



Ellen Batan



MARCCO

Matulatula Agrarian Reform
Community Cooperative

FARMERS' ORGANIZATION

Story

“I’m a Farmer and I keep Learning”

- Ellen Batan



Ellen’s investment on livestock farming

Ellen Batan, or simply **Ellen**, is a learned farmer. Like any other farmer, she always benefits from several opportunities MarCCO provides its members to improve their farming skills.

One of the best learnings she appreciates is composting, and she generously offers to share her learning with other farmers. In addition, she volunteers to assist the cooperative with their usual operations when needed.

Household and Farming

There are five in the family: my husband and I, and our three children who are currently in their senior high and university. We are economically dependent on farm produce to sell on the market.

The scarcity of produce would lead us to sell some of our livestock, mainly our native chickens, to meet our household needs and children’s education.

My husband and I are currently farming 1 ½ hectares of land, planting vegetables like okra, eggplant, string beans, pumpkins, bottle gourd, and fruits like “dalandan” (*Citrus aurantium*), and calamansi (*Citrus macrocarpa*) as our primary crops. We also raise some cows, chickens, ducks, and swine for supplemental income to support our family.

Our estimated annual harvest of crops is as follows: two tons of dalandan, one ton of calamansi, 200 kgs of okra, 1 ton of eggplant, 100 kgs string beans, 200 kgs pumpkins, and 100 kgs of bottle gourd.

We usually use cross-cut saws and pruning shears for pruning calamansi and dalandan and other farming tools like a machete, shovel, garden trowel, garden hoe, garden hose, and sprinklers, among others, to cultivate and harvest our farm produce.

“We receive free technical training on farming, like compost-making, crop management (pruning), supported by Agri-agencies (AsiaDHRRA) and national, local, and provincial governments”

AsiaDHRRA: *What is the environmental context of farming and how are farming practices affected by it?*

Ellen: Climate change, specifically changes in rainfall patterns and prolonged dry periods, is a challenge we currently face. Prolonged dry periods affect our crops and animals due to an inadequate water supply.

Excessive rainfall also damages and negatively affects the growth of our vegetables.



Ellen participating in focus group discussion during the SIS mission conducted by IFAD on May 2023 at MarCCO office in Pola, Mindoro Oriental

AsiaDHRRA: How important are these services and the community in your daily life?

Ellen: The cooperative's service is vital as it provides seeds, training, marketing, and low-interest loans to its members to support their farming businesses or even start their new agri-businesses.

AsiaDHRRA: Are you involved in the governance of your Farmers' Organisation? If yes, what is your role? How has the involvement of women and youth in the governance changed over the past years?

Ellen: I am not a member of the cooperative's governance, but I support conducting basic audits of the cooperative's inventory, financial transactions, and documents related to operations and project implementation, including activities engaging women and youth to earn an income during fruit harvesting (peak) season.

AsiaDHRRA: What services does the Farmer's Organization provide to you? Did these Services change over time?

Ellen: The cooperative provides us with tools for farming, seedlings, marketing, and credit services. There is an improved service due to more people being employed in administrative, accounting, record-keeping, finance, operation, and marketing.

As a result, cooperative membership has increased. This change has led to further income for the cooperative, thus allowing member farmers to earn dividends from their membership paid-up capital.

The cooperative also provides free technical training on farming, like compost-making, crop management (pruning), supported by agri agencies (AsiaDHRRA) and national, local, and provincial governments.

"The cooperative offers this opportunity for women and youth to earn extra income apart from what they get from their farm"



Women and youth sorting calamansi during harvesting season

Previously, there were very few women and youth members. Women and youth membership have increased, and they help sort the fruits, particularly calamansi, during the harvest or post-production.

The process involves sorting and cleaning the fruit by size and removing unnecessary branches before squeezing or placing them in the extractor. The cooperative offers this opportunity for women and youth to earn extra income apart from what they get from their farm.

AsiaDHRRA: *What were the challenges you had to overcome in the past years and how did you do that?*

Ellen: Our cooperative previously had problems with member farmers who needed help to pay back their loans. However, the cooperative always finds a way for their member farmers to settle the loans accordingly by conducting meetings and discussions to agree. Climate change always affects our crops, particularly our vegetables. But we are not yet aware of the degree that climate change has negatively impacted our calamansi and dalandan fruit crops.

Yet we know from experience that performance and yields have been significantly lower compared to 3 to 5 years ago due to climate change and pests that affect and damage our crops. Pests did not cause much damage to our crops before, but in recent years, pests have become more challenging as they affect our crops' yields. I sometimes single-handedly remove pests from the plants to avoid infecting the fruits and use traditional farming pest traps and repellants.

“I am very grateful for the support provided by the cooperative who shaped me to learn several technical skills to manage our farm and livelihood.”



Ellen's vegetable farm

AsiaDHRRA: *What are your plans for the future?*

Ellen: I intend to increase my capital share to support the cooperative's efforts in its services to members. I also plan to expand our farm's production. I do support the cooperative in many other ways to improve its services like basic administrative and operational auditing.

Ellen's story may be similar to other farmers who work hard to earn a living. Still, her learning gave farming a better meaning of benefiting the environment by voluntarily sharing knowledge and servicing the cooperative for its sustenance.

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