



ATI-RTC-CAR Training and Extension **WEAVERS**

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Great Gift Comes in Simple Package: The Janrey Casionan Story



Doing Business with a Heart: The Allen Bongat Story



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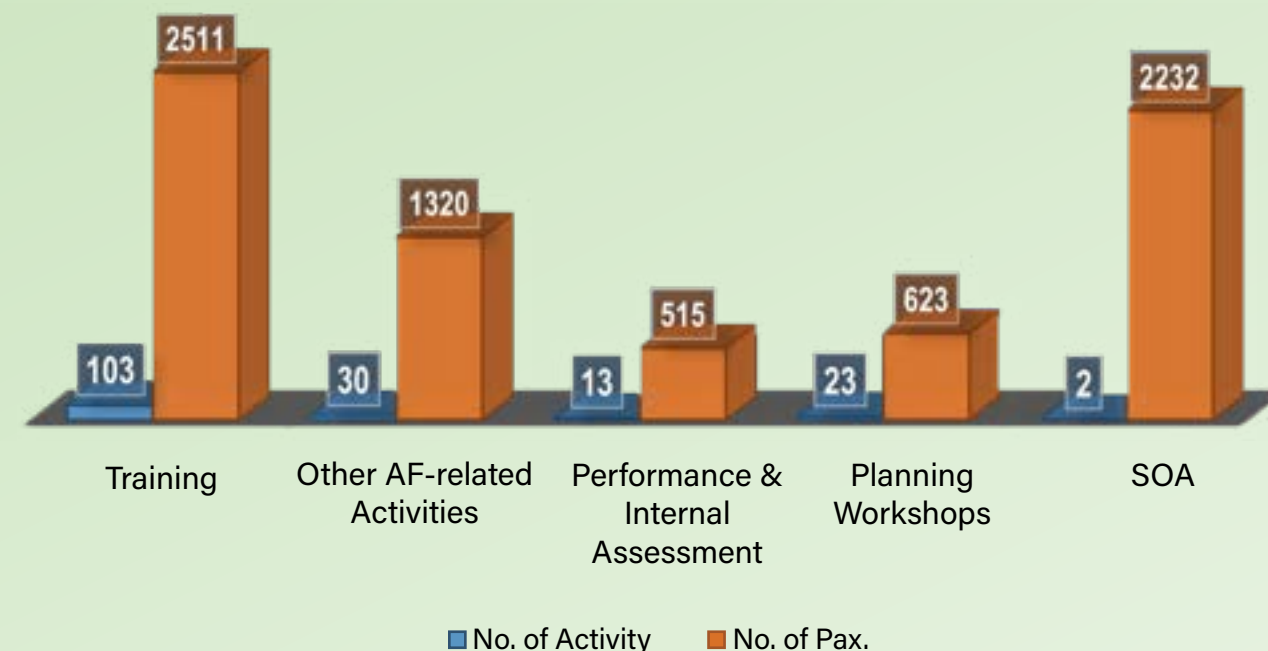
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Summary



The CY 2022 interventions brought forth the accomplishment of 182 training and other agriculture and fishery-related activities to 7,647 participants. With the 'new normal' taking place, the Center conducted these via face-face, online and blended approach.

The scholarships on Educational Assistance for the Youth: Degree Courses in Agriculture and Agricultural Biosystems Engineering (EAsY Agri) supported 14 students enrolled in their bachelor degrees. The Educational Grants for Extension Workers (EdGE) on its first year of implementation offered scholarship grants to six post graduate students.

For the year, the Center's commitment to advance the involvement of youth in agriculture, abled the sending-off of five young farmers to Taiwan for the Filipino Young Farmers

Internship in Taiwan program.

Further, one young farmer was also nominated to partake with the Young Filipino Farmer Leaders Training program in Japan. In addition, the Center facilitated the awarding of the four young agripreneurs during the 2nd Youth in Agripreneurship Program (YAP) Awarding Ceremony. The implementation of the Philippine Action Plan for Family Farming (PAP4FF) gave opportunity for the Center to support the 15 families with trainings and start-up support.

The project on 'Strengthening Farmers' Competitiveness through Capability Building of Vegetable Growers in the Province of Benguet - Capacity Building for Farmers to the three farmers' association from Balili, Mankayan, Benguet is being undertaken.

In the year, the Mt. Carmel Agri-Tourism and Training Center, Inc. at Pidigan, Abra was accredited

as the second Private Agricultural and Fisheries extension service provider in the Region. Moreover, 11 new learning sites for agriculture were certified and 16 were enhanced. In addition to the learning sites as techno demo sites, seven new community urban agriculture model farm were assisted and six were enhanced.

There were two School-on-the-Air implemented, the SOA on PalayAralan: Makabagong Pagsasaka sa Himpapawid (Smart Rice Agriculture) and Participatory Guarantee System with a total of 2,232 graduates in partnership with the Provinces of Abra, Ifugao and Benguet. The Rice Crop Manager deployment enabled 127 rice farmers from Sagada and Besao, Mountain Province who were briefed on the RCM program. The two AgriTalks abled the sharing of technologies on anthurium, vermicomposting, and seedling-tray productions. For the Techno Gabay Program,

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This publication contains articles on the latest news relating to or about the training activities, technologies, updates, and success stories of the Institute and its clients.

WEAVERS welcomes comments and suggestions from readers.

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three Farmers and Information Services Centers namely: Bucloc and Boliney in Abra and Tanudan, Kalinga were established; eight FITS centers were enhanced; and two Magsasaka Siyentista were endorsed for appointment by ATI-CO.

In terms of dissemination through knowledge products management, 28 were developed to include techno-based, corporate materials, translated to success stories. A total of 20,037 printed IEC materials were reproduced and 20,237 were distributed.

Trainings related to planning and monitoring were likewise

facilitated. Aside from these, various consultations with DA-RFO-CAR and partner LGUs were made for a harmonized implementation of the CY 2022 plans. Further, regular monitoring of the programs, projects, and activities is being implemented by the Center.

To ensure the smooth flow of the operation, the Center regularly conducts management committee and staff meetings, quarterly performance reviews, plannings, clean and green, and ISO-related activities. The capability building activities reinforced a working

environment for the staff to deliver services to the ATI-RTC-CAR partners and stakeholders.

Noteworthy for this year was the finalization of the Collaborative Provincial Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Program (CPAFEP) of the six provinces of CAR. This was made possible through series of consultations, planning and workshops facilitated by the Center, DA-RFO-CAR, and BFAR-CAR.

In terms of financial operation, the Center fully obligated the total amount of PhP 70,505,797.31 downloaded for the Center's operation.



ATI-RTC-CAR's Holds **Green Friday**

with 440 Seedlings Planted at the Baguio Animal Breeding and Research Center (BABRC)





Baguio City. The Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center-Cordillera Administrative Region (ATI-RTC-CAR) went out of the Training Center on July 8, 2022 for a day dedicated to farming and to nature through planting trees.

The activity is in partnership with the DA-Regional Field-Office-CAR (DA-RFO-CAR), through its Baguio Animal Breeding and Research Center (BABRC) which provided the ATI-RTC-CAR an area at the Baguio Stock Farm in Barangay Dontogan, Baguio City where it can plant and maintain fruit and other agricultural trees.

This year's tree planting saw the ATI-RTC-CAR staff, scholars, and interns, with the assistance of the DA-RFO-CAR and BABRC. Four hundred forty (440) seedlings were planted which composed of 270 coffee seedlings, 100 lemon seedlings, 40 guapple seedlings, 28 calamansi seedlings, and 2 avocado seedlings.

ATI-RTC-CAR Tree Planting
July 8, 2022
Baguio Stock Farm, Dontogan, Baguio City

Philippine Action Plan for Family Farming (PAP4FF)

Stepping forward from the Farm Family program implemented by the Center in the previous year, the Center is given the opportunity to advance its interventions along this line.

The Regional Training Center of the Agricultural Training Institute in the Cordillera Administrative Region was the first to implement the conduct of the Philippine Action Plan

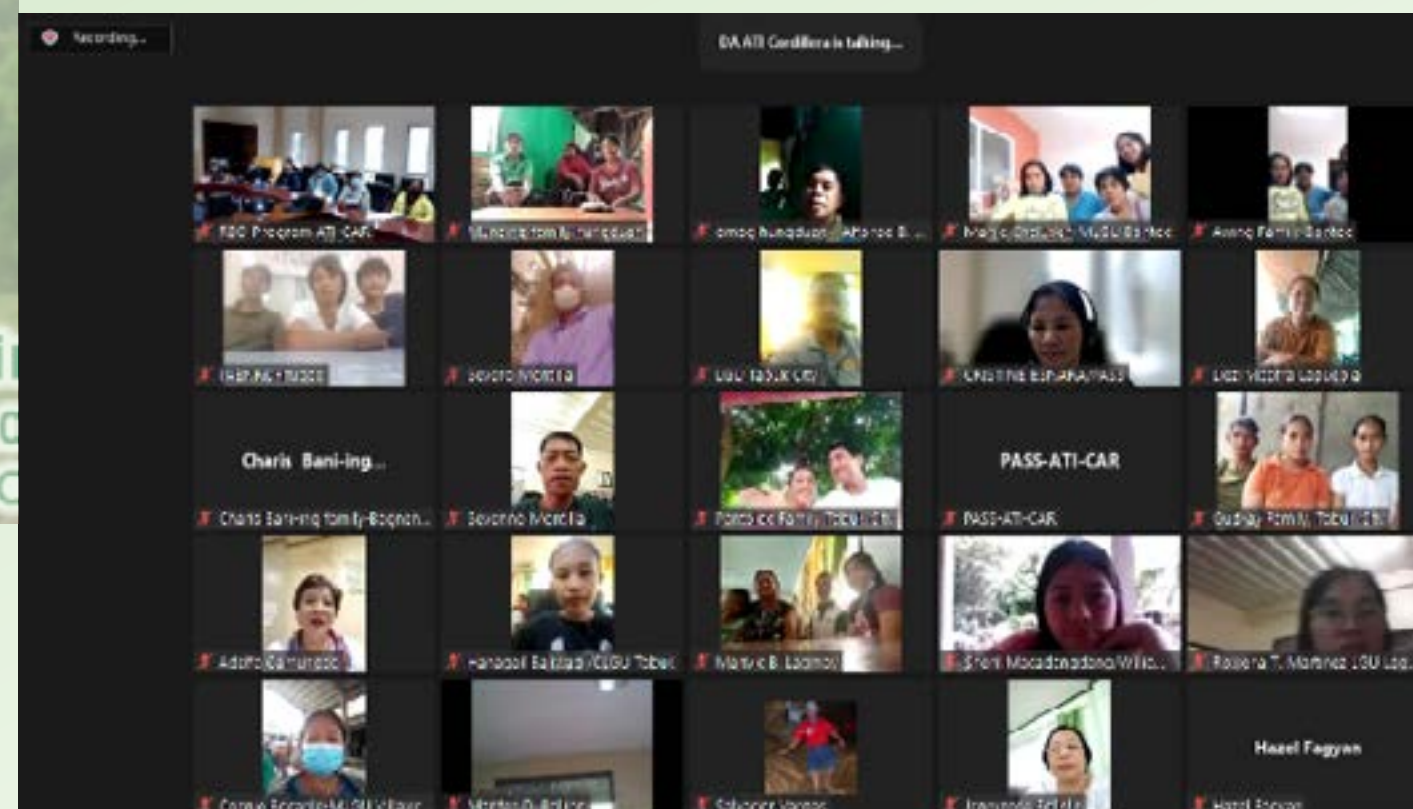
for Farming Families (PAP4FF) giving emphasis that agriculture is a family affair. With this endeavor, a total of 15 farm families were awarded a project worth 30 thousand each after submission of their project proposals.

Ms. Veronica Siloy, the Rural-based Organization Focal Person pointed out that, family farming in the Philippines is more than just family-managed

activity, but it speaks of multiple dimensions and how a typical Filipino family engages every member of the household in agriculture.

Yet, despite the initiatives of the different institutions offering to improve the lives of the people behind the food production in the country, family farmers remain the most vulnerable sector.

Mobilizing the key sector to work towards a common goal



Online participants; families from Abra, Kalinga, Ifugao, Mountain Province and Kalinga

was proven to be one best strategy to address the underlying causes affecting the multi-dimensional problems face by the farmers themselves. With the growing pressures in our food system, we look to family farming as a model of sustainable food production and as an innovative response to challenges: socially, environmentally, economically, and culturally.

This initiative is in line with the key strategies of our One DA Reform Agenda wherein we mobilize and empower our partners and engage every member of a farming family particularly the women and the youth in establishing more Agri-based industries in the countryside and developing markets for agriculture products. With this, the

Philippines finally came up with a national action plan that will mobilize all relevant institutions from the key sectors towards an overarching goal of: “Masaganang Ani, Mataas na Kita at Marangal na Buhay ng Pamilyang Magsasaka” (Abundant Harvests, High Income and Dignified Life of Family Farmers”).

A total of 50 Farm families were oriented on how the program works on June 30, 2022. Afterwards, fathers underwent a training regarding Agri-fishery production on July 18-19, 2022.

On August 29-31, 2022, the training on Agri-fishery Processing and Packaging were attended by Mothers while children of farm family attended the training on Branding and Marketing.



The PAP4FF is designed to contribute to the government's commitment in the UN's 2023 Agenda. These programs aim to Improve the productivity, competitiveness, and resilience of Filipino family farmers, fishers, and upland dwellers characterized by secured land and resource tenure, increased productivity of soil and water resources, food self-sufficiency, and well-being for all at all ages (Masaganang Ani, Mataas na Kita, at Marangal na Buhay ng Pamilyang Magsasaka).

In the Philippines, the concept of family farming is culture-based and family managed that highlights the significant roles and needs of family farmers, IPs, small fishers, women, and the youth; the support to the transformation of family farming tenants and farmworkers into owner-cultivators based on existing asset reform laws, the government's thrust of clustering into production groups; and its contribution to sustainable management of land, soil, and water resources towards the achievement of just, inclusive, and sustainable development. (BLBuli-e)



4-H Youth Convention

4-H level-up: Leading Excellence in Agriculture through Viable Innovations, Empowering Leaders and Unleashing 4-H Potential

La Trinidad, Benguet. Farm youth from the provinces of Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, and Mountain Province, and from the cities of Baguio and Tabuk converged at the ATI-RTC-CAR for the annual Cordillera Administrative Region 4-H Regional Convention on September 8-9, 2022

MAY JOY O. GAID
SANTA MARCELA, APAYAO

I want to thank God for giving me this opportunity to be one of the participants of this convention. I have been dreaming for this kind of opportunity before because I have seen the advantages and benefits of these kinds of trainings and so I thank our 4H coordinators for choosing me to be one of the participants. Lastly, I would like to thank ATI-CAR for giving us these kinds of opportunities for us to showcase our talents as youth in different kinds of aspects especially for me as an Agriculture graduate. Thank you very much!



GENE MAR RAGUS
ATOK, BENGUET

As an outgoing 4her, I just want to share these things that I have learned throughout the years with our 4H organization. I have gained confidence through these kinds of activities. I was also given different kinds of exposure, and through 4H, I learned to stand on my own and not relying to others. I also learned how to deal with different kinds of people through 4H regardless of their status. Lastly, even though I may not be qualified as a 4H I will still be here supporting our fellow 4hers in the future.



ASHLEY JADE CAMADDO
BALBALAN, KALINGA

Good afternoon, everyone. I just want to share that in our place, 4H organization is not that popular that is why I was surprised and joyful at the same time to see some of our fellow active 4Hers from different provinces. As one of the participants who made the promotional video, I am proud that I was able to showcase my talent in video making. In this way, I was able to encourage some of my fellow 4Hers to do the same thing. I would like to thank our provincial coordinator for this opportunity and to ATI-CAR for this successful event.



Opening program of the 4H Convention



Group Picture of Participants, Provincial Coordinators, RPs, TMT



Candle Lighting
Ceremony

Input on Digital Farming by Sir Adrian Cris Velasco from DA- ATI-CAR



2022 CAR LGU Trainer's Assembly: The ATI Trained LGU Trainers

The DA-ATI-RTC-CAR recognized the Top Performing ATI Trained LGU Trainers who have submitted their entries by program category. This is to recognize the top performing ATI trained LGU trainers on field and be inspired on the stories of the performing LGU AEW trainers.

The activity was graced by the Centers' former Training Center Director, Dr. Arlene L. Flores who initiated the development of the Training Program Approach since 2005.



Mr. Charlie Sagudan, the OIC of the Center said that such activity will be pursued annually and one of the ways forward for 2023 is a Success Story Documentation and Writing Training for the AEWs to further improve their documentation and writing skills and properly record their results and successes in their respective localities.

The activity was conducted through a blended approach (virtual and face-to-face).



Dr. Arlene L. Flores
Centers' former Training Center Director

For extension to be functional, you as our extension workers should be dynamic, resilient and innovative... and you have to develop yourselves to achieve this and one of which is training



Marcelina Tabelin
Provincial Veterinary Office, Baguio City

The efforts of ATI incapacitating extension workers must be valued and must slip down to our clients. In conclusion, no matter what the circumstances are, always choose to excel and consider obstacles as a stepping stone to greater success."



Faith Pec-ao
LGU-Bontoc, Mountain Province

Thank you for this award. Thank you, ATI, I gained lots of knowledge in all of your training and activities provided.



Mark Lloyd
LGU-Benguet

What I learned most in being an extension provider is, being an extension worker means having no boundaries. We need to be flexible in many ways. This activity became my signal of doing more and being more.



Berto Bayeng
LGU-Itogon, Benguet

With the training and activities provided by ATI we extension workers are not only able to train farmers but also gain recognition and awards. So, all these opportunities given must really be grabbed! Mabuhay ATI! Mabuhay AEWs

The ATI-RTC-CAR congratulates all our Awardees! May you serve as an inspiration to your co-trainers. The ATI-RTC-CAR also extends its gratitude to the respective LGUs, municipal and provincial who endorsed and supported their entries.

ATI Extension Modalities Summit in the Country

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET. “Allies in embracing the challenges in agriculture” was the overarching message of the first extension modalities summit in the Philippines with the Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center-Cordillera Administrative Region (ATI-RTC-CAR) as lead organizer. The activity gathered 98 individuals representing various ATI developed, certified, and accredited extension modalities. These extension modalities include Learning Sites for Agriculture (LSAs), Community Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Model Farms (CUAMF), and Private Agriculture and Fishery Extension Service Providers (PAF-ESPs) in CAR. The event was held at the ATI-RTC-CAR in La Trinidad, Benguet on November 21, 2022.

The first Extension Modality Summit across the ATI Network was an initiative of the ATI-RTC-CAR which focuses on strengthening partnership and connectivity among all accredited and certified ATI extension modalities in CAR. It was also a venue for providing updates on technology, relevant policies and guidelines especially to newly established LSAs/CUAMFs.

Another input during the event was the sharing of seasoned LSAs and leading CUAMFs of their farming technologies, good practices, and strategies particularly those they experienced, developed, and employed during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Awarding of Certificate of Recognition to the Community Urban/ Peri-Urban Agriculture Model Farms of the center, LSA special awards and awarding of after-training support of the PAP Farm Family.

Capping the summit was the promotion of products from extension modalities through a display and selling of their respective fresh and processed farm products. ATI Assistant Director Ms. Antonieta J. Arceo graced the event as guest speaker where she reiterated the Institute's commitment supportive to the further development of

extension modalities. She particularly highlighted the role of extension modalities as partners of ATI, DA, and other agencies and organizations providing extension services most specially within the community level.

Another first during the summit was the book launching of “POWER PLANT” authored by Mr. Pat Acosta of the Masters Garden, one of the first ATI-accredited LSA in CAR.

Mr. Acosta in the said book “presents a special practice relative to crop production. It shows that farming can be sustainable and profitable by adapting to the natural environment, using the forest ecosystem as a demonstrative model. Added to this is the utilization of resources around that are bountiful yet ignored. This is a special practice that can address the common crop production problems and make farming a lucrative career that can support a family comfortably. This would entice the young generation to go into farming, ensuring replacement for the aging farmers. This practice also ensures food safety as well as the safety of the farmers, not having to use chemicals excessively for crop protection.”

Finally, the Extension Modalities Summit will be part of the ATI-RTC-CAR's regular yearly activities. (ACP Velasco)

Sharing of the LSAs and ESP on their innovations and experiences amidst the pandemic.



Great Gift Comes in Simple Package: The Janrey Casionan Story

This quotation from Mehmet Murat Ildan (a multi-awarded Turkish novelist, thinker and playwright) crossed my mind, as I came to know Janrey Casionan, one of ATI-RTC-CAR's scholar under the Academic and Technology Integration Education Program or ATI-EP. The scholarship program was designed to empower interested Out-of-School Youths (OSYs) to become the next generation of young farmers. The scholarship was funded under the 4-H Program and ran from December, 2016 – May, 2017.

This quotation reflected Janrey's perspective of life. Let us get to know him more.

“When simple is more than enough, you will feel happy more than enough!”

The Hike: A Prelude to the Interview

Janrey lives in Brgy. San Marcos, Alfonso Lista Ifugao. Their barangay is a predominantly corn-producing

area, a product that Alfonso Lista is known for. During the scheduled interview, Janrey met us at the Brgy. Hall of San Marcos. It has been years since I last saw him. He now grew his hair, a jungle bolo hangs in his waist and wears long-sleeved shirt and rides in a motorcycle. He smiled to greet us, parting his red lips and showing his red-stained teeth as a result of chewing momma. He seems happy to see us.

From the barangay hall of San Marcos, we slowly drove around 20 minutes of rough road into a drying pavement where we left our service car, since their place cannot be reached by our vehicle. I cannot see houses around except of corn fields that span as far as the eyes can see. We then hiked



is from Mayoyao, Ifugao. He is the 6th of the 8 siblings. He finished his secondary education thru the Alternative Learning System (ALS) of Department of Education in 2018 (as part of the curriculum under the ATI-EP scholarship).

It has been my style to ask my subjects (specially youths) about their dream or what

around 2 kilometers of rough and slippery road across corn plantations to get there. Luckily, the effect of typhoon “Florita” was not that severe in their area.

During our hike, I was able to prove again, that the word “near” is relative. It varies from one person to another. But for Janrey, a 2-kilometer hike along slippery and muddy rolling hills is “near.” The terrain, coupled with heat, forced me to rest from time to time to catch my breath. After around 45 minutes of hiking, we finally reached the site of his project.

Right away we documented the various components of his farm while there is still sunlight. After documentation, we settled for the interview.

His Dream Job

Janrey grew up in a farming family of 10. His father, Mang Dante, is from Mountain Province and Aling Margareth

prefer farming against white collared jobs. I am mystified by his answer. Is he for real? What does “certified farmer” mean? I ignored my thoughts and continued with the interview.

Influenced by his friend, Janrey's first dream is to become a soldier. However, when he got accepted in the ATI scholarship, he had a change of heart. With their engagements with various LSA proprietors, Janrey, was inspired by the story of Mr. Rogelio Marsan (a School for Practical Agriculture of ATI), who according to him, proved that there is money in farming. After soul searching, he realized that there is no peace in the life of a soldier and that he cannot supervise his family, thus his choice.



they wanted to become. I don't know why, but it gives me a thrill to know their answers and whether or not they fulfilled their dreams. So, without exception, I also asked Janrey about his dream or what he wanted to become in life. To my disbelief, Janrey casually answered “I just want to become a certified farmer.”

I have thrown that question several times in my conversations with youths, but it was my first time to hear such an answer. I never thought that there are still youths who

He has been criticized for his decision. According to him, bashers sometimes argue that there is no hope in agriculture. However, his decision is



firm. He argued that his grandfather is a farmer and his father is a farmer and yet for generations they were able to survive and live decently and happily. Sometimes, there are misunderstandings but it is part of life, he said. He cited others whose job is not agriculture but ended up being hard up in life as well. He also cited that there are also rich who have all the material things in life but are not happy, he further justified. He believes in the usual dictum that agriculture can provide the basic needs in life as long as you are industrious.

His ATI Scholarship Journey

According to Janrey, he has no plans of going to college. He is done with learning



only theories. He wanted actual application/practice of technologies. So, when he learned about the scholarship from his friend who is working as a job order in the municipal

agriculture office in Alfonso Lista, he half-heartedly decided to give it a try.

He was interviewed by Mr. Ronan Soriano, a corn expert and a former staff of ATI-RTC-CAR. During the interview, Janrey was hooked with Ronan's statement, that a stalk of corn can bear 5 cobs and that if he wants to know



how, he should take the scholarship to learn it. Being a corn farmer, this solidified his decision to apply for the scholarship.

When he was accepted to the program, Janrey felt mixed emotions. He felt fear and doubt, because he doesn't know what is in store for him and he fears the new environment where he is considered a stranger. He also thought of his family's welfare because they will lose a helping hand. On the other hand, his family also feared what might happen to him since it was the



first time he will be separated from the family.

Despite all these, Janrey pursued the scholarship program. According to him, he is tired of being hopeless when their crops are attacked by pests and diseases because he doesn't know what to do. He realized that, if he will go through the scholarship, there is a possibility that he can

learn new ways of farming that will enhance his knowledge and skills as a farmer. His desire to learn and to discover kept his hopes high.

According to him, his routine as a scholar is somewhat boring but challenging. To lessen the boredom, he usually goes at the ATI-RTC-CAR's urban garden and converse with the workers. One of the challenges he experienced is dealing with co-scholars with various personalities and culture. He remembered an instance when a fight ensued between scholars because of these differences.

To avoid drama, he just tried to get along with everyone.

His family showed support by checking on him from time to time and by sending additional allowance. When I asked if there was an instance when he almost gave up and quit, he answered that he was determined to finish the course and that there was no instance that quitting came to his mind. According to Ms. Jam Balingan, the focal person for ATI scholarship program, Janrey is an industrious and responsible scholar who actively participated in every activity of the program. No wonder why he graduated at the top of his class with a Leadership Award.

His Life After the Scholarship

After the scholarship, Janrey endeavored to gain more knowledge in farming. He stayed in the farm of Mr.

Villafuerte Camat (one of LSA cooperators of ATI-RTC-CAR in Lamut, Ifugao) to supplement his learning in the program. He said that his exposure in the 6-month program was not enough. There are some technologies (e.g. feed formulation) that interests him during the program but unfortunately, he did not fully observe the outcome because of lack of time. So, he decided to stay with Mr. Camat to learn more about organic farming.

Janrey claims that he learned a lot of ways of organic farming and he is now applying them in his farm. However, the concept and value of multi-cropping/diversified farming struck him the most. In fact, when I asked what change can he contribute to his community, he answered that it would be to encourage and convince his fellow corn farmers to adopt the multi-cropping system. He said that their present practice of corn monocropping is very risky

because if pests hit, nothing will be left to the farmers. Whereas in multi-cropping, if one crop is affected by pests, there are still the other crops that the farmer can harvest and sell to have funds to start all over again. If the price of corn drops, their income is severely affected. Whereas in multi-cropping, if the price of one component drops, there are still the other components that can offset the loss income. In a way, this will make their farming more profitable and resilient, Janrey said.

The Benefits of his Experience as ATI-EP Scholar

Considering the short duration of the program, I am interested to know if really, there were benefits that he got from his experience as a scholar. So, I looked at him in the eye and asked him to answer me honestly. He replied "a lot".

According to him, the scholarship provided him a



sense of direction. He learned how to plan for his life. In fact, Janrey influenced his two younger siblings to pursue enterprise development and animal science as a course so that their agriculture venture will be complete and interconnected in the future. He has this vision of turning their farming into a family enterprise that has both crops and livestock component as well as the business aspect.

Moreover, aside from the farming technologies, his social skills improved. Janrey learned how to properly mingle with others and he confidently said that he can now converse with confidence to almost all types of people and personalities.

Furthermore, opportunities opened for him. People started to notice and respect him, especially Engr. Eugene Culimay, the Municipal Agriculturist of Alfonso Lista. Compared before, he is now offered trainings and seminars as well as partnerships. His attendance to trainings led him

to be employed as an Artificial Insemination Technician (casual) by the Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) for supposed to be 6 months. However, when he was to be assigned in Tabuk City, he decided to quit for personal reasons.

One good opportunity he got was the approval of his proposal to develop his farm to be funded by ATI-RTC-CAR.

The Fruits of His Proposals

With the help of Mr. Cristino Balancio, the head of the Partnership and Accreditation Services Section (PASS) of ATI-RTC-CAR back then, Janrey got an P80,000.00 grant from the 4-H program under the Extension Program for Agri-Fisheries and National Development (ExpAND). This program aims to provide extension support to proposed extension interventions of LGUs, SUCs, NGAs and the private sectors through catalytic financing and counterpart schemes. The program has

two components namely: 1. The Training and Sustainability Support for Farmers, Farm Youths and Extension Practitioners; and 2. The Livelihood Support for 4th – 6th Class municipalities. Luckily, his proposal was approved under the category 1, in which one of the requirements is being a recipient of ATI scholarship program.

According to him, he used the P50,000.00 to buy the components of his farm and some farm tools. The P30,000.00 was used to purchase another lot from his grandfather that was mortgaged. He has both crops and livestock in his 1.5 ha. farm where he practices the learning he gained from his trainings on organic farming like crop rotation, crossbreeding etc.

He planted miracle plants which he claimed, can cure a variety of ailments (the fruit), thus the name. He also has dwarf coconuts, sweet guavanos, star fruit, bignay and native papayas.



Janrey, prefers native papayas over the hybrid ones because his chickens love them more compared to hybrid ones (a sign that the lad is very observant). He also has citrus, lemon grass, katuray and of course bananas – a crop that Ifugao is also known for. In the entrance of his farm are 2 paddies of rice crops.

I noticed that Janrey loves fowls. He proudly showed me his prized Brahman chicken which he called King of chickens, which is really big compared to the native ones. Aside from chicken he also has ducks, Bengal turkeys and native pigs. He also has a water impounding area, which can be a potential fish pond. He also grows eggplant and okra in his main production area.

According to him, the farm is purely a corn area before the project came. Right now,



he cannot maximize the area because some are rolling terrain. However, he planted 50 seedlings of durian and rambutan in the sloping part before to maximize the area but were destroyed by typhoons. Part of his future plans is to replant it again with permanent crops if fund will be available.

In terms of revenue, Janrey said that the farm does not generate a steady income yet. Majority of the produce were for home consumption, only those that are excess were marketed. However, there was a time that his onion venture gave him enough returns to purchase hogs, but unfortunately, they were killed by the deadly African Swine Fever. Only his bananas are giving him P4,000-5,000.00 a month.

As a way of giving back to the community, Janrey is giving free planting materials to those who visit his farm.

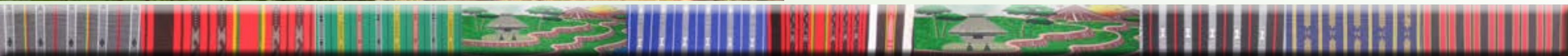
His Achievements and Future Plans



According to Janrey, he has not yet achieved great feats as a farmer. However, he decently claimed that if you ask for a young farmer in Alfonso Lista, his name resonates, especially in the agriculture office. As a wrap-up question, I asked Janrey about his future plans for himself and the farm, and he answered “to become a certified farmer after 10 years.” There goes the mystery word again, but this time I did not let it slipped away. According to Janrey, a “certified farmer” means one who is successful enough to become an LSA, adopts farmers and youths and shares his practices to them.

After we wrapped up the interview, we walked to their house to meet his family. There, we saw ducks, chickens, goats and native pigs roaming around and vegetables and fruit trees planted on the perimeters. We also saw a stock of palay, a pumpwell, a wood stove, a makeshift comfort room and their simple house. But most importantly, we saw a simple but happy family that are supportive and proud of what Janrey has become. A

picture that affirms Ildan’s quotation “when simple is more than enough, you will feel happy more than enough!” Indeed, the great gift of happiness comes in simple packages!



Doing Business with a Heart:

The Allen Bongat Story

MANGO is one of the tropical fruits that the Philippines is known for, and one province comes in mind if we speak of sweet mangoes – the province of Guimaras. In the town of A. Lista, Ifugao, there is one man, that is known for his quality guimaras variety mango fruits. He is Mr. Allen Bongat, a Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA) under the HVCD program. Let us get to know him more.

His Roots

Mr. Allen Bongat was born in Baguio City to Mang Calixto who is a native of Natonin and Aling Minda, who is a native of Barlig, Mountain Province. Mang Calixto is a former NIA employee and Aling Minda is a teacher. Allen is 3rd in the 5 siblings.

The reason why they migrated to Alfonso Lista, Ifugao is a long story, so, to cut it short, his father (as a NIA employee) was involved in the construction

of the Magat Dam way back in 1970s. According to him, the project Engineer by the name Mr. Dulig promoted his father from a laborer to foreman because he was the only laborer back then that can speak English. And their friendship flourished.

With the help of Engr. Dulig, Mang Calixto was able to buy their 50 ha. land in Alfonso Lista sometime in 1978. Through salary deductions, his father was able to buy the land from Engr. Dulig. The land was foreclosed by banks from various owners.

Initially, they utilized the area as a pasture land for their more than 120 heads of cows that time. However, as time passed by, cattle rustlers started to grow in number in Alfonso Lista so they decided to change venture in 1983. They fenced the area and started to plant mango trees (though their cattle venture remained). He recalled that every summer break, he would go to their farm and help his father plant mango seedlings until it grew to what it is today. At present Mr. Allen has a more or less 500 mango trees.



Why Farming?

Allen loves farming, particularly livestock. He developed the passion for it due to the influence of his father who already involved them in their farming activities at a young age. He recalled that he was grade 4 when he started helping his father to take care of the cows. As a child, he saw the potential in raising cows. In fact, he dreamt of becoming a veterinarian that time.

To pursue his dream, he enrolled in Araneta University in Manila for two years (1990-1992). His plan that time is to go to Australia when he graduates because of high salary (as influenced by his professors). However, his health issues (sickly) back then forced him to drop out of school. According to him, just to say that he has a degree, he pursued and

graduated with BS Marine Transportation.

Despite being a certified seaman, he never boarded any marine vessel because his heart is with farming. Some are urging him to try, but by observation, he realized that even those who boarded vessels turn into farming when they come back so why still board, he said.

Also, he recalled that in 1987 in their career orientation program, he realized that agriculture is very important because one of the basic needs of human is food, you can never say no to food because if you don't eat you will die, he said. This is why we survived during the pandemic even if there were no support, he quipped.

All these solidified his decision to delve into agriculture.

The Mango Farm

The farm has a total land area of 50 ha., but only 30 ha. is productive. Aside from mango as the main component, it is planted with banana, dragon fruit and coconut. They also have cows, ducks, chickens and goats.

Mr. Bongat took over the management of the farm in 2011, when her wife resigned from her work in Manila. His wife is from Abulog, Cagayan. They were blessed with 3 children, 2 boys and 1 girl aged 24, 19 and 6 respectively.

His first project when he took over was a fishpond. They cultured tilapia and they were earning from it. However, competition grew so he concentrated in their mango production starting with 200 trees.



Why Mango?

According to Sir Allen, there was a guy from Batangas who encouraged his father to plant mangoes back then. He said that, venturing into mango production has a potential because it has both local and export markets. In addition, those that are not sold can be processed into other products like dried mango, pickles or mango purees. So, there are a lot of products that mangoes can be processed into. Recently (2022), he also tried processing mango pickles and his neighbors liked it. However, he lacked proper equipment to operationalize his plans yet.

When it comes to revenue, Mr. Bongat claims that income from mango is big depending

on your strategy. He said that if you will depend solely with middlemen, you will lose a lot of potential income. He related his experience with one middleman who offered him to buy the fruits of his 15-20 mango trees for P20,000.00, but he declined. Instead, he followed the advice of an employee from DENR, who encouraged him to sell his mangoes on the side of the road. As a result, he was able to sold his mangoes for a whopping P60,000.00 or three times the price that was offered to him.

It was that time that he realized there were really honest and cunning middlemen. So, when I asked him, what change will he do in the agriculture sector if he was the president? he answered

- to eliminate middlemen because a lot of income is lost for farmers because of them. Another reason why he sells his mangoes himself is that, mangoes are sold expensively in the market thereby depriving the needy consumers the chance to taste the sweetness of mangoes. "For me, I do business with a heart," Mr. Bongat says. He gives "free taste" especially if he sees that the buyer looks needy. Sometimes, he adds extra kilo if he sees a really needy buyer with a child and even gives extra to the child. Sometimes he even gives it for free. It is by these practices that he grew the base of his buyers (suki). Right now, his "suki" comes from all walks, ranging from barefooted to the ones riding SUVs.

"Isu nga haan laeng a dimmakel

iti kitak, nakatulungak pay kadagiti padak nga awanan" (so, I did not only increase my income, I also helped people who don't have much, like me).

According to Sir Allen, he has many competitors from other provinces, but because of the good quality of his mangoes, buyers go straight in their farm to reserve orders (may it be green or ripe mango). Oftentimes, if he sells by the roadsides, his mangoes are already sold even before 3:00PM.

His technologies being practiced

Probably, one reason why his mangoes are of good quality is because of the technologies he practices. One of these is bagging. Mr. Bongat wraps his mangoes in a size 2 brown paper bags to protect them from pests. He does this when the mangoes are about quail-egg in size. Bagging the fruit earlier is not recommended because at earlier stage, it is still not sure whether the fruit will survive

or not. From his experience, a lot of the fruit will not survive if they are bagged earlier than quail-egg size. This will result in wasted bags thus wasted investment.

This is the reason why others bag their mangoes at chicken-egg size to have a better chance of surviving. But for him, he cannot do this because of his area. He needs to start earlier in order to cover as many trees a possible. He said that he can bag 90% of the fruits if the tree is short while around 50-60% if it is tall. Sometimes, he is still bagging even if they are already starting to harvest. A piece of brown bag costs around 35 centavos and they can bag around 50,000 – 60,000 fruits from his 200 trees in one season.

Mr. Bongat also practices pruning. According to him pruning allows sunlight to penetrate the canopy of the tree thus supporting better fruit

production. Also, it prevents the growth of fungi in the bark of the tree. He also practices sanitation.

When he joined a Facebook Group called "Mango Raisers Haven" he discovered that there are groups who offer fruit bagging contracts. With this, he got already an idea, "if God willing, I will be able to stand a chance against "Kurikong," he said.

The Challenges

Sir Allen claims that one of the disadvantages of mango farming is the very sensitive management of mangoes on the first 45 days from flowering. It needs close monitoring because if pests or disasters hit at this stage, don't expect that you will gain profit. You can break-even depending on the severity of damage. So, pest management is critical during this stage, he said.

Another problem during 45 days onwards are trespassers.



However, I let them be because, they cannot uproot the whole tree anyway, so I let them taste my mangoes, he said.

According to him, common mango pests are manageable, except the “kurikong” which is very hard to control. This problem is caused by a Cecid fly, that causes raised black blotches in the fruit, that ruins the quality of the fruit. This started in 2018 in their area but originated in Pangasinan province. Compared to typhoons which can be forecasted, “kurikong” attacks unexpectedly. If you do not bag, all will be wasted, he said.

In fact, this problem almost pushed him to quit farming. Recently (2022), it was first time in history that he incurred heavy losses. Out of his P400,000.00 investment, only P40,000.00 came back. This experienced weakened his spirit to continue farming. However, his passion for farming kept him standing. He realized that if he quit the

management of the farm and let it on the hands of contract growers, there is a possibility that it will be abused again. He said that losing is part of farming but as long as you have passion and happy in what you are doing, you will never quit.

So, his wife suggested to just hire additional laborer that they can be contacted at certain months of the operation. Right now, they hire around 5 laborers whom they treat with compassion and as part of the family.

His Experience as LSA

Mr. Bongat learned about the Learning Site for Agriculture Program from Mr. Danny Barruelo from the office of the municipal agricultural services of Alfonso Lista. He liked the concept but he still doubts about the offer. However, his friend from Cabatuan, Isabela, Engr. Felix Maramba, who also has an integrated farm, told him the advantages of

being an LSA. Engr. Maramba, underscored that thru LSA he will gather various technologies and information thru trainings and seminars. So, he became interested and decided to give it a try.

In 2015, he became a cooperator of the LSA program. At first, he felt mixed emotions. He was happy but at the same time, confused because he doesn’t know what to do. As LSA, he got a grant worth P70,000.00 which he used to build his holding area. Another P50,000.00 for his nursery and another P50,000.00 to develop another area in his farm. He is planning to proposed again to develop his water source/ deepwell. However, sometimes he is not able to submit his reports because of his busy schedules, which he feels deeply sorry.

As LSA, he gives back to the community by sharing his technologies as resource person



in various trainings. Likewise, he shares technology-based IEC print materials (that he sourced from ATI) to those walk-in clients that are interested. However, according to him, majority of his clients were from Isabela not from Cordillera.

According to Sir Allen, the program helped him a lot. He developed his presentation skills by being tapped as resource person during trainings/ seminars. He said that the most important learning that he got from attending ATI trainings/ seminar, is about the soil and water conservation. It opened his eyes to care more for the environment. “I realized that I have still a lot to learn,” he said.

His Future plans

Mr. Bongat is planning how he will get a steady income from the farm. He realized that this

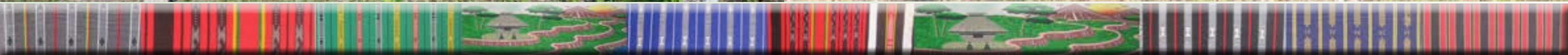
can be done by planting various fruit trees. According to him, he observed the fruiting sequence of various fruit trees and he found out that next to mango is avocado, next to avocado is rambutan then lanzones then durian. Banana is all year round so he will replace his dragon fruit area (already diseased) with banana.

At the personal level, as one of his sustainability plan, he is now teaching his kids to work in the farm because he is already old. He is encouraging them to also have a passion in farming because in the end, they will be the ones who will benefit from it. He recalled the wisdom of his father when they were planting the mangoes, their neighbors were mocking him that time that he will not be able to reap the fruits of the mangoes anymore because of his age. However,

his father was still able to benefit from the farm for 20 years and they are still reaping the fruit of his labor until now.

Reflecting on his story, behind Mr. Allen Bongat’s success lies his faith in God.

“As long as you have passion and happy in what you are doing and you have faith in God, everything will be alright. There will be failures but there will be more success,” he says. So, he encourages his co-farmers to just continue and be proud in what they do because farmers are the ones feeding the nation. He also encouraged the students or out-of-school-youths (OSY) to take up agriculture because in agriculture they can live and survive even if they are not employed. (MRAromin,Jr.)







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