CORN IS THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT CROP IN THE PHILIPPINES. It comprises about 70 percent of livestock mixed feeds in the country, and is the preferred main staple food of about 12 million Filipinos. With the corn-livestock sector contributing 16 percent of the country’s gross value added (GVA) in agriculture, corn production has become an important source of livelihood for many small-scale farmers, with some 600,000 farm households directly dependent on corn production for their subsistence.

About 60 percent of the Philippines’ annual corn production is from Mindanao, and of this island’s six main corn production areas, the Caraga region has the lowest average yield production of 1.77 MT/hectare in 2005. This is mainly attributed to low adoption of modern corn production technologies and use of low-yielding traditional/open-pollinated varieties by the farmers.

The FFTC-Philippines technical cooperation
There is enormous potential for the Caraga region to develop a comprehensive corn production program toward providing improved livelihood opportunities for its small-scale corn farmers. To realize this potential, FFTC and the Department of Agriculture (DA), Philippines; the Northern Mindanao State Institute of Science and Technology (NORMISIST); and the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MEO) launched a three-year (2006-2008) agricultural technical assistance program that aims to extend modern cultivation techniques and introduce hybrid corn varieties to corn farmers in the Caraga Region.

With the technical assistance of scientists from Taiwan, the overall goal of this technology transfer program is to improve the productivity and achieve sustainable production of quality corn in the Caraga region through the extension of modern cultivation techniques and introduction of hybrid corn varieties.

Significant achievements of year 3 implementation
The third-year implementation of this technology transfer project focused on the following activities: continuation of testing and selection of high yield Taiwan hybrid corn varieties, not only yellow corn (for feed), but also white corn (as staple food); organization and establishment of a 25-hectare group farming in corn production areas of the Caraga region, incorporating the use Taiwan’s F1 hybrid varieties; promotion of local capacity-building among technicians, extensions workers, and leading farmers through the conduct of on-farm demonstrations/pilot testing.
as well as training courses on modern corn cultivation techniques; and production and dissemination of extension materials on improved corn cultivation for practical use by extension workers and farmers.

On-site adaptability trials of Taiwan corn hybrids were conducted at the Bacuag and Bayugan demonstration farms, while F1 hybrid production of white corn was carried out at the NORMISIST demonstration farm. Seeds of corn hybrids (TN-20, PGH 95-5 and PGH 9501-1) were provided by the Taiwan technical mission to the farmer-cooperators. Along with the seeds, the Taiwan corn technology package was introduced to the farmers to serve as a guide in the technical aspect of corn cultivation.

Farmers’ Forum and Farmers’ Field Day were likewise organized primarily to showcase the technology promoted in the corn demonstration farms and to enable corn farmers and technicians to have a personal encounter with the corn specialists from Taiwan and the Project Management Team. These activities were likewise done to allow corn farmers and technicians nearby to see the performance of the Taiwan corn technology package in Caraga region.

Training on farm machine handling was also held particularly for the corn farmers of Bacuag who have little opportunity to operate farm machineries in corn-related activities. Farm mechanization was one of the identified issues in corn production in the region. Lack of farm machines hinders farm operations particularly in the land preparation and postharvest activities. Thus, to attain the project objective of improving corn production in the region, two power tillers and a 3-in-1 thresher, dehusker and sheller were provided to each cooperating corn farmers’ cluster in Bayugan and Bacuag.

For the maintenance and operation of the machines, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between NORMISIST and the recipient municipality and farmers’ cluster was signed. This MOA stipulates the roles of every signatory in the use and maintenance of the machines for better service to the recipient farmers’ cluster. A formal turn-over ceremony was conducted to award the machines to the recipient community.

**Project sustainability**

The achievements of the project in promoting modern corn cultivation technologies have mobilized Caraga corn farmers to form small farmers’ clusters for greater access to corn-related programs. Group farming approach in technology transfer has proven to be an effective mechanism particularly where farmers in a cluster have common needs and aspirations. Farmers’ cluster bonded by shared goals facilitates technology diffusion and adoption.

Production of F1 hybrid seeds to ensure sustainability and availability of good quality seeds is necessary to further encourage the farmer clusters to continuously plant corn. Sustained agricultural technical assistance program is also envisioned to further improve the productivity and achieve sustainable production of quality corn in the region, especially through the production of F1 corn hybrid seeds and introduction of small-farm machineries under a cooperative system.

**Modern Corn Cultivation Technology Transfer in Caraga Region, Philippines (Year 3)**

This three-year (2006-2008) corn technology demonstration and transfer project was implemented in Butuan City, Caraga Region, Mindanao, Philippines.

Cooperating organizations:
- Department of Agriculture (DA) - Caraga Region, Philippines
- Northern Mindanao State Institute of Science and Technology (NORMISIST), Philippines
- Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO), Taipei Office

Sponsor:
- Council of Agriculture (COA), Taiwan ROC

For further information, contact:
- Dr. Tien-Jioung Yiu and
- Dr. Fu-Hsiung Lin, FFTC Technical Consultants

Turn-over ceremony of farm machineries to the farmer cluster in Bacuag, Surigao del Norte, joined by MECO Resident Representative, Mr. Antonio I. Basilio (center, right) and representatives from the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Manila and the local government.