



# TIMGAS

The Official Publication of the Agricultural Training Institute Regional Training Center-XIII



## SOWING SEEDS OF CHANGE

**Arlyn Tagupa's Journey from Struggle to Success**



# TIMGAS

The word Timgas is a Cebuano term which means firm and smooth in texture usually in reference to the grain of a high-quality rice. As an adjective, it is synonymous to ageless, enduring, eternal, firm, and everlasting

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## Contents

**01** Sowing Seeds of Change: Arlyn Tagupa's Journey from Struggles to Success

**06** 4-H Club members equip on fruit processing  
Rural women, AEWs enhance skill in meat processing

**07** DA Caraga, ATI 13 empower AEWs, farmers via garlic production

**08** Rice stakeholders attend "Be Riceponsible" techno forum  
EAsY Agri, EdGE grantees learned effective communication during the Assessment

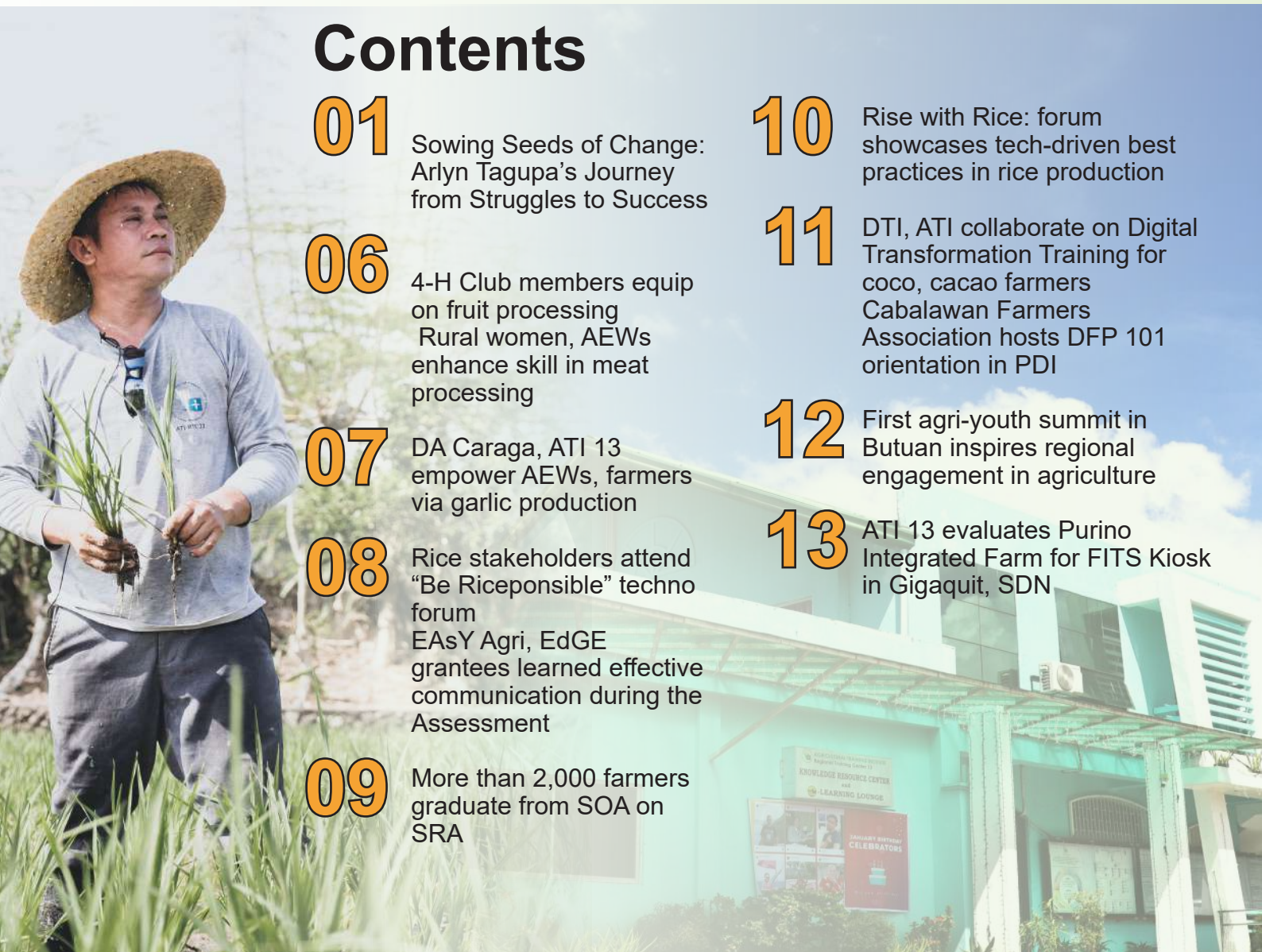
**09** More than 2,000 farmers graduate from SOA on SRA

**10** Rise with Rice: forum showcases tech-driven best practices in rice production

**11** DTI, ATI collaborate on Digital Transformation Training for coco, cacao farmers  
Cabalawan Farmers Association hosts DFP 101 orientation in PDI

**12** First agri-youth summit in Butuan inspires regional engagement in agriculture

**13** ATI 13 evaluates Purino Integrated Farm for FITS Kiosk in Gigaquit, SDN



# Sowing Seeds of Change: Arlene Tagupa's Journey from Struggles to Success

In the rural heart of Butuan City, where the sun rises over vast rice fields stretching as far as the eye can see, Arlyn P. Tagupa's life and livelihood depend on the land she has worked for many years. The daughter of farmers and now a mother herself, Arlyn lives in Purok 4, Brgy. Lemon, with her husband and two children. Together, they rely on the rice that grows beneath their feet. But for years, this rice was never enough—not enough to support their family, not enough to lift them out of the cycle of hardship that defines much of rural farming life in the Philippines.

Arlyn's story mirrors that of thousands of other Filipino farmers who have struggled with traditional farming methods, a lack of access to high-quality seeds, and limited financial resources. But her story is also one of transformation and hope, brought about through determination and the opportunities provided by the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).





## The Struggles of a Traditional Farmer

For years, Arlyn farmed using the methods passed down from her parents and neighbors—methods that, though time-tested, were often inefficient and exhausting. She lacked modern farming machinery, and her access to quality seeds was restricted. Most seasons, she could only plant lower-grade rice varieties, limiting her yield to 70 sacks per hectare. With the high cost of labor, fertilizers, and other farming inputs, each growing season was a gamble. Arlyn often found herself borrowing money just to keep her farm running.

“We would harvest, but it was never enough,” Arlyn recalls. “The costs kept rising, but the harvest did not improve. It was hard for my husband and me to save or provide more for our children.”

Her earnings from farming, which should have been a source of pride and sustainability, barely covered the costs. She and her husband would sit down each season and do the math, counting the pesos to see if they could make ends meet. But with expenses reaching up to PHP 25,000 per hectare, and income from the harvest barely covering that, the future seemed uncertain.

The lack of machinery only compounded the problem. Arlyn had to rely on simple, labor-intensive tools which slowed her down and made each planting season more grueling than the last. These limitations made it nearly impossible to grow her farm and increase productivity.



## The Turning Point: Enter the RCEF Program

It was in 2021 that Arlyn's life began to take a different turn. The RCEF program, designed to support farmers like her through modern technologies and training, arrived in their area. Through the RCEF Farmer Field School (FFS), Arlyn enrolled in a comprehensive training program that covered modern farming techniques, seed quality improvement, and pest and diseases management.

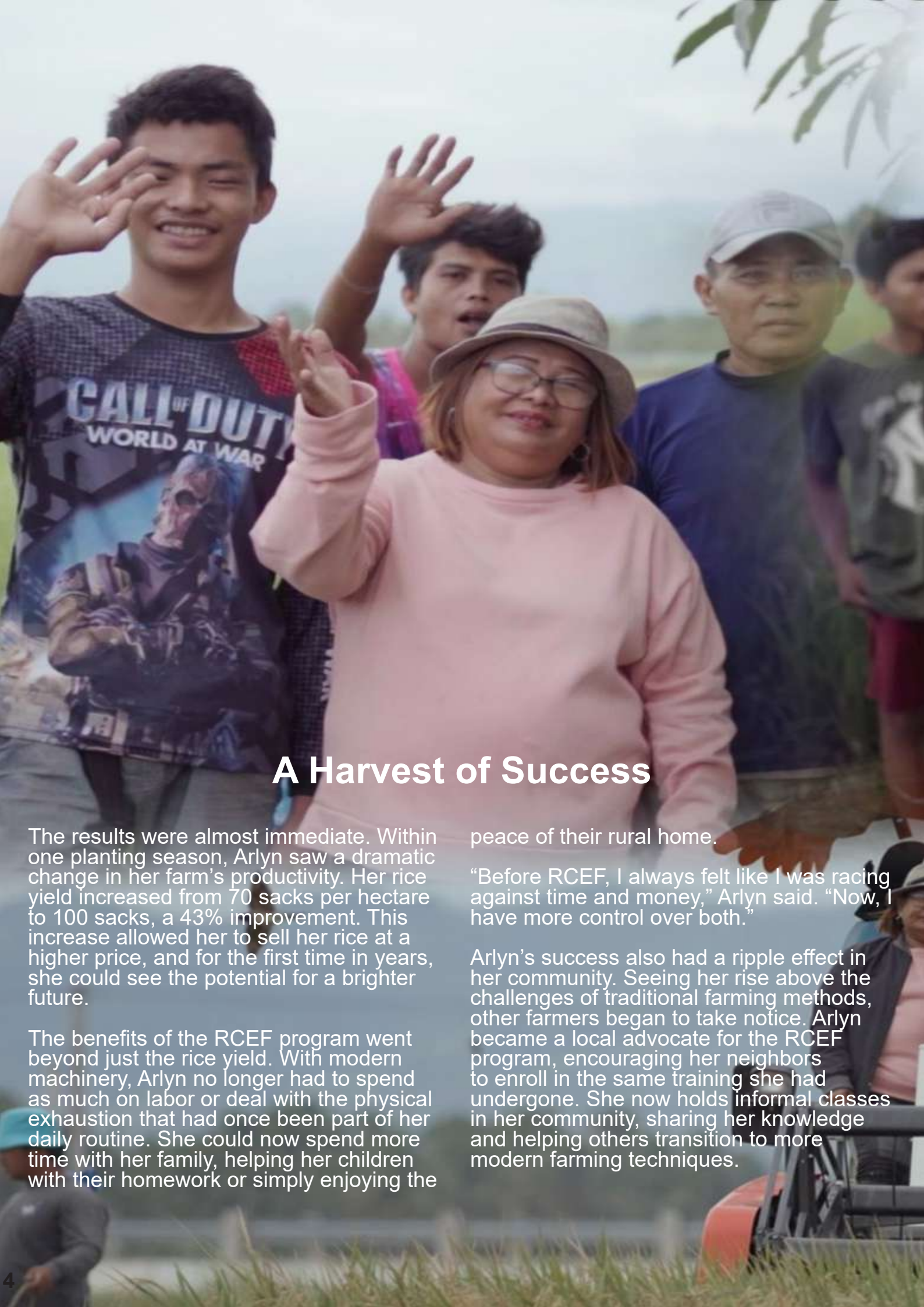
"I was determined to learn," Arlyn said. "I realized that if I kept farming the way I always had, nothing would change. I wanted to be able to provide a better life for my children.

The RCEF program provided Arlyn with access to high-quality rice varieties, such as RC 160 and RC 480, which were proven to increase yield. The training she received was not only about planting rice but understanding the ecosystem

her farm was a part of. She learned about Agro Ecosystem Analysis and how to monitor the health of her crops. She now knew how to control pests without overusing insecticides, which not only saved her money but also protected the health of her soil.

Moreover, Arlyn was introduced to farm mechanization—modern machines that could replace the manual labor she had been accustomed to. These machines allowed her to till the land more efficiently and plant rice at a much faster pace. The tools she had once relied on became a thing of the past.

"Using the machines for the first time was like stepping into a new world," she said with a smile. "I could do more in a day than I used to do in a week."



## A Harvest of Success

The results were almost immediate. Within one planting season, Arlyn saw a dramatic change in her farm's productivity. Her rice yield increased from 70 sacks per hectare to 100 sacks, a 43% improvement. This increase allowed her to sell her rice at a higher price, and for the first time in years, she could see the potential for a brighter future.

The benefits of the RCEF program went beyond just the rice yield. With modern machinery, Arlyn no longer had to spend as much on labor or deal with the physical exhaustion that had once been part of her daily routine. She could now spend more time with her family, helping her children with their homework or simply enjoying the

peace of their rural home.

"Before RCEF, I always felt like I was racing against time and money," Arlyn said. "Now, I have more control over both."

Arlyn's success also had a ripple effect in her community. Seeing her rise above the challenges of traditional farming methods, other farmers began to take notice. Arlyn became a local advocate for the RCEF program, encouraging her neighbors to enroll in the same training she had undergone. She now holds informal classes in her community, sharing her knowledge and helping others transition to more modern farming techniques.

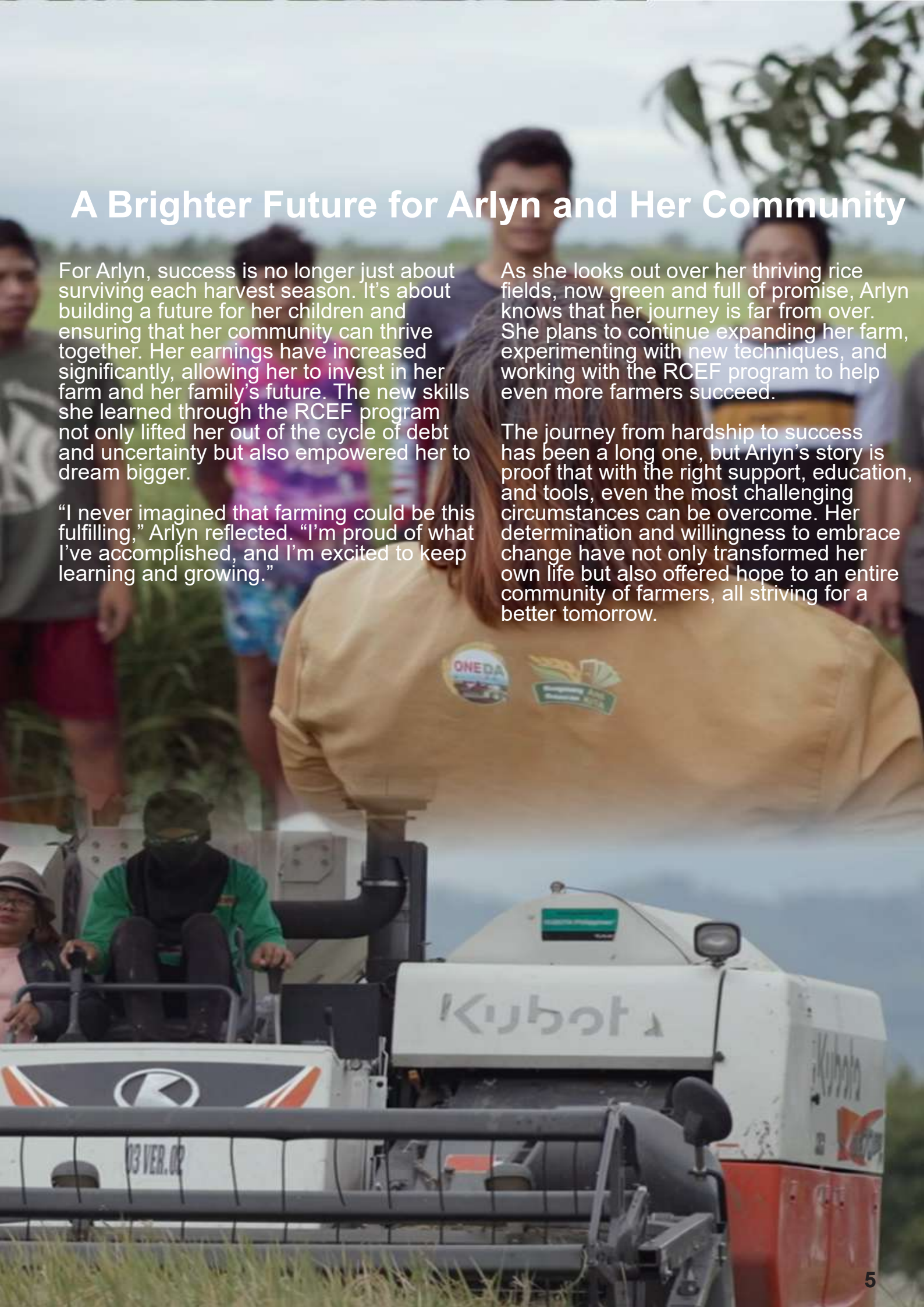
# A Brighter Future for Arlyn and Her Community

For Arlyn, success is no longer just about surviving each harvest season. It's about building a future for her children and ensuring that her community can thrive together. Her earnings have increased significantly, allowing her to invest in her farm and her family's future. The new skills she learned through the RCEF program not only lifted her out of the cycle of debt and uncertainty but also empowered her to dream bigger.

"I never imagined that farming could be this fulfilling," Arlyn reflected. "I'm proud of what I've accomplished, and I'm excited to keep learning and growing."

As she looks out over her thriving rice fields, now green and full of promise, Arlyn knows that her journey is far from over. She plans to continue expanding her farm, experimenting with new techniques, and working with the RCEF program to help even more farmers succeed.

The journey from hardship to success has been a long one, but Arlyn's story is proof that with the right support, education, and tools, even the most challenging circumstances can be overcome. Her determination and willingness to embrace change have not only transformed her own life but also offered hope to an entire community of farmers, all striving for a better tomorrow.



## 4-H Club members equip on fruit processing



**P**ROSPERIDAD, Agusan del Sur - The Agricultural Training Institute - Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) XIII, in partnership with the Provincial Agriculture and Veterinary Office of Agusan del Sur, conducted the Training on Food Processing and Food Safety in Support to GAD Batch 2 at Hygeia IntegraMeds Center FDAI on September 24-26, 2024. The training aims to enhance the knowledge and skills of the members of the Rural Improvement Clubs, 4-H Clubs, and other stakeholders in the province on food processing and food safety awareness through technology promotion.

Provincial S&T Director Andrea Cabonite and Science Research Specialist Rhea Santos from the DOST-Agusan del Sur, discussed the topics on the importance of food safety. Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), personal hygiene, techniques in food processing, and packaging and labeling were also explained.

Further, Evelyn Montino, a retired agricultural technologist from Sibagat, Agusan del Sur, was the resource person responsible for the hands-on demonstration. She led and guided the participants during the processing of pineapple-carrot jam, durian jam, and jackfruit preserve on the third day of the training.



*"This training is very beneficial to us, agri-product growers, business owners, and food handlers in ensuring that the knowledge and skills we've learned here will not be put to waste but will be used for the betterment of our 4-H organization,"* said Karen Mae F. Señerez, one of the participants from Trento, Agusan del Sur.

## Rural women, AEWs enhance skill in meat processing



**P**ATIN-AY, Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur - A total of 29 farmer-leaders, Rural Improvement Club (RIC) members, and AEWs from Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Sur, and Surigao del Norte completed the Training

on Meat Processing with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) conducted by the Agricultural Training Institute - Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) XIII held on September 25-27, 2024 at Hygeia IntegraMeds Center FDAI.

The said training aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of the participants in meat processing and food safety awareness through technology promotion. It was conducted in partnership with the Agusan del Sur Provincial Veterinary Office (PVO) where the actual demonstration was done.

Minda B. Manliguez and Edessa Jeane A. Hijara were the resource persons.

Moreover, tocino, longganisa, and siomai were the processed food products made by the participants.

The training was conducted under the livestock program with Florita Lozada, Agriculturist II, as the project officer.



## DA Caraga, ATI 13 empower AEWs, farmers via garlic production



**B**UTUAN CITY – The 31 participants, composed of Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) and farmers, completed the three-day Training on Garlic Production and Management on September 25-27, 2024 held at Golden Tara Hall, ATI-RTC XIII, Los Angeles, Butuan City.

OIC-Center Director Noemi Beth G. Macario, encouraged and challenged the participants to take risks in garlic production by testing it themselves before sharing it with other farmers. Likewise, Mary Jane Gonzaga, Development Management Officer II and project officer, presented the training overview. She related that this training was requested by the Department of Agriculture -Regional Field Office Caraga; hence, the DA is willing to take the challenge of engaging in garlic production.

Noralyn B. Legaspi, a University Researcher at Mariano Marcos State University, shared her knowledge, experience, and expertise from site selection to crop establishment, harvesting, and postharvest handling storage. She also discussed the good agricultural practices (GAP) of garlic nutrient management and insect pest and disease management.

Guided by the principle of learning by doing, participants underwent a field practicum at Guias Integrated Farm, Nongnong, Butuan City. Each group demonstrated the land preparation, seedling preparation, and planting of garlic.



*“This training would help us try new technology that would help our region produce one of the needed crops in our daily diet/home. We hope that sooner this technology will be passed to our farmers that would help them have another source of income,”* said Dave Nichol Y. Resurreccion, Agricultural Technologist and one of the participants from Surigao del Norte Provincial Agriculture Office. (with the report from Mary Jane Gonzaga)

## Rice stakeholders attend “Be Riceponsible” techno forum



The ATI-RTC 13 successfully conducted the “Be Riceponsible: Techno Forum for Rice Stakeholders” on November 15, 2024, at Robinsons Place Butuan City, as part of the National Rice Awareness Month (NRAM) celebration.

The forum brought together 50 rice farmers and stakeholders from Butuan City, Cabadbaran City, Kitcharao, and Buenavista, Agusan del Norte. Participants actively engaged in discussions on various topics, including ICT-based tools for rice farming, innovative practices from local government units (LGUs), digital marketing strategies, and government support programs.

Resource speakers included representatives from ATI Caraga, PhilRice Agusan, LGU-Cabadbaran City, and Pastor Wesley Calunsag, a Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA) cooperator.

## EAsY Agri, EdGE grantees learned effective communication during the Assessment



LOS ANGELES, Butuan City- The Semestral Assessment for the First Semester of the Academic Year 2024-2025 took place on December 23, 2024, at the Golden Tara Hall, ATI-Caraga, Los Angeles, Butuan City. This event was held simultaneously with a team-building activity attended by grantees of the Educational Assistance for the Youth in Agriculture (EAsY Agri) and the Educational Grants for Extension Workers (EdGE) Scholarship Programs.

On behalf of OIC Center Director Noemi Beth G. Macario, Administrative Officer IV Francis H. Iriarte welcomed the participants and delivered an encouraging message to the scholars, urging them to continue their education and not give up on their studies. ATI-Caraga manages and supports 50 scholars from EAsY Agri and EdGE scholarship programs.

During the Knowledge Sharing and Learning (KSL) session, Information Officer II and Focal Person for the Scholarship Program, Ginalyn V. Arbutante, led a discussion on effective communication, which will greatly assist the scholars in their professional development and interactions with others.

The main purpose of the assessment was to evaluate the academic performance of the scholars, assess their progress in fulfilling program requirements, and gauge the effectiveness of program management by ATI for the first semester of the 2024-2025 academic year.

## More than 2,000 farmers graduate from SOA on SRA



This year's School-on-the-Air (SOA) on Smart Rice Agriculture (SRA) has produced a total of 2,015 graduates from the provinces of Agusan del Norte and Butuan City, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, and Province of Dinagat Islands (PDI).

The Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) XIII spearheaded the mass graduation in collaboration with the Provincial Agriculturist Offices. It was conducted in four sites: October 22, 2024, for Agusan del Norte and Butuan City graduates held at Balanghai Hotel and Convention Center, Butuan City; October 23, 2024, for Surigao del Norte graduates held at the Provincial Convention Center, Surigao City; October 25, 2024 for Surigao del Sur graduates at the Municipal Evacuation Center, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur; and for the graduates from PDI on October 29, 2024 at the Municipal Gymnasium, Cagdianao, PDI.

The graduates received certificates for completing the 16-week SOA session. Additionally, the top-performing graduates from each municipality were awarded a pair of rubber boots, a raincoat, and a chargeable knapsack sprayer as tokens of recognition.

Municipal SOA coordinators, local government units (LGUs), and resource persons were also acknowledged for their valuable contributions to the successful implementation of the SOA program.

Launched in June 2024, it aimed to help catalyze agriculture modernization through the massive and sustained education of smallholder farmers and local intermediaries on modern and innovative technologies and approaches to Smart rice production.

## Rise with Rice: forum showcases tech-driven best practices in rice production



**B**UTUAN CITY - A total of 175 rice farmers attended the techno forum entitled Rise with Rice: Technology Forum on Rice Production Best Practices and Innovations, conducted by the Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center XIII in three provinces from November 27 to 29, 2024.

The events took place at three locations: the Municipal Agricultural Learning Center in Kitcharao, Agusan del Norte; the municipal gymnasium in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur; and in Carmen, Surigao del Sur. These venues facilitated technology and information sharing among rice farmers, practitioners, and government agencies.

Mr. Matt Janfour B. Cabahug, the Rice and RCEF focal person of ATI, discussed the Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) for rice, highlighting the best practices and innovations in the field. Ptr. Wesley C. Calunsag provided valuable insights on maximizing digital marketing strategies to enhance brand visibility and sales. He shared best practices for adding value to rice products implemented on his farm. Calunsag is the owner and cooperater of FAITH Nature Farm, an ATI-certified learning site for agriculture located in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur.

Additionally, technical personnel from the National Irrigation Administration, Richard P. Lugo, and Jogie M. Montilla, outlined the Farmers Support Services Program (FSSP). The success of the activities can be attributed to the active participation and coordination of the respective local government units.

## DTI, ATI collaborate on Digital Transformation Training for coco, cacao farmers

**B**UTUAN CITY - On November 7, 2024, the Department of Trade and Industry – Caraga spearheaded the conduct of the two-day Digital Transformation to RAPID Assisted Farmers and Farmer Organizations at Grand Palace Hotel Annex which was participated by 20 coconut and cacao farmers and businessmen from Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, and Surigao del Sur.

Ressell Angelie Fetalsana, Information Officer II of Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center XIII, served as the resource person and introduced the partakers to the Digital Farmer Program of the ATI in partnership with Smart Telecommunications.

The first day's sessions included Smartphone 101 and the installation of various agricultural applications such as Accuweather, Payong PAGASA, and GPS Field Measure. Topics on Social Media Marketing and Internet Safety were also covered to safeguard participants from online scams. A Facebook group was created for participants to share their outputs.

The second day introduced advanced agricultural applications and highlighted the ATI e-Learning website, encouraging participants to enroll in available courses. Advanced Social Media Marketing was also discussed, and participants created posters using Canva, with awards given to the top five entries.

The training concluded with sessions on e-commerce platforms, including Facebook Marketplace, Shopee, Lazada, and online payment methods such as Maya and GCash.



## Cabalawan Farmers Association hosts DFP 101 orientation in PDI



**P**rovince of Dinagat Islands - As recipients of the Digital Farmers Program (DFP) Package of Technology, the Cabalawan Farmers Association in Barangay Garcia, Libjo, conducted a one-day DFP 101 orientation on November 25, 2024.

Attended by members who had not participated in the June 2023 training of trainers, this activity aimed to equip them with essential DFP knowledge and skills such as Smartphone 101, agricultural applications, and social media marketing.

Romelita F. Mate, the association secretary, served as the resource person during the one-day activity. The Information Services Section of the ATI Caraga, led by OIC-ISS Chief Jason Paul Dads Jampac and Ressell Angelie Fetalsana, provided support and guidance. Mr. Rene Fideles from the Municipal Agriculture Office of Libjo, PDI, was also present during the activity.



*"We are very thankful that through this program, we are able to share knowledge with our co-farmers in Libjo, especially here in our farmers association. Through these gadgets and equipment, we can apply our knowledge in using smartphones in our farming practices,"* said Ronnie Beronguis, Chairman of Cabalawan Farmers Association.

## First agri-youth summit in Butuan inspires regional engagement in agriculture



**B**UTUAN CITY – On November 22, 2024, the first Agri-Youth Summit was organized by the Department of Agriculture (DA) Caraga Region, through its Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Information Services (RAFIS), at the Provincial Training Center in Agusan del Norte.

The event aimed to inspire youth engagement in agriculture by promoting participation in various agricultural programs offered by the DA and its affiliated agencies. Attendees included members of the Sangguniang Kabataan councils and Agricultural Extension Workers from all five provinces of the Caraga Region, as well as Butuan City.

Moreover, Jason Paul Dads Jampac, OIC Chief of the ATI-Caraga Information Services Section, delivered a talk on the scholarships and e-Learning courses offered by the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI).

ATI actively participated in the exhibit by setting up an informative booth. The team distributed a wide range of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials to visitors. These materials included brochures, flyers, and booklets aimed at enhancing the public's understanding of various agricultural practices and programs.

## ATI 13 evaluates Purino Integrated Farm for FITS Kiosk in Gigaquit, SDN



Jason Paul Dads Jampac (right), ATI-RTC XIII ISS OIC-Chief, interviews Mr. Jose Alexander Purino (left) during the evaluation of Purino Integrated Farm's application for a FITS Kiosk.

**G**IGAQUIT, Surigao del Norte – On November 26, 2024, the Information Services Section (ISS) team of the Agricultural Training Institute – Regional Training Center (ATI-RTC) XIII, led by Jason Paul Dads Jampac, together with Ressel Angelie Fetalsana, visited and evaluated the application for the Farmers' Information and Technology Services (FITS) Kiosk at Purino Integrated Farm, owned by Jose Alexander Purino.

The farm, sprawling over four hectares, is a model of diversified farming. The farm boasts several agricultural enterprises, including poultry egg production, mango production and processing (producing mango nipa wine and mango jam), and swine production.

Moreover, the farm is a certified Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA), emphasizing the integration of advanced agricultural practices. One of the key highlights is the innovative use of agricultural drones in rice production. This technology aids in precision farming, ensuring efficient use of resources and maximizing yield.

“The establishment of a FITS Kiosk at Purino Integrated Farm will be a great asset to our community,” said Mr. Jampac. “It will serve as a hub for disseminating valuable agricultural knowledge and innovations, benefiting local farmers and enhancing agricultural productivity in the region.”

Mr. Purino expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to the agricultural development in Gigaquit. “We are excited about the potential of becoming a FITS Kiosk and are committed to supporting our fellow farmers through this initiative,” he stated.

The FITS Kiosk initiative aims to provide farmers with access to relevant agricultural information, resources, and technologies, thereby empowering them to improve their practices and productivity.



**ATI**  
**AT A GLANCE**  
*October -*







AGRICULTURE

PLANNING

December





# Agricultural Training RTC

# Year-End Assessment and Management

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