

Rough Road to Success

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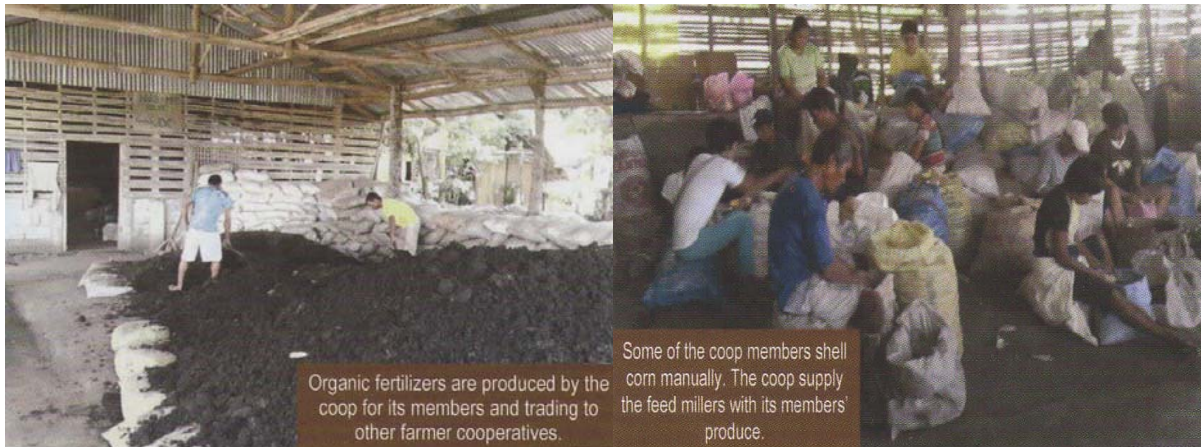
The Nagasi Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries MPC Story

Hacienda Esperanza located at Barangay Nagasi, La Carlota City, Negros Occidental was owned by the late Ambassador Roberto Salas Benedicto. It had a total land area of 564 hectares planted to sugarcane. In 1992, the Department of Agrarian Reform covered the landholding under Compulsory Acquisition (CA). Landowner's resistance was one of the reasons why it took almost seven (7) years to acquire and distribute the landholding.

CLOA was issued to the 182 farmer beneficiaries in 1999. In the same year NAGASI FARMERS and FARMWORKERS ASSOCIATION was organized by Negros Economical Development Center for Peace Empowerment and Rural Development (NCPERD). Farmer beneficiaries were installed by then DAR Secretary Morales, however the landowner still resisted and this ARB's were not able to take physical possession of the land.

In CY 2000, the association was able to avail of loan assistance from Peoples' Agricultural Plan for the 21st Century (PAP 21) funded by a Japanese Institution led by Father Ben Escrupulo.

The ARBs cultivated 174 hectares; however only 68 hectares were harvested due to the case filed by the land-owner. The court issued a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) stopping the organization from its cultivating and harvesting operations. It was also in this year that members decided to change their registration from association to cooperative. The organization was registered with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) on July 5, 2000 with a new name, NAGASI AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARY MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERATIVE (NARB MPC) with 76 members and P30,400 start up CBU.



In CY 2001, farmer beneficiaries were again installed by Secretary Braganza. Barricades with blue guards were put up by the landowner to stop the beneficiaries. There were factions among beneficiaries, out of 182 ARBs only 76 are members of the cooperative. Other farmer beneficiaries who were pro-administration opted to lease their lands to the landowner. In May 2002, the Court of Appeals ruled with final decision granting the NARB MPC the right to take possession of the land and in November 24, 2002 farmers were again installed by then Secretary Pagdanganan with the assistance of the Regional Military Groups. Bloody incidents happened in March 6, 2003 where one NARB member was murdered by security guards and two other members were also wounded.

In 2004 more than 25 hectares were left vacant because of intimidation and harassment by blue guards hired by the landowner. But this did not stop the members of NARB MPC to struggle more to get full possession of the land that belongs to them. In December 11-12, 2004 the Philippine Council for Food Security and Fair Trade/KAISAMPALAD conducted a workshop on land use and productivity and provided cooperative credit assistance up to year 2005.

Today, NARB MPC is assisted by Alter Trade Foundation, Inc., to increase productivity, integrated farming system with the use of organic fertilizer is being practiced in the collective farm. The cooperative is now a producer of organic fertilizer and has started trading with other groups of farmers. Members are trained in these farming systems to make them more productive.

At present, the cooperative is engaged in the following projects:

1. Sugarcane Production intercropped with peanuts
2. Vegetable Production
3. Rice & Corn Production
4. Livestock & poultry production
5. Consumer Store
6. Farm Tractor & Trucking

These projects are supported by strong policies that lead to the successful operation of the organization's business.

With the help of Department of Agrarian Reform, NARB MPC still continues to struggle to attain its vision of alleviating members from poverty and seek justice to those who are oppressed. NARB MPC also continues to campaign for the continued implementation of the government's land reform program to help other farmers who are still landless.