



# FACES

**OF SUCCESS IN CARAPRENEURSHIP**

Second Edition, 2022

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## FOREWORD

For the past 29 years, the DA-Philippine Carabao Center has been consistently showcasing grit and resiliency in providing quality services to its clients and serving the development of the carabao industry. The industry has evolved from client-focused service provision through social preparation and animal dispersal to establishing a carabao value chain manifested by the outcome of different projects, programs, and activities of the agency and other government partners.

The commitments of DA-PCC in genetic improvement, carabao enterprise development and research for development have inspired and motivated champion farmers to focus on the carabao business as a means of hoisting their current quality of living. This book features “25 Faces of Success” which are considered models in each of their own segment in the carabao value chain. They are the living witnesses that there is undeniable success in the “wean” to “win” strategy in this new age of bringing forth felt changes in the agriculture industry.

These successes would not be possible without the sustained dedication and symbiosis of PCC players to its clients, partners, stakeholders, and other co-workers. We are also witnesses of the progression of our clients in terms of their mindset and performance in carabao production and management. This helped upscale their contribution to community revenues and income and increase their influence in furthering the industry.

As the agency celebrates its 30th anniversary, PCC will continue the legacy toward excellent service and exponential synergy.



**LIZA G. BATTAD**  
Executive Director III

## ACRONYMS

AI	Artificial Insemination
ATI	Agricultural Training Institute
BCS	Body Condition Score
CBED	Carabao-based Enterprise Development
CBIN	Carabao-based Business Improvement Network
CCDP	Coconut-Carabao Development Program
CDA	Cooperative Development Authority
CDP	Carabao Development Program
DA	Department of Agriculture
DepEd	Department of Education
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
FLS-DBP	Farmer Livestock School on Dairy Buffalo Production
LGU	Local Government Unit
NCC	National Carabao Conference
NEFEDCCO	Nueva Ecija Federation of Dairy Carabao Cooperatives
DA-PCC	Department of Agriculture-Philippine Carabao Center
DA-PCC at CLSU	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at Central Luzon State University
DA-PCC at CMU	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at Central Mindanao University
DA-PCC at CSU	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at Cagayan State University
DA-PCC at LCSF	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at La Carlota Stock Farm
DA-PCC at DMMMSU	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University
DA-PCC at MLPC	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at Mindanao Livestock Production Center
DA_PCC at MMSU	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at Mariano Marcos Memorial State University
DA-PCC at UPLB	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at University of the Philippines at Los Baños
DA-PCC at USF	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at Ubay Stock Farm
DA-PCC at USM	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at University of Southern Mindanao
DA-PCC at VSU	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at Visayas State University
DA-PCC at WVSU	DA-Philippine Carabao Center at West Visayas State University
SBFP	School-based Feeding Program
SDO	Schools Division Office
SLP	Sustainable Livelihood Program
VBAIT	Village-based Artificial Insemination Technician









## CARAPRENEURSHIP: A VENTURE WORTH PURSUING

BY RODOLFO JR. VALDEZ

Dominic Paclibar of M'lang, North Cotabato saw in his vision what it was like to be in a carabao-based dairy venture. He decided to pursue that trail in 2019 and is now treading along a stream of benefits and opportunities abounding in carapreneurship.

Dominic's and wife Ma. Elisa's dream for their own family was like any other Filipino parents. The couple strived to work doubly and even overseas for a sustainable livelihood to secure their future.

By a stroke of fate, while pursuing their family dream, Dominic learned of the Carabao Development Program (CDP) being implemented by the DA-Philippine Carabao Center at University of Southern Mindanao (DA-PCC at USM) and was immediately convinced that he should try his luck in joining the program.

The course of his pursuit of a successful family life changed since then.

"I am grateful that I came to know the channel of blessings that will bring me my very own package of blessings," Dominic reflected on his first meeting with DA-PCC at USM Center Director Benjamin John C. Basilio when the latter was initially encouraging Dominic to engage in carapreneurship.

In May 2019, Dominic enthusiastically obliged to the invitation and participated in the "Farmer Livestock School on Dairy Buffalo Production (FLS-DBP)". The FLS-DBP is a learning modality conducted by DA-PCC for farmers to have technology options and to capacitate them to maximize the benefits that can be derived from carabao-based enterprises.

After graduation from the 34-week training and deliberate evaluation of his qualifications, Dominic was identified as a recipient of a Dairy Buffalo Module from the DA-PCC at USM on the same year. In this module, 25 head of dairy buffaloes were turned over to Dominic for his initial stock. In the first two years, while Dominic was waiting for his buffaloes to produce milk, he engaged in Napier grass production.

As a farmer whose mindset is cut out for business, Dominic explores spin-off ventures out of his dairy

buffalo-based enterprise. He does so by actively participating in related activities, including trainings and other learning events, conducted by DA-PCC at USM. Dominic believes that continuous learning can bring him more success in his newfound venture.

In 2020, Dominic's farm started to flow with milk. While he was earnestly waiting for this time, he was initially anxious on where to bring his produce and who are willing to take them.

This was another instance when DA-PCC at USM stepped in to help Dominic overcome a challenge that most farmers in the dairy business have also encountered.

"I appreciate DA-PCC at USM's readiness to assist whenever farmers like me are in challenging situations such as in marketing our milk and dairy products. The extra mile that they do is consistently motivating us to keep going and doing well," Dominic uttered.

Dominic's dairy farm, the D&L Dairy Farm, is now accredited by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Food and Drug Administration. Today, the dairy farm produces an average of 800 liters of milk monthly that he processes to dairy products including fresh milk and flavored milk, which are available to customers in Davao City, Digos City, Matanao, South Cotabato and Cotabato Province. He also buys 1,400 liters of milk from the Canahay Dairy Farmers Association and other carapreneurs in their area.

Dominic is also one of the suppliers for the SB-FP-Milk Feeding of DepEd Cotabato and South Cotabato Divisions. From 2019-2022, he had supplied 2,919,124 milk packs, giving him a gross income of PHP54,335,256.

While devotedly pursuing his own track in carapreneurship, Dominic knows that he will still be presented with challenges but is now ready to confront them head on. He recognizes that there will be highs and lows in the business but to experience the peak of his success means that he has to continue treading on.



Patience has to be the virtue behind any struggle. It is in patience that hardships are seen rewarded in the end. If we don't give up on hardships, we come out stronger and have a taste of sweet success.

DOMINIC PACLIBAR





With dairying, we were able to support our children's education in private schools. When they finally become professionals, we'll be the happiest parents.

BONIFACIO ALAGAR SR.



## FULL-BLOODED 'BARAKO' IN DAIRYING

BY RONALINE CANUTE

Perhaps, one of the great glories of married life is the opportunity to support one another and build dreams together. Manifesting this is carapreneur couple Bonifacio Alagar Sr., 51 and Flordeliza, 51, of Batangas.

Bonifacio, fondly called Ka Facio among friends, looks at tending their dairy carabaos as an instrument that draws them closer as husband and wife and as a family. He said their carabaos bring happiness to their marriage.

Flordeliza fully supports him in his dairy venture, that is why, even when tending the carabaos could be exhausting at times, he won't mind working harder to provide for their family. He said he would just come home to his wife who he considers as his source of joy and comfort and where he finds contentment.

Ka Facio and his wife said their greatest achievement in this business would be to see their children become professionals in their respective interests.

Because of their dairy business, the couple is able to send all their four children to private schools. Their eldest, Charlene, is pursuing a degree in Accountancy, followed by Charlie in Marine Transportation, Charmaine in senior high school, and Bonifacio Jr. in grade school. These siblings look up to their parents as their "superdad" and "supermom".

While looking after their children's future, Ka Facio is also preparing for the time when he and Flordeliza reach retirement age. He said, he doesn't want his children to have to worry about them when that time comes.

He is also preparing his children to take over the business and he makes it his mission as a father to instill in them the value of farming and how this has made their family life better.

"When they are not in school, I would ask them to join me in the barn so that they will have an appreciation of our farm operations and for them to see that this is where provision for their schooling and for our daily needs comes from," Ka Facio said.

Looking back at how he started with that lone carabao that was entrusted to him upon completion of his training at the DA-PCC at UPLB, Ka Facio has nothing but gratefulness to the people who introduced him to this opportunity.

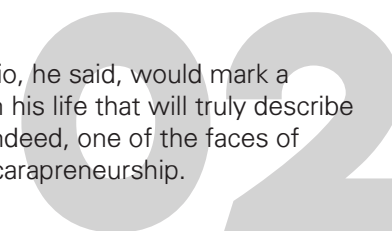
He is now earning a monthly income of PHP100,000 to PHP130,000.

"I see dairying as a blessing. I have never experienced earning like this before in rice farming especially when the price of palay was only at PHP9.00 per kilo. No matter how hard I work, my income then was never enough for our growing family," Ka Facio recalled.

Aside from providing well for his own family, Ka Facio said he is also able to help provide job for his three helpers who assist him in milking, cleaning, and feeding the carabaos. He pays each one of them PHP4,000 monthly and gives them a bonus whenever he can.

When their time is ripe, Ka Facio said in a sentimental voice that he and his wife will be by their porch, enjoying freshly brewed barako coffee while looking out for their growing herd of dairy carabaos. Providing a perfect backdrop on that scene would be their children's diplomas hanging nicely on the wall.

That scenario, he said, would mark a milestone in his life that will truly describe that he is, indeed, one of the faces of success in carapreneurship.





# 03

## 'HUWARANG JUANA' GIVES A STEER TO THOSE WHO 'JUANA' MAKE IT GOOD IN DAIRYING

BY MA. CECILIA IRANG-MARIANO AND LEINEFE ATON

Barely making it to the first level of education, Grace Boyles of Mabini, Bohol was so hard up for basic necessities that she had no idea what it was like to have a decent living. But good fate smiled on her when she put her heart into a newfound pursuit and eventually created a positive ripple effect in her community.

What she ventured into is also now the source of income for 130 other townspeople in the community. All of whom she influenced by her mettle and willpower.

Grace is a member of the San Jose Dairy Buffalo Producers Association, an association initiated by the late agricultural technician of the DA-PCC at Ubay Stock Farm (DA-PCC at USF), Floriano Bernales. She used to be a maidservant in Manila, but her unfavorable experience and longing to be with her family made her decide to come back home and try her luck in dairying.

Grace recalled that it was her relentless search for a livelihood opportunity that goaded her to find out what dairy buffalo production was about. She joined the dairy program of DA-PCC at USF in 2005, wherein she was entrusted with two American Murrah buffaloes. Five years later, she started milking the animals that were then producing an average of four liters of milk daily sold at Php45 a liter. Grace was the only woman in the group at the time, and was the only one milking her buffaloes.

But her journey was not without bumps. She could still vividly remember how many times she cried while milking her animals, feeling disheartened because her husband did not approve of milking their animals because, to him, milk should be fed to the calves. Grace, blessed with an enduring spirit, persisted and did not give up.

Her grit in dairying qualified her to receive more buffaloes from DA-PCC in the succeeding years, increasing her herd size from two to over 20 dairy buffaloes, aided by proper breeding and herd management. This gives her a peak income of more than Php27,000 a month.

Out of that, she was able to convince her husband to assist her in this endeavor, renovate their worn-out house, send their nieces to college, and help her siblings financially.

"When my husband witnessed the unfolding of the good benefits of buffalo dairying, he finally agreed to support me in this business. He then left his job as a rice mill operator to work full-time in our dairy enterprise," Grace said.

Grace has been a constant partner of DA-PCC at USF in the immersion program on dairy production training. She offers accommodation and accepts coaching services to those who want to learn about buffalo dairying. With the genuine intention of demonstrating that dairying is indeed profitable, she even offered her milking carabao for paiwi as a start-up stock to her relative.

She has encouraged her community to go into dairy production and is now producing more than 80 liters a day.

In 2020, Grace was recognized by the DA-PCC as "Modelong Juana sa Kalabawan" for her resolute dedication and hard work as a female dairy farmer.

To her, being a woman should never be a hindrance to success, and Grace deems carabao dairying as her "saving grace" that got her family out of the quagmire of poverty.



Let us not make being a woman an excuse. Juana can do everything that Juan can in this business. What is important is that we can help our husband provide for the family and not rely solely on his income.

GRACE BOYLES









# 04

## DESTINED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL CARAPRENEUR

BY MA. CECILIA IRANG-MARIANO

Richard Reyes enjoys watching the sun peak over the mountain each morning just about after he is done milking his dairy buffaloes. He also takes this moment to reflect on how blessed he is to work in an industry where exactly his heart is.

Dairy farming is not without challenges but Richard said he would rather be in his dairy farm than anywhere else.

In his dairy farm in Pampanga, Richard's dairy buffaloes form a vibrant foreground against the lahar-stricken Bacolor town. His animals stand mighty and proud, complementing the scenic view of Mt. Arayat, a testament to how Richard has been soundly managing his dairy buffalo farm.

But Richard is not a one-man army in this venture. In fact, this business is what bonds his family tighter, as Maricel, his wife, and their five children all play a role in the farm.

"That's how I want my children to grow up because that's the kind of upbringing I had. It is important that they are prepared to take on the business someday and they have to appreciate its operation as early as now," Richard said.

In 2010, Richard returned home after working abroad and started his venture in carabao dairying. He bought two crossbred carabaos as his initial stock. He buckled down to taking care of his animals, understood their needs well, and nurtured them. From two crossbreds, his herd grew to 53 dairy buffaloes, which are products of continuous backcrossing.

Richard receives technical assistance from the DA-PCC at Central Luzon State University and is also a recipient of its Bull Entrustment Program.

During the peak season, his daily milk collection is 100 liters, priced at PHP90 a liter, giving him a gross monthly income of PHP270,000.

Richard is able to give his family a better life solely from his income in dairying.

He was able to afford the renovation of their run-down house in San Fernando, Pampanga into a two-story abode, the purchase of a jeep, four motorcycles, a vehicle intended for transporting milk, home furniture and appliances, and a milking parlor. Right where his barn is, Richard also built another house to cater to their farm workers.

"There was a period in our lives when I couldn't even afford to buy medicine for my children when they got sick. Looking back, I am just so grateful that I can now buy them anything they need. On a 10-point scale, our lifestyle has changed dramatically from zero to 10," Richard proudly shared.

While some are busy looking down on him because of his chosen livelihood, Richard is up to his ears in business, making it good as a carapreneur.

"When the time comes, I want them to be proud of me as their father because I was capable of sending them to the best schools even if I did not graduate from college myself. I want them to see and appreciate that I made it because I was a dairy farmer," Richard said.

Richard said he also owes his good fortune to the people who influenced him to go into dairying. These were his late father, Redentor, and his role model, Filomino Pasamonte, who was in his time one of the progressive dairy farmers in Pampanga.

If Richard is right about his assessment of his destiny in carabao dairying, then fate has clearly carved him out for a certain role. He said his hard work and perseverance paid off now that his entire family is living its dream life. This proves that there is, indeed, hope for carabao dairying and for changing lives for the better.

Since he was a young child, Richard has always had a disposition for hard work—a quality he undoubtedly inherited from his father. "Wherever you place me, left or right, I would still go back in the middle to be a dairy farmer," he proclaimed with pride.



Carabao dairying is as important to me as breathing. Without this business, I wouldn't have provided my family a comfortable life.

RICHARD REYES







# 05

## FEARLESS BADIES

BY RHEA MAE B. RUBA

A warrior who puts on the armor of fortitude and wisdom is one to overcome great battles.

In a far-flung area in Cadiz, Negros Occidental, Corazon Badie soldiers on a daily fight as she transports her milk produce from their dairy farm to the pick-up and drop-off point, which is some 2 kilometers of rugged terrain. The narrow and informal road, which looked like a furrow in the middle of a sugarcane plantation, is what the Badies have to traverse every day to attend to their daily errands. On rainy days, the road becomes a total ordeal.

The place was where Corazon and her husband raised a family where they had six children. The couple used to work as laborers in the plantation for manual weeding with a meager PHP100 pay for their piecework.

“That was a drudging work to do, especially that we have to be exposed to the scorching sun to finish our work or we won’t bring home any penny,” Corazon reminisced with teary eyes.

Their impoverished life back then made it impossible for the couple to fulfill their dream of providing their children with the best life. Their measly income could not even cover their basic daily needs. And with no one to tide them over, Corazon knew that she had to do something for the family.

Hardships did not hinder Corazon to persevere for her family. She prayed and held firmly onto the hope that they will not stay poor. She knew, someday her sacrifices will pay off.

That was when their family became one of the recipients of the Dairy Buffalo Livelihood Project under the Department of Social Welfare and Development-Sustainable Livelihood Program (DSWD-SLP). They were entrusted with eight dairy buffaloes and that was also when they met DA-PCC at LCSF through Michael Anotado, a Project Development Officer II of DSWD.

To the Badies, the project freed their lives from being strapped. Now that they have entered into the dairy business, they do not just look after each other but after the dairy carabaos that were entrusted to them as well. This means each member of the family is now assigned a role in the business.

As their venture grew, the Badies also experienced growing pains as in any case of starting a new business. Misfortunes befell the family but Corazon saw these as a test of their mettle in dairying. Corazon’s husband once fell from riding a buffalo and sustained an injury. This hindered him from helping Corazon on the farm. They also experienced the death of a calf which they considered a big loss as the buffaloes are like family to them.

Despite being wounded in their own kind of battle, the Badies carried on the fight and are now reaping the benefits of their perseverance after two years. The couple can now fully support the education of their children and have more than enough for their daily needs. Their house, which used to be a shanty, is now standing on the concrete pavement with steel roofing. In fact, even their dairy buffaloes have a decent coral and a large pasture area. The family was also able to invest in a multi-cab and motorcycles.

During the peak of lactation, the buffaloes produce at least 60 liters of raw milk per week sold at PHP90 per liter in Silay City. This gives the Badies a weekly income of PHP5,400, a significant leap from their PHP500-700 take-home pay as laborers on the plantation.

As a family that trudged on together to prosper their newfound venture in dairy buffalo production, the Badies demonstrated that teamwork and faithfulness to steward what was entrusted to them are what made them win one battle to another and have blessed them with great favors.

The Badies, named as DA-PCC’s “Most Outstanding Family Module” in 2019, proved that a triumphant cry of victory is only for the fearless.



Many people believe that the buffalo is precious. I searched and looked for it, then I discovered buffalo dairying. Now, I can also prove that, truly, there’s treasure in raising a buffalo if you patiently wait for it to milk. I am grateful since it helped me fulfill my dreams for my family.

### CORAZON BADIE







## PERKS OF HAVING A KNOW-HOW ON DAIRY BUFFALO PRODUCTION

BY MA. CECILIA IRANG-MARIANO  
AND CRISTINE JOY DEL ROSARIO

Investing in a business, particularly in the carabao-based enterprise, requires not only financial capability but also one's competence and knowledge about the venture. This is a principle in life of Arnold Cunanan, 45, from Barangay Porais, San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.

Arnold has always taken the initiative to acquire significant knowledge that he may use in whatever business he intends to embark on.

He has been a self-motivated learner, always hammering away to gain new knowledge and skills that he can apply on his farm. He learned a lot of pointers and practical applications on buffalo management after attending a series of learning events organized by the DA-PCC. From then on, he made sure to be a keen observer and inquisitive whenever technicians and veterinarians visit his farm. This, to him, is the key to becoming more competent and independent.

Arnold eventually learned the know-how on detecting pregnancy in buffaloes, testing the milk quality through alcohol precipitation test, deworming, administering vaccines and vitamins, and determining body condition scores (BCS) of buffaloes.

He said he is more than willing to share his knowledge and experiences in buffalo dairying with his fellow dairy farmers who seek his advice.

"I always tell them to maintain the body of their buffaloes and stay alert for the start of the estrous cycle. If the body score is very low or very high, it will be difficult to get the animals pregnant," Arnold revealed.







When you care about the welfare of your carabaos, you will go to great lengths to ensure their safety. What I like about the technicians of DA-PCC is that they will not only provide animal health service, they will also teach you how to do it.

ARNOLD CUNANAN

Arnold recalled that he became interested in dairying because of the encouragement of his friend, Allan Benitez of the Simula ng Panibagong Bukas Producers Cooperative (SIPBUPCO).

“He was always telling me that carabaos can be of great help to our financial problems especially when they are already producing milk,” he stated.

Arnold joined SIPBUPCO in 2009 and was grateful that he was one of those who were loaned with Brazilian Murrah buffaloes under the 25-dairy cow module of the DA-PCC in the same year.

As a start, he converted his piggery into a corral for his carabaos. He also planted a portion of his farm with Napier grass.

In 2014, Arnold received the “Outstanding Dairy Buffalo Farmer” award while his buffaloes won the “Best Senior Cow” and “Best Junior Cow” in 2020 and 2022, respectively, during the National Carabao Conference.

After receiving several awards, Arnold was all the more motivated to further improve his dairy business and expand the number of his herd. Now, he has 36 buffaloes; five of which are pregnant and six are milking. He collects a total of 26 liters daily, which he sells to DVF, Milka Krem, and NEFEDCCO at PHP80 a liter.

Through all of these, Arnold has his family to count on. His wife, Angelita, and sons John Carlo and DJ Rafi would help him deliver the milk to the collection center of their cooperative. They also help in record keeping, cleaning the stall housing of the carabaos, and in feeding them.

Since their revenue from milk sales is enough to cover their daily needs, they were able to save what they earn from their other sources of income such as selling onions and palay. They could also afford to send their children to good schools and renovate their house.

Arnold has been a partner of DA-PCC in buffalo dairying since 2009. He has exhibited his ability in taking good care of his dairy buffaloes. He is one of the growing numbers of buffalo keepers who have an increasing herd size through the adoption of DA-PCC’s technologies and serving as a model dairy farmer to others.

With the hard work and determination, Arnold is well on his way toward attaining greater success.



# 07

## PANGASINAN FARMER DEEMS CARAPRENEURSHIP A CHANNEL OF BLESSING

BY MA. CECILIA IRANG-MARIANO

What we acquire for ourselves, including our wealth, dies with us, but the good deeds we do for others will live on. Always choose kindness because a single act of love can change lives.

The 51-year-old progressive carapreneur from Asingan, Pangasinan, Rolly Mateo Sr., has this principle, which explains why he generously shares his blessings with others rather than hoarding them all for himself.

Through carabao dairying, Rolly earns not just a four- or five-figure income but up to a six-figure profit, or PHP100,000 monthly. He believes that God has made him a vessel of favors so that he can channel these blessings to others as well.

“My family and I look for people or families around the town who might be struggling. We give them a sack of rice or cover some of their bills. We extend help as much as we could. We do not post these on social media because a good deed is still a good deed even if no one knows about it. And for those that we were able to help, there’s only one favor that I ask of them—that they pay it forward,” Rolly said.

Based on the Family Income and Expenditure Survey of the Philippine Statistics Authority, the country has 19.99 million individuals living below the poverty threshold. This represents 18.1 percent of the population. Hence, for Rolly, it is important not to have any second thoughts about helping someone, no matter how small it is, because one act of kindness is one felt change.

Rolly recalled that before his family was able to have the kind of life they have now, it was always punctured by difficulties and tough times.

He used to work on someone else’s farm and was only taking home PHP5,000 every cropping season. Aside from farming, he also tried his luck in piggery but their income was still insufficient to meet all their financial needs.

In 2007, Rolly was luckily selected by the DA-PCC at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State

University to be a recipient of a pregnant dairy carabao. That changed the course of their lives.

Rolly and Gracia, his wife, are blessed with six children: John Loui, James Anthony, Rolly Jr., Yvette, Jade Carlo, and Jeffry. They felt a positive shift in their lives after getting a carabao, which paved the way for Rolly’s entire family to be interested in the business and to invest in purchasing more carabaos.

It was in 2019 when Rolly’s dairy revenue peaked substantially until 2021, owing to daily sales of 40 to 50 liters of milk. His gross monthly income exceeded PHP100,000, allowing them to purchase a top-of-the-line crossover, a motorcycle, one acre of property, and a two-story house.

To date, the Mateo family has 70 buffaloes. Among them are four bulls, 10 are lactating, while 12 are pregnant. He sells his harvested milk to the Bantog Samahang Nayon Multi-Purpose Cooperative, which pays him PHP82 per liter. Since 2010, Rolly has been the co-op’s chairperson, and he has also helped the co-op grow from that association that was looked down on by townfolk to the cooperative that is now considered as the pride of Asingan town.

Rolly also helps fellow farmers in his community by entrusting some of his animals through a “paiwi” system.

He has this advice for those who want to engage in a similar venture: “Let them try it so that they’ll discover for themselves that there is indeed money in carabao dairying. The amount of their earnings is all up to them; the more they put in great effort, the more they’ll surely earn.”

Rolly wants to pay it forward by helping other people since he has earned enough from the generosity of others as well.

Goodness spurs goodness—this is Rolly’s formula to success. And it’s no secret.



# 07





Since the DA-PCC's trust and support were given to me without any expectation of recompense, I believe it is only right to pay it forward by blessing others.

ROLLY MATEO SR.







I am a mother myself, and I can relate to dairying. Just like how a mom breastfeeds her baby, I found love and passion in taking good care of carabaos. That's why I am hoping that one day our farm will serve as a learning site or an agri-tourism destination to let locals know the advantages of dairy farming.

JUNE FLORES



## FLORES BLOOMS IN DAIRYING

BY RONALINE CANUTE & CHAMANEI ELIAS

June Flores, owner of Adeline's Fresh Buffalo Milk Products in San Manuel, Tarlac City, decided to venture into dairy farming despite having no formal education or experience in the field and clinging desperately to nothing but hope.

June had grown up on a farm and loved the simple, tranquil lifestyle. She often recalled family get-togethers from her childhood, such as those that involved a sumptuous breakfast of hot steamed rice, fresh carabao's milk, and dried fish.

June is a chemical engineer by profession but despite her success, she has never forgotten to look back to how and where she started. "I still mingle and talk with our local farmers.

In 2017, she bought a farm lot and started traditional farming. This did not pan out well for her as their first harvest was sold at barely break even. This pushed her to find other means of livelihood and decided to venture into dairy farming.

She soon found her way to groups who have the same interest in carabao farming on Facebook and immersed herself on YouTube how-to videos. In her mind, giving up is not an option and always found a way to keep moving forward with her venture.

"We started with nothing. We relied solely on Google and YouTube. From two native carabaos as our startup stock, we bought additional 14 head of Murrah buffaloes. We were at first overwhelmed and challenged because we had to work out forage, feeding and health management," said June.

In October 2019, she started with product development. She created her brand name Adeline's Fresh Buffalo Milk Products. They usually produce 20 to 30 bottles of fresh carabao's milk for students. Adeline's chocomilk, pasteurized milk, kesong-puti and yoghurt are currently available and sold in

Tarlac, Laguna, Metro Manila, Zambales and select areas in Mindanao.

But since the pandemic, she had to find another way to sell her products with the absence of face-to-face classes. June resorted to the internet to sell her products. She was able to market her products through online selling. It turned out that their biggest sales were during the lockdown.

Her plans to prosper the farm goes beyond production as she is also planning to establish it as a training center or learning site for buffalo production.

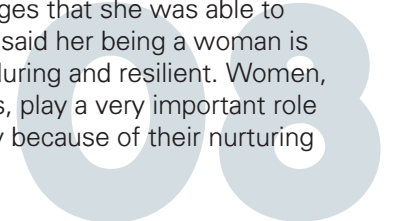
"To do this, I am currently teaching and encouraging other farmers to consider dairying as another source of income," shared June.

She has recently connected with the Provincial Veterinary Office of Tarlac for training and information campaigns that could help her and other interested farmers in her community.

To meet the sudden spike in demand for Adeline's Fresh Buffalo Milk Products, June bought another 16 head of pure Murrah buffaloes from Zambales. Most of these were pregnant but were ill managed causing post-calving deaths.

During this crisis, she met Dr. Marvin Villanueva and Erwin Encarnacion from DA-Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) who helped rehabilitate her buffaloes. She was also consistently communicating with the Carabao-based Enterprise Development (CBED) team of the agency for technical support and trainings on genetic Improvement, herd management, and product development.

With all the challenges that she was able to overcome, Adeline said her being a woman is what made her enduring and resilient. Women, she deeply believes, play a very important role in the dairy industry because of their nurturing spirit.







## DAIRY DOSE OF FAMILY TIME

BY DINE YVE DAGANOS

Carabao's milk does not only strengthen bones but fortifies family ties as well. Annalyn Tade, 45, a mother of two, proves this as she now enjoys quality family time—the one important thing that she sacrificed while being bottled up in a day job for years.

The Labor Survey of the Philippine Statistics Authority in 2019 shows that Filipinos spend an average of 43.2 hours weekly at work—leaving less to no time for quality bonding with the family.

As a real estate broker to a development company, Annalyn shared she missed many family dinners and weekend family outings as she has to attend to clients. Clients bring in the dough so clients always come first. The work paid well but it was highly competitive and stressful. But these are all behind her now as she has found a more relaxed work environment and yet equally financially rewarding.

With her dairy carabao-based venture, she can attend to her family without the guilt of neglecting work. She finds immense joy and meaning in the moments when she works with her kids' side by side in the farm, tending to the animals, cleaning the pens, and gathering forage.

### Farmer by chance

Annalyn's family bought a parcel of land in Rosario, La Union, in 2013. While they resided in La Trinidad, Benguet, the property served as their weekend get-away. It was planted with rice and corn for the family's consumption. They also raised free-range poultry, tried papaya farming, and vegetable production and now dairy carabaos.

It was through her neighbour Jayson Albay who supplied her with carabaos milk that she came to know about the carabao-based enterprise development program of the DA-Philippine Carabao Center at Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DA-PCC at DMMMSU). After a series of consultations and preparation training, she finally received her first dairy carabao in November 2018.

Within the first year, Annalyn received 12 dairy carabaos. At present, Annalyn has 17 dairy cows,

10 calves and few more carabaos expected to calve before the end of the year.

### Career shift

All the 12 animals that Annalyn received were retrievals, or those that were returned by farmers who can no longer fulfill their obligations in the contract, their condition was poor which brought Annalyn to a challenging situation. She fostered the carabaos and cared for them until they were fully rehabilitated. She eventually got attached to the animals that she decided to keep them in her farm and pursue dairy farming as a livelihood. Although, she was unsure of the profitability of dairy farming, the sense of fulfillment and accomplishment derived when she was able to restore the poor animals to good health.

Through proper care and management and ensuring that their reproductive efficiencies are planned and monitored, Annalyn's carabaos soon produced offspring. By the third year, she was earning a decent income from her raw milk harvest. From 2 to 3 liters in the first calving, the milk produce increased to 4 to 5 liters a day for some of the cows on their succeeding calving.

Annalyn said that being in the real estate business has provided her opportunities and good income plus a convenient workspace. But keeping up with the demands of the job became too much of a stress to bear. This is the opposite of her life on the farm where the air is fresh and the only demand and pressure that she has to answer to are that which she places on herself. Most importantly, she has time for her family and her other roles as a wife to Melvin, 46, and as a mother to Neal, 24, and Iverson, 15.

### Bound by carabao's milk

Initially, Melvin was hesitant about tending carabaos because at one time, the carabaos ran free and destroyed his young fruit-bearing trees. He was also worried that the pollens and dust from the grass and corn would trigger allergies of the boys.



"When I exhausted all my savings in my first year of dairy venture, Melvin got worried all the more that my business plan would end up a flop. But when the carabaos started producing milk, Melvin became lukewarm with the idea until eventually, he supported it by financing the housing and buying some tools and equipment. On the second year, our sales from milk were able to cover our household expenses and I was able to pay myself less than minimum wages," Annalyn happily narrated.

Annalyn said because of the carabaos, their family conversations became more frequent. Even when their children were away studying in La Trinidad, they would call and ask about the animals.

Experiencing how the dairy business could sufficiently provide for her family, Annalyn intends to stay in the farm and continue to develop her dairy carabao-based livelihood with her family.

"You come to a point when you look at things differently. For me, dairy farming and farm living gave me the opportunity to be more appreciative of things," she concluded.



It is a rare opportunity to find a lucrative business without sacrificing time for the family. In carapreneurship, we can still bond as a family while doing our farm chores and earning good income. For me, the most rewarding part of farming is when we can accomplish things together as a family and that makes me genuinely happy and fulfilled.

ANNALYN TADE







SUCCESS STORY OF THE FIRST-EVER STERILIZED  
MILK RETORT FACILITY IN REGION 2

## OPPORTUNITIES IN ADVERSITIES

BY MA. CECILIA IRANG-MARIANO

Behind a riveting story is a plot twist of circumstances unimaginable and hurdles unthinkable.

Such is the story behind the success of the first and only retort facility for sterilized carabao's milk in the entire Cagayan Valley, which also faced major impediments prior to its eventual operationalization.

Noemi Liangco, president of the Amancio Nicolas Agri-Tourism Academy (AATA) in Cordon, Isabela, which manages the retort facility, wore her heart on her sleeve as she described the hardships she and her husband, Amancio Jr., confronted when they first started the carabao-based business.

Her story was specifically about the setbacks she encountered in supplying sterilized milk and how her team was able to bounce back with the help and support of their community.

"I am just one person among the many people who made this possible. I want to acknowledge the people who helped us during the hard times because the whole story is not really about me; I'm just a part of it," Noemi said.

Noemi's family business grappled with the economic disruptions brought about by the pandemic. One of the three branches of their popular fast-food chain had to close. Due to the unprecedented losses, their three chains of restaurants and hotels also ceased operations.

Aware of the impact this would have on her staff and colleagues in the business who depend only on their company, Noemi decided to venture into the carabao-based enterprise so they could have another source of income. This was after she was encouraged by the DA-PCC.

Noemi made the decision to contact her friends Jum Supaksiri and Yay San Pedro of Belldas Thailand for assistance with the retort facility for sterilized carabao's milk, after conducting extensive research and study about the new business she intended to launch.

However, her journey through the dairy enterprise wasn't a straight line. It was like a squiggly line with some ups, downs, and troubles along the way. Throughout her venture, she was constantly hit with one adversity after the other, most of which she had no control over. Noemi had a packaging issue, delaying the operation of the retort facility and necessitating the temporary production of pasteurized milk.

"Despite so many challenges, I was taught by those who love me, my parents, and my mentors, that the effort that is required to proceed to succeed and the effort to give up, I was told: 'Noemi, it's the same. Take your pick.' And I always choose to proceed and give it my all. I'm a risk-taker, especially in this field of agriculture," Noemi said.

Mina Abella, DA-PCC's former national milk feeding coordinator, assisted Noemi in contacting and consulting Jaime Tiongson of Laguna Training and Consultancy Services for the operation of their retort facility and Noel Laforteza of Bagong Pag-asa Engineering Company for packaging machines.

"It is indeed at your lowest point that you can see the blessings flowing in, and there were a lot of people who came in to help. One thing that I've learned is that when you are achieving something good, good people will also come to you," Noemi stated.

Since its inception in 2020, the AATA has supplied more than 1.9 million pouches of sterilized milk to 86,182 schoolchildren in Region 2 (except Batanes) and the Cordillera Administrative Region (except Baguio) in partnership with the Department of Education, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and DA-PCC.

"Milk feeding is a miracle making an impact on its stakeholders in various forms. Now, when we look back, we're grateful for those trials that came because they brought a lot more people to help in the cause. They brought many more





opportunities I did not imagine coming,” Noemi narrated.

The AATA believes in the mission of RA 11037. It took part in the milk feeding program for three reasons: to help increase milk production in the Philippines, to give farmers in the countryside an extra source of income and livelihood, and to help combat hunger and malnutrition in the country.

“For me, these challenges are opportunities. When we define the opportunity, it’s something to champion. It’s an opportunity to grow cooperatives and to further educate farmers, among others,” she argued.

Noemi’s journey in the dairy industry mirrors many other experiences that prove “no man is an island,” and that collaboration and meaningful partnership always bring forth beneficial outcomes.



Amancio Nicolas’ participation in the milk feeding program is rooted in the fundamental thought that we are being synchronized to be of added value in the institutionalization of RA 11037. For three feeding cycles and counting, the program, together with the DA-PCC, DepEd, and DSWD, has created a positive economic impact through local employment and farmers’ awareness of the significance of taking care of their carabaos, among others. May the milk beneficiaries include farming as one of their options in planning their future career.

NOEMI LIANGCO







## OFW TURNED CARAPRENEUR-MENTOR

BY ROVELYN JACANG

As an accredited Farmer Livestock School on Dairy Buffalo Production (FLS-DBP), Alejandro Leoncio finds fulfillment in sharing knowledge to other dairy farmers. Many of them he communicates with thru social media.

"Sharing knowledge to other farmers, some of whom I meet on social media, gives me fulfillment. It feels good that people tell you that you help them by simply answering their question online" said Alejandro, a carapreneur from San Miguel, Bulacan.

His interest in mentoring other dairy farmers started in 2016 when he was asked by the local government of San Miguel to attend the Facilitators' learning workshop for FLS-DBP. His participation in the said learning event played a big role for his farm to be recognized and become a learning site for agriculture, with the help of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI).

As an active carapreneur, Alejandro always sees the need to learn things about the business. He often attends seminars, convention and online webinars to learn. "It is important to me that I have sufficient knowledge in every aspect of the business that I am pursuing." He added. He is always interested in improved technologies that will not only give him new knowledge but also opportunities for added income.

With his commitment and dedication in dairy buffalo production, he often gets invitations to be a resource person for webinar and be featured in various agricultural TV programs where he wholeheartedly shares his knowledge and experiences to dairy farmers.

Alejandro is a former Overseas Filipino Worker in Riyadh Saudi Arabia. After

working abroad for five years, he used his savings to put up an electronic shop and repair service in their town. Alejandro has this attitude of not spending their earnings on material things. Instead, he used the profits from previous business ventures to buy land, which they now use for mango and dairy production for additional income.

He is continuously improving his farm by reinvesting his earnings into other carabao-based enterprise such as vermicomposting, silage, and milk based products. His farm also accepts trainees who wants to learn dairy buffalo production.

With his current success and gained knowledge over the years, he humbly admits that he still has a lot to learn in order to continuously improve and succeed. His dream is for other dairy farmers to embrace the program. As he sees and experiences the potential of dairy production, he hopes that other dairy farmers will get serious about dairying. That is why every chance he gets, he shares his experiences and encourages farmers especially those who has capital to invest in this kind of business as it really pays off as long as farmers will work hard for it.

"Success needs hard work and perseverance. One must have passion, interest, and attitude to learn and vision to grow," he stated.

From a starting inventory of two buffaloes, currently, he has 33, 10 of which are lactating and some will be calving soon. In the coming months, his total inventory will exceed 50 head. In 2019, his total earnings from dairy buffalo production reached 1 million pesos which he uses to improve his farm and to purchase additional animals.



My journey in carabao dairying is not only focused on my personal benefit, but also in benefitting others. I believe that is the secret behind a progressive livelihood.

ALEJANDRO LEONCIO



## FINDING FORTUNE AND ‘BEAST’ FRIENDS IN DAIRYING

BY DINE YVE DAGANOS

Being up in the clouds and seeing the whole world from a completely different viewpoint, Rodrigo Diao said that aviation was the thrill of his life. After a number of years in commercial airlines, he went back to his hometown in Naawan, Misamis Oriental where he settled with his family. He diverted his energy to their farm and caring for their livestock including their dairy carabaos. Unknowingly, Diao grew fondness for the animals’ while he made fortune from selling their milk.

Diao had always taken interest in agriculture. In fact, he never missed the annual agricultural exhibit held in their province every month of October. He would not hesitate to skip work so he could explore the fare. This is where he amassed most of his knowledge on dairy buffalo including which species are ideal for milk production.

One day he was invited by a staff of the provincial office to attend an orientation on carabao dairy industry conducted by DA-PCC on January 2020. As he was unable to attend, he sent one of his farm helpers instead. Surprisingly, the following day, some staff from DA-PCC at Central Mindanao University (CMU) came to visit and evaluated his farm. A couple of days later, DA-PCC at CMU Center Director Dr. Lowell Paraguas also met with him in the City of El Salvador, Misamis Oriental to personally brief him on dairying.

As soon as a delivery date was set by DA-PCC, Diao worked on the construction of his carabao pen and, within 15 days, it was completed. He also made sure to stock up enough forage feed supply for the animals to come.

Six buffaloes were initially delivered followed by another set of five. Diao admitted he was much surprised with the fast transitions but at the same time exhilarated with his new venture.

Upon entering Diao’s farm, we were swarmed by the friendliest carabaos. The calves didn’t mind posing and staying still next to each one of us for a few selfie shots.

“My carabaos come second to my dogs,” Diao said. “When I call out ‘kabaw’ or ‘baw’, they would approach me. Of course, they weren’t always this friendly. It took time, and daily chest rubs before I earned their trust. In fact, one of the carabaos used to greet me with its horn, but now, it greets me with its snout. It is something special to experience,” he cheerfully narrated.

Diao used to name his carabaos and one of them was Raulito, the very first calf they had out of all their buffaloes.

“Carabao raising is stress-free. Just looking at Raulito makes me forget about my problems,” Diao said. “When he is eating and he sees me approaching, he would stay still and will wait for me to grab the food next to his mouth, only then will he continue feeding,” he added.

Nonetheless, having this soft side for animals is also problematic. Diao said he had difficulty selling them at first because of the attachment made. This is when he decided to stop giving names and refer to them in general as ‘kabaw’ (the local term for carabao) instead.

While enjoying the companionship of his carabaos, Diao also generates good revenue from selling their milk. At present, he owns a total of 17 carabaos, with 8 of them producing milk.

“Competition is not a problem in the buffalo dairy industry because of the enormous demand for milk especially from the milk feeding and supplemental feeding programs of DepEd and DSWD, respectively, requiring about 600,000 liters a day. Even if everyone in Naawan raised dairy buffaloes, they still would not be able to supply for the whole Misamis Oriental,” he asserted.

“If I have at least 30 carabaos with daily milk production of 10 liters, I can definitely generate much more than what I earn from my previous profession,” he also related.

Diao’s buffalo dairy venture like any other businesses was not a smooth sail. However, he is resolute of the promising future that the dairy carabao industry holds for Naawan and he wants to set the first example.

“There are challenges, but they are nothing too serious to be unresolvable,” he said. “If you accept defeat, that is what you will get. There are too many people involved in this venture—people who look up to me and people depending on me. I want to give them hope and I don’t want our community to miss the opportunities that the dairy industry can offer,” he contended.

As part of his efforts to advocate dairying, Diao is also currently working on developing a module for a cost-efficient management system accommodating five carabaos to serve as reference to the local farmers in their area. He is also trying to develop a forage feed formulation for increased milk production of dairy buffaloes with the help of Dir. Paraguas who recently completed a research on the use of yeast culture as supplements in carabao feeds.



One of the greatest joys in raising carabaos is having their loyalty. Unlike humans, carabaos stick with you through whatever circumstances. I did not even have to give them anything special to earn their trust. I only groom them every now and then and I did not expect that they would actually give me affection in return.

RODRIGO DIAO





When you enjoy what you do and when you have a clear purpose of why you do it, your vision will be fixed on winning and never on quitting.

Rolly Richard Salameda, 27, became a village-based artificial insemination technician (VBAIT) at a young age of 16. Coming from a simple family in Barangay Lao, Ormoc, Leyte, he is third of seven siblings.

His interest on becoming a technician was piqued when DA-PCC at Visayas State University (DA-PCC at VSU) recruited his father, Rolando, to train as a technician in 2011. Richard had just finished high school then.

While being an active technician as his day job, Richard was also able to attend to schooling as he took a vocational course in seafaring with specialization in stewarding at the Ormoc City Institute of Technology. After three years, he also tried finishing his college education but eventually decided to stop so that he could start working for his family. That was when he became a full-fledged VBAIT.

“Becoming a VBAIT was difficult at first because I had no service record yet that will prove clients that I can deliver,” Richard recalls. In tandem with his father, Richard soon established a name of his own as a capable technician initially in their barangay.

“From only three services a month, we are now serving the whole of Ormoc,” Richard said.

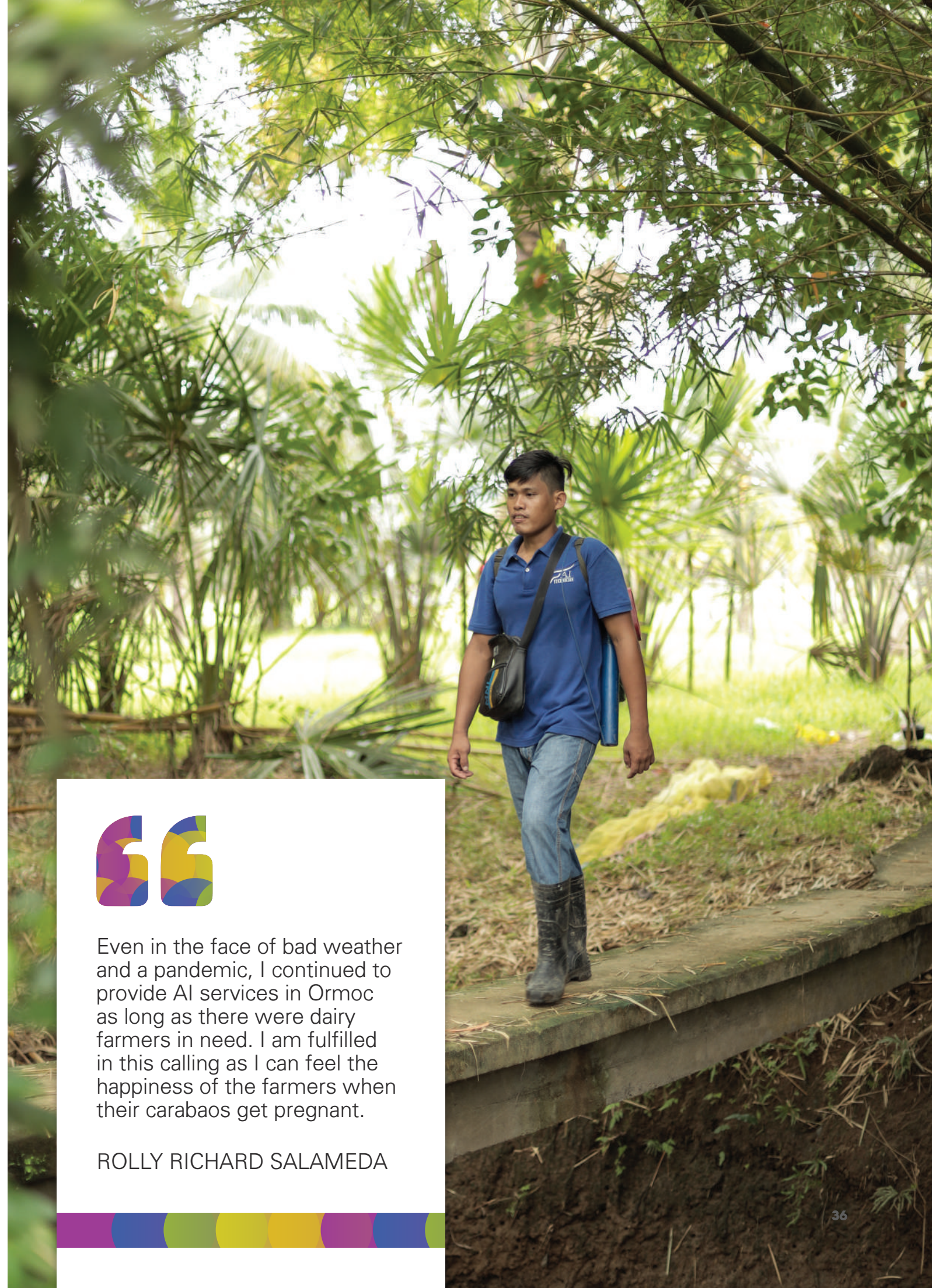
Getting clients is no longer a problem for the father and son duo as anyone who would come looking at the calves borne out of their AI service in their place instantly becomes an avid fan and patron of their work.

As a proof of his performance, he hit a 56% efficiency rate during the first semester of 2022 according to DA-PCC at VSU. The efficiency rate refers to the number of carabao that were successfully impregnated and gave birth through AI.

Richard also takes home an additional PHP100 as an incentive for every service and another PHP100 for every calf born out of it. With his earnings as a VBAIT, he was able to acquire a motorcycle that he could use when servicing remote areas.

Richard also earns additional income from providing other technical services to farmers such as delivering a calf, deworming, and administering vitamins to the animals. All this know-how he learned through a training with DA-PCC at VSU.

“When other farmers see the beauty of calves that are borne out of the AI that I administered myself, I feel fulfilled. It’s an instant reminder that, really, hard work and not ever quitting pay off,” Richard said in glee.



Even in the face of bad weather and a pandemic, I continued to provide AI services in Ormoc as long as there were dairy farmers in need. I am fulfilled in this calling as I can feel the happiness of the farmers when their carabaos get pregnant.

ROLLY RICHARD SALAMEDA



# 14

## TYPICAL FARMERS NO MORE

BY ROWENA GALANG-BUMANLAG



# 66

We desire for inclusive progress where our members and employees will both succeed. As stewards of this opportunity, we commit to continued success by giving this project our best.

RICHARD HIDALGO

It was a quiet, laid-back afternoon and the barrio people were just about to wind down after a day's work. When they saw visitors approaching, they blithely gathered around. A vibrant conversation ensued and those huddled in a circle gazed at one direction—it was toward an outmoded hut that has gotten along in years, drearily sitting on the dirt road leading to the neighborhood.

The group was particularly looking at the sooty and decrepit tarpaulin hanging on the frontage that says: "Welcome! Blessing and Grand Opening of Baclay Multi-Purpose Cooperative (BMPC)". On the lower leftmost corner of the banner is an italicized announcement that says: We are accepting members...

Judging by the content of that banner, the house must have been a place for some modest business activity in the barrio sometime ago.

"This used to be Baclay's [Multi-Purpose Cooperative] old office. We [DA-PCC] happened to stumble upon them here when we were trying to locate an old recipient of a bull from DA-PCC," Fe Academia said. She is the carabao-based enterprise development coordinator of DA-PCC at Mindanao Livestock Production Complex (DA-PCC at MLPC) who ushered BMPC to carapreneurship.

The old BMPC office can be found in Ocampo St., Sto. Niño, in Tukuran, Zamboanga del Sur. Its new headquarters is located in barangay Baclay in the same town.

That banner was perched high up on that hut during BMPC's grand event in 1993—a key moment that saw the beginning of transformed lives among the Zamboangueños.

From only 33 members in 1993, the cooperative has grown to 10,000 members. It is rapidly improving not only in numbers but in social stature as well.

"It was difficult for us to grow the cooperative with only lending as a business. But when DA-PCC introduced us to dairying in 2019, it has been one big ride for us. It was not all roses but looking at where we are now and what we were able to accomplish for our families and our community, every challenge that we had to go through and overcome was all worth it," Richard Hidalgo, the general manager of BMPC, said.

From hundreds of thousands, the cooperative is now worth millions of pesos or over PHP50 million in assets.

"The carabao is not recognized then as an animal that can be utilized for business much less as a dairy animal. But because of DA-PCC and the cooperative taking a chance in carabao-based business, the carabao is now a revered animal here," Richard added.

With that shift in mindset about carabao, the fate of BMPC also changed. A complete opposite of their low-key start in that far-off barrio, BMPC now bustles with carabao-based ventures making it famed in the region as a multi-million carabao-based dairy cooperative.

BMPC served as the milk supplier for the national milk feeding program in eight Schools Division Offices (SDOs) in Zamboanga Peninsula and Region X in 2020 to 2022. This covered 150,000 schoolchildren benefitting from the program.

"We can process 44,000 200-ml sachets of milk a day. That's about 150,000 sachets weekly. For our KaraBun production, we have previously served 37,000 buns covering only one SDO. This has increased to 92,000 for three SDOs," Edmund Calvo, the production supervisor of BMPC, said.

BMPC's participation in DepEd's national milk feeding program has brought a myriad of benefits to the cooperative's members.

Edmund said he witnessed how their members were previously unable to afford their children's school expenses but are now providing them for their needs more than they thought they could ever manage.

"We'd like to believe that our farmers are typical farmers no more. They are no longer 'just farmers' but carapreneurs. More than providing for their children's education, they have also built for their families a decent shelter. Our dairy venture has led us to experience the life that we thought we could never have," Edmund added.

The cooperative was able to generate employment in Tukuran and adjacent towns with the increased requirement for milk and KaraBun production personnel. BMPC is currently maintaining 140 employees and providing practicum for the youth who want to earn money while studying on a part-time basis. This was especially so during the pandemic when high schoolers have more free time because of modular learning.

His statement still rings true with "Dalan sa kalambuan, sa kaugmao'ng haruhay!", the theme that was written on that banner hanging by the old BMPC office hut in 1993. Translated, it means: "Road to Success Toward a Better Future".

From that small beginning in Ocampo St., BMPC has traveled bigger roads and its three-decade journey has finally led to a season of harvest. Today, its vision is set on charting a road toward modeling successful carapreneurship in the region. Those who have already benefited from the harvest all agree: it's a trip worth taking.









Milking the carabao is a new venture for our farmers. The establishment of the carabao-based dairy hub provides the Pandan MPC with many opportunities.

DEDACI NEPOMUCENO

Once a woman ruled a cooperative, believe it or not, it hits differently.

In the 24 years of leadership of Dedaci Nepomuceno as a General Manager, the Pandan Multipurpose Cooperative (Pandan MPC) has grown its assets to more than PHP450 million. Her promise to generate services that cater to the needs of its members and even the residents of Pandan, Antique was fulfilled.

But before the achievement came along, Nepomuceno shared that Pandan MPC once became a sinking co-op. It was tested by time due to having multiple debts.

Nepomuceno was challenged in re-establishing the reputation of the cooperative, as well as reconciling the perspectives of the members. But, she showed transparency and credibility in solving the concerns and issues in the co-op. She eventually succeeded in winning back the trust and confidence of the members.

Since then, the members impart the willingness to patronize the coop's services, such as gasoline stations, co-op farms, lending operations, and telecommunications, which generate an abundant livelihood and income. Good operations and management enabled it to become the 5th multi-millionaire co-op in the province of Antique.

A bigger challenge came along to Nepomuceno, i.e., to identify the ways to sustain the standing of the co-op. She stated humorously that bigger money entails bigger responsibility. Nonetheless, it encourages her to search for a venture that will sustain the economic growth of the co-op for a long time.

In attending various symposia, Nepomuceno found a lucrative business in buffalo dairy farming. With the help of Arn Granada, Center Director of DA-PCC at WVSU, the Pandan MPC entered into a memorandum of agreement to have a partnership with the provincial government of Antique, the municipality of Pandan, and the DA-PCC to establish the Cara-Dairy project in 2020. It was also supported by the DOLE, DTI, and DA.

Efforts were made to build the Cara-Dairy project in the town of Pandan, as the residents have only seen the buffalo as a reliable animal in farming. In their land, occupants are not aware that buffalo can produce nutritious milk. Even the market acceptability of its meat encountered problems as people believed it was tough and of low quality. According to Nepomuceno, its meat would only sell if buffalo died in an accident.

The misconceptions of the people in the town of Pandan and in the province of Antique were changed to a positive outlook through the establishment of the Cara-Dairy project. As time went by, the people and community of Pandan felt the advantages and benefits of buffalo dairying.

The young and old citizens of Pandan enjoy the presence of buffalo fresh milk through the establishment of Pandan Dairy Box in 2021.

Customers love to visit the hub to taste its flavored milk, toned milk, and ice cream. Buffalo products became popular in the place for being delicious and nutritious.

Pandan MPC widened the production of its fresh milk in 2022. It entered the milk feeding program supplying various School Division Offices (SDOs) in the municipalities of Antique. In partnership with the DepEd, it serves 7,483 beneficiaries with a PHP2,274,832 contract covering the municipalities of Patnongon, Bugasong, Valderrama, Laua-An, Barbaza, Tibiao, Culasi, Sebaste, Pandan, and Libertad. Likewise, with its partnership with the DSWD, it serves 1,180 beneficiaries with a PHP2,548,800 contract covering the municipality of Bugasong.

Compliments from parents and teachers of the children who are recipients of the fresh milk encourage the Pandan MPC to work harder to supply the milk feeding program consistently.

"The people of Pandan warmly accept the venture of buffalo dairy farming. In fact, it distinguished the co-op from other farmer's organizations in the entire Antique, as before; the buffalo was only used in the farmlands, but now it is also used for collecting and producing fresh milk," humbly shared by Nepomuceno.

Even if buffalo dairying is a new project for the Pandan MPC and a new business for the municipality of Pandan, dairy buffalo farmers have demonstrated their resolve and commitment. In the first year of its establishment, the co-op had 217 buffalos that were managed by 98 dairy farmers.

Nepomuceno visualizes the potential of the buffalo industry in generating occupation and improving nutrition. It inspires her to pursue the negotiation with the DA in building the "Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita" project, which will strengthen the promotion of dairy products.

Pandan MPC was admired for discovering dairy enterprise, as it made the co-op distinctive in Pandan, Antique. From its current members of 7,800 and counting, a lot of people aspired to enter this co-op.

Through the commitment of Nepomuceno, who took the challenge to revive the failing co-op, she succeeded in turning it into a competitive organization. With the help of the dairy buffalo enterprise, Nepomuceno is confident that it will attract more opportunities, securing the co-op's status.



## WHAT MAKES A COOPERATIVE STRONGER

BY RHEA MAE B. RUBA



In the same year, DA-PCC's former Executive Director Libertado Cruz, who happens to reside in a near barangay, became a member of LAC and was later appointed as its business manager. He turned the dairy business of the cooperative into an economically robust carabao-based enterprise.

In the last month of the year 2019, the LAC became a supplier of milk for the national milk feeding program of DepEd and DSWD covering the provinces of Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Aurora, and Nueva Ecija in Region III.

Members of LAC since then vigorously tackled their respective roles to usher the cooperative to its former glory. There are still bumps on the road but with its current leaders and with chairman Alexander Dumale at the steering wheel, LAC is now strategically headed in a clear direction.

As an added value to its product as a participant in the milk feeding program, LAC entered into a partnership with San Miguel Corporation for the toll processing of milk using the company's sterilization technology, which extends the shelf life of milk from seven days to three up to six months, providing LAC a wider market reach.

Currently, with 55 active members, Chairman Dumale is leading the group with a shared value on the love for dairy farming and how this is contributing to nation-building. He said he helps nurture this value by creating a sense of partnership, not of competition, among the members.

In 2020, the co-op acquired its own land worth PHP200,000 and measures 200 square meter area where its main office was built. The LAC have also acquired vehicles for the transport of their milk produce and for delivering their other goods and services.

Among its other investments, it has recently established its agri-vet supplies store named Licaong Agri-Vet Supply. Cruz said this is to offer production supplies to the co-op members and even to the neighboring communities at a cheaper price.

From an initial capital of PHP18,000, the LAC is now worth almost over PHP15 million in assets. Both the opportunity and challenge that came along with this blessing have made the members of the cooperative wide awake, fully aware that what was behind them has only made them better and stronger.

With sheer determination to rise up from slumber for too long of a time, aiming for a fresh start is possible.

In the Science City of Muñoz in Nueva Ecija, where science and agriculture activities bustle, a group of farmers in barangay Licaong took the chance to establish a cooperative, which they named Licaong Dairy Producers Cooperative (LDPC) in 2004.

Initially, the hope to create a vibrant community of dairy farmers in this part of the town was high, keeping the spirit of cooperativism alive. At the onset, the undertaking proved to be working well for the pioneers but it wasn't long enough when most members went offhand, leaving the fledgling project barely making an impact.

This happened despite the full support of DA-PCC, providing LDPC with dairy animals complete with dairy farming equipment and machinery. Eventually, the cooperative lost not only its members but its business as well.

However, a "few good men" stayed in the cooperative and pledged to stand by what they have started. They trudged on and even with slow and arduous progress, not to mention the disdainful comments from their avid critics, they carried on the hope that someday, they will be known not as the "disbanded" group but as a force that made Licaong proud.

In 2019, the remaining members registered the co-op to the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) and was renamed as Licaong Agriculture Cooperative (LAC).



For the cooperative, buffalo dairy farming is game-changing. Back then, it was a despair to hear the problematic situation of members who incessantly complain about nothing but their mounting debts. But now, it is interesting to hear about their plans on where to invest their money. I would easily tell them: that is a better problem!

ALEXANDER DUMALE



## FROM ARID SOIL TO A LAND OF FREE-FLOWING MILK

BY DINE YVE DAGANOS



The years 1982 and 1983 were haunting for the agricultural municipality of President Roxas, Cotabato, as a prolonged dry spell left villagers starving and crippled with the loss of harvest and livelihood. Desperate parishioners of the Sta. Catalina church sought help from the priest (and later co-op founder) Fr. Fred Epiz. Through the priest and other church leaders, the “Tindahang Kooperatiba sa Parokya” sari-sari store was erected behind the church where the parishioners sold basic commodities. Through the years the little store born out of drought, flourished to a well of opportunities for the community through buffalo dairying.

Now upgraded to Sta. Catalina Multipurpose Cooperative, the community-based business was introduced to the buffalo dairy industry during a convention of cooperatives in North Cotabato in 2019. The DA-PCC at University of Southern Mindanao (USM) Center Director Benjamin John C. Basilio who also attended the event opened

the discussion on conduit partnership with the co-op for the implementation of dairying in the municipality.

Sta. Catalina MPC Operations Manager Wendell Amoronio admitted to have second thoughts with the idea, as carabaos were normally utilized for draft power in the community and not for sourcing milk. Nonetheless, a discussion between Dir. Basilio and the co-op board took place and a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed by the two parties.

Witnessing how DA-PCC facilitated the engagement of the co-op through every process of the Carabao-based Business Improvement Network (CBIN), Amoronio grew to appreciate the project.

“As it turns out, CBIN is unlike any past government projects we have participated in because it has a sure-market set in place through

the milk feeding program of DepEd and DSWD. As soon as we started our operation with the dairy industry, we were able to engage in the DepEd milk feeding program based in our own municipality. We agreed with PCC to start with one municipality as our milk supply was still limited and we were still familiarizing ourselves with the project,” Amoronio gladly narrated.

By 2020, Sta. Catalina received a total of 50 carabaos from the CBIN project. With the increasing milk production, the construction of a Dairy Box outlet and processing facility followed the next year.

The Dairy Box became an instant hit among locals with its wide variety of dairy delectables such as yogurt, ice cream, pastillas, cara blanca, cheese, flavored milk, as well as milk tea. According to Amoronio, they generate an average sale of PHP4000 to PHP5000 each day.

From one municipality, the co-op advanced to supply milk to five municipalities in their second milk feeding cycle. With the good market they were able to invest in a PHP1 million-worth of storage facility, purchase an auto-filling machine for the ice cream products, and about PHP400,000-worth of freezers to sustain their milk feeding venture as well as for added quality to their dairy products.

It took over a couple years to recover its capital share but it was worth the patience, as Sta. Catalina evolved to open more opportunities to its co-owners and the community as a whole. The co-op now has around 2,900 members and

continues to reach out to other farmers in the community.

“However little, we encourage the dairy farmers in the community to sell us their milk harvests. Aside from this, we also encourage them to sell us forage grasses to feed the buffaloes, as our farm space is not enough for forage plantation,” Amoronio enthused.

Aside from the dairy industry, Sta. Catalina MPC also markets general merchandise, agricultural marketing services in procurement, grading and warehousing of agricultural products, rice milling and corn shelling, drying, and warehousing, trucking services, feed production for livestock, organic rice production, whole nut and copra buying, a gasoline station, and a separate credit cooperative.

Throughout his 12 years of service in the cooperative, Amoronio said the dedication invested by the people in the management and the solid support of the members have kept the cooperative thriving.

“With our vision of inclusive growth, Sta. Catalina MPC leaves no one behind. In every step forward, every member and stakeholder are included,” Amoronio stressed.

Having this resolve, Sta. Catalina MPC is confident of a bright future in the dairy industry filled with opportunities that will never run dry through whatever forms of drought that may come.



With all the government projects that we have participated in so far, this is the first to offer a complete value chain with components on production, processing, and marketing.

WENDELL AMORONIO







# DEBT FREE!: THE CAMCI'S TESTIMONY OF VICTORY

BY RONALINE CANUTE

Ferdinand Cueva, chairman of the Catalanacan Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CAMCI) located at the Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, feels a sense of relief whenever he looks back at the situation of their cooperative in the 90s.

The cooperative was plagued with debt. Just when everything seems to be hopeless, a door of opportunity suddenly opened.

It happened in 2020 when CAMCI was considered in the list of DA-PCC to supply part of the requirements of the DepEd's Milk Feeding Program and KaraBun (milk flavored bun) distribution.

The co-op gained Php54,497,300 from the 2,701,770 packs of toned milk that it produced for the milk feeding. They also earned a total of Php600,000.00 from the 600,000 pieces of carabun. Their determination and perseverance of

officer and members to revive their cooperative paid off.

Forty-nine of CAMCI's 131 members are engaged in dairying. The co-op buys milk from them at PHP76 per liter.

Ferdinand is grateful that the implementation of milk feeding and distribution of KaraBun enabled them to recover the title of their land. He also shared the noticeable changes in the lives of their members.

He enumerated one by one the results of their engagement in milk feeding.

"We acquired 5 hectares of land worth 8.6 million pesos. We also bought an elf truck worth 2 million pesos and built a gasoline station worth 1.50 million pesos," Ferdinand proudly shared.

They also built a bakery intended for the development of pastries flavored with carabao's milk.

At present, CAMCI has three business lines namely trading, lending, and dairying. Ferdinand pointed out that their dairy business has the highest contribution to their total income.

They are also managing a Dairy Box where their bakery and dairy products are displayed and sold. Said outlet is located along the Maharlika highway, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija where customers can enjoy fresh delicacies like espasol, bibingkang gatas, pastillas, chocomilk, and pasteurized milk.

Part of their future plans is the expansion and building of additional outlet of dairy box where they can showcase their products.

CAMCI is beyond thankful, even for the failures they overcome. Ferdinand said that a person should experience disappointments sometimes to learn how to be patient and perseverant. No one ever became successful without failing first.

It is indeed a great testimony of their determination, perseverance, and faith. For two consecutive years, CAMCI was bestowed the "Best Dairy Buffalo Farmer Cooperative" title during the 6th and 7th National Carabao Conference.



Behind the success of our co-op is a story of disappointment, but with our patience and determination to scale up through dairying, we were able to find the light at the end of the tunnel.

FERDINAND CUEVA





## HARD WORK AND COMMITMENT OVERCOME PERTURBATION

BY RONALINE CANUTE

Alvin Virtucio, chairman of The Rosario Livestock Agricultural Farming Cooperative (TRLAFCO) formerly known as Barangay Agricultural and Fisheries Council (BAFC) in Rosario, Batangas is one of the co-op leaders and carapreneurs who attested that there is an economic opportunity in dairying.

He said that they tried venturing into other agricultural product but it was never enough to sustain their cooperative. Their commodities are swine, rice, corn, coconut, and vegetables but they often lose profits due to the low values of these commodities in the market.

"The farm inputs are expensive but the selling value is very low. When we plant palay, it requires a lot of effort plus the price of fertilizer is costly. At the end, the farmer's gain is little," Alvin said.

Through the initiative of DA-PCC at UPLB, TRLAFCO was introduced to dairy farming in 2013. The succeeding year, they started to produce and collect milk from their members. Alvin recalled that the price of each liter before was PHP40, but now they are buying it for PHP70 to PHP75 per liter.

According to Alvin, there is nothing difficult about taking care of buffaloes as long as you are diligent enough to wake up early to bathe and feed them. An individual should have the mindset that for every minute spent caring for a buffalo, there is a correspondingly high income.

In 2018, many BAFC members showed interest and engaged in buffalo dairying, thus, the council became a cooperative. The flow of the business was smooth not until the COVID-19 pandemic came. They were concerned about how they would continue the operation given the sudden lockdown and

travel restrictions.

Catherine Santiago, manager of the TRLAFCO, narrated the challenges that their cooperative went through.

"Most of us were afraid to go out because our families might be infected with the virus. At the same time, we were worried how our cooperative can survive," Catherine recalled.

She reminisced about the time when theirs were the only vehicles running along EDSA during the lockdown to collect and deliver milk. Yet, she and her team remained dedicated to their work, believing that no dairy farmer should be left behind during such a difficult time.

"I don't know how we did it. We just kept on praying, and we always think about the welfare of the farmers," Catherine said emotionally.

Likewise, Alvin said that they draw inspiration from the fact that they are helping and giving livelihood opportunities to the locals of Rosario. Their only problem now is, "Who will continue their dairy business?"

"I hope we can pass it on to our children. Most of our members are of old age. We want to make the children aware that they don't have to go far to find a job because the livelihood is right here in Rosario," he said.

Today, they are committed to extending support to the community they serve by donating wheelchairs to PWDs and giving school supplies to children.

True to their hard work and dedication, they were hailed as Outstanding Dairy Buffalo Cooperative during the 8th National Carabao Conference.



We cater different services in our co-op but we generate most of our sales from carabao's milk. Our daily milk harvest ranges from 300 to 400 liters. Because of the significant progress that this enterprise proved, more people were enticed to join us.

ALVIN VIRTUCIO







## DAIRY PROCESSING SERVES AS A GOLDEN KEY TO A COOPERATIVE

BY RHEA MAE RUBA

In a land full of sugarcane, a cooperative stood up in changing directions by venturing into a dairy enterprise that unknowingly became their golden key in building a bright future.

In 1982, the San Julio Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Cooperative at Tanjay, Negros Oriental bid their luck on sugarcane production as its board of directors noticed the market potential of this industrial crop.

San Julio started from a small capital managed by its 15 members. Aside from the shortage of manpower, the coop was challenged by the absence of equipment and machinery.

Leaders and members faced obstacles in establishing and maintaining the cooperative. In particular, it was difficult to increase the income of the co-op due to the vast number of competitors.

But, George Yleaña, the General Manager of the San Julio co-op, discovered the unique and ready market in buffalo dairying, which changed the direction of the co-op. He got interested in this venture by attending seminars at Tanjay in 2019.

Luckily, the co-op was chosen as one of the Carabao-Based Improvement Network (CBIN) recipients, a project of DA-PCC, which provided them dairy buffaloes and farm equipment.

San Julio endeavored in managing the buffalo business. It soon established a dairy processing plant in its small office building in March 2020. Having this tiny space did not hinder the co-op to become a supplier of the DSWD's and DepEd's milk feeding program in December 2020.

The co-op chooses to save their profits, as they aimed for more benefits. It was able to increase the dairy buffalo inventory to 78, consisting of 70 females and 8 males. Some 30 liters of raw milk are gathered daily, which can be sold at PHP105 per liter.

For the milk feeding program, the co-op supplies different schools in the various municipalities of Negros Occidental, such as Isabela, Binalbagan,

Sipalay, Ilog, Cauayan, and Kabankalan in partnership with the DepEd. Also, the coop supplies milk to Bacolod in partnership with the DSWD.

The growth of dairy farming and processing in Negros island attracts blessings to the entire San Julio cooperative. They finally owned apparatus and machinery from this venture, which are utilized for dairy and sugarcane farming.

In June 2021, the co-op's big goal was unlocked by building a concrete and convenient dairy processing plant in the middle of a sugarcane plantation, which made the cooperative looks special. It also secures the plantation from pollution, as they are away from the houses and cities.

Finally, the cooperative embraces heaven, ensuring continuous income from dairying. The initial 15 members also increased to 142 members. Also, their previous profit of PHP11 million jumped to PHP45 million because of dairying.

The strong foundation of the co-op showers other people to have a livelihood that fulfills their daily necessities and provides for their entire family's education and hospitalization.

"I am a former factory worker. I endured all the difficulties in the factory to have any amount of salary. But, I was more than blessed when I entered this cooperative. I earned a good salary with easier duties by being a dairy worker. Even if I am a woman, I can now provide enough for my family," a living testimony of Renalie Quimada.

Due to the overflowing grace, the co-op allocated a separate budget as part of its social responsibility, such as donating to schools and churches. Also, they take action on the pandemic by giving free milk to frontliners.

From the accomplishments, San Julio believed that the dairy enterprise served as their golden key to attaining power, success, and good fortune.



One of our proudest achievements in this venture is the establishment of a dairy processing plant, which cannot be simply done by an ordinary agrarian cooperative. Also, we gain funds for the additional equipment and machinery. Expanding this dairy enterprise in the cooperative is more inspiring, as it provides employment to our members.

GEORGE YLEAÑA







## NURTURING A FUTURE FOR COMMUNITIES WITH CARABAO'S MILK

BY DINE YVE DAGANOS

"When I set foot in the carabao pen to do chores, or enter the office to perform tasks, I don't think of it as work but consider it a sworn duty—to provide food for our communities as well as income opportunities through the services we offer."

This is the work creed of Divina Quemi, Chief Executive Officer of the Nueva Segovia Consortium of Cooperatives (NSCC) in Vigan City, Ilocos Sur. She is the first worker, manager, and CEO of the consortium since its registration with the Cooperative Development Authority in 1992.

The NSCC was conceptualized by former Archbishop of Nueva Segovia Cardinal Orlando Quevedo, while Monsignor Ambros Cabildo, then Nueva Segovia Caritas Executive Director, helped in establishing the federation.

True to its vision of "enriching lives thru diversified cooperative services," the once charity foundation flourished to become the country's leading and most trusted national consortium of cooperatives and a multi-millionaire federation that now assists hundreds of individuals in North Luzon through the financial, agro-enterprises and marketing services, capability building or training services, tourism program, and social services (FACTS).

"We chose to engage with agricultural activities because of their economic potential in sustaining the cooperative and also because it is something that connects us with the people in the community. So we innovate our services with different agri-related activities like our native pig production, chicken meat production, and carabao dairy industry. This is also our effort to support food security in the locality," Quemi enthused.

DA-PCC at Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) in Batac, Ilocos Norte headed by then Director Grace Marjorie Recta entrusted an initial of 15 carabaos to the federation in 2021.

The carabaos reminded Quemi of her childhood when she used to have joyrides on her grandfather's large native carabao if it was not used for draft power in their farm. When she found out through DA-PCC about the dairy potential in carabaos, it really sparked her interest and gave

her a thrill to venture into the project. Quemi made all the necessary preparations for the project and bought 5 hectares of land for growing napier grass to feed the animals. Currently, they are managing a 22-hectare land, which accommodates various livestock herds.

"The carabaos are properly being cared for not because of the income they give us through their milk but because we consider them part of the family in the farm. In fact, we named some of them after the mothers helping in the farm including me especially the pregnant carabaos not merely for laughs but because we want to care for them like we do with people, too," Quemi shared.

With the increasing demand for milk supply particularly in the annual Milk Feeding Programs of DepEd and DSWD, Quemi saw the significant economic potential of buffalo dairying. The CEO is hoping to acquire additional carabaos for the coming years to realize their dream of establishing the "NuangCo", which is a portmanteau of nuang, the local term for carabao, and cooperative. Quemi said this dream shop will showcase different products aside from milk like pastries, soap, and others. They also hope to include the entrustment of carabaos to add to their livelihood services in the future.

As part of their several advocacies, the NSCC team also conducts community organizing activities by visiting barangays and facilitating meetings for the organization of cooperatives that are not only focused on socio-economic activities but works with a heart for the community.

"In NSCC we work not solely for the returns of our investments but our paramount goal is to serve the community. We engaged in the dairy industry because we want to help build economically-independent communities with healthy and bright children through carabao's milk," Quemi emphasized.

With more than 300 members at present and counting, Quemi is fully driven that the federation has still more communities to empower in the future.



As we are engaging with DA-PCC and observing from other co-ops, I learned that through the dairy industry, we can benefit significantly from carabaos without having to exhaust them. Carabaos should not only be for draft power in the field. We take good care of them not because of the livelihood they give us but because we consider them as part of the family in the farm.

DIVINA QUEMI





## THE LIGHTHOUSE IN THE VALLEY

BY RONALINE CANUTE AND KHRIZIE EVERT PADRE

The yellow-painted Lighthouse Cooperative (LC) building in the city of Tuguegarao City, Cagayan stands conspicuously, and people are perplexed as to why it was named as “lighthouse,” where in fact the city is far from the coastline.

According to Chairperson Arturo “Art” Tabbu, the name was inspired by the Bible verse in the book of Psalm 119:105 which says, “Your word is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path.”

A lighthouse is constructed on rocky cliffs or a wave-swept reef in the sea to guide sailors away from dangerous coastlines. This, according to Art, is reflected in their mission to act as Cagayan’s lighthouse keepers and ignite light by generating employment possibilities.

The LC is a church-based cooperative that was established in August 1998 through the members of the Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF) in Tuguegarao City. Its founders realized the importance of creating a cooperative to safeguard consumers against greedy entrepreneurs. The first businesses that they ventured into were selling computer services, home furniture, and office supplies.

In 2006, while they were standing on the sidewalk, they saw a vendor holding a bag of chicharon (crackling) made from carabao. They thought that it was a bright idea to create a product from carabao and introduce it to the market. After conducting thorough research, they finally came up with the Chicha-rabao.

However, they were challenged when they tried to introduce the product to the public. “We heard feedbacks from people saying that the price is expensive but no difference from other kinds of chicharon. They said we just put a label in the container but it’s just an ordinary chicharon,” Arturo said.

They did not lose heart so they did more research. Their efforts worked and they were able to formulate seasonings, and that was how the garlic flavor was made. Today, chicha-rabao is available in two other variants: hot and spicy and onion and vinegar.

Arturo is proud that Chicha-rabao now has an identity as a product of Cagayan. It is recognized as the “One Town, One Product” of Tuguegarao City under the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Chicha-rabao, as many describe it, is not as heavily fat-laden as the other chicharons being sold in the market. It is puffy in texture, like puffed cheese balls, with a light and tasty flavor. Nutrition wise, it is definitely less in fat and lower in cholesterol since it is purely made from carabao’s skin only. It can be taken without having to dip it in the usual vinegar mix.

Fresh from the slaughter house, the carabao’s skin are cleaned, chopped to a specific size and then deep-fried in boiling oil. The skin is tempered first. It is mixed with small amounts of a hot ingredient and a cold ingredient before adding the entire cold ingredient to the hot ingredient. This way, it helps prevent the cold ingredient from curdling or lumping when it is mixed into the hot ingredient.

Art revealed that they need a volume of 70,000 kg, which is equivalent to about 2,000 head of carabao, for the processing of chicha-rabao. They are buying the raw materials from slaughterhouses and from local farmers for PHP65 per kg.

“Basically, without the chicha-rabao, sales would be very poor. It’s the chicha-rabao that attracts customers,” he happily said.

Today, the LC continues to spread light by generating employment for and provide additional investment, income and saving opportunity in Cagayan.

“Our main goal is to generate more jobs not so much on the profit. At the end of the year, we make sure that we give back the fruit of our effort,” said Art.

The LC is grateful that there has never been a year when it experienced a loss of revenue, even during the pandemic. Their way forward is to expand, develop more products, and build more lighthouses to create more opportunities.



The Lighthouse Cooperative is inspired by Bible verse Psalm 119:105, and we live this out by providing employment opportunities to our fellow Cagayanos. We offer different kinds of services and products, and one of our products that we are proud of is the Chicha-rabao. It differs from other varieties of chicharon because it is made from carabao’s skin and not from fat. We are happy that Chicha-rabao has become identified with Tuguegarao, Cagayan.

ARTHURO TABBU









Carabao's milk lends our brand a unique selling proposition that makes Karabella gelato a better choice for customers.

ERIC JAN BUENAFLORE



## THE TASTE OF VICTORIES: THE KARABELLA DAIRY JOURNEY

BY RHEA MAE RUBA

Happiness and calmness—that's what ice cream delivers to everyone, explicitly to young and old individuals. Indeed, each flavor brings back fond memories.

Eric Jan Buenaflor shared his inspirational story with his comfort food: ice cream. He is one of the luckiest tasters, as he can manufacture his own flavor by being the managing partner of Karabella, which now produces 23 flavors of gelato ice cream made from local and natural ingredients.

Eric Jan reminisced the time when his mother Jan Buenaflor and uncle Alfred Ng asked him if he wants to join their starting business Karabella in 2017. Its brand is derived from the words "caraballa" which means female carabao and "bella" which means beautiful. Behind Karabella's origin was the pursued advocacy of the Buenaflor family to help the local farmers from using 100% carabao's milk and natural ingredients in making ice cream.

In fulfilling their goal, they acquired a partnership with Gawad Kalinga Enchanted Farm managed by a group of farmers called General Trias Dairy Raisers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (GTDRMPC) from Cavite. Since then, they sourced fresh carabao's milk from the farm with the aim of giving the workers sustainable income.

It seems like hitting multiple achievements in one action for Eric Jan. By managing Karabella, it completed his love for the ice cream and social responsibility for the country. Therefore, he made concerted efforts in learning gelato processing to acquire a better and healthier product.

"I have a high trust that Karabella will stand out in the market since it processes gelato from carabao's milk, which makes it smoother and creamier. It has no vegetable oil, filled milk, or any additives, which also makes the Karabella healthier and tastier," proudly shared by Eric Jan.

It became a challenge for Eric Jan to introduce Karabella in the market since it is new. But with confidence, he took the risk to rent a commissary for the production of Karabella. He believed that, someday, their space for freezers in restaurants will multiply and, eventually, build their own store.

Eric Jan also took the opportunity to join the "Ultimate Taste Test" or UTT contest in Metro Manila in 2018. He won second place with his salted egg caramel and ube halaya flavored gelato.

The triumph inspired Eric Jan to experiment with different

flavors that will attract a lot of buyers. Through his perseverance, Karabella got invited to food fairs, birthdays, christenings, parties, and other celebrations, which signifies that it had already widened its customers.

Again, as a proof that Karabella had won the heart of dessert lovers, it constantly joined the UTT presenting different flavors. It introduced sorvete de manga and bazooka bubblegum in 2019. Dynamite and chocoholic mint in 2021. Amadeo, manille, paradise mango rum, very old captain, and intramuros in 2022. The judges and attendees were always amazed by the Karabella products. According to them, every scoop brings back memories. Now, it's not just luck since it has already been proved that Karabella is the best of the bests desserts.

"I, together with my family and staff, continue to learn and improve our gelato flavors. But, we are sticking to local taste because we are committed and dedicated to also served the local farmers and local suppliers," Eric Jan said.

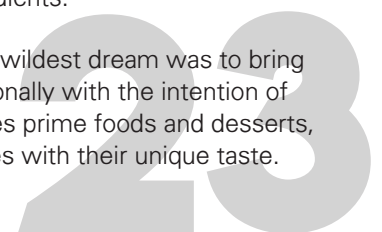
In reaching more sales, Eric Jan decided to have certification from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). With that, they managed to enter prime malls around Metro Manila, specifically 12 marketplaces and 3 metro supermarkets. Also, they have five distributors in Metro Manila. Recently, they reached Robinsons in Boracay, Aklan.

"Someday, Karabella will be part of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. I want people to know what Karabella is, what it tastes like, and what carabao's milk is," hopefully said by Eric Jan.

Eric Jan was also grateful for discovering the edge of carabao's milk in the gelato making. According to him, the Karabella Dairy collects about 30 liters of carabao's milk from GTDRMPC weekly. At the peak season, it collected around 80-100 liters.

Since then, carabao's milk has become the foundation of Karabella Dairy as it is full package when it comes to health benefits. It also gives different vibes when combined with other local and natural ingredients.

As a carapreneur, Eric Jan's wildest dream was to bring the Karabella Dairy internationally with the intention of promoting that Filipino serves prime foods and desserts, which could unbox memories with their unique taste.





The Philippines is a country of many things and one of its coveted wonders, more than its scenic archipelago, is its craftsmanship manifested in its world-class produce.

One can find such product at CHELSI Leather and Services Inc. in Meycauayan, Bulacan—the town known as the center of Philippine leather industry in the last 100 years.

The company is one of the biggest in the tannery business producing and supplying leather materials to various manufacturers of shoes, bags, furniture, novelty items and even automobiles.

Mary Lazaro, managing director of CHELSI Leather and Services, Inc., prides her company for pioneering leather goods manufacturing in the Philippines since its operation in 1901.

Mary is a keeper of a century-old knowledge on a craft that has been passed on to her by generations including that of a Chinese traditional tanning process using ingredients like lime, acid, and camachile extract, which is a natural tanning extract.

The first product that they made was of carabao hide.

Carabao leather is naturally firm and is ruggedly grained. This is why thicker things like belts, soles, and radio cases tend to use it more frequently. In comparison to cow leather, it has fewer options for finishing because of its hard characteristics. However, it still has a simple quality, making it adaptable to embossed prints and patterns.

The carabao leather comes with different style, color, and design such as acacia, milled, pebble, perforated, stones, veins, waffles, washed, and yama.

As the business grew, the tanning technology advanced and new products were added into

its catalogue. Aside from carabao hide, they are now manufacturing leather from cow, rabbit, and crocodile.

Their raw materials are sourced from as far as Samar and Zamboanga. They also import from Asian countries and Australia when supply becomes scarce.

Their items are available for online purchase in the Philippines and can be monogrammed or tailored to a particular style, kind, and design.

CHELSI's remained resilient even in the face of adversity, exhibiting tenacity during the period when most tanneries in Meycauayan struggled to survive but howbeit failed.

CHELSI's also got caught up in a hardship during the global pandemic when products like theirs are considered as not essential for survival. Sourcing for hides at this time has also become significantly challenging because it is cooked for food rather than sold to be made into accessories.

But CHELSI's knows that this is just a temporary setback and did not stop them from producing quality products. This made them a mainstay supplier of leather goods abroad.

While export has become the crux of their business, Mary openly shares her personal gripe on how the local leather industry has faced a downturn since the early part of the 21st century.

She said, from 200 tanneries when the industry boomed a century ago, only 10 tanneries are operating in Meycauayan.

It is against this backdrop that the province of Bulacan has recently laid out measures to revitalize the tannery industry. Said measures include maintaining a steady source of cow, carabao, and goat skins; modernizing the tanneries; and reviving a cooperative and



creating a technical working group that will plan out how to sustainably operate the tanneries in Bulacan without hurting its river system.

"If you're into serious business, instead of just eyeing on how to make money, your focus should be fixed on producing high-quality products while being mindful of your workers and the environment," Mary said when asked how CHELSI's made it to the remaining few tanneries that are still standing.

The statement is also telling of why the brand, much like each one of its leather products, is designed to last.

The good thing about leather is that it may survive for a hundred years or more. What makes carabao leather unique is that it is naturally firm with rougher grains. This is why it is often used to make thicker materials like belts, soles, and radio cases. Our products made from carabao leather are being exported to as far as Europe.

MARY LARAZO





## CARABAO X 'KARYADOR' —THE POWER DUO THAT DRIVES THE AGRI SCENE

BY MA. CECILIA IRANG-MARIANO

Dubbed as the farmer's best friend, the carabao remains as a mainstay in the rural scene, playing an irreplaceable role as the farmer's dependable ally. It demonstrates unrivaled strength and power—a steady complement to the toil rendered by farmers to produce staple food. The aphorism "a farmer without a carabao is just half a farmer" verily depicts this narrative.

Even with the advent of mechanization, the carabao still plays a crucial role in major farm operations. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, the total carabao inventory reached 2.74 million as of June 30, of which, based on a study, 65% to 70% is used for farm operations.

One such important farm operation where the carabao takes center stage is during "karyada" in the harvest season.

Karyada is the kind of work in rice production where bags of newly threshed palay are hauled to where they will be piled or stored up. It is a contracted job carried out by a group of farm workers known as "karyador" and paid on a per-sack basis.

Nimensio Jimenez or Ka Neme, as he is fondly called, proudly shared that he was able to finance the educational needs of his three children and build their own house with his income as a "karyador", of which, he said, has been his work for more than four decades now. He is also the "kabisilya" or leader of seven "karyador" in Sto. Domingo, Nueva Ecija.

The karyador is paid PHP10 to PHP15 for every cavan transported from the farm to the road. Ka

Neme's team would transport the sacks of palay to the nearest road or to the "bilaran" of the land owner.

"Our earnings are divided equally among ourselves. During the wet season, each of us expects to bring home PHP15,000 to PHP18,000 in one cropping but we get more during the dry season," Ka Neme shared. He said "more" could go as high as PHP30,000 plus hauling is relatively faster and easier during the dry season.

He also prides himself of the exceptional draft power and strength of his crossbred carabao that he uses for karyada, which can pull a cartload of 15 to 20 cavans during the dry season and eight to 10 cavans when the field is muddy.

Aside from transporting palay and other farm products, he added the carabaos are also utilized for land preparation such as cultivating, harrowing, and plowing the sides and corners of the field (locally termed "dukut"), which a tractor cannot till.

"Machines alone cannot do all the farm work. Carabao's draft power is unparalleled especially when the field is muddy. No machine can surmount its power. Only its draft power can meet the difficulty of transporting hefty loads of harvest to a firmer ground. Carabao is also low-maintenance, as opposed to the machine, which requires gasoline to work," Ka Neme argued.

Ka Neme and his fellow karyador are living proofs that the carabao's draft power has proven to be an exceptional complement to farmers' labor in the agricultural scene from then until now.

The carabao is very much needed in farm operations. There's no way that the carabao's help will be brushed aside. If there is no carabao, karyada will not be able to move on successfully.

NIMENSIO JIMENEZ









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