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 (MECO) 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 was to improve the productivity and achieve sustainable production of quality corn in Caraga region through the extension of modern cultivation techniques and introduction of hybrid corn varieties.

The Taiwan technical team visited the corn seed production demonstration field in Butuan city (above) and corn project sites in Saranggani province (right).
The project activities in the last three years (2006-2008), primarily in terms of promoting modern corn cultivation technologies and introduction of Taiwan corn hybrids, have mobilized corn farmers to form small farmers’ cluster for greater access to corn-related programs of the government and other organizations. These activities contributed in strengthening the farmers’ cohesiveness, as the group farming approach builds interdependence among the farmers. However, to further encourage the corn farmer clusters to continuously plant corn, seed supply should be made accessible to them.

F1 seed production
On the fourth-year (2009) implementation of the Philippine corn project, the Taiwan technical team, joined by officials from MECO, visited Butuan city in Caraga region and Saranggani province, Philippines on June 01-06, 2009. The purpose of the said visit was for the Philippine and Taiwan counterparts to deliberate on the current year implementation geared toward enabling local cooperating farmers' organizations in Butuan and Sarangani to venture into F1 hybrid seed production. This phase of the project aimed at maximizing the benefits of the technical cooperation program to the Filipino corn farmers in terms of improved seed availability, better production technology, and increased income.

The fourth-year project implementation was envisioned to improve the productivity and achieve sustainable production of quality corn not only in Caraga region but in Saranggani province as well, by making F1 corn hybrid seeds readily available to the farmers. Specifically, this year’s accomplishments include: the establishment of field demonstration areas for the production of F1 corn hybrid seed varieties; distribution of good quality F1 corn hybrid seeds to farmers in at least 1,000-hectare corn area; and promotion of local capacity building among technicians and corn farmers through the conduct of training courses on modern cultivation techniques for hybrid corn and F1 hybrid seeds production.

F1 Hybrid Corn Production in Caraga Region, Philippines

This four-year (2006-2009) corn technology demonstration and transfer project was implemented in Butuan city in Caraga region and Saranggani province, 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

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