



FARMER'S EXPERIENCES: THE CASE OF AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES

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Abstract:

Farming is a multifaceted activity that involves various farming challenges and opportunities and their experiences were honed by various elements such as marketing strategies, technological innovations, and cultural features are very essential to develop more farmer-centric interventions that support sustainable and gender-responsive agriculture. This study utilized a qualitative design bound by a grounded theory approach by means of purposive sampling representing the group of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries of Davao City, Davao Del Sur, Philippines. The study revealed five themes following factors (1) Production assistance (2) Full marketing support through cooperative membership (3) Lack of management strategy (4) Lack of financial assistance and market linkages (5) Lease agreements from ARBs to high-end operational agricultural plantations. The following results show the remaining gaps and areas of concern that must be highly provided by policy interventions and streamlined procedural assistance that could benefit the ARBs.

Keywords: agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBS), production assistance, marketing support, management strategy, and lease agreements from high-end operational agricultural plantations

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Over the years, CARP has distributed 4.8 million hectares – 16 percent of the nation's land to almost three million beneficiaries. However, only approximately 53 percent of lands distributed were in the form of individual titles. Especially in the 1990s, the government issued mostly collective land ownership awards to speed up land distribution, intending to subdivide and title them individually at a future time.

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The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) is an expanded version of earlier land reform initiatives, involving both developmental and redistributive programs to open up frontier lands and redistribute property.

CARL is a redistributive program that began in the 1960s with the enactment of RA 3844 and Presidential Decree 27. It abolished share tenancy, instituted a leasehold system, and lowered the ceiling on agricultural landownership. Agrarian reform in the Philippines is not an easy task compacted of the challenges it has to face opposition from landlords, criticism by civil society, suspicion by the private sector, cynicism by legislators, lack of financial and material resources as well as general public apathy (Guardian, 2003). Agrarian reform has improved the lives of Philippine peasants, but its impact may not be as large (World Bank, 2009).

As GTZ (2006) wrote then and is still true today, it is evident that the agrarian reform is far from being completed, especially in terms of the compulsory acquisition of large private landholdings and their redistribution to the mass of landless peasants. The remaining lands are difficult to acquire and distribute, and many have been left without meaningful support. (Focus on Global South, 2013). Moreover, Agrarian reform beneficiaries may not be able to take possession of land or gain support.

Duterte reversed the long-standing pattern of ignoring agrarian reform's social justice principles (Tadem, 2016). Recently, the Philippine government has embarked on a renewed push for individual titling to hasten transformation in rural areas. Implemented by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the SPLIT Project will support the government's ongoing efforts for parcelization and individual titling through the adoption of improved technologies and digital platforms, improvements in regulations, streamlining of procedures in the titling process, and enhanced consultations with beneficiaries (Spres Release, June 2020).

1.2 Scope of the Study

The study will take place in Davao City.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This study is designed to look into the CARP Beneficiaries Experiences in the case of Davao City.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of:
 - a) Age;
 - b) Sex;
 - c) Number of years in farming?
- 2) What is the current situation of CARP beneficiaries as farmers?
- 3) What are the CARP initiatives given to CARP beneficiaries?
- 4) What are the outcomes of the CARP initiatives?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are the following:

- 1) To determine the agrarian reform beneficiaries' farmers on their experiences from the aid provided by the Department of Agrarian Reform- Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.
- 2) To provide recommendations to the DAR agency Region XI and other stakeholders for the basis for the policy and social development for the ARBs.

2. Literature Review

A modernization paradigm centered on specialization, intensification, and scale expansion has guided agricultural progress (De Roest, Ferrari et al., 2018), with the increase of population of 40 million in Kenya, they needed to engage in crop modification as it threatens their food security (Muhunyu, 2012) and adapting to climate change necessitates a better understanding of present cocoa production methods and farmers' coping techniques (Abdulai, Jassogne et al., 2018). With this, smart farming (SF) incorporation of information and communication technology into agricultural machinery, equipment, and sensors (McLellan, Cassman et al., 2018).

The introduction of smart farming (SF) in the Philippines faced numerous challenges (Liang and Paengkoum, 2019) and the primary priority to assure survival and well-being is the sustainability of the agricultural system (Talukder, Blay-Palmer et al., 2020, & Yamagishi, K., et al., 2021).

However, in the Philippines, it was cited by (Lanzona Jr., 2019) the high transaction costs and insufficient credible pledges have impeded the Philippine Agrarian Reform Programs, resulting in the erosion of market forces and elite takeover of institutions.

2.1 Production Assistance to the ARBs

Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries' participation in the welfare consequences of market participation was captured using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and documental analysis in Agdangan, Quezon and discovered that balanced benefits and agricultural needs for market involvement are critical (Teves, 2022). A study conducted by (Steenkamp, Pieterse et al. 2020) that support measures were crucial to the success and profitability of an organization. Therefore, it was mentioned by (Ogay, 2019) that the government has failed to provide for peasants notably rice producers, with the required financial assistance for maximum output, and as a result, the peasants have been compelled to take out bank loans, and frequently usurious lending institutions that have proliferated not only in heavily populated areas but even in distant rural communities in recent years.

2.2 Full Marketing Support from the Government

The implementation of CARP has made significant progress in terms of land reform area and beneficiary numbers during the last 30 years, however, there is a need in scaling up

their auspicious arrangement towards the ARB communities (Ballesteros, Ancheta et al., 2018). In the study of Ballesteros, M. M. and J. A. Ancheta (2021), alternative ownership rights structures may also be considered in order to encourage members, both commercial and subsistence farmers, to participate in and invest in cooperatives which will be highly assisted by the DAR office. The assessment of the effects of land policy change on farm size and agricultural productivity resulted in a potential role in land productivity effects in the agricultural sector (Zaragoza and Caelian, 2020).

2.3 Lack of Management Strategy

Over the years, the structural transformation has gradually improved and accelerated farmers agricultural farmers and fisher folks has been honed a more food-secure vision in the Philippines (Bank, W., 2020), using historical data and referencing previous analyses conducted by (Ma, 2020), her study demonstrates and compares the historic changes pursuing economic and political prosperity that concerned landlord classes in each country that the strategies can be adopted for local state-building to achieve economic progress and political stability in that period: either destructing the landlord classes and carrying out land reforms, or having absolute control over land lodgers. It was stated further by (Bayudan-Dacuycuy, C., et al., 2022) that the government has been intensifying its capacity programs and boosting affordable easy access to retail lending, however, common problems had to remain such as lack of market strategy, repayment capacity, and credit rating of small farmers and fisher folks in the Philippines.

2.4 Lack of Financial Assistance and Market Linkages

Credit programs have long been regarded as critical methods of developing the Philippine agriculture industry, particularly small-farm agriculture. Credit programs in the country have evolved from subsidized-directed to market-oriented in recent years (Galang, I. M. R., 2021). On the other hand, most successful redistribution cases require transitional support. making the loss of their freshly acquired land more appealing rather than keeping it. This is where block farming comes in transition (Barreiro, E., Guinto, W., Tacubanza, E., & Abrina, T., 2023). In the implementation of Sugarcane Block Farming to increase farm income and productivity, it was suggested that the government must create a policy framework in which Philippine export crops can compete further added that the beneficiaries of agrarian reform and their groups should also be supported through capacity-building programs (Pantoja, B. R., Alvarez, J. V., & Sanchez, F. A., 2019).

3. Methods

This research used qualitative research design and the case study approach was chosen as most appropriate to the examination of a contemporary phenomenon in context (Yin, 2003).

According to Yin, R. K. (1994), an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The researcher also utilized

primary and secondary data acquired from face-to-face interviews with the agrarian reform beneficiaries.

This study tries to look at a broad range of interconnected processes or causes. New questions and 34 pieces of information gathered in the process of research shape the questions as the research is being done. And in place of reproducible results, qualitative researchers generally aim at accuracy—getting at the everyday realities of some social phenomenon and studying important questions as they are practiced (Becker, H. S., 1990).

Figure 1: Representation of diagram of the procedure of the study



3.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze the data which was collected from personal interviews. According to Moore & McCabe (2005), this is the type of research whereby data gathered is categorized into themes and sub-themes, to be able to be comparable. A main advantage of content analysis is that it helps 37 in data collected being reduced and simplified, at the same time producing results that may then measure using quantitative techniques. Furthermore, content analysis provides the capability of researchers to structure the qualitative data collected in a way that satisfies the success of research objectives.

4. Results and Discussions

This study will be focused on ten (10) recipients of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) Beneficiaries under the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) XI, Davao City.

As shown in Table 1, the researcher was able to interview eight (8) males and two (2) females with the majority from the age group forty-five to sixty-four (45-64). Most of them are 20 years onwards in farming.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents (N=10)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (years old)		
25-44	2	20%
45-64	7	70%
65 and above	1	10%
Sex		
Male	8	80%
Female	2	20%
Number of years in farming		
1-10	3	30%
11-20	2	20%
21-30	5	50%

4.1 Current Situation of CARP Beneficiaries, CARP Initiatives, and Outcomes

This section will determine the findings on the current situation of the Agrarian Reforms Beneficiaries, CARP initiatives, and Outcomes of farmers' experiences in Davao City, and each transcript divided into represented implications (Moustakas, 1994).

Theme 1: Production Assistance

Efforts alone are not enough to keep the farm operating. Indeed, it helped farmers to live comfortably but the problem is how to keep living comfortably. Farmers need assistance to provide fertilizers and pesticides. Not to mention that they have yet to pay the high interest when they borrowed money from the private sector to temporarily keep the farm operating.

In today's current condition, the need of linking farmers to the market is very essential. Despite the help of the cooperative, the lack of market links and bulk buyers seem to make few farmers unsatisfied which made them incapable to cooperate with others, and ended up selling their products outside the support from the cooperative (DAR, November 2020). The respondents express their need to bridge them for a direct bulk market of their products as evidenced stated by the key informant stating:

"The only thing that we really lack until now is the bulk order or marketing. Even though we have a coop, an association, our other colleagues still sell outside the coop. What's happening is that we are no longer getting good prices because we lack supply. There would be a good buyer if the volume of our supply is sufficient. DAR did something like market matching. But what happened, was the farmer was not briefed, and still nothing. What happened was that others mortgaged the land, nothing happened yet." (45, M.)

"Lack of capital for fertilizer, like financial needs. There are times when our budget is really insufficient because there are needs at home. We actually borrow money to buy fertilizer." (50, F.)

Cited by Makita (2016), the event of operation of shared land with agricultural certification may be a real kind of aid to land reform recipients who have a strong desire to be landowners, however in the advent of the promotion of intensive farming is a need for producer co-operative and was further recommended by (Santos, S. G. G. D. L., Pantoja, B. R., & Rañeses, F. P., 2022) continuous cooperative management and gender and development training are still required to encourage women to assume positions of leadership.

To respond to this deficiency, a commercial partnership agreement signing was conducted with the Southern Mindanao Multi-Purpose Cooperative, (DAR, November 2020) DAR assisted cooperative in Basiawan, Sta. Maria Davao Occidental recently inked a Commercial Partnership Agreement with Biao Agrarian Reform Cooperative (BARBCO), also a DAR-assisted cooperative in Davao City, and the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI). SDMC will supply quality cacao beans to BARBCO, the latter as the anchor organization in the partnership; will provide technical and marketing assistance in cacao production and DTI for the business development services, and processing equipment/facilities, among others. Moreover, The Department of Agriculture through the Agricultural Credit Policy Council and the Landbank of the Philippines released Php 91.98M as new loans for smallholder farmers to boost their competitiveness in rice production (DA Communication, October 24, 2019).

Theme 2: Full marketing support through Cooperative Membership

Despite the many dire situations farmers are facing, they still receive support from the DAR. It may not be enough but this helps the farmers to continue working and exert efforts in working their farms. The coop is also aiding support by helping the farmers sell the products and providing them the amount they should have in return.

The cooperative expresses its full and consistent support when it comes to marketing the banana product, still, farmers tied its hand and let some portion of the lands be rented out by private companies (RA, 1199) to be of use and to help provide for their farming needs as evidence stated by key informant stating that:

"Well, our coop still continues to sell our products." (59, F.)

"It is all right. We are the only ones who supply our crops and when it is harvest time we put them in the coop. We are also members of the coop." (47, M.)

If they will be dependent on the minimal support and services the agency offered, their farms will not survive knowing that those who are unqualified and deceased ARB members are receiving the said support. Active members are constantly requesting those in high positions to evaluate the recent lists of members so that those who are not qualified or no longer active will be removed as evidenced stated by the ARBs.

Civil society organizations have been at the vanguard of encouraging for agricultural reform concepts that inspire optimism for rural advance and nation-building Lorayna, K. J. A., & Caelian, M. V. (2020). To strengthen the engagement of ARBs, an

agribusiness venture arrangement is duly acknowledged by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) through policies that promote accountable reserves in agrarian reform areas Limbo, R. C. (2020), with these ancient challenges it is the utmost priority of the Philippine government to provide innovative and effective approaches to ensure sustainable agriculture through policy enhancements (Rampa, A., Gadanakis, Y., & Rose, G., 2020).

Theme 3: Lack of Management Strategy

There are farmers who are under contract with farm owners; in this case, even if farm owners want to reduce their farmers, they cannot decide about it until the years stated in the contract are over. This problem arises when the production is low which affects the gross net of the farm. The more farmers there are, the lower the income since they need to be paid. The other factor that causes the low production is the situation of the farm's soil. Too much fertilizer given to it throughout the years can decrease the soil's fertility caused by the chemicals in the fertilizers as evidenced stated by a key informant stating:

"We're okay, but it's not the same as before, because we have a big share before. But if we only talk about the land that is awarded, that's fine. We were able to use this land. Without the land, I may not be able to send my children to school." (52, M.)

"It should be fine, but due to the increase in the number of workers, our income seems to have slowed down now, so I have to observe in order to survive. We have so many workers but our production is slow. It's not the same as before, we have a relatively large income, but now it seems to have slowed down. And now, we divide the income together with the workers." (49, F.)

"The problem as of today is low of buyers of pineapple, before were very saleable. Maybe there is a change of marketing strategy of the cooperative to solve the problem, hopefully, DAR office will help us." (58, M.)

In the setting of an agricultural industry model with a nondegenerate distribution of farm sizes comprising an occupation option and a technology choice of farm operators according to this model, land reform can moderate agricultural production not just by misdirecting resources among farmers, but also by altering growers' livelihood and skill decisions Adamopoulos, T., & Restuccia, D. (2020). Galang, I. M. R. (2022) in the Philippine Journal of Development, Project ConVERGE's survey data suggests that individualized tenure has a positive correlation with yield and gross sales, but banana is a plantation crop. Contract farming arrangements are prevalent in the banana and pineapple industries, providing access to credit and technical assistance and guaranteed prices. Grades and standards are developed in commodity markets.

Theme 4: Lack of Financial Assistance and Market Linkages

They have insufficient financial or credit assistance when it comes to the farmers' needs for production to survive. Despite the help of the cooperative, the lack of a market link made some of the farmers sell their products outside or to other cooperative buyers. Aside from the unstable income of the farmers, they also have trouble providing the necessary amount to purchase fertilizers and pesticides to maintain the farm's productivity. A huge percentage of farmers is suggesting letting them take a loan that has a low interest as evidenced stated by a key informant stating that:

It was stated by (57, M.),

"There is no intervention. Ni updates from the market links. Sometimes these programs from the government are just for decorations only. it is way better if they provide fertilizers, we are the one who keeps reaching, anyway, it is better because the cooperative is supporting us."

It was added by (43, F.),

"Initiatives and training were provided related on pineapple and its other products to make that could be a source of income. If the cooperative was not created, maybe we are in difficulty in selling."

Further added by (48, M.),

"Still, in difficulty in marketing, sometimes it is compulsory to sell it per boxes. If there is a buyer from outside, it is not that bulk, we have a buyer in pineapple vinegar, juice, and jam might be, okay. But, if we will do extra efforts and trust the projects and programs of the government, I believe we can earn more."

A case study analysis to smallholder farmers in the Philippines was conducted by Chandra, A., McNamara, K. E., Dargusch, P., Caspe, A. M., & Dalabajan, D. (2017) in Mindanao Region revealed that Climate change and war exacerbate smallholder vulnerability, resulting in the forfeiture of livelihoods, fiscal properties, agricultural productivity, and the escalation of debt difficulties. With the advent of COVID-19, its impact distressed around the globe together with the high rate of joblessness and lesser income, thus access to financial services was highly problematic (Takenaka, A. K., et al., 2020). For instance, in the Bukidnon sugarcane plantation, it was cited by Intong, J. D., & Intong, R. L. (2016) inefficiencies within and outside the farmers' cooperative could hinder sugarcane block farm development, and it resulted to uniting small sugarcane farms into a block farm enterprise.

Theme 5: Lease Agreements from ARBs to High-End Operational Plantations

In the event of land redistribution to the agrarian reform beneficiaries, sometimes the farming capacity and ability, including the financial capacity is really challenging and it comes to a point that the awarded land will end up lend at the high-end operational plantation and production such as banana and pineapple. Despite the accessibility and capacity, the financial stability for investing in fertilizers, pest control, and others are much more expensive and end up in negative earnings. The following expressions, explain the situation:

"The situation today in our banana farm, because we are on CARP under DAR, and then we did under contract to Sumifro, they bought the banana fruit but, lots of pests in the banana, like Panama, moco although it is natural in a banana the problem now we cannot sustain it, like today, I have 4 areas awarded from DAR, and they are aware of it, we and my colleagues are both senior citizens, we do not have a second a liner, it is not good that I will take charge all of it, so the only land left is this, from the CARP and beneficiary of COOP, because we cannot sell this." (37, M.)

"The rent will continue and we maximize our markets also in banana even if our area is far, we are blessed because the road here is at good condition, but as of now, the DAR office didn't make any actions to market our farmed bananas because of cheaper price in markets." (40, F.)

The desired land distribution under the CARP program has not resulted in the desired redistribution of power from the landed to the landless, thus CARP does not redistribute power, but reinforces unequal distribution of power (Hambloch, C., 2018) and the scarcity of support services for agricultural reform beneficiaries living outside of agricultural Reform Communities prohibits them from being carefully feasible fabricators and significantly taints any land distribution that may have occurred. Some reform recipients may have been granted land on paper but were unable to take ownership of it or must have relinquished control of it (Drbohlay, Svitálek et al., 2017).

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This section presents the study results, conclusion, and recommendations for future reference.

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the study, the following were concluded:

- 1) Majority of the farmers were male, between 45-64 years old, and engaged in 21-30 years of farming, thus indicating that there is a low numbered of young generations of farmers especially in the ARBs sector;
- 2) There is a lack of crop production assistance such as capital for fertilizers which is highly needed for quality crop production and bulk order from the farmers

because the cooperative cannot accommodate all crop products as a result, other farmers tend to sell their products in a low price in lieu to the cooperative.

- a) There are ARBs that are active “ghost beneficiaries” in the DAR records.
- b) The farmers lease their land to the plantation owners for agriculture purposed;
- c) Insufficient financial or credit assistance to the farmers resulted to incapable of investing in fertilizers, pest control, and other farm needs.

5.2 CARP Initiatives

- 1) Training on pineapple products such as pineapple vinegar, pineapple jam, and many other products from pineapple fruit. Further, the DAR office provides Basic Financial Management for Farmer’s Associations.
- 2) Established Agribusiness Venture Arrangement between high-end operational agribusiness engage plantation and ARBs.
- 3) Streamlining the granting of land distribution to the Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries.
- 4) Provisions of seedlings in partnership with the Department of Agriculture such as different varieties of Cacao.

5.3 Recommendation

Based on the conclusions, the following are highly recommended:

- 1) Provision of full-blown assistance to the ARBs throughout the cropping system (e.g from financing, fertilizers, and marketing) this will be in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Office of the Department of Agrarian Reform, Local Government Unit, Barangay Local Government Unit, and other stakeholders.
- 2) Intensify the conduct of by-products of crop production and explores the world of marketing.
- 3) Review and extend the marketing strategy that is utilized today, and introduce an online promotion strategy and tactics to win customers.
- 4) Generate an online monitoring system in the assessment of active ARBs, this is to ensure that the office provides support services to the right stakeholders.
- 5) Intensification of the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) to determine all the resource elevations, stream locations, and others that will help analyze the most fitted crops to be produced.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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