

Issue #1

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magazine

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Stories from the Field
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Increasing the Youth's Interest in Agriculture

It's 2019. Janisa, 28, is a pharmacy assistant working in a generic drugstore in the congested Metro Manila. It's her seventh year in this job that still pays her the minimum wage—500 pesos and not a single increase in nearly a decade.

Yes, she moved to Manila dreaming of good paying job, or at least, a fixed source of income. It was a little too late when Janisa realized that the promises of the city for a better life isn't necessarily true. She definitely wanted to earn a lot more than what she's getting. She no longer wants this environment that limits her growth.

Then an idea hit her.

Two weeks later, she finds herself in a ship heading back to her hometown in Ormoc City, picturing her plans for her family's farm.

Raised in a Farm

Janisa is a farm girl since birth. She grew up in their half-hectare family farm where they cultivate calamansi. Along with a backyard piggery, selling their calamansi produce has been their main source of income ever since they acquired their land under the government's comprehensive agrarian reform program. They also cultivate rice enough for their family's

consumption, unlike their neighbors who plant it for a living.

Despite this, Janisa dreaded working in the farm. It is simply unappealing for her — she hated the heat; she doesn't like staying outside for long; it requires so much effort and her body can't take the pain after a few hours work in the farm.

But most of all, she hated the feeling whenever the farm gets infested by pests or destroyed by typhoons—which unfortunately happens quite frequently in the country. In her own words, *nakakapanlumo* (it's disheartening).

This is the very reason why she decided to move to Manila and find a job with a fixed income, so she would no longer perpetually worry about losing money over events that she has no control of.

This was all seven years ago though. Today, Janisa returns home with a completely different mindset. She wants to develop their farm!

Never mind the pests. Never mind the typhoons. She knows it can be discouraging when the farm goes through a disaster, but her experience in Manila made her a lot tougher than she was when she left her hometown, Ormoc City.

The Light Bulb Moment

In the middle of concrete Manila, the image of the rich soils of their farm popped on Janisa's head. That was her light bulb moment—she will start a farm business. She already has the most important capital for such business anyway: a productive parcel of land that most farmers in their town are still struggling to get.

She planned of adding poultry. She also planned of planting other crops instead of just calamansi. These were all running in her mind, but she did not how to start. Her parents weren't that helpful, as well, as they keep on rejecting Janisa's suggestions to improve the farm.

Because of these, she once again felt discouraged to farm and started to regret her decision to return to her hometown.

Family Farming, Family Bonding

Now 30, Janisa could not be any more thankful when a staff from KAISAHAN reached out to her family and discussed about a project that seemed perfectly tailored to end her problems.

Their family was invited to participate in the project called "Bridging the Generational Gap in Agriculture" wherein

In the middle of concrete Manila, the image of the rich soils of their farm popped on Janisa's head. That was her light bulb moment—she will start a farm business. She already has the most important capital for such business anyway: a productive parcel of land that most farmers in their town are still struggling to get.

they will be trained and be give farm outputs to develop a backyard vegetable garden. An elder member of the family has to work closely together with a young member in developing the farm. For their family, that's going to be Janisa and her mother.

All of sudden, everything is falling into place. Janisa's plans suddenly became possible to achieve and no longer directionless. Plus, she had to work with her mother! She might start to listen and consider her ideas this time, she thought.

Being the religious girl that she's always been, Janisa knew this is a blessing given by God and not just a mere coincidence. They accepted to participate and a year later, different types of vegetables now line up Janisa's family farm.

Ever since the project began, a farm technician regularly visits their family farm. The technician was always there to assist them from land preparation to harvesting; from harvesting to marketing. Because of the hands-on role of the technician and their family's active participation, the farm is at its most productive ever. Their farm income has also significantly increased. And to top it off, Janisa observed a change in the way her parents take her suggestions to improve the farm — a little change, but that's better than none at all.

Farming is now their family business. Janisa was able to achieve her goal of earning more than the minimum wage. She's now thriving in an environment that facilitates personal growth, because according to her, there is always a room for her ideas in farming. Unlike in the pharmacy, she's now her own



▲ Farm girl in the city. Janisa wanted a secured source of income that's why she decided to move to Manila to work a salaried job.

boss. There are no rules, so she is free to explore ideas and be creative.

She went back to Ormoc to develop their farm, but she never expected that her appreciation of farming would skyrocket into passion because of the project—because of family farming. Janisa thought that the fact that these all happened in 2020 contributed to her enlightenment. 2020, year of the worst pandemic in recent history, made her realize how essential farming is and how important its role is in food security.

What went wrong?

Janisa is only one of the millions of young people belonging in a farming family. And it seems that her experience—the challenges, especially—is not an isolated case.

In one of the sharing sessions attended by the participants of the family farming project, the youth shared the following as their reasons why their interest in agriculture or farming is declining:

- *They don't think there's money in farming.*

For most of the participants, farming is not a good source of income. It's hard not to blame them given that farmers in the Philippines are considered among poorest of the poor. Most of the farmers in Leyte are farmworkers and do not till their own lands.

With the poor implementation of the agrarian reform program, the concept of owning and tilling their own land seems so foreign to the farmers of Leyte. This is why most of the elderly farmers never wanted their children to be, in their own words, “magsasaka lang.” For them, the idea of having a farm

business is a bit far-fetched and they somehow influenced their children with this thinking.

It is now uncommon for the children of farmers to consider moving to Manila to find an office job. Just like what Janisa thought before, they prefer it more than farming because it is salaried work that wouldn't require them to work under the sun. Janisa learned it the hard way that working in Manila rather than staying in their farm is not always the better choice.

- *They see farming as a job, not an essential part of community.*

As mentioned, the mindset of the farmers in Leyte is that of

farmworker where they get paid around 70 to 100 pesos daily for their work. This is passed on to their children.

For them, farming is simply a job, not a career. Farmers work on farms as “employees” of landowners or hacienderos to earn, and not because they see it as their contribution to the bigger society. This is why their view of farming is a bit “soulless.”

- *Their elders are not supportive neither welcoming of their ideas.*

The young farmers shared that none of their parents were encouraging them to farm, or at least engage them in their farm

▼ The Laude bunch. Janisa and her family cultivate their own land in Leyte together and now run their farm business.



For Janisa, it is really important for the elderly farmers to be proactive and more conscious of their relationship with their children if they want to have “second liners” in their family and in their community.

An essential worker. Janisa's appreciation of farming grew stronger during the pandemic. Despite the lockdowns, Janisa continued to develop her farming and marketing skills.



activities. Janisa mentioned that she experienced her suggestions being rejected by her own parents and that pushes her to lose interest in farming. This kind of relationship is deep-rooted and is linked to the patriarchal culture in farming communities.

The youth shared that they continue to feel and experience this during the early days of the family farming project, but somehow observed changes after a few months.

The younger members of the group (Gen Z) also shared some reasons that are different from what Janisa, a millennial, experienced.

- *There are too many distractions.*

Mobile legends. Tiktok. Basketball. Reintroducing farming as a hobby seems to be impossible today given the wide variety of entertaining social media platforms or recreational activities. Most of these are

shared interests with their peers that is why the youth prefers this over laborious farming. They get to enjoy these activities with people in the same age group.

- *House is not located near a farm.*

Some also shared that they know some friends who are initially interested in farming but lost interest because of their geographic location. The young participants think that the interest of the youth in farming

depends on whether they grew up near a farm or not; or if they are living in a rural area, in the suburbs, or in the city.

It is highly likely for individuals living in the rural area to develop interest in farming despite the discouragement from families because they get to see things are done in the farm especially if they are tilling their own land.

These issues were raised during the whole duration of the family farming project, and in the

process, ways to address these issues also came to light.

Moving Forward

In another sharing session, Janisa explained what she feels whenever her ideas get rejected by her parents. She stated that whenever her parents do this, she felt like they are “looking down on her.”

Most of the time, she said, whenever she does something in the farm that her parents do not

agree with, she’s often met with hostile and hurtful words.

“If there’s something wrong, they should say it in a nice way,” Janisa shared. “We (the youth) get discouraged easily if they talk to us that way. Good communication is important.”

The project, as Janisa attested, has also made it clear that there is in fact money in farming, especially if you own the land you till, and if you are equipped with the technical knowledge to

cultivate crops, manage farms, and market farm produce.

The pandemic has also been a turning point for most of the families, not just Janisa's, to realize how essential they are as farmers.

While there was panic in the big cities because of decreasing food supply during lockdowns, the farmers in the rural area never worried about having food on their tables because they have everything they need in their own backyards.

It took a global pandemic for the youth to realize how important

the role of a farmer is in the society because they saw how the people in the cities rely on them for food.

They now have a first-hand experience on farming amidst a pandemic and this alone deepens their appreciation of farming and agriculture.

But this is not enough.

For Janisa, it is really important for the elderly farmers to be proactive and more conscious of their relationship with their children if they want to have "second liners" in their family and in their community.

It's all cultural and she knows it would take time for this to change.

The best thing she can do now, Janisa shared, is to make farming interesting to the eyes of her fellow youth by sharing her story and showing how proud she is for being a young farmer. //



REASONS WHY YOUTH'S INTEREST IN FARMING IS DECLINING

- They don't think there's money in farming.
- They see farming as a job, not an essential part of community.
- Their elders are not supportive neither welcoming of their ideas.
- There are too many distractions.
- House is not located near a farm.



Elderly and Youth Collaboration in the Farms

For a largely agricultural country, one should have already assumed that family farming is a thing in the Philippines. Surprisingly, this is not the case. In Leyte, the productive agricultural lands are vastly owned only by a few families who hire farmers to work on haciendas. As farmworkers, the only time farmers are able to farm with their children are when they work together as hacienda employees, and never as partners in their own farm.

The Silvas

When Pablo Silva, 57, received his land through

the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) in 2016, he was not sure how to keep it productive. All his life, he's been working as a farmworker and he had no experience in growing other crops aside from sugarcane. He didn't have any savings, and the support services from the government was a bit inadequate. The City Agriculture Office's programs mostly are intended for farmer associations and not for individual farmers or families. This would not work with Pablo as the members of his association seem to be uninterested in working on a communal farm.

Pablo did whatever he can to keep his portion of the land from being idle. He started planting root crops as it has the least production cost. He was also able to plant sweet corn when he received seed donations from various non-government organizations. But the challenges seem endless — access to water in Pablo's farm is limited. With his age,

IN THE PHOTO: Team Silva. Pablo Silva (in green) and his children (L-R): Jean, 19; Wawie, 24; Andro, 28; and Nolito, 32, each have their own task in their vegetable and root crop farm.

On-site training. Barad visits family farms provide hands-on training to farmers on the new technologies and trends in agriculture.



fetching water is already a backbreaking chore. Good thing his son, Wawie, 24, is always at home to help him with the farm. But just like his father, Wawie has no experience in managing their own farm, nor in cultivating other crops aside from sugarcane.

Everything is basically trial-and-error for the father and son. There are hits and misses, and their farm income is just enough to feed their growing family.

A New Bond

Pablo met Barad Magan in 2019 through KAISAHAN's family farming project called "Bridging the Generational Gap in Agriculture." Barad is a former farm technician in the City Agriculture Office who was tapped to be part of the project and help selected farmers develop their family farms.

With Barad's help, Pablo improved his farming skills and learned new techniques in farm development. His family grew a vegetable farm and applied all the new knowledge he learned from Barad. Aside from Wawie, he has three other children who have been helping him in the

farm, Jean, Andro, and Nolito. Pablo assigns each of his children their own task in the farm: Wawie (24), Andro (28), and Nolito (32) join Pablo in doing the dirty work, while Jean (19) is in charge of documenting the farm activities to share with other farmer families.

After almost a year, Pablo noted that he observed an increasing interest in farming among his children, especially Wawie. The new technologies, combined with some traditional farming methods, definitely captured Wawie's interest.

But what Wawie enjoyed the most is his newly formed bond with his father and siblings because of the shared experience in family farming. It's their new bonding activity, Wawie said.

Working with Families

The Silvas is not the only family Barad has been assisting. There are also two other families in Ormoc developing their own family farms. They have different back stories, but Barad has experienced similar challenges in working with both elder and youth members of these families.

Barad particularly find it hard to teach new farming technologies to elderly farmers as they have tendencies to simply stick with what they know and the practices they are used to. New technologies tend to confuse the elderly farmers, as well.

This is why participation of the youth, especially their children, is crucial since they are new learners — blank canvases — who are not bound by traditional methods. Now, both traditional and modern techniques are being applied in the family farms.

Personal or internal family issues affect the farms, too. Barad observed that misunderstandings within the family get in the way of the farm activities. This is especially true at the beginning of the project. But as the families get to bond more and more in their vegetable gardens, the farm yield is not the only thing that improves but the relationship of the family members, as well.

Institutionalizing Family Farming Programs

Seeing its benefits, Barad finds family farming a great way to keep agricultural lands

productive after distributing it to smallholder farmers. The problem, he said, is that the government has no current programs that are focused on family farming even if it seems to be more effective than association-based programs, basing on his experience.

According to Barad, it's easier to sustain the land when one is working with family as there are lower possibility of conflict. Decisions are easily made within the family, regardless of how big or small it is, unlike in associations where even simply

selecting the type of crops for the farm can cause huge clash among members.

All the families he's been assisting have been able to significantly increase their household income and save for the rainy days, unlike when the head of the family are still cultivating lands with their association.

Barad plans to stay in touch with the farmer families even after the project ends. He will continue to be the link between the families and the

City Agriculture Office so that they will be updated about new farming technologies. Barad hopes for the office to realize the advantage of family farming and to consider reforming the programs offered by the institution.

Institutionalizing it is a long and complicated process and Barad knows that. So for now, he will just continue to advocate for family farming — carrying the story of Silva family and his own experience as testimonies of its success. //

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Preparing the Youth to Farm

Family farming is surprisingly uncommon among farming communities in Leyte, so it was not news that this is farm technician Liezl Absalon's first experience in assisting farming families, let alone youth farmers. Liezl usually works with farmer organizations or cooperatives

with members usually in their 40s, 50s, or 60s — the usual demographics of Filipino farmers. Her experience in working with the elderly farmers is so different from when she's working with the younger generation. What makes the experience more unique is that Liezl has to work

with both elderly and youth farmer at the same time.

When Liezl took the job, she knows that she signed up for the challenge of getting the youth be more involved in farming in the age of Facebook, Tiktok, and Mobile Legends.

She knew that family farming is a good start. And she is right.

Farm Tech Liezl sat down with us to discuss her first-hand observations and insights from her year-long stint assisting farmer families.

What's the difference between working with farmer organizations and farmer families?

The main difference between these two groups is the involvement of the youth. Most of the people I trained in farmer organizations are elder

farmers, while working with farmer families means I will be training the youth members of these families, as well. They are the new generation of farmers

IN THE PHOTO: Farm technician Liezl Absalon guides Octavio family as they prepare seedlings for their vegetable garden.

who are still inexperienced in farming and are still not used to working with their parents.

Another thing that I noticed is that decision-making in the farm is a lot easier in family farming since they are a smaller group and there is already an existing family dynamic; unlike in farmer organizations where decisions are made in plenary and there are too many voices that has to be considered.

There's also a lesser chance of conflict among members in farming families, but most importantly, in family farms, the gains of the farm go directly to the family who tilled it and not to the organization.

Alright, so how is training the elder farmers different from training the youth farmers?

Honestly, despite their inexperience, training the youth is so much easier. They are more welcoming to new technologies. You see, elder farmers already have their own systems, or styles, or farm traditions in place. And it's not easy to let go of those things to make way for the new farm technologies.

The youth, on the other hand, accepts the technology and gives effort to learn it. They get easily distracted though. Sometimes, sessions are delayed because they have to play Mobile Legends, or do something else on their phones. Aside from this, the youth are really helpful in the farm.

Most of the time, I give my technical instructions, especially those that involve close documentation, to the youth member of the family because they can read and



write unlike some of the parents.

What do you think are the benefits of practicing family farming?

One, among others, is the family's chance to bond with each other. I learned that they are teaching and assisting each other when one of them are having difficulties in remembering what I taught in the training. They help each other from land prep to marketing.

Family farming also puts farming into a new light. They now see it as a family business, and not simply as a job.

Based on your experience, do you have any suggestions on making the youth more interested in farming?

Experience to appreciate. To make this happen, we should first be able to show the youth the advantages or benefits of farming, and this should start with the elderly farmers in their communities.

They should be the first ones to encourage the youth to farm and not instill in their minds that farming is not a viable source of income. They should stop looking down on themselves as farmers.

The family vegetable farms that we develop for this project are profitable and could be a really good example to show the youth that farming is a viable livelihood. To help them realize these things, we should continuously share success stories

Another good point to sell is that in farming, we are our own boss. They no longer have

to work for someone because they work for themselves and their families in their farm.

How can we prepare the youth for this difficult task?

We should continue to orient and train them in a more systematic way. What we lack right now is a farm business school that would help the youth understand that farming is a business, and not just another job. Once they see farming as a business, they are more likely to be more interested to get involved.

It is important to note that Liezl's experience may be different from the experiences of other farm technicians who got to work with both youth and elder farmers.

However, her testimony is significant to KAISAHAN's project as she worked with 3 out of 6 families involved in the program. Her observations and conclusions were drawn out from the common experiences she had in working with the three families.

As earlier mentioned, family farming is a new concept in Leyte. With its apparent role in getting the youth more involved in farming, perhaps, we should consider institutionalizing it and making it a common practice among agrarian reform beneficiaries. //



Amidst the lockdown, Gary Gonzales monitors seedlings in their family farm nursery.

Farming amidst the Pandemic

Like most industries, the agriculture sector drastically changed its game when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country. Millions were affected and people were left with no choice but to be creative and continue finding ways to do their usual activities differently, most especially their livelihood.

One good example? Online stores. Selling products online is already common in the country prior to the pandemic but not for selling fresh produce. The lockdowns showed us that this is actually possible as long as there are enough resources to implement it.

The pandemic also re-opened discussions on the most common problems being faced by farmers in the countryside such as the lack of farm-to-market roads and access to different markets. Of course, the issue on the country's food security floated, as well, which directly related to the inadequate farm inputs, technologies, and resources to produce higher yield that is sufficient enough to feed the whole nation.

COVID-19 arrived unexpectedly thus making the shifts too sudden. The effects of these shifts are both positive and negative — the farmers realized that there are so much more to what they were doing pre-pandemic, yet challenges were inevitably experienced despite them being considered essential workers. Loopholes in the system were discovered.

Some farming families in Leyte first-handedly experienced the effects of COVID-19 on agriculture. These families are part of KAISAHAN's family farming program that happened to be being implemented when the pandemic started. In a sharing session, the families discussed and listed down their collective experience during community quarantine.

They had difficulty accessing farm inputs and fertilizers, because of the strict border controls. These products can only be bought in the market located downtown, and the farmers are having troubles in leaving their barangay because of the restrictions.

To be able to cross the borders, one should present a health certificate, a quarantine pass, and a QR code identification. According to them, these are not easy to obtain because of the long queues in the barangay hall, and as much as possible, they did not want to be exposed to crowds to mitigate the risk of being infected with the virus.

Selling their products became more challenging during the pandemic, also because of the strict border control and because of the limited number of people visiting the public markets. This resulted to the rotting of their surplus produce.

Around this time, food shortage across the country, especially in Metro Manila, are being

Farming is essential. Betoro family struggled to sell their farm produce while the lockdown in Leyte was in place. They eventually learned new ways to market their products.

reported. This is the point where they realized that there should be other way to deliver food to everyone's table. KAISAHAN picked this up and started making changes on the family farming program.

A couple of organizations and individuals within KAISAHAN's network started selling fresh farm products online. There's *Cordillera Landing On You*, a collective started by former Ifugao representative Teddy Baguilat to bring fresh vegetables from the Cordillera region to Metro Manila; and *Bukluran Market*, an online platform to sell products of Aeta communities.

Inspired by these initiatives, KAISAHAN organized a training-workshop on online marketing and selling of farm products. The workshop targeted the more tech-savvy members of the families which are the youth.

The three-day workshop resulted to the creation of the Orkfarm Facebook Page which are currently serving as a platform for the families to sell their farm produce to individual consumers or

distributors within Ormoc and Kananga, Leyte.

Aside from Orkafarm, the farming families also market their products in their individual Facebook accounts.

Ever since they started selling their products online — combined with the application of new technologies they learned during their family farming training — they were able to make their farms more profitable.

Some reported a significant increase in their farm income being from Php 3,000.00 every 8 months, to Php 50,000.00 every 3 months.

The increase in farm income can also be attributed to the fact that they are now farming as families, and that they are more focused on their own farms since they are spending more time now at home compared during the pre-pandemic days.

The pandemic indeed made the farmers realize how essential their role in the society because they are the ones who feed the nation most especially during this unprecedented time.



Seeing this unfold before their eyes, the youth developed a new level of appreciation for farming and agriculture. Today, at least one youth member of each family under the program is considering pursuing agriculture.

COVID-19 changed lives in different ways indeed. //

The farmers realized that there are so much more to what they were doing pre-pandemic, yet challenges were inevitably experienced despite them being considered essential workers. Loopholes in the system were discovered.

From the Elder's Perspective: Farming with Family

The Octavios are a typical rural family — parents working on a farm to send their children to school, while the children study to be able to work in the city after graduation. However, these things changed when they developed their family farm and started planting high-value crops.

Erlinda, the matron of the Octavios, has always been in charge of the farm. She used to plant rice and root crops and earn around Php 3,000.00 every 8 months. Her children, Erian and Junjun, stayed out of it and focused on their schooling, friends, and other things that interests the average teenager.

In late 2019, the family was selected to take part in a family farming program initiated by KAISAHAN. This is where Erian and Junjun got involved as they were given roles in the farm as part of the program's features.

Today, Erlinda shared her thoughts on working with her children in their own farm.

What are your children's roles in the farm?

They basically became my extra hand in the farm. They are in charge of monitoring the health of the crops. They also wake up early to water and weed the plants.

How did family farming affect your relationship with your children?

I love my children and I appreciated them more now because family farming. I was impressed by their willingness to help in the farm. They are really hardworking children. I enjoy family farming because I was able to get to bond with my children while being productive.

Did you get any violent reactions when you asked them to do some farm work?

Not at all. They got even more motivated when they saw how profitable farming is. I also give them some monetary incentives to show them that they get rewarded for their hard work.

One of our youth participants mentioned that some elderly farmers unintentionally discourage their children to farm because of the way they talk to them, especially when the child gives suggestions. Do you think this is true?

I believe that is true. That is why my advice to my fellow farmers who has young children is: be mindful of your language. Speak with your children and listen to what they have to say. The best way to encourage them to farm is by not scolding them when they do something

wrong in the farm. Teach and help them instead.

What do you think are the benefits of family farming?

First, it's easier to develop a profitable farm if you do it with your family. We were able to plant other crops, improve the quality and yield, and gain more profit because of the extra hands. You didn't exactly have to pay for labor because your farm income directly benefits the whole family. Even if you give incentives to your children for their work in the farm, the money essentially just moves around within the household.

Secondly, family farming gave my children a hands-on experience on agriculture which made them appreciate it more. In fact, my daughter, Erian, has now decided to take an agriculture-related course in college. She's now in Grade 12.

The Octavios worked together with a farm technician throughout the whole year and were able to develop their farm in to a high-yielding source of income. The family now earns Php 50,000.00 every 3 months — a significant increase from the Php 3,000.00 every 8 months.

And for sure, their family farming business will grow even more, especially when the pandemic is over. //





Farming as a Career Path: A Youth's Perspective

It isn't uncommon for farmers in the countryside to dream of sending their children to college or university so that the kids could find a job in the city and "not become farmers like them." Sadly and surprisingly, farming in the Philippines, an agricultural country, is perceived to be a menial job — something for the poor and uneducated.

This is why farmers never wanted their children to follow their footsteps. This is why the average age of farmers in the Philippines is as old as 57. This is why the country is losing its second liner of farmers.

The root cause of this, of course, is the flawed system. Farmers are among the poorest of the poor in the country because of

the lack of government support to promote and improve agriculture. And this resulted to the current perceptions on the profession. But this is a story for another time.

KAISAHAN, attempted to defy this mindset by starting in the smallest unit of the society — the family. Through its project called Bridging the Generational

Gap in Agriculture, KAISAHAN assisted farmers to start a family farm and develop it together with their children that are still considered to be youth.

The project was implemented with the proposition that family farming is an effective way to change the perception of the youth about farming and influence their career decisions. And Noel Caingay, 29, among others, is a success story worth telling.

How It Started

Noel has been exposed to farming ever since he was little. He literally grew up in a farm and often joined his parents to watch them work.

When Noel got older, he lost interest. To him, farming was simply his mother's job where she gets paid around \$1.50 a day for a whole day's work. There was no sense of ownership since the land was not theirs at that time. Noel's mother is an agrarian reform beneficiary and, back then, she was still a hacienda farm worker and was still in the process of claiming the land awarded to her.

His mother's earnings can barely get them through the day, so he decided to work as a salesman in a mall to have a fixed source of income. He stayed in this job for a while even after his mother finally got to occupy the agrarian reform-awarded land.

His parents started tilling the land and planted sweet corn and vegetables, and this got Noel gain back his interest on farming. He lived with his parents in the farm, helped them grow their crops, and continued working as a salesman.

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When he realized that he can potentially earn more if he focus on farming, Noel decided to leave his job and became a full-time farmer.

How It's Going

From earning Php 4,000.00 monthly salary as a salesman, Noel now earns at least Php 8,000.00 a month from their family's farm income. It's a 100% increase in income from a dead-end job to a career with so much potential for growth.

Noel's appreciation of farming heightened when his family officially became part of KAISAHAN's family farming program. They received farm inputs and free technical training to help them improve their family farm.

As the youth representative of their family, Noel also attended training-workshops on media production, to document their farm activities and share it with their fellow youth; and on online marketing, to give them options on ways to sell their farm produce.

Noel, as one of the most active members of the group, made sure that he applies all the techniques and skills he learned during these workshops. He worked harder in the farm, followed the advices of their farm technician, and as a result, their farm yield increased.

Noel also noted that the quality of the crops improved. They were also able to diversify their farm and add more variety of vegetables.

When the pandemic struck, getting the farm produce in the market became more challenging, but Noel still found

a way to sell their products efficiently.

He created a Facebook page called Noel's Farm where he posts his family's farm produce and sell it to consumers from his town and neighboring barangays. His products include bulk orders of corn, vegetable bundles, or mixed vegetable packs.

He also uses the Facebook page to share his experiences in the farm, and to exchange farming tips with other farmers from different parts of the country. These newfound friendships made him more motivated to farm.

From Salesman to Businessman

Farming gave Noel a different level of fulfillment. He definitely enjoys being in the farm despite the scorching heat than being in the mall for 12 hours.

Now, Noel considers himself a businessman because farming, he said, is business. It's not just simply work. There's definitely more money in farming than in most jobs. You are even your own boss!

But one must be patient and persistent to be able to fully enjoy these gains.

Noel has found his calling, and he is now tirelessly encouraging other youth to pursue farming.

As a word of encouragement for his fellow youth, Noel said that it's definitely alright to take baby steps.

Start small. Try planting in pots first and enjoy the process, and for sure, the experience will somehow ignite one's passion for agriculture. //

***From earning
Php 4,000.00
monthly salary
as a salesman,
Noel now earns
at least Php
8,000.00 a
month from
their family's
farm income.
It's a 100%
increase in
income from a
dead-end job to
a career with so
much potential
for growth.***





Project Activities

- Regular field monitoring, area visits and Farm Discussions with Farmer Technicians were limited at first then gradually increased as the travel restrictions relaxed or requirements became easier to comply (e.g., securing health passes with fee). The farmer technicians continued to provide technical assistance and monitoring for the farm-based activities of the six (6) farming families.
 1. Youth farmers, youth documenters, farmer technicians and KAISAHAN staff created a chat group for regular farm updating, for problem sharing, for technical assistance, and sometimes used to call for back-up from the group when the farming families need additional farmhand.
 2. The chat group becomes the default way for the youth farmers to communicate with each other to share their farm journey since the local governments are periodically imposing stricter health protocols when crossing territorial boundaries.
 3. The target elder and youth family members are always present during the monitoring and area visits and participate in the farm discussions with Farmer technicians.
 4. During farm discussions, target groups ask questions and clarifications to the Farmer technicians on farming methods and issues, making for lively discussion and interaction.
 5. With this, during monitoring and area visits, concerns and problem arises on their farm plot development is discussed and resolved immediately.
- Hands-on mentoring and provision of technical assistance from our Farmer Technicians for the family farm plot development
 1. Project staff and Farmer technicians conducted weekly farm visits amidst the pandemic. In addition to sharing new farming techniques, and teaching the farming families

on how to develop organic fertilizers, farmer technicians informed the families of market opportunities like the Market on Wheels and Talipapa ng Bayan, both programs of the local government.

2. Farmer technicians regularly went to the family farm plots to monitor and visit the development of the plots.
 3. Whenever there is an urgent call from the target groups, Farmer technicians, directly respond by conducting a visit and provide them technical assistance to minimize the risk of the crop.
- Regular Meeting and Updating with Youth Farmers and Documentors
 1. Every month, a regular meeting and updating is scheduled and done to discuss the status of the project implementation, farm plot development, issues and concerns and what have they learn so far. Youth documentors share their photos and videos captured for the particular month. They also shared their challenges and learnings. These photos and videos are shared on the ORKAFARM page and Kaisahan's FB page.
 2. Sharing of experiences is also done during the meeting since every youth share their individual learnings and experiences.
 - Capacity development and sharing sessions
 1. A project development training was conducted and attended by representatives of the 6 farming families and youth documentors to capacitate them in proposal development and in expanding their knowledge on the available opportunities to access support services and on how to access it.
 2. Proposals were drafted and submitted to the Public Employment Service Office (PESO).
 3. The first social media marketing training was conducted and attended by representatives of 6 farming families. The families learned the different social media platforms and online marketing strategies and how important for farming families to utilize social media to expand their market.
 4. The second sharing session was actively participated by 16 farming family members to showcase their farm plans, to

share their traditional farming practices and rituals and to share their experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown. We also invited the City and Municipal Agriculture Offices of Ormoc City and Kananga, Leyte to share their programs that farming families can access.

- Hands-on and online assistance to youth documentors in documenting diversified farming processes and traditional way of farming
 1. Video documentation of farm activities of farming families were continued to complete the video production of all 6 farming families and the video of traditional farming practices and farming rituals.
 2. The IEC Officer does area visits to meet with and provide hands-on assistance to the youth documentors with their video documentation. She is also available online for their questions on documentation.
 3. Farming activity outputs and reports were also discussed with the farm technicians and project staff to elaborate what was written in their reports and to share their farming experiences.
- Active engagement with the LGUs and other support services providers
 1. Project staff and farmer technicians have requested assistance from the LGUs for the project for support services. LGUs, through their City Agriculture Offices in Ormoc City and Kananga municipality, were able to provide assistance to the target groups. This was made possible because of the existing partnership of Kaisahan and LGUs in providing support services to the farmers.
- Close coordination with youth farmers and documentors using social media group messaging app (ORKAFARM Young Farmers Facebook group).
 1. With the youth recommendation, a social media group messaging app was established to ensure the close coordination with each other. The group serves as a common and safe space for the youth to discuss any related or not related topics on the project. The youth got accustomed to sharing their farming experiences and the status of their individual plots. An interactive coordination with the youth through the messaging app makes the communication of the group fast and convenient.



What We Learned

- The creation of the chat group to sustain the sharing, the communication and coordination among farming families, the youth and the project team was a perfect response to continue the process and development despite COVID restrictions.
- The project benefitted a lot from the capacity building trainings as we have produced dozen of youth who are very capable in developing IEC materials and developing proposals.
- It is possible to involve the youth in agriculture but there are different ways to convince them to engage in farming. One of it is to make them realize on their own by experiencing the actual farming activities and the marketing itself. It is important to acknowledge their ideas, improvements and progress and provide them the space to speak up. Another one is to maximize their interests such as in using social media as a platform in their online marketing innovation. Also, exposing them to different farming strategies and techniques makes them more interested in improving their knowledge in farming. Lastly, it is important for the youth to have access to land and credit assistance as starting capital on their farming so that they can come up with their own innovation in agriculture. Hence, it is important to be patient and understanding.
- There is a need to ask the youth their ideas and views on how to improve their family farming and make them feel that they are vital to the process. Giving the youth farmers the chance to provide inputs in the development of their family farm plans can increase their stake in sustaining and making their farm economically feasible.
- Elderly farmers and young family members can collaboratively work on their family farm plots as long as there's clear vision, goal and a farm development plan that defines the roles and responsibilities of every family member.

- Elderly farmers appreciate the increased participation of young family members in farming and are open to give the youth more say in decision making.
- Elderly and young farmers capacitated on diversified farming methods and techniques.
- Two farmer technicians are assisting the farmer families to develop their farm plans and apply farming techniques on their plots. The farmers are being linked with the City/municipal agriculture office to access inputs for their farm plots. The technicians are assigned 3 areas each to monitor and assist with at least 1 to 2 visits made per week on each area.
- Family farmer beneficiaries started cultivating their diversified farm plots according to their farm plans.
 1. Before starting work on their family farm plots, each family made their initial blueprint of farm plans. Based on these plans, they prepared the materials, seeds and equipment needed for cultivation.
 2. They generally followed their farm plans with minor changes during actual cultivation. They finished transplanting all their seeds from their nursery to the farm plots and applied fertilizers.
 3. Young family members became more active on the farm and came up with schedules on their farm management.
- Family farmer beneficiaries with increased awareness on the importance of diversified farming practices.
 1. When they were asked what crop/s they wanted to plant on

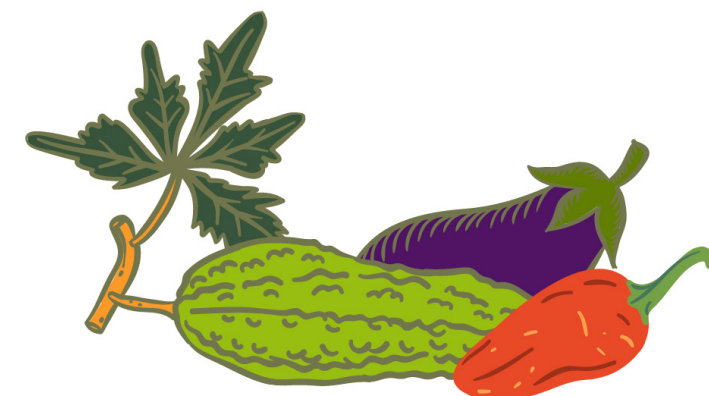


their farm plot after introducing the diversified farming to them, they preferred crops which can be harvested within 3 months or less.

2. They were able to visualize their farm plans with a variety of crops during the preparation of their farm plots, which could generate more income for their families.
 3. Having a variety of crops on their plots will help them manage both price and production risks.
 4. They said they are willing to try the new farming techniques introduced by their assigned farmer technicians, such as using plastic mulch in their farm plots and applying fertilizers 1 week before transplanting. But they will study how they can complement these with their traditional ways of farming also.
- Some knowledge and experiences shared by the elderly farmers to the young family members:
 1. Use of organic fertilizer, such as chicken dung and recyclable waste after 1 week, is beneficial for soil productivity. They can also use soil that was swept when they cleaned the plots.
 2. Eggplant, pepper and bitter melon are vegetables they can already harvest in less than three (3) months.
 3. No planting distance needs to be followed as long as it is in linear form.
 4. Watering the plants should be done regularly, morning and afternoon.
 5. Instead of using plastic mulch, they use bamboo to shield their plots so that it will not be deformed if it rains.
 6. They use dry leaves of coconut to cover their plots from direct sunlight;

7. They can use seeds which come from overgrown vegetables. They plant the seeds directly on the plots and put the organic fertilizer or synthetic fertilizers if available around the plant hills. They don't wait for 1 week after applying fertilizers to plant the seeds.
8. Most importantly, share your first harvest with your neighbour so that you will be blessed abundantly.

- Some traditional farming beliefs shared by elderly farmers
 1. Crops should be planted during a full moon so that they will also have high yield.
 2. Planting sweet potato should be done during low tide. Sweet potato and other root crops are best planted at dawn (some farmers even plant them without clothes on).
 3. There is a ritual prayer recited before harvesting of corn and rice.
 4. First bunch of harvested rice is hanged within the cooking area.
 5. Any seeds attached to each other, or twin seeds, are considered as lucky seeds. It should be placed under the baskets or containers wherein the crops being sold are placed.
 6. In corn planting, sit while planting and every after 3 hills or plants, crawl. Stand up only on the last hill/plant.



List of Family Farms and Produce



Laude Family Farm

Brgy. Salvacion, Ormoc City, Leyte

Elder farmer: Virginia Laude
Youth farmer: Janisa Laude

Crops:
Ampalaya, Talong, Sitaw, Siling Haba



Silva Family Farm

Brgy. Sumangga, Ormoc City, Leyte

Elder farmer: Pablo Silva
Youth farmer: Wawie Silva

Crops:
Talong, Sitaw, Okra, Sweet Corn, Mani



Gonzales Family Farm

Brgy. Mahayag, Ormoc City, Leyte

Elder farmer: Gabriel Gonzales
Youth farmer: Gary Gonzales

Crops:
Pakwan, Upo, Siling Haba, Mais, Mani



Octavio Family Farm

Sitio Beningasan, Kananga, Leyte

Elder farmer: Erlinda Octavio
Youth farmer: Erlan Octavio

Crops:
Ampalaya, Kalabasa, Talong, Sitaw, Pipino, Upo, Sweet Corn



Caingay Family Farm / Noel's Farm

Brgy. Montebello, Kananga, Leyte

Elder farmer: Alicia Caingay
Youth farmer: Noel Aniban

Crops:
Talong, Atsal (Bell Pepper), Ampalaya, Sitaw, Okra, Sibuyas Dahon, Sweet Corn, Upo, Kamatis



Betoro Family Farm

Brgy. Hiluctugan, Kananga, Leyte

Elder farmer: Meliton Betoro
Youth farmer: Meliton Betoro, Jr.

Crops:
Sweet Corn, Squash, Talong, Monggo, Mani, Upo, Sitaw, Ampalaya



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