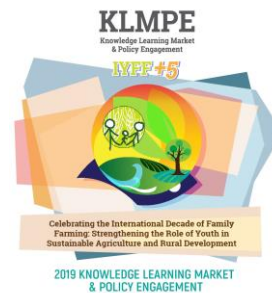


Maligaya Agri-Business Association and its Flavors of Tahong

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BACKGROUND

The Maligaya Agri-Business Association (MABA), previously known as Kapamilya Association, was organized on November 2012 as one of the prerequisite of the government to the farmers and fisherfolk before receiving additional livelihood support to assure the sustainability of the projects provided.

Since MABA is residing in the town of Jiabong in Samar – which is recognized as a major producer and supplier of green mussel or locally known as *tahong* to various parts of the Philippines such as Manila, Bicol, Cebu, and Davao – the association’s main source of income was mussel culture along with their mini *sari-sari* store.

When FishCORAL Project was introduced to the area, MABA members thought of ways how they could produce value-added products other than selling the *tahong* raw/fresh. With this, they proposed the *tahong* processing as their livelihood project due to the abundance of the said raw materials. On January 2018, initial materials and equipment were delivered to the association to start the production of the processed *tahong*.

INNOVATIONS / GOOD PRACTICES

From just culturing mussels, MABA is now producing variety of processed products such as bottled *tahong* in different flavors (adobo, adobo *sa gata*, bopis, escabeche, menudo, and spicy), and *tahong* and shrimp sticks and crackers.

This was made possible through the Aqua-Based Business School with Gender and Climate Change Perspective (ABS-GCC) being implemented by the FishCORAL Project under its Livelihood Development Component. ABS-GCC is a revised adaptation of the Farmer Business School (FBS) used in agriculture. It involves a learning process where fisher groups and major stakeholders are involved in the whole value chain. It promotes fishers’ participation in a more dynamic interaction between and among the actors involved in the value chain.

MABA was struggling at first with the marketability and pricing of products before they were intervened by the ABS-GCC. Through ABS-GCC, the association was immersed in different technical trainings, which in return made the association more capable and equipped as an organization and entrepreneur. MABA has not only improved the packaging and elevated the flavors of their products but they also learned the good manufacturing practices (GMP) and proper labelling making way for an expanded market.

STATUS

The mussel processing project of MABA is successfully being implemented and operated. To date, MABA is actively participating in different events and activities not only within the Region 8 such as the monthly trade fair of Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), but in Metro Manila as well like the BAHANDI Trade Fair spearheaded by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI),

among others, to showcase their products. They also signed a contract with Product 8, a *pasalubong* center, in Tacloban City that made the MABA products easily accessible to the locals and tourists all around Eastern Visayas.

FACILITATING FACTORS / CHALLENGES

Various improvements on their products are needed to be done such as enhancement of packaging (e.g., integration the nutritional facts, and inclusion of the expiration date). In addition, the association does not have a proper area for processing and storage yet but a processing center is being built by the FishCORAL as a support facility for the association.

Moreover, the association is also facing a cyclical challenge on the harmful algal bloom or the red tide phenomena. As mitigating measure, BFAR and the FishCORAL Project are continuously providing technical support by imposing a shellfish ban whenever there is a red tide, and regularly conducting of water analysis to make sure the quality of the raw mats.

IMPACT

Before the intervention of the Project, MABA members were only focusing on the mussel culture along with the management of their *sari-sari* store but the profit was not enough for their families' basic needs. However, when they started venturing on mussel processing, the difference on the association's profit was very evident.

Livelihood	No. of years operated	Start-up capital (PhP)	Monthly Income (PhP)	Annual income (PhP)	Market (buyers)
Mussel culture (PO member earned through personal capacity)	3 years	20,000.00	18,000.00 per cropping	36,000.00	Jiabong
Sari-sari store	7 years	20,500.00	20,000.00	240,000.00	Jiabong
Mussel Processing	7 months	374,550.00	28,500.00 (average)		Pasalubong Centers, Grandtours Terminal

MABA is composed of 41 members in which 10 members (1 male, 9 females) are engaging in the *tahong* processing project while the other members serve as the supplier of the raw materials. Even though MABA has only one registered youth member, the children of the members are also involved in the association by doing marketing and accompanying their parents in obtaining the ingredients in making the processed products. Through this effort, the youth are being immersed in the business. They are being taught of the technical aspect of the mussel processing as they are going to be the next successor of the said business.

More so, Brgy. Maligaya is now known for its processed *tahong* products because of MABA and this somehow contributes to the food tourism of Jiabong, Samar.

POLICY / PROGRAMME / COOPERATION IMPLICATION

There are myriad of potentials for synergy among the development stakeholders since MABA is still a budding business entity to the industry. One of these is technical and/or financial support for other needed equipment to further upgrade the taste and enhance the packaging of the product, and to support the association's participation in more activities and events where they can showcase and market their products.

Initial discussions with BFAR and DTI, among others, have already been made to scale up the business.