

The persistent corn farmer

Leopoldo Arcenio, 65, was born and raised in Brgy. Pawa, Burauen, Leyte, and has been a farmer for 31 years. Despite his age, the spark that seemed to keep him eternally youthful had not yet been extinguished. He started farming at the young age of 14, and since then, farming has become his bread and butter. He is happily married to Melinda Arcenio, and the union is blessed with 4 children. He has been able to make both ends meet for his family through sheer diligence, persistence, and perseverance.

In 2015, Leopoldo decided to plant corn using his traditional knowledge, methods, and practices in farming. He planted native white corn without applying any fertilizer, and his harvest was meant solely for family consumption.

When SAAD Program introduced Corn Production Project in Burauen in 2018, he was fortunate to be chosen one of the beneficiaries. Leopoldo received proper training on how to plant corn and properly apply fertilizers. As project recipient, he was given 1 bag OPV white corn, 4 bags Urea, 3 bags Complete, and 2 bags MOP for his 1-ha. farm. With the inputs he acquired, he harvested 1,344 kg. milled corn, which he sold for PhP10.00/kg.

For the 1st cropping of 2019, the farmer replanted OPV white corn and harvested 864 kg. Compared to his previous harvest, he had less harvest due to continuous rain and damage caused by pests, namely fall army worm (FAW) and corn borer. He was provided additional inputs, receiving 1 bag hybrid yellow corn, 8 bags Urea, 6 bags Complete, and 4 bags MOP. In this succeeding cropping season, he was able to harvest 920 kg. milled yellow corn that he sold as cracked corn for PhP25.00/kg.

In 2020, he decided to plant sweet corn for a change for the 1st and 2nd cropping seasons, which produced a total of 1,680 kg. during harvest. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, Leopoldo was not able to sell his harvest in the market area, thus his children helped him sell his harvest at PhP25.00/kg. using social media.

The beneficiary gratefully stated, “Dako kaayo ang nabulig sa SAAD Program sa akong pagtanom og mais, ilabi na sa mga trainings. (SAAD Program has been a big help in my corn production, especially the trainings.)”

These stories with their black-and-white view of the world underscore the importance of trainings/education in the life of farmers. By exposing them to new or improved technologies, SAAD Program empowers farmers by helping them realize that their indigenous mores on farming need to be complemented, or even replaced, with scientific technologies that are fail-proof. Knowledge, skills, and right mindsets are vital factors that go together to improve productivity. Sustained growth can only happen with continuous education of the actors engaged in the transformative project that is SAAD Program. These are essential ingredients to keep them abreast and always ready to face present and future challenges.
