



Catbalogan City:

Cecilia A. Arga

The Samar Centre of Agripreneurs

Photo by Ronian Jabon

Catbalogan is a medium-sized city (103,897 inhabitants, NSO 2015) in the Philippines with rich farmlands. Nonetheless, 80% of the agricultural products that Catbaloganons consume are imported from elsewhere. Catbalogan faces challenging performance indicators for both junior and senior high schools, with a participation rate of 66%, a dropout rate of 4% (school year 2014-2015) and a vast number (10,500) of out-of-school youths (2015 Literacy Mapping). The combination of these agriculture and education statistics inspired the Schools Division Superintendent of the Department of Education in July 2017 to lead the implementation of an innovation project: the Catbalogan City Agro-Industrial School, commonly known as CCAIS.

The CCAIS is a training facility for teaching Catbaloganons, particularly youth, the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become producers and/or agripreneurs. The project enjoys the full support of City Mayor Stephany Uy-Tan; her long-term strategy aims to improve the lives of her constituents and to ensure a safe and healthy environment.

Catbalogan City Agro-Industrial School

CCAIS is situated in a long-abandoned prison facility on 9 hectares of city-owned agricultural land. The school was realised through strong collaboration by various stakeholders led by the Schools Division Superintendent of Catbalogan City Division. He envisioned the school to be a centre of organic farming agripreneurs in response to food security and greening initiatives of the city government. To date, more than PHP 13M (about EUR 207,000), mainly from the city's Special Education Fund, and the PHP 10 (EUR 0.16) annual counterpart from the internal revenue allotment of every barangay have supported and sustained the needs of the school. Fifty-seven barangays (13 urban and 44 rural neighbourhoods) were each asked to send two students (junior high school completers and senior high school students, aged 16 to 18) to enrol in CCAIS. All students receive free board and lodging, as it is financed by the city. Students can enrol in agricultural crop and/or animal production. The school head reports on the school's activities to partners

such as the Philippine Business for Social Progress, which helped strengthen school operations with their "Livelihood Education through Agri/Aqua Development Project" funded by Standard Chartered Bank. Through this project the teachers and students are given both equipment and training on advanced farming technologies. Other partners involved are the City Agriculture Office, City Tourism Office, Department of Trade and Industry, Cooperative Development Office and the Department of Labour and Employment.

Results and impacts

To date, high school participation in the city has increased to 76% and the dropout rate has dropped to 1% (school year 2016-2017). In its second year, CCAIS has increased its senior high school enrolment from 44 to 101 and continues to attract students to enrol in agriculture courses focused on practice-based vegetable and crop production and animal production. CCAIS is attractive to parents due to the free board and lodging. Initially the students produced crops like cassava, camote, rice and corn. They have also maintained their so-called "pakbet farm" where they produce vegetables like squash, okra, beans, pechay, pepper, eggplant and chayote. Poultry products and vegetables produced are for student consumption and for the local community. Students develop their entrepreneurial skills by marketing their products in the neighbouring barangays. They gain experience earning money while studying because of the agri-products that they sell. This convinces them that they will have a better quality of life once they venture into their own agribusiness. Students are also given seed capital to start their own agri-livelihood after graduation. Small farmers in neighbouring barangays can also receive training on farming technologies. The school regularly receives visits from other farm entrepreneurs for benchmarking, and generates some agrotourism revenues. The school also continues to attract and gain support from non-governmental organisations that see the feasibility of the innovation project. The activities of the CCAIS help the city to improve the future economic status of its people and to eventually ensure food and environmental security.

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More information

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVL4NxZvYNQ