



YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE FORUM

Fostering leadership, innovative capacity, and agripreneurship of youth in Region 13

Highlights and key messages



I. Background

Cooperatives are vital in driving economic and social progress, combining democratic governance with social responsibility. Despite their importance, fostering youth engagement in cooperatives requires intentional efforts and support. The aging population among farmers, regular members, and leaders in agricultural cooperatives—who hold valuable organizational knowledge—highlights the need to involve younger generations. This engagement is essential for the ongoing sustainability and adaptation of the agriculture sector and cooperative principles today, especially considering cooperatives' significant potential to tackle various challenges facing farmers and rural communities.

To address this need, a forum was held on April 13-14, 2024, in Butuan City to motivate, empower, and engage young people in cooperative activities and leadership. This platform also showcases the proactive initiatives of cooperatives to uplift youth. This event is part of a larger effort led by the Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) to empower young farmers, along with its members, the Philippine Family Farmers' Agriculture Fishery Forestry Cooperatives (AgriCOOPh), and the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA). The event is part of AFA's project titled "Empowering Women and Youth through Inclusive Cooperatives and Agricultural Value Chains toward Peace and Development in Mindanao."

Co-organized by AFA, AgriCOOPh, PAKISAMA, and NYC Region 13, the forum served as a platform to collectively discuss and understand the barriers, enabling factors, and opportunities for youth to achieve their leadership potential and facilitate youth-led innovation and enterprises. The forum was designed to allow participants to gain information and knowledge on the following:

- the challenges and barriers faced by youth in agriculture
- innovations of youth
- strategies employed by cooperatives to support their youth members
- ways that youth can engage in leadership and governance of cooperatives, social organizations, and in their communities

A total of 54 individuals participated in the two-day Youth in Agriculture Forum.



II. Sessions

Session 1: Rural Youth Situation in the Philippines

Speaker: Alar-laa Joy Cagata, PAKISAMA

Ms. Cagata shared her journey, starting at 17 in a cooperative. She emphasized the importance of youth in agriculture and challenged participants to see themselves as the hope for agriculture.

She highlighted the challenges and opportunities in agriculture stating that the average farmer's age is 58, with a poverty threshold of Php14,000. Approximately 2.8 million youth work in agriculture, yet 4.5 million face poverty. She outlined three main challenges:

- Social: Low recognition, self-esteem issues, discrimination, and apathy towards farming.
- Financial: Low income, hunger, and limited access to financial resources.
- Production: Climate change, inadequate mechanization, and poor access to land and government support.

She emphasized the cooperative's potential to empower youth by providing organizational support, linking them to resources, and enabling them to lead and transform their communities. She shared that PAKISAMA's efforts are focused on youth leadership transformation through organizing, capacitating, and strengthening youth-led organizations. She highlighted PAMANAKA, a national youth organization formed by PAKISAMA that focuses on youth leadership training and advocacy. It supported the passage of the bill—the Magna Carta for Young Farmers.

Ms. Cagata recommended enhancing and strengthening youth involvement in cooperatives, emphasizing the cooperative's role in fostering youth leadership and addressing rural youth's multifaceted challenges in agriculture.

Session 2: Cooperative as an Inclusive Institution

Speaker: Atty. Kenny Junce P. Altubar, Cooperative Development Authority, Region XIII Extension Office

Atty. Kenny Junce P. Altubar from the Cooperative Development Authority's Region XIII Extension Office highlighted the legal framework, benefits, and mechanisms through which cooperatives promote inclusivity and support diverse community members. He underscored the importance of cooperative principles in fostering equitable economic participation and empowering marginalized groups, primarily focusing on including youth and women in collaborative activities and leadership roles.

Atty. Altubar stated that *"cooperatives can be powerful tools for community development and social cohesion, ensuring all members have access to resources and opportunities"*

Session 2.1: The Philosophy, Why, What, and How of Cooperatives

Speaker: Mr. Niño Rosil Bantayan, Cooperative Development Authority, Region XIII Extension Office

Mr. Niño Rosil Bantayan delved into the foundational philosophy of cooperatives, which is rooted in mutual aid, democratic governance, and social responsibility. He emphasized that cooperatives are built on voluntary and open membership principles, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training, and information, cooperatives' cooperation, and community concern.

Mr. Bantayan said that *"cooperatives offer a unique model that promotes equality, inclusivity, and sustainability and they empower members by giving them a voice and stake in the organization, which leads to better decision-making and a fairer distribution of benefits"*

Mr. Bantayan defined cooperatives as autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. He detailed the different types of cooperatives, including agricultural, consumer, credit, worker, and housing, each serving different purposes but adhering to the same core principles.

He explained the operational mechanisms of cooperatives, focusing on their governance structure, decision-making processes, and the roles of members, boards, and management. He stressed the importance of democratic control, where each member has an equal say in major decisions, typically exercised through a one-member, one-vote system. He also discussed the economic aspects, including how members contribute equitably to and democratically control the capital of their cooperative.

Session 3: Youth Leadership and Agripreneurship in Cooperatives

Speaker: Japheth Tio, AYA Coordinator, AgriCOOPh

Mr. Tio led an insightful session on the importance of youth leadership and agripreneurship within cooperatives. He began by defining agripreneurship as the transformation of farmers into agricultural entrepreneurs who manage and support business ventures within the agriculture sector. Agripreneurs bridge traditional farming and modern, business-oriented agriculture, driving sustainable practices, embracing technology, and contributing significantly to the sector's development.



He highlighted the critical issue of aging farmers, citing a 2020 PSA report that the average age of farmers was between 57 and 59. This statistic raised concerns about the future of farming and the need for younger generations to take up the mantle. He shared that due to the Department of Agriculture's interventions, including training and

scholarships, the average age of farmers has decreased to 49-50 years as of 2023, according to the farmers' registry system.

Mr. Tio presented demographics showing the CSA-AgriCOOPh Project's reach, engaging 2,307 young farmers across 13 cooperatives. This involvement highlights the significant impact of targeted projects on youth participation in agriculture.

Why the youth matter in cooperatives:

1. **Generational Renewal:** Ensuring a continuous influx of younger members to sustain cooperatives.
2. **Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Young members bring fresh ideas and innovative approaches to agricultural practices and business models.
3. **Potential Contributions:** Youth, through their unique perspectives and skills, have the potential to drive growth and development within cooperatives.

He also discussed several obstacles young people encounter when joining agricultural cooperatives, including stringent membership conditions, limited resources, financial constraints, and skill gaps.

He emphasized the importance of mentoring programs in developing leadership skills and agripreneurship among youth. Such programs can bridge the skill gap and empower young members to take cooperative leadership roles.

Session 4: Testimonials from a Young Farmer Leader

Speaker: Alar-laa Joy Cagata, PAMANAKA/PAKISAMA

Ms. Cagata provided a powerful example of youth leadership and innovation in agriculture, inspiring other young participants to pursue their passions and contribute to the sector's growth and sustainability.



Ms. Cagata shared her inspiring journey as a young farmer leader, starting with her involvement in a cooperative at 17. Ms. Cagata highlighted her early participation in agriculture and how it fostered her passion for farming. She described her challenges as a young farmer and how these experiences honed her resilience and determination. Despite the hardships, her determination and innovative spirit helped her overcome obstacles and make a meaningful impact.

She presented their youth group, "Young Dreamers, Young Farmers," with the motivating slogan "It's time to shine!" This group focuses on empowering young individuals in agriculture and encouraging them to take active roles in

the sector.

Ms. Cagata emphasized her aggressive and innovative approach to farming. In 2022, she participated in the Young Farmers Challenge Summit, where she presented her program model, "Abanse NPK (Agri-Bokashi Alternative Natural Soil Enhancer)," and won a national award. This achievement underscored her commitment to sustainable farming practices and agricultural innovation.

She also shared her role in founding the Hugpong sang mga Ilonggo nga Mangungumang Kabataan Association (HIMATA) in 2022. This association aims to unite young Ilonggo farmers and promote agricultural development and leadership among youth.

Session 5: Workshop - Understanding the Barriers and Challenges of Youth in Region 13

In this interactive workshop session, participants were divided into four groups to discuss and explore the various barriers and challenges faced by youth in Region 13.

Workshop Structure:

1. Group Discussions: Each group spent 40 minutes discussing their impressions, experiences, and assessments of agriculture as a livelihood activity. Participants shared the challenges they encountered as members of farming families and identified factors that have hindered them from becoming innovative farmers, agripreneurs, or managers of their family's land.
2. Illustration Activity: Each group drew an illustration or symbol representing farming or agriculture. They were asked to explain why they chose that particular illustration or symbol, allowing for a creative expression of their viewpoints.

The facilitated discussions provided a platform for participants to openly express their thoughts and challenges, fostering a collaborative environment for problem-solving and idea generation. The illustrations and symbols created by each group offered unique insights into the collective mindset of young farmers and their vision for the future of agriculture.

Synthesis of Workshop Results by Ms. Esther Penunia

Ms. Penunia synthesized the workshop results by weaving a narrative based on the illustrations created by each group. She emphasized that every drawing, painting, and illustration has a story and meaning, reflecting individual perspectives. Drawing on the group discussions and creative outputs, she crafted a cohesive narrative highlighting the struggles, hardships, and hopes of the youth in agriculture.

The following are the key points from Ms. Penunia's Synthesis:



First Group - Pregnant Woman Illustration: The first group drew a pregnant woman to symbolize farming or agriculture. Ms. Esther interpreted this as the youth in the forum being the baby inside the womb, representing potential and new beginnings. This imagery highlighted the nurturing aspect of agriculture and the promise of growth and development.

Second Group - Seedling Illustration: The second group depicted a seedling, representing the baby from the womb now starting to grow. Ms. Esther related this to the early stages of development, where the seedling, though not yet mature, is beginning to spread its leaves. This symbolized the initial steps of youth in agriculture, filled with hope and potential.

Third Group - Full-Grown Farm Illustration: The third group illustrated a community as a full-grown farm, abundant with fruits and various crops. This representation showcased a vision of a prosperous and productive agricultural community, reflecting the aspirations and potential achievements of the youth when provided with the right support and opportunities.

Fourth Group - Broken Chains Illustration: The fourth group chose to illustrate broken chains, symbolizing freedom from the limitations and challenges associated with farming occupations. This powerful imagery conveyed the youth's desire to overcome obstacles and embrace agriculture with renewed vigor and understanding.

Ms. Penunia concluded her synthesis by urging the youth to face the challenges and pursue their goals and dreams within their farming communities. She highlighted that, despite the struggles and hardships, there is hope and potential for growth, especially with support from the government and partner organizations.

Session 6: Empowering Futures: Youth in Nation Building

Facilitators: Karene Añover and Rizza Malou Vicente, NYC Regions 10 and 13

Activity 6.1 Paper Airplane

Ms. Karene Añover instructed all the participants to make paper airplanes. The participants wrote their names, ages, and dreams on the paper planes. After that, they flew their paper planes to a specific "AFA Airport." Out of all the planes, four were randomly selected to determine the leaders of four groups formed during the forum. The leaders then selected the members for their respective groups.

Each group were assigned an animal sound. Group 1 was assigned the sound "aw-aw," Group 2 had "meow-meow," Group 3 had "Oink-Oink," and Group 4 had "Mooo." The groups were required to respond using their assigned animal sound whenever their group was called upon.

Then, Ms. Vicente explained that NYC is a government agency in the Philippines that addresses issues concerning Filipino youth. It was established on June 30, 1995, through Republic Act 8044, also known as the "Youth in Nation-Building Act of 1995." The NYC serves as the country's primary policy-making body on youth affairs and coordinates and implements programs that raise awareness about youth issues. The agency's mandate is rooted in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and aims to promote and protect their overall well-being.

Ms. Vicente elaborated on the various mandates of the NYC, including the National Youth Parliament (NYP), Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), the Medium-Term Youth Development Program (MTYDP), and the Youth Organizations and Volunteer Program (YORP). She specifically discussed the YORP, the agency's program for registering youth organizations.

Session 7: Empowering Futures: Relationship of Local Youth Development Council (LYDC) and Youth Organization Registration Program (YORP)

Speaker: Ms. Rizza Malou Vicente, NYC Regions 10 and 13

Ms. Vicente highlighted the key relationship between the Local Youth Development Council (LYDC) and the Youth Organization Registration Program (YORP). She outlined

their roles in empowering youth and influencing their futures. The LYDC serves as a platform for youth participation in local governance, ensuring their voices inform development policies. Meanwhile, the YORP registers youth organizations, offering legitimacy, resources, and opportunities for collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Ms. Vicente elaborated on the functions of LYDC, which include:

- Advising local government units on youth-related policies and programs.
- Ensuring the implementation of the Comprehensive Barangay Youth Development Plan.
- Facilitating the allocation of budget for youth programs.

Whereas, the roles of YORP are:

- Creating a database of youth organizations.
- Providing technical and financial assistance to registered organizations.
- Enhancing networking and partnership opportunities.

She stressed the importance of collaboration between LYDC and YORP. These bodies can ensure a more coordinated approach to youth development by working together. LYDC can identify the youth's needs and aspirations, while YORP can facilitate the necessary resources and support.

She also emphasized that the synergy between these programs can lead to more effective and impactful youth initiatives, fostering leadership, entrepreneurship, and community engagement among the youth.

She acknowledged some of the challenges faced by LYDC and YORP, such as limited funding, lack of awareness, and bureaucratic hurdles. However, she also presented solutions, including advocacy for increased budget allocations, awareness campaigns, and streamlining registration processes to encourage more youth participation.

Session 8: Empowering Futures: Financial Literacy

Speaker: Ms. Karene Añover, NYC Cluster Head for Regions 10 and 13

Ms. Añoover led a hands-on workshop focused on financial literacy in this session. The aim was to equip the youth with essential budgeting, financial planning, and responsible spending skills.



Activity 8.1 Scenario and Task

Each group was given a hypothetical budget of P20,000.00. The task was to allocate this budget to various expenses they deemed necessary, simulating real-life financial decision-making.

Steps:

1. Budget Allocation: Each group discussed and decided how to spend their P20,000.00. They considered various potential expenses, such as investments, savings, essential purchases, and discretionary spending.
2. Budget Presentation: After stipulating their budgets, each group prepared a detailed breakdown of their expenses. One member from each group was assigned to explain their financial decisions to the other groups.
3. Group Rotation: Groups rotated to see what the other groups had purchased with their P20,000.00. This activity allowed participants to compare different budgeting strategies and learn from their peers' approaches.

Importance of financial literacy:

Ms. Añoover highlighted the significance of understanding financial concepts like budgeting, saving, and investing. She emphasized that financial literacy is crucial for achieving personal and professional goals, especially in the agricultural sector, where financial management can significantly impact success.

The exercise demonstrated the importance of making informed financial decisions. Ms. Karene discussed strategies for smart spending, including prioritizing essential expenses, avoiding unnecessary debt, and the benefits of saving a portion of the income for future needs or investments.

The session concluded with a discussion of the insights gained from the activity. Participants shared their reflections on the budgeting exercise and how it influenced their understanding of financial management.

She encouraged the youth to apply these financial literacy principles in their personal lives and entrepreneurial endeavors, reinforcing that responsible financial management is critical to sustainable development and economic empowerment.

Session 9: Resource Mobilization Session

Speaker: Ms. Karene Añoover, NYC Cluster Head for Regions 10 and 13

Ms. Añoover led an interactive workshop where participants drew maps of the CARAGA region, marking crops and commodities in each area. This aimed to improve their understanding of the regional agricultural landscape.

Groups focused on key provinces, highlighting where specific crops were produced. They discussed staple and cash crops, then presented their findings, explaining the distribution and unique agricultural features of CARAGA.

Ms. Añoover emphasized the region's agricultural diversity, highlighting the need to understand crop production variations. She shared strategies for utilizing local resources and addressing challenges.



The session ended with participants reflecting on insights gained and discussing how to apply them to their agricultural activities and community initiatives.

Presentation of PARBEMCO Youth's Business Plan

Presenter: John Peter Cebuala, PARBEMCO Youth Organization President

Mr. John Peter Cebuala presented the business plan for the PARBEMCO Youth's entrepreneurial venture, which is marketing coffee and coffee-based beverages. This initiative is part of the broader efforts to engage and empower youth in agripreneurship, supported by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) under the SPADe. This enterprise development support demonstrates ways to support youth participation in the economic activities of the cooperative.

Session 10: Empowering Futures: Youth Parliament

Facilitators: Ms. Karene Añover and Ms. Rizza Malou Vicente, NYC, Regions 10 and 13

The session started with a detailed presentation on the procedural framework of a parliamentary meeting. They explained the key components, including the roles of the parliament members, the structure of a typical session, and the rules of conduct. The presentation covered drafting and presenting motions, debate procedures, voting processes, and the importance of maintaining decorum and respect during discussions.

Role-Playing Activity:

Participants took on different roles within the parliament, such as president or speaker, secretary, members of the parliament, and various committee heads. The role-playing exercise simulated an actual parliament session, allowing participants to apply what they had learned in a realistic setting.

The interactive session aimed to deepen the participants' understanding of parliamentary procedures and the legislative process. It emphasized the importance of active participation, critical thinking, and effective communication in governance and decision-making.

Ms. Añover concluded the session by encouraging participants to use the skills and knowledge they gained in their communities and organizations. They emphasized the potential of youth to be leaders and change-makers, advocating for their active involvement in governance and development initiatives.

Session 11: Empowering Futures: Youth Leadership and Achieving Common Goals

Facilitators: Ms. Karene Añover and Ms. Rizza Malou Vicente NYC, Regions 10 and 13

Youth leadership and the power of working together to achieve common goals are significant. The activity tested the participants' ability to communicate, collaborate, and innovate under time constraints.

Each group was instructed to build a tower using only plastic straws. They were informed that their towers would be judged based on stability and aesthetics. Each group was given limited plastic straws and a set time to complete their towers. The activity encouraged participants to brainstorm, delegate tasks, and work together efficiently.

After the judging, the facilitators led a debriefing session to discuss the activity's outcomes. The session concluded with the facilitators encouraging participants to reflect on the experience and consider how their practiced skills could be applied to real-life situations, especially in their roles within cooperatives and community projects. They reiterated the value of teamwork, innovative thinking, and effective leadership in achieving common goals.

III. Election of Officers

Facilitator: Eustaquio Literatus

The process involved a methodology where each cooperative appointed a representative to represent their youth organization at the provincial level. Subsequently, representatives were selected at the provincial level, leading to the progression to the regional level, where the president was elected and other member leaders were chosen.

