



Marlon Moong



**MARCCO**

Matulatula Agrarian Reform  
Community Cooperative

# FARMERS' ORGANIZATION

*Story*



# “A Farmer Technician, a Farmer by Faith”

- Marlon Moong



Marlon Moong discusses about his farm's challenges

## Household and Farming

There are four of us in the family: my wife, my two daughters, and I. The rough economic situation in our household is reflected in the increasing price of essential commodities, particularly rice, and electric (power) consumption. Low market prices of our agricultural products have always been a problem for a very long time. Our family has five hectares of land-producing crops like rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*), avocado (*Persea americana*), bananas, guyabano or soursop (*Annona muricata*), calamansi (*Citrus microcarpa*), coconuts (*Cocos nucifera*).

We produce around 50 kgs of seasonal rambutan, one ton of avocados, two tons of bananas, 700 kgs of guyabano, and 1.5 tons of calamansi annually. Additionally, we produce approximately 2,000 nuts of coconut or 500 kilograms of copra every two months. I use pruning shears, cross-cut saws, a typical machete, and motorized grass cutters, among others, to cultivate, maintain, and harvest our crops.

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

**Marlon:** Our farm has an inadequate water supply and relies largely on rain during the rainy season. During the dry season, production is affected. Calamansi production is not possible primarily because calamansi trees require plentiful water to flower and bear fruits.

“If someone could give me, I will use and manage it with utmost care because it is a gift”. Marlon replied with a smile when other farmers told him to buy a grasscutter instead of waiting for someone to provide it.

**Marlon** is a calamansi grower like other member farmers of MarCCO, and he can afford to buy grass cutters in numbers. However, he appreciates the sentimental value of an item if it is gifted, not purchased.

After a brief tour of his calamansi trees, Marlon and his wife served a freshly cooked afternoon snack with coconut water and accommodated the request for an interview.



Other crops like coconuts, bananas, and soursop are likewise affected, resulting in lower yields compared to an abundant water supply.

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

**Marlon:** Through MARCCO, we learned technical ways of caring for and improving our agricultural practices, including soil fertility management, which is important in enhancing productivity and nutrient management, inducing flowering and fruiting of calamansi and other fruit trees.

Earlier, MarCCO's capacity to buy calamansi from its members was very limited. Due to the increasing number of members, the cooperative was able to increase its capital and eventually accessed financial loans from a bank, increasing MarCCO's capacity to provide lending services to members. Our cooperative offers lower interest rates on loans it provides to members. MarCCO's lending services also support start-up agri-enterprises and the livelihoods of members.



MarCCO staff and board members with visitors from AsiaDHRRA, IFAD, and AgriCord during the SIS Mission on May 2024

Moreover, the cooperative collectively markets our farm produce through networking and support from agri-agencies and national, local, and provincial governments.



Marlon's calamansi trees

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

**Marlon:** These services are vital because they support the members in further learning about agriculture, enhancing livelihood and members' enterprises, and educating members to grow as responsible, cooperative members.

The lending services of MarCCO help members recover from farm losses or allow a new member to start agri-enterprises. As the cooperative collectively markets our products, it helps us earn more profit, eventually benefiting our family income.

**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?

**Marlon:** I was elected recently to become a MARCCO's Board of Directors member. I support the other members of the Board of Directors and management in setting strategic directions and formulating policies that would help strengthen MARCCO as an organization, grow our enterprises, and expand our services to members.

As a volunteer *farmer technician*, I also contribute to resolving problems faced by members related to agricultural production.

I also advocate and encourage young children of members to participate and engage in discussions, exchanges of ideas and experiences, or sharing knowledge and information during our regular cluster meetings to learn more about farming, especially agroecological farming.

**"... I advocate and encourage young children of members to participate and engage in discussions, exchanges of ideas and experiences"**

There are currently three women as members of the board. Like youth, most women farmers help sort calamansi during harvest or post-production season. Further, women farmers usually facilitate cluster meetings among the farmers and prepare the documentation.

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

**Marlon:** Previously, there were just a few members, and the cooperative was about to be dissolved. However, with the support given by AsiaDHRRA and through the mobilization of assistance from national and local governments, the cooperative managed to resolve the membership problem, grow the number of members, and start the enterprise in calamansi.



*Harvest from Marlon's banana trees*

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

**Marlon:** I want to support the cooperative by providing the members more space to learn and improve their farm and agri-enterprise. I also hope that the farmers will appreciate the farm services offered to them so they can advance in the future.

I hope my children complete their studies and for me to continue serving our church as an activity minister to help more people in need in our community.

*Marlon is a farmer with functional hands, from providing directions in the cooperative to selflessly sharing technical knowledge and spiritual guidance to their community. His skills do not belong solely to the soil itself flourishing crops, but to sharpen and foster the mind and cores of every farmer to harvest the fruits of their hard work and faith in farming.*



*Marlon as a Church minister*

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# FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS FOR ASIA (FO4A)