



PCAF QUARTERLY

When actions speak louder than words: Dante Tobias' decades of award-winning volunteerism

Born in Santiago City, Dante Tobias grew up in a family of farmers.

His interest in agriculture started way back during his teenage years, when they moved to Diffun, Quirino and their family started cultivating his grandfather's land.

This fascination blossomed, nurturing him to be the remarkable Farmer-Leader he is today.

After finishing his Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture at the Quirino State University, Dante joined a multinational company that focuses on developing agrochemicals. Years later, he decided to pursue his other passion: serving the people.

Dante served as a consultant for institutionalizing and strengthening special projects of the Provincial Government of Quirino for 12 years. During this time, he established a provincial newsletter to disseminate information about the local government's programs and initiatives, especially in the agriculture and fisheries sector.

In 1997, Dante was elected as a barangay official, leading to his discovery of PCAF's Agricultural and Fishery Council (AFC). Given his extensive background in agriculture, he was voted to sit as the Barangay AFC Chairperson in the same year.

Not long after, Dante became Diffun's Municipal AFC Chairperson and advanced to be the Provincial AFC Chairperson of Quirino in 2003. Under his stellar leadership, Quirino garnered the Gawad Saka Outstanding Provincial AFC Award twice—in 2004 and in 2015.

The national recognition did not stop there. During the first-ever National Agriculture and Fisheries Volunteers' Day in 2015, Dante was awarded as the Outstanding Provincial AFC Chairperson.

Proving himself as a notable farmer-leader, Dante secured the seat of the Cagayan Valley Regional AFC (RAFC) Chairperson in 2022 and is now in his second consecutive term.



One of Dante's roles entails his designation as the Farmer-Director of the Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Office (DA-RFO) II for the whole of May, as part of the Farmers' and Fisherfolk's Month celebration.

In time for his second stint as the Farmer-Director, staff from the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries visited him and some of the Cagayan Valley Region's Municipal AFCs for the conduct of the Lakbay Panayam.

In one of their conversations, Dante shared that he is usually the quiet type, someone who lets his works speak and resonate for themselves.

Dante's quiet but busy life

Through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, Dante acquired a hectare of land in Brgy. Maria Clara, Diffun, Quirino. The challenge for him was how to make the land productive enough to support a family.

"Marginal land *iyon kasi dating* pastureland *at mahirap ang* production *dahil sa* soil quality. I was challenged with that small farm *kung paano ko gagawing* productive to support a family, *kaya yung* one hectare *ay ginawa kong*

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integrated farm,” he explained.

Utilizing this one-hectare land, Dante was able to have an orchard of fruit-bearing trees, rice paddies, vegetable plantations, and ornamental plants. He also installed an artificial lagoon that provides irrigation to his crops and is also used for raising tilapia.

“My advocacy is to promote organic and integrated farming to break the traditional ‘lean month’ of marginalized farmers *kasi* whole year *na silang may* income and *yun ang importanteng* lesson *na maibabahagi natin sa mga magsasaka. Naiiwasan din ang mga bisyo kung* all-year round ay busy sila,” he shared.

Living alone in his farmhouse for almost 27 years, Dante now devotes his time to giving back to the community.

He works as an extension service provider for organic agriculture under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority and the DA-Agricultural Training Institute. In 2018, his farm was accredited by the two agencies as a small-farm learning site.

On top of this and his RAFC Chairperson duties, Dante also serves as a resource person to some schools for their Gulayan sa Paaralan projects.

Dante’s resonating works

When the COVID virus hit last 2020, many people in general became discouraged to work. For Dante, it was the opposite: he was motivated to help other farmers amid the pandemic by organizing the Diffun Organic Farmers Agriculture Cooperative (DIOFARMCO).

Through his initiative, the town’s farmers were able to overcome the high fertilizer costs, while the rest of the community was encouraged to utilize their back/front yards for organic farming.

His dedication in uplifting the lives of farmers and fishers as well as in developing the agriculture sector also resulted in the passage of significant policy resolutions. His legacy was the implementation of the Appropriate Soil Conservation Management for Sustainable Corn in Sloping Areas, also known as SCoPSA, through a resolution passed and endorsed by the RAFC of Cagayan Valley to the DA-Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM).

The DA-BSWM adopted the said resolution, and is now being implemented nationwide to help increase farmers’ income by utilizing idle slopes for corn production. An essential provision in the resolution is banning the use of glyphosate or nonselective herbicide, which is harmful to humans.

Dante also led the passing of a resolution for the promotion of local agriculture products. This involves serving farmers’ produce and considering their products as tokens during national and/or local government events.

As an advocate of women’s empowerment and welfare, Dante also endorsed a policy resolution that initiated the conduct of the first-ever Women in Agriculture Congress in Cagayan Valley. In partnership with the DA-RFO II, the RAFC held the Congress last March 30, 2023 to end gender-based discrimination and recognize the contributions of women in the field of agriculture.

Despite all of Dante’s accomplishments, he admitted that there is still a lot to do for the farmers and fishers,



not only in Cagayan Valley but also in other parts of the country.

“Ang pangarap ko ay yung totoong umangat ang mga marginal farmers, mabigyan sila ng kaukulang atensyon at suporta ng ating gobyerno. Sila kasi yung napag-iivanan talaga, despite yung mga madaming programs natin, kasi walang magsakripisyong pumunta sa kanila para mag-cascade ng mga programs,” Tobias said.

Currently, Dante focuses on visiting farmers and fishers in the remote areas of Cagayan Valley to promote organic and integrated farming, including the various DA programs and projects that work towards the attainment of *Masaganang Agrikultura, Maunlad na Ekonomiya*.

JCL

Cagayan Valley caps Farmer and Fisherfolk Month with RFO Open House

“Naniniwala talaga ako sa ‘No Farmer, No Food’ kasi tayo ang dahilan kung bakit may handa sa bawat hapagkainan ng sambayanang Pilipino,” said Cagayan Valley Farmer-Director and Regional Agricultural and Fishery Council (RAFC) Chairperson Dante Tobias.

Hand-in-hand with Cagayan Valley Regional Executive Director Narciso Edillo, Tobias led the Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Office (DA-RFO) II’s open house on May 23, 2023 in Tuguegarao, Cagayan.

The activity served as the culmination of the DA’s Farmers’ and Fisherfolk’s Month celebration, which involved the designation of RAFC Chairpersons as the Farmer-Directors of DA-RFOs for the whole month of May.

In his opening message, Dir. Edillo encouraged all the farmers and fishers present to partake in the Farm and Fisheries Clustering and Consolidation (F2C2) Program. This will allow them to receive centralized benefits from the DA, such as farm input distribution and market linkage establishment.

“Sana sa araw na ito ng pagpupugay namin sa inyo ay may nakuha kayong konting aral. Pagtibayin natin ang ating mga value chain para madagdagan ang ating kita sa pamamagitan ng pagproseso. Sana rin ay makasali kayo sa mga kooperatiba o magparegister sa RSBSA for centralized benefits,” Edillo added.

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AFCs of Cagayan Valley Region...

discussion, the team presented the overview of Lakbay Panayam and its intended outputs.

In Tuguegarao City, the three-term CAFC Chairperson Servanro Gumabay joined the AFC through the Lakbay Aral organized by the local government unit (LGU). "Being with the AFC entails intense understanding in crafting sound policies for the agriculture and fishery sector," he added.

During his 9-year tenure as Chairperson, the CAFC recommended the setting of price of rental fee for tractors. In the area for fairness and "walang dayaan" scheme. It was in 2015 when they recommended the rental fee for the tractor and in 2022 for the dryer and harvester.

Tuguegarao City LGU trusted the CAFC's recommendation and adopted the PhP700 pesos rental fee per hectare for the government-issued machinery for farms that are no more than three hectares. For those over three hectares, privately-owned machinery may be rented for a minimum of PhP2,005.

Among the policy recommendations that the CAFC Tuguegarao endorsed was the imposition of penalties for untagging palay produce, including the selling of palay citywide. This is a result of the prompt monitoring and reporting of farmers in the city, especially on products originating from areas outside the region.

According to CAFC Chairperson Gumabay, it helps that almost all of their Barangay AFCs (BAFCs) in Tuguegarao City are active, which plays a great role in the effective implementation of the said policy.

RAFC Cagayan Valley representative Marlon Balunsat praised the support of the RAFC and CAFC in engaging the youth in agriculture.

"Very supportive ang RAFC at CAFC when it comes to the youth. In fact, numerous activities with youth involvement were organized, such as the Youth in Agri Summit," said Balunsat.

The proficiency of PAFC Nueva Vizcaya

"Ugali ko na magserve sa aking mga kasamahan, masaya at kontento ako kapag nakakatulong ako," beamed PAFC Nueva Vizcaya Chairperson Arturo Baybayan on his motivation in serving the AFC since year 2000.

Chairperson Baybayan cheerfully shared his optimism about

More than 1,000 participants from the AFCs, local government units, schools/universities, and DA Offices joined the whole-day program, which involved the awarding and recognition of Good Agricultural Practices-certified farms, Animal Welfare Act of 1998-compliant animal facilities, and African Swine Fever-free municipalities, including those municipalities that upgraded from Red to Pink Zone.

The program also featured the oath-taking ceremony of newly elected officers of the F2C2 Program and the ceremonial signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Patronizing Local and/or Farmer Cooperatives and Associations' (FCA) Products in serving food or distributing tokens during government events and activities. The MOA is the result of the policy resolution passed by the Cagayan Valley RAFC.

Aside from these, on-the-spot dish gardening and fruit and vegetable carving contests were held. A whole-day trade fair was also arranged, with various booths offering FCA products and the DA-RFO II Operating Units distributing seeds/seedlings and providing assistance on civil society organization accreditation.

The Farmers' and Fisherfolk Month is celebrated every May by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 33, series of 1989 to recognize the invaluable contributions of the Filipino farmers and fishers to nation-building. As part of this celebration, the Farmer-Director Program of PCAF is also institutionalized, wherein the RAFC Chairpersons assume the role of Farmer-Directors of the DA-RFOs. **JCL**

AFC that aside from being touted as the voice and bridge in the development of the agriculture and fishery sectors, his main advocacy would be that AFCs in all levels partake in the planning, consultation and monitoring activities for a holistic approach.

Being part of the AFC for many years, Chairperson Baybayan seized the opportunity of having to converse with the leaders of different farmers and fishers' organizations and the local chief executives in the government from the regional down to the barangay levels. The AFCs were being tapped by the government in the provision and delivery of services to their constituents.

The PAFC Nueva Vizcaya, through the leadership of Chairperson Baybayan, initiated the reactivation of their Barangay AFC or the BAFC in all barangays of the entire province. With the reactivation, BAFC Chairperson or representatives are now being requested to attend the MAFC meetings, as well as the PAFC meetings if necessary.

The reactivation of BAFC is believed to play an important role in the mobile meetings among MAFCs in the entire province, where representation of concerned AFCs is highlighted. During the said meetings, the host MAFC acts as the secretariat to ensure that the requirements for the successful conduct of the meeting are provided.

The creativity and competence of MAFC Cabarroguis

Even though MAFC Cabarroguis is unfunded, Chairperson Armando Pastor shared that this did not deter them from conducting various MAFC activities. Thanks to the P100,000 budget they were able to receive in 2023 from the LGUs, the MAFC was able to provide training and seminars offered by the government and private entities to members of MAFC Cabarroguis. Through these interventions, Chairperson Pastor believes that his fellow farmers and fishers are being equipped with enough knowledge and skills on various agricultural techniques and innovations.

The MAFCs are also being tapped by the LGU in its programs and activities for the farmers and fishers, such as the distribution of seeds and fertilizer as well as in the anti-rabies vaccination drive for dogs.

Capturing the ingenuity of ICCAFC Santiago City

An AB Economics graduate, ICCAFC Santiago City Chairperson Fernando Fajardo joined the AFC due to its vision and mission aligning with that of the credit cooperative he is currently leading as its General Manager.

"Nagkaproblema ang coop dahil sa hindi nakakabayad ang mga members dahil nasisira ng calamities ang mga pananim. But because of my affiliation with ICCAFC and the City Agriculture Office, I was able to help my fellow coop members in availing various programs and projects of the government at yun din ang nakatulong na makabangon ang aming coop," he said.

With the strong support from LGU Santiago City, Chairperson Fajardo beamed with confidence from the numerous programs and activities made available for the AFCs. Among these is the provision of life insurance for ICCAFC members, including the city agriculture's staff and focal persons.

"Simple as gustong makatulong sa mga kapwa ko farmers and fishers kahit na boluntaryo ang pagiging member or officer ng AFC, na-challenge din ako dahil sa nangyari sa coop kaya lalong naging pursigido ako na makatulong," he added.

Beyond active collaboration among the concerned stakeholders, Chairperson Fajardo advocated for good management and financial accountability. For transparency purposes, ICCAFC meetings are being held after the conduct of activities where financial and auditing reports are the major agenda.

This Lakbay Panayam with the AFCs of Cagayan Valley Region was timely as PCAF commemorated its 10th anniversary with the theme "A decade of heightening participatory processes, strengthening partnerships, and extending institutional support". | **JD**

FROM RANGES TO RAISING CONCERNS:

When thinking of Cagayan Valley Region, people are drawn towards the beauty of some of the most breathtaking landscapes in the country, captivated by the scenic waters, terrains, agricultural plains, valleys, and bordered mountains like the majestic Sierra Madre or the Mother Mountain Range.

More than the picturesque views, these landscapes have contributed to the development of the agricultural and fishery sector of the region, making it the “grains granary” of the Philippines and supplying most of the agricultural requirements of Metro Manila.

Just like the Sierra Madre that has been serving as the backbone of Luzon – stretching from the provinces of Cagayan to Quezon– protecting the island from storm surges and typhoons from the Pacific Ocean, the women of the region have been determined to protect the agriculture and fishery industry of Batanes, Cagayan Province, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino.

These women have been using their voice stressing the importance of food security and how the industry could benefit from empowered and supported women, youth and AFC in the region.

Marilou Alina: The Mavakes who finds her voice and purpose in agriculture

Juggling her work as a Job Order at the Department of Agriculture (DA) from Mondays to Fridays, tending their own farm on Saturday and Sunday, and being a full-time mother and wife, Marilou has a lot on her plate.

The 57-year old Municipal AFC (MAFC) High Value Crops Sectoral Representative of Basco, Batanes has been part of the AFC since 2018. Basco’s Municipal Agriculturist, Dr. Rory Domingo first introduced MAFC to her.

“I know the tasks of being part of MAFC will add to my tasks. I was convinced that I need to know DA’s programs and other interventions because this will be beneficial to my fellow farmers,” said Marilou.

As a mavakes or woman in Batanes, she saw MAFCs as an opportunity to give feedback and voice out issues and concerns on the programs and projects of the Department.

“Women in Basco are well-represented. We are grateful that when we make suggestions, especially in the MAFC, they listen to us because they know women here are well-rounded. I, for example, do the actual tilling of land, harvesting and other farm works,” she added.

Marilou wants to highlight the need for farmers to have rain collector, net for garden, fertilizer, organic pesticide and access to farm-to-market roads, not only



in Basco, but in all of Batanes.

She mentioned that they have already raised this as a policy recommendation. However, the rain collector has been a challenging one.

In a statement from the Provincial Government of Batanes in October 2022, there were already talks various agencies and departments to find ways to fund the request of rain collectors and water impounding facilities to support the farmers, and other agricultural programs in Batanes.

In a separate interview with MAFC Itbayat Chairperson Teodoro Gato, he confirmed that there are rain collectors in the island but they are for household use and not enough for the agricultural requirements of the farmers.

Aside from fresh water supply being scarce especially in the drought months, most of the vegetable farms in Batanes are also located near the shores which are not suitable for growing crops and livestock.

“We have other concerns here in Basco and it is important to involve the youth in agricultural activities because we want them to continue what we are advocating,” Marilou added.

In her simple ways, one of her neighbors was inspired to take up agriculture-related courses in a college in Basco. Aside from the 30 women officers and members of MAFC Basco, she also got her sisters and neighbors

Capturing women's role as backbone of food security in Cagayan Valley through participation and volunteerism



involved in farm works for extra income.

Shirley Ann Garlitos: Young mother who aims more opportunities for mothers

Aside from the rich archeological site that hints at the traces of prehistoric colonization, the municipality of Ivana in Batanes stands out with the stories of a younger generation who aim to create a fresh start in the agriculture and fisheries industry.

Shirley Ann Garlitos has just started her own family and is still tending to her eight-month old daughter. Despite this, she already knows how to help the farmers and fishers, through the MAFC in Ivana and how the policy resolutions can change everyone's perspective.

"As the Public Information Officer of the MAFC Ivana, I can help the Council in strengthening the collaboration between the private stakeholders and the local government agencies for possible funding of projects for the farmers and fishers of Ivana," Shirley said.

Fishing is the main source of living here in Ivana. While husbands are fishing, their wives are maintaining a backyard garden as additional

income or source of food. She also mentioned that in Ivana, women are an integral part of the sector. The men were tasked to fish while the women were in charge of processing and selling the product.

Ivana MAFC Chairperson Florencia Pavilla has been encouraging the farmers and fishers, including women to share and voice out their concerns and suggest ideas on how to solve them.

"As one of the unfunded MAFCs, we are only required to meet twice a year but we will not limit ourselves in conducting more meetings because we are aiming to increase our members and craft more policy recommendations that could create more opportunities for all," she added.

Some of the organizations that the Council have been supporting are the women organizations for solo parents who make Spanish-style libang or Flying Fish, infant-toddler feeding program, and noodles and chips processing.

Although she just started in the Council in 2022, with the guidance and supervision of MAFC Ivana Chairperson Pavilla and other Council members, she knew she can contribute and inspire her generation to step up and be more involved in the development of the agriculture and fishery sectors in their area.

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Perla Dagway: Saving lives and involving wives in decision making

Knowing that a child's life could be lost by mishandling of pesticides and insecticides pushed Kasibu MAFC Chairperson Perla Dagway and the entire Council members to craft a resolution that would save other children in the municipality from danger.

In cooperation with the Kasibu's local government unit, the Council's policy resolution that aims to strengthen the segregation of agricultural wastes was adopted in the entire municipality. This is in response to a report they received that a kid died after drinking from a colored neon green plastic soda bottle after it was used as a container to mix fertilizers.

According to the Nueva Vizcaya official website, 13 out of their 15 municipalities have a Material Recovery Facility (MRF). Kasibu is one of the municipalities that already have the MRF, however, residents need to be reminded of the harmful effects of nonsegregation, particularly of chemical containers.

Aside from the policy resolution, MAFC Kasibu also helped in information dissemination through conducting mobile meetings in different barangays.

Perla also took the opportunity to promote food security through economic activities particularly for women.

"I joined the AFC because as a woman, I can see and personally experience the issues in the sector. I was elected as the youngest MAFC Chairperson in Nueva Vizcaya and the Council members did not mind if I am a woman, a mother or the youngest, because we are all raising our voices for the stakeholders here in Kasibu," she added.

Through the Council, programs like seed distribution, various aid, and training from the LGU were coursed through them. Women representatives in Kasibu are

part of the livelihood projects made especially for women like processing of turmeric ginger tea, tinapa making, pig dispersal, lending and other agricultural-related livelihood.

"In the MAFC meetings, we can share our problems and share solutions without the prejudice of being a woman," she said.

Teresita Gaffud: From KIDS to mothers: introducing agriculture and marketing produce

They say it is never too early to start, especially with young minds.

Teaching children about the importance of agriculture and letting them enjoy agricultural projects such as planting seeds, raising chickens, and harvesting produce can foster a sense of curiosity, promote creative problem-solving skills, and teach patience.

Teresita realized this when she started the Kabataan Inyo Ding Sundin or KIDS in 2005.

After her husband came back from the Middle East as a technician, the growing family of Tess decided to settle in Santiago City in 1992. She and her husband would juggle different kinds of jobs until she got a job for a college pre-need plan company.

They acquired properties because of her job at the company until it collapsed in the early 2000. While dealing with the loss, she was also diagnosed with hyperthyroidism. During this challenging time, she saw an opportunity to introduce the world of agriculture to children through KIDS.

From seed segregation activity for the children, Tess also involved their mothers and started urban gardening and seedling distribution activities. In 2015, she became the Rural Improvement Club (RIC) president in Santiago City with 25 members. As a group, they advocated healthy meals for the children by planting vegetables in every barangay.

These communal gardens "by women, for women" became successful because they have harvested more than enough produce. Upon realizing these, she taught the members on how to market the crops to nearby barangays, for extra income.

A year later, she was able to share these marketing strategies with the AFCs when she became the CAFC women representative of Santiago City.

"Bilang babaeng member ng AFC, nadadagdagan ang aming kaalamansa agrikultura tulad ng vermicomposting at mga iba't-ibang innovations sa pagtanim. Sa mga meetings at consultations, nalalaman namin ang mga proyekto ng LGU at ng DA para sa industriya.

Dahil itinutulak din namin dito sa Santiago City ang organic farming at mas ma-enganyo pa ang mga kabataan na magventure sa agriculture, nakakapag recommend kami ng mga policies na akma sa aming mga priority projects para food security," Tess narrated in her interview.

She also expressed her appreciation to the LGU of Santiago City and its Mayor Atty. Alyssa Sheena Tan-Dy for the support to the AFCs and to all other agri-related organizations in the City.



Gaffud

“Hinihikayat nila ang mga kababaihan na mag-avail ng mga trainings at seminars as part of the LGU’s technical assistance to farmers para mas ma-improve pa ang aming knowledge at mabigyan din kami ng confidence para magsimula,” she added.

Juliet Morales: Rising and grinding to revive Kasibu’s coffee industry

“Coffee trees used to be planted in most parts of Kasibu. Karamihan, Robusta yung nakatanim. Maganda ang lupa at klima rito sa amin, perfect for the coffee trees,” Juliet looked back.

Kasibu used to be the coffee capital of Nueva Vizcaya until the decline of coffee bean prices discouraged farmers from maintaining the trees. From brewing a flavorful taste of success, the coffee industry simmered down in the late 1990s.

The MAFC Coffee and Cacao Sectoral Representative believed that there will come a time when the Kasibu farmers will agree to plant and tend coffee trees again given the town’s favorable coffee-growing condition. Juliet also needed to convince her fellow farmers by presenting a workable business concept.

In 2014, her son, who is an agricultural engineer, went to Davao for the Philippine Coffee Board and met Pacita “Chit” Juan. The social entrepreneur and advocate for women’s empowerment, along with Nicholas Matti of the Philippine Coffee Board Inc., advised them to revive the coffee industry in Kasibu.

“I tried to convince my brother, who was the mayor that time but unfortunately, he thinks this will not succeed. Some of our neighbors were unconvinced that this would become a success. There is an Ilocano belief that says *‘dyak pati, dyak kita’*. And I have to prove that it will work,” Juliet shared.

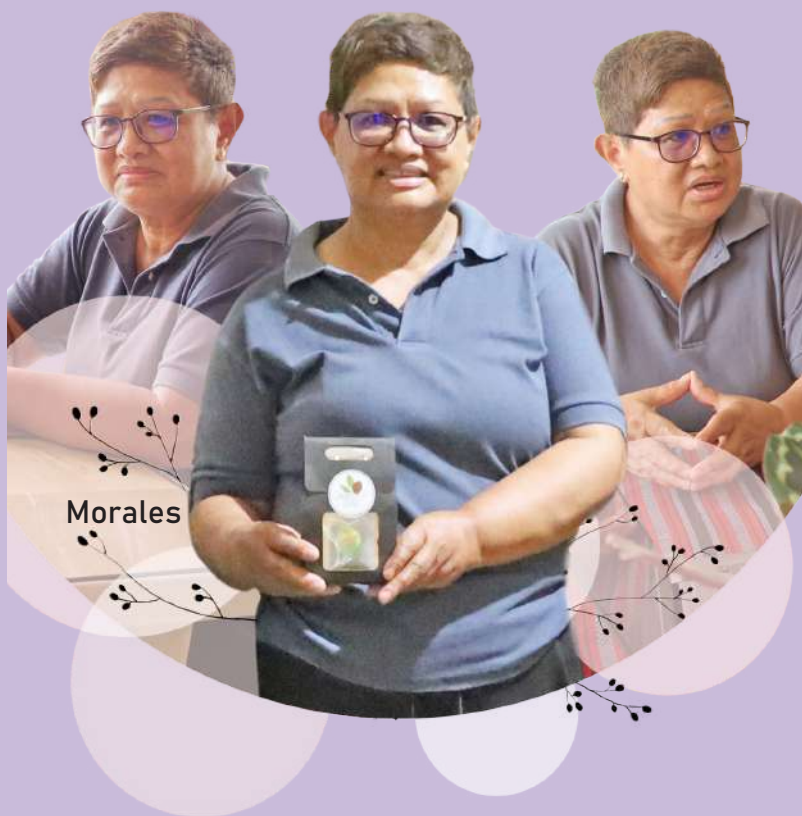
She coordinated with the Department of Agriculture (DA) Regional Field Office II, particularly with Karol Albay of the DA High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) for training, programs and projects, joined the Cagayan Valley Coffee Industry Cluster, and made partnerships with private sectors like the Oceana Gold Mine (OGM).

The training and partnerships, particularly with OGM, led them to acquiring seedlings, farm inputs, a roasting machine, and a pulverizer.

In 2019, Juliet applied for a grant from the Department of Trade and Industry for a bigger coffee roaster to accommodate the increasing coffee beans supply from their coffee farmers. They needed to roast 100 packs of 250 grams of coffee ground.

With her experience with OGM, Juliet saw the importance of monitoring to ensure the success of a project. In 2019, Juliet was invited by DA RFO II to be part of the sectoral committee of Cagayan Valley RAFC.

“I was curious about the AFC. The meetings were time consuming but the discussions were crucial because we were able to know the existing programs, activities and



projects of DA for our sector. Unfortunately, I also saw some program mismatch and it even strengthened my belief that there should be consistent monitoring,” she added.

In 2020, their organization was able to get a building and their own grinder from the DA. Aside from representing the coffee sector in RAFC, she also became the coffee sectoral representative at the National Sectoral Committee, expanding her connections in the industry.

In 2021, then HVCDP Director U-Nichols Manalo suggested to her to pass a resolution for an extension of their organization’s building to accommodate the increasing demand of coffee from Kasibu.

“The building became our processing center and we employ single parents, person-with-disabilities, and housewives. We also gave part time jobs for students. I hope that when the effects of the Climate Change hit the coffee industry, we will be able to sustain the the supply and continue to give livelihood not only to the coffee farmers but also to their families,” she added

Juliet already requested from DA and OGM a water system for the association and they are still waiting for water pumps that will supply enough water for the coffee trees.

“We were not only able to bring rise to the coffee industry, but we were also able to create jobs. Maybe we also proved that the men, women, and the youth of Kasibu can work together and make Kasibu coffee or the KasiBrew glorious again,” the woman leader concluded.

| JC

AFCs of Cagayan Valley Region radiate positivity on finding sound solutions to local agri-fishery challenges

Like the shimmering warm season of May, the AFCs of the Cagayan Valley Region showed optimism during the Lakbay Panayam conducted by the team of PCAF Knowledge Management Section (KMS).

Reestablishing AFCs in the island province of Batanes

Upon setting foot in Batan Island, the Batanes' main gateway for travelers and visitors, the team had a courtesy call with Basco Municipal Mayor German Caccam and his Municipal Agriculturist Dr. Rhodora Domingo.

Mayor Caccam admitted to being unaware about PCAF and its private sector partners. Meanwhile, Dr. Domingo emphasized that she only became knowledgeable about the existence of PAFC and MAFC upon her entry in the Municipal Agriculture's Office (MAO) in 2017.

"Gusto kong magkaroon pa ng maraming information tungkol sa PCAF at AFCs upang maidagdag ko sa mga ginagawang Executive Order dito sa Basco. Yung establishment ng AFCs, role and functions at composition," said Caccam, after the team showed him the PCAF's website, sample newsletter and other knowledge products containing the information about AFCs.

Although this is the case, Dr. Domingo reiterated that MAFC Basco continues to have dialogue with her office especially on the issues of price ceiling on certain agricultural commodities in the area.

Dr. Domingo added that the revision on the omnibus guidelines on AFC membership, which was relayed to her by the MAFC Coordinator, was not yet discussed with the council due to the financial constraint in conducting MAFC meetings. On the other hand, Batanes Provincial Agriculturist Doroteo Cesar Hostallero suggested that the membership guidelines be discussed thoroughly with the PAFC and all concerned MAFC for the proper representation of the sector.

MAFC Basco Chairperson Dennis Lim also agreed with Dr. Domingo on the limited financial support to the MAFC in Basco, which led him to conduct some of the MAFC meetings in his demo farm. This turned out to be one of their best practices as MAFC members were able to witness first hand at the demo farm the potential of farming as a main source of income as it has been accredited by the Agricultural Training Institute as a learning site for agriculture since 2012.

Both Dr. Domingo and MAFC Chairperson Lim raised that another challenge that their AFCs are facing is that the agriculture sector is not the priority of the local chief executives. This is true not just in Basco but in the majority of the municipalities in the province of Batanes as well.

MAFC Chairperson Lim didn't hesitate to highlight the gap between MAFC Basco and its counterpart in the province, most notably in the endorsement of the resolutions that will properly address the concern raised by MAFC.

During the visit, PAFC Batanes was not active and no meetings were being conducted which resulted in impediment on the endorsed resolution of MAFC Basco.

PAFC Batanes Chairperson Romarico Caccam admitted during the interview that the PAFC has not been active since the start

of the pandemic. They were not able to achieve a quorum for meetings due to the unavailability of members. This was more evident during the pandemic, where even online meetings were not feasible since most of the farmers and fishers involved use outdated phones with keypads.

PAFC Chairperson Caccam further stressed that PAFC had difficulty in recruiting additional stakeholders or encouraging farmers and fishers to join the AFC since they tend to join in a cooperative or association which gives direct and tangible benefits, unlike AFCs which solely work on drafting policy resolutions.

In addition, participation and involvement of the youth in Batanes is very low, not just in joining the AFCs but also in agriculture or farming activities according to MAFC Chairperson Lim.

"Among the youth, lagi nilang iniisip na ang farmers or farming ay nasa laylayan ng society. Ngayon kasi ang pagiging government employee lang ang way to uplift and secure their future," he emphasized.

Together with MAO, MAFC Basco developed a project in 2021 wherein they provide all inputs and support needed by farmers to make a sustainable livelihood from farming. Starting with five farmer recipients, there are now a total of 18 beneficiaries as of May 2023. Assistance is based on the volume of production to ensure that farmers will be using the inputs on their farm for themselves and not for commercial use.

The challenge of the AFCs in Itbayat Island, Batanes

MAFC Itbayat Chairperson Teodoro Gato's understanding on the role of AFCs in the development of the agriculture and fishery sector is to help the farmers through the resolutions that the MAFC endorsed to the Sangguniang Bayan and to other government agencies for funding request of various projects needed by the farmers and fishers in the locality.

The major challenge of the farmers in Itbayat is the limited source of water for agricultural use. There were rain collectors provided in the area but were not enough to provide for crops and livestock consumption.

Although the Department of Public Works and Highways initiated the establishment of a shallow deep well, this is only for domestic consumption.

According to the AFCs in Itbayat, as the El Niño phenomenon is approaching, farmers are requesting additional rain collectors or "tangka" for stocking of rainwater. The MAFC Itbayat has already endorsed this request to the concerned office.

Itbayat dwellers had a version of a famous Filipino bayanihan called "yaru" where everyone in the locality helps in planting, harvesting or any related activities without expecting a monetary payment for their service. The host will only provide free meals for the workers.

Keeping up with AFCs in mainland Cagayan

The KMS Team met the AFC representatives led by RAFC Chairperson Dante Tobias for a kapihan session. During the

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The editorial team encourages everyone to photocopy and circulate this newsletter with proper acknowledgment. Everyone is also encouraged to contribute stories of individuals or organizations engaged in the development of the agri-fishery communities.

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