Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

# Learning is a two-way street

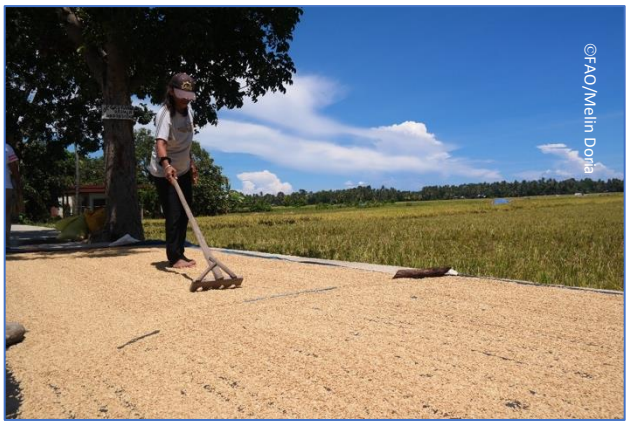
*Clarin National High School*
*Province of Misamis Occidental, Philippines*

*Clarin National High School is an active partner in the Farmer Field School on Save and Grow (FFS-S&G) program. The school has started to integrate the learning in their school curriculum. Both educational institutions and farmer's groups see the importance of introducing modern farming methods and integrating hands-on learning in the curriculum to encourage the younger generation to participate and practice positive agricultural practices.*

The Municipality of Clarin, is in the province of Misamis Occidental. It is more popularly known for its different flavors of rice cake or "suman". This local delicacy is cooked rice with sugar that is wrapped in banana leaves. Rice farming is definitely an important source of livelihood for the farmers in Clarin.

Clarin was chosen as one of the partner sites for the *Sustainable Intensification of Rice Production (SIRP)* of the Farmer Field School on Save and Grow (FFS-S&G) program of FAO. The FFS-S&G program in Clarin was a collaborative effort of the Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office (DA RFO), the Local Government Unit (LGU) and the farmers.

What is noteworthy in Clarin is the active participation of the Clarin National High School in the FFS-S&G program. The school's involvement has not





only given much-needed support to the farmers but also provided support through a knowledge sharing platform.

The school was invited by the Department of Agriculture to attend to a series of seminars and for its participants to be trained as co-facilitators who would conduct agro-ecosystem analysis. According to Charyl Navarez, a science teacher at the school, "It wasn't very difficult to get the students to join because they are sons and daughters of farmers. Some of them are even residents of the barangays where the pilot field site is located."

In the beginning, farmers did not understand the value and benefits of setting up an aquatic system around rice fields, Charyl says. But through the FFS, he showed the participating farmers that the integration of aquatic biodiversity (adding fish to flooded paddy) can also improve the rice ecosystem and can provide a good source of protein for his family. "If there's protein in the ecosystem, it won't be difficult for the farmers to find food," he adds.

The aquatic organisms that grow around the rice fields are natural predators of pests and could also be a biological control agent to serve as a good source of organic fertilizers for the rice.

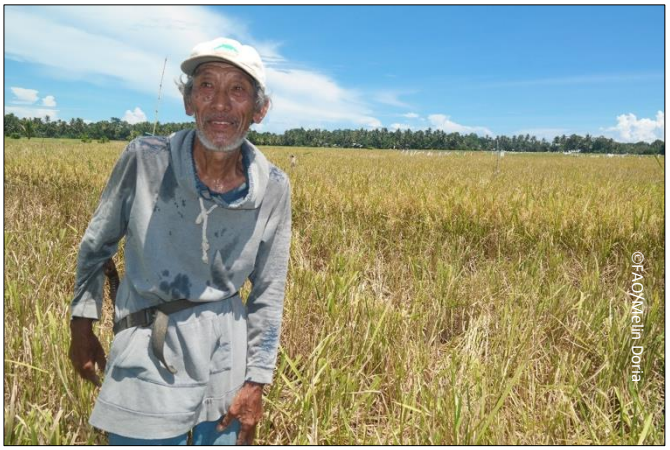
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Together with the students the farmers constructed a fish pond where water was sourced from a nearby canal. They propagated a native fish variety called “tilapia” and through that demonstrated the value of diversified farming. After a few months, the farmers were happy with their harvest of fish.

Nelly Toledo, one of the farmers, says the program has not only addressed the challenge of increasing her yield but has also relieved her of the burden of spending too much money on fertilizers.

“I was able to save around 1,500 pesos every month and I could use that money for my children’s schooling,” she says. “My costs have been less because I no longer buy inorganic fertilizers. Now, I use only organic fertilizers.” Nelly learned in the program that the snails farmers used to throw away, and considered pests, could instead be collected, crushed and pulverized and used as organic fertilizers by mixing them with molasses.

“Inorganic farming would destroy the environment. It will poison the fish in the waterways and poison the crops surrounding us. And in effect, we won’t be able to eat them anymore,” Nelly says. “If you use insecticides, the fish will eat them, and when we eat those fish, we’ll be poisoned, too. Organic farming is always better because it means more food for all of us.”


Charyl admits that the FFS-S&G has become somewhat personal for him. Growing up in a family of farmers, he had high hopes of reviving the declining interest of students in farming as a profession. The intervention of the students in the field has shown farmers that the methods have been accepted in society and at the same time, the interaction of the students with the farmers has increased student interest in the activity. With the help of the students, farmers are encouraged to continue farming practices and correct some of the practices that are not environmentally friendly.

At present, the FFS-S&G is being sustained in academe through the senior high school curriculum. A program is offered under the title of Agricultural Rice Production NC II. In this syllabus, integrated pest management and diversified farming are included.

The Clarin High School is proud of the fact that their students are considering a career in agriculture. In fact, the first batch of students who participated in the Farmer Field School have pursued agriculture in college. Charyl further adds, “I believe that the program is very good in reviving the declining interest of our students in agriculture as a career. We all know that agriculture is really the backbone of our economy.”



Contact:
FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
Maliwan Mansion, Phra Atit Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Phone: (+66 2) 697 4000; Fax: (+66 2) 697 4445
Email: FAO-RAP@fao.org

Regional Rice Initiative
Supported by
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE 1898