



**Fostering Collaborative Partnership Towards
Agricultural Development:
The Bayanihan Farm Cluster
in TANGUB CITY, MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL**

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**LOCAL
LEADERSHIP
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Philippines

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About Tangub City. Tangub City is located at the southern curve of Misamis Occidental in Region 10. It is bounded on the north by Mt. Malindang, a national forest reserve, on the south by Panguil Bay, on the east by Ozamis City and on the west by the municipality of Bonifacio. Proclaimed as the 50th chartered city on June 17, 1967 by virtue of Republic Act 5131, it was once a barrio of the then municipality of Ozamis (now Ozamis City) formed by the early settlers from the province of Cebu.



It has 55 barangays, 23 of which are considered urban. Sixteen of the barangays are coastal. The climate is classified as Type IV which means that rainfall is more or less equally distributed throughout the year. The city boasts of fertile soil suitable for a wide variety of agricultural crops and rich fishing grounds for various aquamarine products.

The city's population reached 53,985 in 2005 (NSO). In 2010, it is expected to hit 56,627 based on the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) data. The average household size is five. The urban population comprises 55 percent of the population.

Tangub City remains a predominantly agricultural city (67%). Forest lands occupy 23.83 percent, built-up 5.17 percent, while the remaining lands, 726,539.8 has. (4.38 percent) are classified as grassland/pasture, idle lands, swamps/marshes, mangrove/fishpond, and roads and utilities.

Farming remains the leading source of income. The other major sources include fishing, manual labor, private business, government, employment, teaching, driving and carpentry. Almost two-thirds of the population (62.80 percent) earn less than Php3,000 monthly which in 1996 constitutes only one-third of the poverty threshold of Php9,000 for a family of six in the agricultural sector.

Among the major agricultural products, coconut predominates followed by corn, banana, rice, root crops and vegetables. Two springs and seven rivers provide water to the irrigation system servicing 210 has. spread across seven rice-producing barangays and benefiting 100 farmers.

The Bayanihan Farm Cluster Program. The agricultural sector of Tangub City has been beset with issues and problems commonly affecting the agricultural sector. These issues and problems pertained to production, post-harvest, processing and marketing of agricultural produce. Specifically, the agricultural sector suffers from the following issues and problems:

- insufficient or low production of crops, livestock and poultry due to unimproved farming practices;
- inadequate/insufficient post-harvest facilities for aquamarine products and farm products;
- lack of market linkaging/ networking or market support system;
- lack of appropriate technology for agricultural and aquamarine products processing;
- lack of access to credit and capital;
- slow adoption of farmers of farming technology package;
- inadequate infrastructure support (e.g., lack of irrigation system, farm-to-market roads unpassable during rainy days, lack of post-harvest facilities); and
- high cost of production or farm inputs (e.g., fertilizers, agri-chemicals).

Interviews with key respondents revealed that the lack of a farmers' organization prevented farmers from marketing their produce in bulk and negotiating for a favorable price especially during harvest season when prevailing market prices are normally low. On the part of the City Agriculture Office (CAO), it faced difficulties in delivering the basic agricultural services, i.e., a package of new technology, fertilizer supply, etc. to individual farmers. Given the prevalence of the issues and problems in the agricultural sector, the city government initiated some measures to address them.

Conceptualization of the Bayanihan Farm Cluster. As early as 1992, during the term of former Mayor Philip Tan, the concept of farm or barangay clustering as a mechanism in the delivery of agricultural services was already being considered. During his administration, he envisioned Tangub City to become the agri-business and skills center in Northwestern Mindanao. The budding concept was later bolstered by the Department of Agriculture (DA) in its communications encouraging the city government to form a cluster of rice and corn farmlands as part of the DA's Ginintuang Masagana Ani (GMA) Program. However, the city government's plan to form a farm or barangay clusters was not implemented immediately due to lack of funds, as it had allocated the funds earlier for the Fertilizer Now, Pay Later Program.

Another factor that pushed for the implementation of farm clustering was the city government's objective to balance the opportunities between the coastal and highland barangays. The city government already launched the Tangub Fish Port for coastal barangays which was designed initially by Mayor Jennifer Tan as a reentry plan when she attended the 45th Local Administration and Development Program (LADP), a long-

running training program of the University of the Philippines-Center for Local and Regional Governance (UP-CLRG).

It was during the first term (2002-2004) of the Mayor Jennifer W. Tan, that barangay clustering has finally pushed through. But first, the program must have a name, for as the mayor explained, the project's name gives it its own identity and helps ensure its sustainability. Its name therefore must elicit easy recall and bears apt description of what it stands for.

The search for the appropriate name of the program ended when Mayor Tan hit upon the name, "Bagong Yaman ng Nagkaisang Hukbong Pang-Agrikultura sa Nayon (Bayanihan) Farm Cluster" or Bayanihan Farm Cluster for short while in bed at 1 in the morning. She liked the term "bayanihan" as it connotes the Filipino value of helping or aiding those in need. In this case, it refers to the objectives of the project, to help address the concerns of farmers from production to post-harvest including the formation of farmers' associations and eventually cooperativism.

Consistent with the city's vision to be the "Agri-Business and Learning Center of Skills and Technology in Northwestern Mindanao in 2015" (<http://www.cdsea.org>), its agricultural sector aims "to enhance agricultural production and productivity, and make entrepreneurs out of marginal farmers/fisherfolks to increase their income and improve their living condition" (CLUP 2000-2010: 82).

Guided by the goal and objectives of the agricultural sector, the city government organized the Bayanihan Farm Cluster with two general objectives: "to improve the living conditions of the Tangubanons, and to develop the Tangubanons to become a healthy community" (Bayanihan Farm Cluster: A Presentation Material for Healthy Barangay Initiatives, n.d.: 1).

Implementation Strategies.

1. Planning, Organizing and Mobilizing for the Bayanihan Farm Cluster

Planning, organizing and mobilizing for the implementation of the Bayanihan Farm Cluster went underway in 2002. Mayor Tan herself supported the program actively. She convened the Economic Development Committee (EDC) consisting of the City Agriculture Office, Sangguniang Bayan Committee on Agriculture, City Planning and Development Coordinator (CPDC), and City Budget Office to discuss and formulate the plan for the Bayanihan Farm Cluster. Among the EDC members, the City Agriculture Office was designated the primary office responsible for the implementation of the program in coordination with the barangay farm clusters which managed the day-to-day activities in their respective clusters.

2. Conduct of Barangay Farm Cluster Mobilization Meetings

Between October and December 2002, the EDC met with the barangay chairpersons and officers of farmers' associations to discuss with them the proposed Bayanihan Farm Cluster. This entailed specifics on the formation of barangay clusters, identification of component barangays per cluster, and selection of barangay center per cluster. The barangay chairpersons and EDC disseminated information on the proposed Bayanihan Farm Cluster during monthly meetings of farmers' association, purok meetings and barangay assemblies.

To show her great interest in the program, Mayor Tan herself visited the barangays every month to talk with the barangay captains and other officials on the proposed program. In 2003, when the barangay clusters were starting to organize, Mayor Tan attended the meetings so she would know the actual status of the program in each cluster. She read and studied the proceedings of the meetings, discussed the problems with concerned officials and tried to address those that fell within her authority. However, she realized that when she attended meetings, the people would hesitate to talk or open up as they did not want to embarrass their barangay officials. Likewise, she understood that if she made her presence felt a lot of times in the barangays, the people would cling and depend more on her. Thus, she started to reduce her appearances in the barangays but still remained on top of the program implementation.

3. Restructuring of the City Agriculture Office and Barangay Agriculture Office

One of the changes brought about by the Bayanihan Farm Cluster was bringing the concept of decentralization even closer to the people by transferring the center of the delivery of agricultural services from the city to the barangays. Once the EDC decided on the implementation of the Bayanihan Farm Cluster, Mr. Emigdio Florida, the City Agriculturist and Mr. Jose Binondo, the Assistant City Agriculturist met with the staff to explain the goals and implementation plan of the program and the ensuing changes in their working assignments.

One major change introduced in the CAO was the restructuring of the weekly schedule of the agricultural technologists. On Monday mornings, they report to the CAO for regular weekly meetings. Tuesdays up to Friday mornings, they report to their respective barangay clusters. On Friday afternoons, they report back to the CAO to do the necessary paper works and reports. Aside from their weekly schedules, they meet with the cluster federation officers every month to discuss the clusters' problems and needs. They submit monthly reports to the City Agriculturist who in turn check their accomplishments vis-a-vis the targets, and validate their reports with the farmers during barangay meetings.

The CAO has 15 agricultural technologists and they are distributed into four clusters as follows: three each in Clusters 1, 2 and 3, and six in Cluster 4. Each cluster is headed by a team leader or coordinator. They raffled off cluster assignments for fairness and non-favoritism purposes. Assignment in cluster barangays normally lasts for three years. The agricultural technologists, however, who do not perform their jobs well may be reassigned.

The agricultural technologists performed agricultural extension services related to crops and animal production and development as well as other related services. Their functions included diagnosing problems affecting crops and animals, assisting farmers find solutions for such problems, assisting farmers during planting and harvesting, monitoring the buying prices of crops, providing transport vehicle for delivery of seeds and fertilizer from the city hall to the barangay cluster center, providing assistance in the extension of loan from the city government and farmers' cooperative, providing assistance in the conduct of market day, among others.

Lending support to the agricultural technologists in the barangays and acting as intermediaries between the CAO and farmers were the Barangay Agricultural Workers (BAWs). Their functions included: (1) supervising the farmers from land preparation to harvest; (2) collecting loan payment; (3) assisting the farmers on their problems in the farms; (4) referring the problems to the responsible/concerned agricultural technologists; (4) assisting in information dissemination so the farmers can avail of certain services; and conducting follow-up home visits among the farmers. They were assigned in the clusters to perform extension work on designated days. For instance, in Cluster II, they do their extension work every Tuesday and Thursday. This arrangement of assigning the BAWs in the farm clusters enabled the farmers to consult with them on agriculture-related problems on site thus sparing them time and transport cost in going to and from the city hall. In return for their services, the BAWs received a monthly honorarium of Php1,000, half of which was funded by the city government and the other half by the barangay.

4. Formation of Barangay Clusters

The CAO either organized new farmers' associations or activated the existing but quite inactive ones by meeting with their respective barangay captains and officers. Once the farmers' associations were organized or reorganized, the CAO met with them at least once a month to help them sustain their organization and encourage them to form the farmers federation associations (FFA).

Barangay clusters were formed to facilitate the delivery of agricultural services along designated geographical jurisdictions to ensure that the component barangays are all served. Formation of barangay clusters was based on a set criteria...Thirty-nine out of a total of 55 barangays in the city have been divided into four clusters...