

Mission Accomplished

This project aimed to boost the yields and incomes of poor farmers, their families, and their communities in the ARMM. It reached its goals—and even surpassed them.

Many farmers in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) have acres of fertile land to till. They have remained poor, however, because they lack the know-how to produce more and better crops.

The farmers in the barangay of Pigcalagan, in the municipality of Sultan Kudarat, are no strangers to hunger and hard work. Before, they could barely raise enough crops to feed their families in the province of Maguindanao. Though they worked from sunup to sundown, their harvests were meager. They used costly chemical fertilizers, but to no avail.

Today, these farmers look at the picture of prosperity. Bapa Mauti proudly declares that he and his family have more than enough food on their table. By using organic fertilizers, they are able to harvest much bitter melon, eggplant, and Filipino bokchoy from their farm. They sell the excess, earning enough to send the children to school and buy a few home appliances.

Mauti has tripled his income from 5,000 pesos to 15,000 pesos. “I replaced my thatch roof with galvanized iron sheets,” he says.



Training on food processing helped many Muslim women acquire new skills and tap new sources of income. Some of the women have started selling banana chips, macaroons, and jams.

His fellow farmers, the 30 members of the Barangay Pigcalagan Farmers Association, have also increased their incomes. They earned more after they shifted to higher-yielding rice varieties, such as RC 9 and RC 11. The RC 9 variety, for example, has a cropping cycle of 110 days. In one demonstration farm, one kilo of seeds yielded 40 kilos of rice.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) developed the improved rice varieties. PhilRice brought them to Maguindanao and selected areas in the ARMM. The move was part of the “Rice-based Farming Systems Training and Support Program for ARMM.”

PhilRice, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries-ARMM, and JICA worked together on the project. It aimed to boost the

yields and incomes of poor farmers, their families, and their communities in the ARMM. The project reached its goals—and even surpassed them.

Training in new methods: The project provided training in farming techniques to agricultural technologists. It also supplied farmers and their families with training in rice and vegetable farming.

A total of 357 agricultural technologists received training, 57 more than the target of 300. A total of 3,769 participants attended training sessions on rice farming; 4,190 people took part in training sessions on vegetable farming. The target number of participants was 3,450.

The project also gave training on food processing to Muslim women. As a result, 128 women learned how to make banana chips, jams, and macaroons from experts from the University of Southern Mindanao. The target number of participants was 75. Some of these women have started small food processing businesses.

Higher farm productivity: Farmers in the ARMM suffer from low farm productivity. Embracing new farming technologies will help boost the quality and quantity of the crops they harvest.

According to the impact survey, an average of 96.5% of the farmers adopted at least three rice technologies in all provinces. The target was 70%. As a result, farmers raised their rice production from 1.63 tons per hectare to 2.71 tons per hectare in 2009.

On the other hand, an average of 97.9% adopted at least one vegetable technology in all provinces. This figure went beyond the target of 70%.

Growing incomes: According to the impact survey, many farmers in the ARMM earned more from their crops after attending training. They averaged a 96% rise in income from rice and a 103% increase from vegetables.

In terms of annual gross incomes, the farmers gained an average of 23,308 pesos from rice and vegetable production. Some of them were able to invest in farm machinery, buy farm animals, and build homes.

Bapa Mauti and his fellow farmers in the ARMM are indeed reaping the sweet fruits of their labors. They have moved from scarcity to abundance.

