harvest losses.

About FAO's Haiyan Response

FAO Philippines has been implementing 22 projects directly in response to Typhoon Haiyan, benefiting more than 150 000 (some 750 000) of the most vulnerable agricultural and fisheries communities. Thanks to donor support of nearly USD 40 million, FAO is providing assistance in four critical areas of intervention: rice and corn farming; fisheries and coastal communities; coconut-based farming systems; and coastal/mangrove forest rehabilitation.

A key component of all FAO's ongoing interventions is resilience-building and laying the ground work for sustainable development through the integration of the Accountability to Affected Populations into all programmes.

FAO's typhoon Haiyan recovery work to date has been supported by the UN Central Emergency Fund (CERF), the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department of the European Commission (ECHO) and the Governments of Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

A family receives one bag of inputs as part of the rice and corn emergency programme



Farmers planting rice in Mambusao, Capiz



A Bumper Harvest for Visayas Farmers

Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc to more than 600 000 hectares of farmland in nine of the poorest provinces in central Philippines. An estimated one million farming households were affected and 1.1 million metric tonnes of crops lost. The typhoon also severely impacted the country's food supply and food security.

In the initial phases after the typhoon, affected households had to rely on relief provisions in order to feed. However with rice and corn input packages provided by FAO—including high-yielding varieties of rice and corn seeds, fertilizers, centrifugal pumps and hand tools—farming households in the provinces of Western Visayas are now a story of hope and resilience.

For Gelma Mesias, a rice farmer from Barangay Pangpang Sur, Mambusao, Capiz, the typhoon wiped out the ready-to-harvest produce of their one-hectare farm and destroyed all houses in their community. They were forced to evacuate to a nearby school for safety for a few days. In the midst of the turmoil, she was thinking how they would be able to afford the major repairs of their house and how they would send their children to school.

Like most of their neighbours, Gelma's family rely on farming as the primary source of income.

"My husband and I work together so we don't have to pay other people to assist us in planting and harvesting. Sometimes, my older son helps during weekends. We've managed for several years; and while we have battled several typhoons in the past, Yolanda (local name of Haiyan) left us with nothing. We cannot ask for help from our relatives, like we have done in the past, because they were badly affected too," recounted Gelma.

This situation has been the same for corn farmers like Eduardo Lantoria, from Barangay Manibad, Mambusao, Capiz. "I've been farming since I was seven years old and I am now 68," he said. "My farm is located in a higher site but it was not spared by the typhoon. We were lucky to have some relatives abroad who have loaned us some money after a few weeks. But during the initial stages, we had to rely on relief support."

The impact of the typhoon was worse for farmers who do not own their land and have to pay arrears to landowners in the form of cash or percentages

from the harvest proceeds. Cristobal Singson, a rice farmer from Barangay Poblacion said, "Even if the landowner was forgiving and allowed us to not pay for the first cropping season of the typhoon, we would be obliged to pay double on the next cropping season. It was a huge problem back then, when we didn't even know where to get the capital for the purchase of inputs so we can start planting again."

A few days after the typhoon, FAO initiated distribution of rice and corn seeds and fertilizers to the households affected. These were done in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and concerned Local Government Units. FAO distributed one sack of rice or corn seeds for every hectare of farm. To ensure that the seeds will not be resold, input distribution was based on farm size.

The certified rice and corn seeds were of different varieties from the ones that the farmers have been traditionally using. In spite of their initial misgivings, they were willing to try the new varieties as they had little opportunity to make use of certified seeds in the past due to their high cost. This, however, paid off. According to Danilo Leonor, a rice farmer from

With the FAO certified rice seed, supported farmers were able to harvest a second crop since Typhoon Haiyan hit



Barangay Maralag, Mambusao, Capiz, "Our yield has doubled. We got very good quality seeds and were able to somehow offset our losses during the typhoon. We are now in our third cropping period and we're still using the propagated seeds from the first batch of seeds that we have received from FAO."

"We were very surprised when the harvests turned in. The new varieties were much better compared with the ones that we've been using. They were also less prone to infestation. Maybe because the pests here were not used to these new varieties" added Gelma. For Fatima Laurente, a rice farmer from Barangay Manibad, Mambusao Capiz, "The seeds enabled us to plant for the harvest season after Yolanda. Because of that, we've managed to make the repairs in our homes, pay for our children's tuition fees and not rely on relief goods anymore."

To date, FAO has provided input package support to over 100 000 farming households in the affected regions in the Philippines. Brenda Saquing, FAO-Philippines Area Coordinator for Region VI pointed out, "We managed to provide support at the time when the farming households needed it most. These input packages were instrumental in ensuring that households have resumed their livelihood and started recovering from the impact of the typhoon."

Farmers harvest their bumper crop



RICE AND CORN EMERGENCY INTERVENTION

(December 2013 - June 2014)



72 000+

metric tonnes of milled rice produced



6 800+

metric tonnes of corn grits produced



44 500+

farming households reached with certified rice seed, corn seed and fertilizer



68 000+

farming households provided with access to hand tools



650 000

people (approximately 130 000 households) could be fed with rice produced



4 000 000

people (approximately 890 000 households) could be fed with corn grits produced



Women dry the fish after receiving post-harvest and value adding training

Looking at the Future: Improving Sustainable Practices

Nearly two-thirds of fishing communities lost their productive assets after Typhoon Haiyan, with an estimated 30 000 small-scale fishing boats lost, damaged or destroyed. The rehabilitation process of the fisheries sector now presents the opportunity to introduce improved practices and help small-scale traders and fish processors add more value to their production.

Paving the way for more sustainable development, FAO is working closely with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and local authorities to restore fisheries-related livelihoods to 19 000 fisher households in the regions of Eastern Visayas, Western Visayas and Northern Palawan, which will benefit some 95 000 people.

FAO and partners are training boat builders on the construction and maintenance of a newly developed hybrid wood-and-fibreglass boat, which will provide a more environmentally sustainable and cost-effective option for fishers. This is being complemented by the distribution of various inputs, such as boat engines, fishing gear,

seaweed and fish production kits. Women, who are essential to post-harvesting activities like conserving, selling and trading fish, are also being trained on how to add extra value to their products.

Because mangroves play a key role in stabilizing coastlines against weather shocks and contribute to aquaculture and fisheries, FAO is working with local communities and organizations to promote the rehabilitation of natural mangrove forests.

EU Ambassador lauds fishing communities' sustainable rehabilitation efforts

During a recent field visit to the typhoon-ravaged Abuyog community in Leyte, Ambassador Guy Ledoux of the European Union (EU) praised the fisherfolks for their remarkable resilience, particularly in playing their part in community-based rehabilitation efforts in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan.



FAO Representative José Luis Fernandez, EU Delegate Guy Ledoux, and BFAR Regional Director Juan Albaladejo distribute fishing boat engines to beneficiaries in Abuyog

The field visit coincided with the ceremonial turn-over of boat engine kits to some 1 700 fisher-beneficiaries of an EU-funded project. The provision of boat engines to the fishers is just one of the steps leading to the rehabilitation of the fishing communities' livelihoods.

"It is rewarding to see how the fisherfolk have become more empowered one year after Typhoon Haiyan," the Ambassador said, hoping that local communities would sustain the hardwork and collaboration to ensure that Abuyog becomes a more self-reliant community.

Accompanying the EU delegation were Czech Ambassador Jaroslav Olša, FAO Representative to the Philippines José Luis Fernandez and BFAR Regional Director Juan Albaladejo.

"Throughout FAO's intervention, emphasis is put in ensuring that fisheries-based livelihoods are

restored in a way that is meaningful, sustainable and builds resilience to natural disasters", said Fernandez, after thanking the support FAO received from the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) of the EU.

Stressing the importance of FAO's commitment to Accountability to Affected Population principles, Fernandez emphasized that "community-based participatory processes are essential to a successful recovery programme—they help improve the appropriateness of the humanitarian response by identifying priority needs and ensuring that local capacities are taken into account."

In addition to the boat engines, FAO—with the support from the EU—will provide 3 000 fishers with material to mend or replace their lost fishing gear, 1 000 women with training in fish-processing, storage, and conservation

to diversify their livelihood, and assist 1 000 seaweed farmers with materials and technical capacity-building to restore seaweed farms. Further, 10 marine-protected areas are being rehabilitated with BFAR's assistance.



A fishing family receives a boat engine kit

Local boat builders receive training on building the hybrid boat



World-first hybrid boat developed for Typhoon Haiyan-affected fisherfolk

Small-scale fishers whose livelihoods were devastated by Typhoon Haiyan will soon have access to a new hybrid boat developed jointly by FAO and the Government's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

The boat will be the first to use both wood and fibreglass, while maintaining traditional Philippine boat designs. Traditionally, local boat builders use a specific type of protected hardwood tree to build the keel, or 'kasko'. Following BFAR's recommendations, FAO, through

the support of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), has developed a new prototype which replicates the design of locally known boats - bangkas - but uses fibreglass instead of the hardwood-kasko. In helping to preserve hardwood trees and deterring further illegal forestry practices. FAO has further included built-in buoyancy tanks and other features that ensure floatability and durability.

"The adoption and fabrication of this inexpensive hybrid fibreglass-wooden

boat model is taking advantage of the opportunity to introduce more responsible practices," José Luis Fernandez added.

In order to foster sustainability, boat builders, NGO workers, local government technical staff and BFAR personnel will be trained in building and repairing the new hybrid models. By training trainers, knowledge on construction and maintenance is expected to be passed on to 3 000 boat builders and carpenters.

Destroyed coconut trees in Mambusao, Capiz



Community nurseries help rebuild typhoon-damaged farms in Mambusao

The province of Capiz lost most of its coconut stands when Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, but through FAO assistance and in collaboration with the Government, farmers in Mambusao are establishing community nurseries that will enable them to rehabilitate their typhoon-damaged and disease-affected farms more efficiently.

Until recently, farmers in Mambusao had to rely on the minimal provisions of a nearby state university for seedlings. The extent of the damage caused by Typhoon Haiyan made it even more difficult for them to source seedlings and resume their normal course of livelihood. Because coconut trees take an average of six to eight years to be ready for harvest, livelihood support for farmers was a paramount consideration in the aftermath of the typhoon.

Prior to Haiyan, farmers like Aida Oximas from Barangay Burias did not give much thought to the establishment of nurseries. While they

have sustained several typhoons in the past, they did not foresee the extent of Haiyan's destruction.

Aida and her family were farming one hectare of rice, that also included 50 pieces of coconut stands and some banana intercrops. "Our income was secure enough to send our children to school and support the needs of my

grandchildren, but when the Typhoon struck our entire rice farm was washed away by flood." The family also lost 40 out of their 50 coconut stands and their banana intercrops were completely destroyed, forcing them to rely on relief assistance to get by.

After receiving emergency livelihood support from FAO for her rice farm,



Fruit tree planting is a key component of the FAO intervention in the coconut sector

Aida together with other farmers, formed the Burias Community Development Extension Association. The group is organized to serve as a conduit of training support from national and local government agencies and to manage the proposed community nursery. As of now, the group is in the process of forging a usufruct agreement with the municipal government of Mambusao for the establishment of a community nursery in a vacant lot within the barangay.

“We are excited with the community nursery as it offers an opportunity for us to stock up on seedlings and help other neighbouring communities as well,” said Mansueto Lata, a farmer who lost 90 percent of his 200 coconut stands in the typhoon. “We can also experiment on planting various vegetable seedlings and determine their potentials as intercrops for our coconut trees. We can even make coco vinegar again.”

According to FAO Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Consultant Jacquelyn Pinat, “the establishment of community nurseries sets the path to long-term recovery. Farmers now realize the need to plan ahead and make informed choices about their livelihood.” Through FAO’s support, the farmers participated in the conduct of hazard vulnerability mapping. This is an assessment tool to determine hazardous areas for planting and will help in determining ideal crops for planting, based on soil-related suitability, slopes and climate. The farmers believe that this will better help them in identifying alternative intercrops for coconut trees.

The coconut-based farming systems programme of FAO endeavours, among others, to establish 38 community nurseries in the affected areas in Western and Eastern Visayas. Trainings on nursery establishment, seed production management and operations and mass propagation techniques will also be provided to participating farmers’ associations and community-based organizations. With support from FAO, Capiz State University, municipal governments, Department of Agriculture and the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) farmer-groups will be able to come up with a management scheme for the community-based nurseries and sustain the need to provide support to other farmers as they transfer their learning on crop propagation techniques.

As Rolly Candelario, a coconut farmer from Barangay Burias pointed out, “Now we have the means. We will be able to innovate, plant new crops and try new things that more than a year ago seemed an impossible feat.”



Beneficiaries receive lanzones (a fruit tree), as part of the coconut-based farming systems inputs



Demonstration activity of participants during a training on commercial vegetable production



Demonstration activity using mulch



Farmers engage in agricultural-based entrepreneurship

Creating new access to markets for family farms

As the globalization of agricultural systems continues, small farmers tend to lose more than they gain. While the market-oriented nature of the new system has presented opportunities for increasing profitability, small-holder farmers and farmer associations in developing countries like the Philippines have inadequate capacities to respond to requirements of the market.

Building the capacities of these small holder farmers to address these challenges is crucial for the profitability of their farms and long-term sustainability. Like in other countries, the farm families make up most of these small-holder farms.

FAO, through the project “Capacity Building of Small Farmers in Entrepreneurship Development and Market Access,” is supporting the efforts of the Department Agriculture (DA) and Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to upgrade the capacities of farm-level extension workers to be able to help small farmers transform their farms as business enterprises with stronger

linkages to markets. The Farm Business Schools (FBS) therefore help family farms to access new markets.

With this, the “Training on Engaging Smallholder Farmer-Entrepreneurs in New Markets” was conducted to provide participants an avenue to build knowledge, enhance skills and adjust attitudes in expanding their reach to assist in linking the beneficiaries of the FBS to the new markets.

A recent five-day training saw 30 agricultural technicians from the local government units as well as staff from DAR and DA agencies participate, including the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), Bureau of Agricultural Research, and Agribusiness Marketing

Assistance Service of the DA. The training included discussions on topics such as human dynamics framework, business ideation and innovation, sales and marketing.

Initially, the FBS was pilot tested in Nueva Vizcaya and Nueva Ecija where a total of 1 389 farmers were trained and 62 FBS conducted. Furthermore, ATI is currently leading the cascading of FBS in the regions with 27 regional trainers and 257 facilitators trained.

The FBS is a unique educational system designed to help farmers learn and improve their knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship and farm business management. As a consequence, FBS is helping family farms to access new markets.



Some of the products produced include different varieties of rice and homemade chili oil





Participants in a Climate-Smart Farmer Field School evaluating good practice options

Analyzing climate change impacts to improve food security

Over the past three years, FAO and the Department of Agriculture (DA) have been implementing the project “Analysis and Mapping of Impacts under Climate Change for Adaptation and Food Security” (AMICAF), which was part of a comprehensive framework by FAO to address climate change impacts and adaptation planning targeted at improving the food security of vulnerable household groups.

With funding from the Japanese Government, AMICAF was able to link climate change impact assessment, food insecurity vulnerability analysis and livelihood adaptation approaches.

Through the project, inter-disciplinary impact assessments (climate, crops, hydrology, and economics) were produced and good practice options were tested to better understand and address the impacts of climate change on food security at the household level and enhance the capacity of local communities to deal with current and future food insecurity in a changing climate. In addition, a training module was prepared on local level disaster

risk reduction and climate change adaptation in agriculture for planners and field implementers.

Climate-Smart Farmer Field Schools were also established as part of the project to test and evaluate good practice options. This included testing Green Super Rice, Rice Duck Farming Systems, the use of earthen jar (burnay) for emergency food storage and super bag for seed storage, rice rationing, a crop calendar and farm weather bulletin, diversified cropping,

and organic farming, among other things.

To wrap up the project in November, FAO and the DA conducted a national conference on climate change impact assessment and community-based adaptation in agriculture. The conference aimed to disseminate the results from the different components of the project and inform on-going and future work on inter-disciplinary climate change impacts assessments and livelihood adaptation.



Spatial interpolation training



World Food Day

FEEDING THE WORLD,
CARING FOR THE EARTH

Every year, on 16 October, FAO has been promoting international awareness on and mobilizing support in eradicating poverty and alleviating hunger by providing food security and nutrition, and achieving sustainable development, particularly in vulnerable farming and fishing communities.

This year FAO Philippines celebrated World Food Day in a fitting ceremony organized in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture at the Quezon City Memorial Circle.

This year's World Food Day theme, 'Feeding the world, caring for the earth', was chosen to raise the profile of family farming and smallholder farmers that include small-scale fishers and indigenous communities, among others.

Speaking at the World Food Day event, FAO-Philippines Country Representative José Luis Fernandez said the day brings much-needed attention to the problem of hunger in the world and strengthens international and national solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

Fernandez thanked the Department for leading the preparation of the 2014 celebrations, signifying its continuing strong collaboration with FAO and for standing solidly with the rest of the world in the observance of World Food Day 2014.



International Year of Family Farming

CLOSES WITH CEREMONY IN MANILA

Officials and representatives from family farmers' international networks, cooperatives, the private sector, academia and UN agencies, marked the formal closure of the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in Manila by stressing how the initiative has helped raise awareness of the crucial role played by family farmers in fighting hunger and poverty worldwide.

"Above all, strong political commitment in favour of family farming has risen at the highest level across the world, both in countries of the South and the North, throughout the IYFF," said Marcela Villarreal, Director of FAO's Office of Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development.

Villarreal noted how, thanks to IYFF, many more people around the world are now aware of the importance of the sector—statistics show that family farms produce more than 80 percent of the world's food in value terms and represent collectively the largest source of employment worldwide. She was speaking at the IYFF closing event in Manila. Participants included Philippines Department of Agrarian Reform Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes, Philippines Senate President Franklin M. Drilon, Philippines Secretary of Agriculture Proceso J. Alcala, International Steering Committee of IYFF Chairman Lupino Lazaro.



Millennium Development Goal-1

PHILIPPINES MOVES CLOSER TO ERADICATING HUNGER

The Philippines was one of 13 countries that recently won recognition from FAO for outstanding progress in fighting hunger, an achievement which includes reaching international targets ahead of the end-of-2015 deadline.

Along with the Philippines, the countries of Brazil, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Iran, Kiribati, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico and Uruguay are the latest in a growing list of countries to make great strides in combating undernourishment.

This includes the early achievement of the Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG-1) hunger target—to halve the proportion of hungry people by 2015—or the more stringent 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) target of halving the absolute number of hungry people by 2015.

During a ceremony at FAO headquarters, the Organization's Director-General, José Graziano da Silva, awarded diplomas to government representatives of the 13 countries.

"You have overcome major challenges in difficult global economic conditions and policy environments. You have demonstrated the will and mobilized the means," Graziano da Silva said addressing the award recipients.



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