

Education, Economic and Health Status and Challenges of Labrador-Laguit Upland Farmers Association

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Introduction

The Philippine government announces that the average age of Filipino farmers has decreased. The previous age of farmers was 57 years old and this has decreased to about 49 to 50 years old. This could be attributed to those individuals who have retired early and decided to pursue their love for farming, and the Young Farmers Challenge project and the scholarship for agriculture-related courses by the Department of Agriculture (PCO, 2023). However, this sector continues to decline and live in poverty.

The results of the October 2022 Labor Force Survey revealed that agriculture and forestry industry lost 511,000 workers, from July to October 2022 due to seasonality. The huge drop in jobs includes planting, transplanting and other related activities, growing of paddy rice, and growing of banana. This drop is caused by the population growth, diminishing farm size, and declining incomes in agriculture.

On the other hand, the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023) reported that fisherfolks and farmers are the top poorest sectors in terms of poverty incidence in 2021. These had the highest proportion of individuals belonging to families with income below the official poverty thresholds compared to the other basic sectors. Fisherfolks and farmers also registered the highest poverty incidences in 2015 and 2018. High poverty incidence in this sector is associated with lower quality of life indicators. On Poor households which rely on agriculture for the majority of their income show indicators of lower standards of living such as low levels of education, lack of access to community water system, and lack of access to electricity, among others (Reyes et al, 2012). These, combined with poor infrastructure, and of extension services available to smallholder farmers, remain as hindrances to development in rural agricultural areas (Balisacan, 1998). For their livelihood, these sectors form association for access to credit, farm equipment, and inputs.

Farmers association is a people organization with members in the basic sector. From Republic Act 8425, the basic sectors or disadvantaged groups are poor, farmers, indigenous peoples, persons with disability, and others. This policy enhances the Social Reform Agenda that addresses the basic inequities in the Philippine society through social interventions from the different agencies of the government both local and national. It also created the National Anti-Poverty Commission that implements anti-poverty programs that streamline poverty alleviation processes and mechanisms and reduce duplication of functions among various agencies of the government. Some of the anti-poverty programs are Pantawid Program and Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the National

Rice Program and National Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Program of the Department of Agriculture or DA (DBM, 2023). The DA also launches three big programs in 2023 and these are Philippine Rural Development Project Scale Up, the Mindanao Inclusive Agriculture Development Project, and the Philippine Fisheries and Coastal Resiliency Project (DA-AFID, 2023). Also, President Marcos is aiming to complete the distribution of lands under the New Agrarian Emancipation Act before his term ends. President Marcos distributed 90,000 free land titles to agrarian reform beneficiaries in 2023 (Valente, 2024).

Pangasinan has a total number of 171,643 farmers cultivating an area of 185,379 hectares. The major crops are rice, corn and mango. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, Pangasinan remains the top 3 palay producer nationwide (PPDO, 2021). The Municipality of Labrador is part of the second congressional district of Pangasinan. It has a land area of 9,099 hectares and a population of 26,811 according to the 2020 census. One of the farmers association in Labrador is Labrador-Laguait Upland Farmers Association. It has an area of 255 hectares located at Laguait Padilla in Bugallon and Bolo in Labrador. Farmers has specific concerns not only in farming or their livelihood. Being a basic sector, there are needs to be identified like on health, education and livelihood. Thus, this study.

Methodology

Using the descriptive type of research, this study is about determining the health, education and livelihood status and challenges of the members of Labrador-Laguait Upland Farmers Association (LALUFA). This association is located in the Municipality of Labrador in Pangasinan. The researchers met the officers and members of the association in April 1, 2022 including its president Mr. Salvador P. Belingan. The meeting was held at the office of LALUFA in Sitio. Kadampat, Brgy. Bolo, Labrador, Pangasinan. The researchers, timeline or milestones, and the purpose of the study were presented. Also, the consent to conduct the study was requested from the group.

This study utilized survey questionnaire as instrument. A draft was developed and validated by experts. From the comments and suggestions of validators, the final version of the instrument was developed. It has three parts – health, education, and livelihood. The respondents are 71 farmer-members of the association. In-person data collection was conducted in April 12, 2022. This was done in order to personally attend to the questions and other research-related concerns of the respondents.

Results and Discussion

Education status and challenges of farmers

It can be gleaned from the table that most of the Labrador-Laguait Upland Farmers Association members are 41-50 years old (29.6 percent), 31-40 years old (19.7 percent) and 51-60 years old (18.3 percent). There are female (64.8 percent) and male (35.2 percent) members. They are mostly married (73.2 percent) and not member of Pantawid Program (63.4 percent) and indigenous community (69.1). On education, the respondents are mostly high school graduate (40.8 percent), and elementary graduate (26.8 percent).

Table 1. Education status of farmers, N=71

	Profile variables	f	%
Age	21-30 years old	12	16.9
	31-40 years old	14	19.7
	41-50 years old	21	29.6
	52-60 years old	13	18.3
	51-69 years old	11	15.5
Sex	Male	25	35.2
	Female	46	64.8
Civil status	Single	10	14.1
	Married	52	73.2
	Widow	4	5.6

	Lived in	5	7.0
Highest educational attainment	Elementary undergrad	8	11.3
	Elementary graduate	19	26.8
	High school graduate	29	40.8
	College undergraduate	1	1.4
	College graduate	10	14.1
	Vocational graduate	4	5.6
4Ps Member	Yes	26	36.6
	No	45	63.4
As indigenous people	Yes	22	30.9
	No	49	69.1

The data suggests that the respondents covered in this study are late adult, female, married, without college degree, and not a member of Pantawid Program and indigenous group. With regards to the members of indigenous community, there are mostly Kankanaey. Very few are Igorot and Pangasaan/Tapuac tribe.

Table 2. Education of children by birth order

Education	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	Last child	Total
Elementary graduate	11	8	4	5	2	2	2	0	0	34
High school graduate	20	19	15	7	4	4	3	1	2	75
College graduate	11	7	3	2	0	1	1	0	0	25
Vocational graduate	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3

Table 2 presents the educational attainment of the respondents' children by birth order. It shows that the educational attainments of respondents' children are high school graduate, elementary, and college graduate. For the high school graduate, the birth orders with highest number of graduate are first-born, second, and third-born.

Economic status and challenges of farmers

Table 3. Economic status of farmers, N=71

Economic variables		Frequency	Percentage
Occupation	Farmer	50	70.4
	Seasonal worker	9	12.7
	Employed	4	5.6
	With business	3	4.2
	Fisherman	3	4.2
	Tricycle driver	2	2.8
Average monthly income	P2,500-8,500	53	74.6
	P8,501-14,000	15	21.1
	P14,501-20,000	3	4.2
Other sources of income	With	32	45.1
	Without	39	54.9

It can be seen from Table 3 that the respondents are mostly farmers (70.4 percent) and seasonal workers (12.7 percent). They have an average monthly income ranging from P2,500 to P8500 (74.6 percent). They have no other source of income (54.9 percent).

Table 4. Farming challenges and needs of farmers

Farming challenges	Frequency	Rank
Irrigation	22	1
Expensive fertilizer	19	2
Water pump	16	3
Sprayer	14	4
Capital	9	5
Tractor/cultivator	5	6.5
Climate change	5	6.5
Rake	4	8
Other machineries	3	9
Farm needs		
Capital	17	1
Power sprayer	13	2.5
Seedlings	13	2.5
Fertilizer	12	4
Hand tractor	11	5
Rake	7	6.5
Irrigation	7	6.5
Hose	4	8

The challenges of respondents are mostly on irrigation, expensive fertilizer, water pump, and sprayer. On farm needs, these are capitalization, power sprayer, seedlings, and fertilizer.

Health status and challenges

Table 5. Health status of respondents' family members, N=71

Relationship to the respondent	Frequency	Age range of respondents' relatives	Health conditions of respondents' relatives
Father	5 respondents	41-68 years old	PWD, heart disease, mental disorder, blurred vision
Mother	4 respondents	54-62 years old	high blood, diabetes, asthma
Daughter	4 respondents	8-30 years old	special child, muteness, allergy, high blood
Son	4 respondents	2-32 years old	PWD, asthma, heart disease

On health status of the respondents' family members, their fathers are mostly sickly with conditions like disability, health disease, mental disorder and blurred vision. From the health conditions, heart-related is present in all members of the family. With regards to disability, two fathers and two sons of the respondents are physical challenged. There is the possibility to inherit disability, mental disorder, and heart disease. For this, data suggests that the health conditions of the respondents' family members

are hereditary. It recommended that The local health offices should assess and monitor the health status of the respondents and their families. The same offices as well as the Pangasinan State University should provide information like access to health assessment or diagnosis, treatment, and the needed financial assistance.

Conclusion and recommendations

Most of members of the farmer association covered in this study are late adult, high school graduate, with low income and do not have other source of income. They have several children and most already finished high school. On health, the respondents' parents are suffering from heart-related illnesses. There are four respondents with family members having physical disability. The challenge on livelihood of the respondents is related to farming. These are poor irrigation facility, expensive fertilizer and source of water for the farm.

It is recommended that the leaders of the farmers association should inform the local government units about the health, education, and livelihood status and challenges of the members and make necessary follow up especially on the planning and conduct of interventional projects. They should actively cooperate with the LGU on whatever projects it could provide. The respondents' family members should be aware of the health, education and livelihood programs of the LGUs and national governments. They should avail these services for their social and economic security.

It also recommended that the local health offices should assess and monitor the health status of the respondents' family members with disability, mental disorder, and heart ailments. The same local government offices as well as the Pangasinan State University provide information like access to health assessment or diagnosis, treatment, and the needed financial assistance. Also, the Pangasinan State University could give assistance to the farmers association in developing partnership with local government units, government agencies, non-government organizations, and other organizations for their health, education, and livelihood conditions.

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