



PHILIPPINE
DISASTER
RESILIENCE
FOUNDATION

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PRESS RELEASE

PDRF, partners launch abaca farm school in Catanduanes



Photos from the launch of the Farmers Field School in Catanduanes

April 29, 2022, VIRAC, CATANDUANES — The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), with the support of Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, launched the Farmers Field School on Abaca Production in the municipalities of Virac and San Andres in Catanduanes.

The Farmers Field School on Abaca Production cum Integrated Diversified Organic Farming System is a 6-month program that aims to educate 60 *abacaleros* or abaca farmers and establish a Techno-Demo Farm that will showcase good agricultural practices and eventually restore abaca farms as a viable source of income. This program will also equip the abaca farmers with more skills and knowledge on abaca production to avoid the occurrence of pests and diseases and introduce additional sources of income by integrating and promoting diversified farming systems.

“Agriculture is a critical component of human and economic development. Investing in the Farmers Field School on Abaca Production cum Integrated Diversified Organic Farming System Program is an investment for the future prosperity of the Municipality of Virac, Catanduanes,” said Virac Mayor Sinforoso Sarmiento, Jr.

Catanduanes is recognized as the top abaca fiber-producing province in the country, contributing almost 80% of the total production in the region and at least 30% nationwide. According to the Provincial Agricultural Services Office, about 13,777 farmers participate in abaca farming and fiber production and 33,000 hectares of land are dedicated as abaca farms in the 11 abaca-producing municipalities in the province.

Unfortunately, the province is also prone to natural calamities such as typhoons causing significant agricultural damage and losses to farmers and fisherfolk. In 2020, Super Typhoon Rolly (Goni) made landfalls in South Luzon, with Catanduanes and Albay being the hardest-hit areas, affecting 24 million people and leaving billions of pesos worth of damage to agriculture.

“I am pleased to share that Catanduanes is speedily recovering from the destruction caused by the typhoons which took place two years ago. *Hindi pa man tuluyang nababawi ang halos dalawang bilyon na pinsala sa agrikultura, lalo na sa abaca, paunti-unti naman nating tinatrabaho upang makamit ito,*” said Catanduanes Governor Joseph Cua.



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[“While we have not yet recovered the almost PHP 2 billion worth of losses to agriculture, especially to abaca, we are working little by little to achieve this.”]

The Philippine Fiber Industry Authority (PhilFIDA), one of the program's partners, also distributed a Modified Abaca Stripping Knife to the project beneficiaries that will help them upgrade their stripped abacas to a type with higher market value for increased income.

“The Farmers Field School on Abaca Production cum Integrated Diversified Organic Farming System *na masasabi kong* great, sustainable program *sapagkat hindi lang tayo nagtapos sa pagbibigay ng* financial assistance *kung di tuturuan pa natin ang ating mga mahal na abakaleros na madagdagan ang kanilang kaalaman sa pag-aabakahan at bukod dito para sa alternatibong pagsasaka upang madagdagan ang kanilang* income aside from abaca farming,” said PhilFIDA Provincial Fiber Officer Roberto Lusuegro.

[“I can say that the Farmers Field School on Abaca Production cum Integrated Diversified Organic Farming System is a great, sustainable program because we do not end with providing financial assistance but we also help our beloved abacaleros acquire more knowledge about abaca farming as well as alternative farming methods as additional sources of income aside from abaca farming.”]

PDRF and PhilFIDA previously distributed cash assistance to more than 1,600 abaca farmers as part of the Catanduanes Livelihood Recovery Program.

“It takes a long time to recover from a storm, but PDRF, led by our co-chairs Manny V. Pangilinan, Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, and Cardinal Tagle, is committed to assisting the people of Catanduanes. We hope to be able to do much more to get you back on your feet again. *Kayo po ang tunay na bayani*, [You are true heroes.]” said PDRF President Butch Meily.

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About PHILIPPINE DISASTER RESILIENCE FOUNDATION

Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) is the country's major private sector vehicle and coordinator for disaster resilience. As an alliance of businesses dedicated to building the disaster risk management capabilities of the private sector in the country, PDRF aims to contribute to the sustainable development and the general welfare of the Filipino people. For more information, visit www.pdrf.org.

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