



CACAOmustahan

Regular bulletin for the Sustainable Farming in Tropical Asian Landscapes in the Philippines

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💡 **Cacaohibalo (Cacao knowledge)**

Agroforestry, most common cacao cultivation practice in Davao de Oro



Baseline study on the current farming systems and cultivation practices present conducted by World Agroforestry (ICRAF) Philippines for the SFITAL (Sustainable Farming in Tropical Asian Landscapes) shows farmers' openness to adapt and practice cacao-based agroforestry. Most of them are also familiar with agroforestry as a significant number of them are already introduced to good agricultural practices through other

programs and projects of the government, such as the Rural Agro-industrial Partnership for Inclusive Development and Growth (RAPID Growth) Project of the Department of Trade and Industry. Most farmers surveyed also prefer developing a single-type agroforestry with one stratum consisting of two to three components.

Additionally, the baseline study also revealed types of farming systems present in the province:

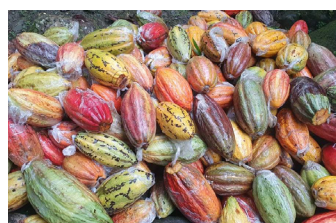
simple cacao agroforestry system with coconut and banana, and more complex cacao agroforestry systems with coconut, banana, and some fruit trees like lanzones or durian or timber trees.

Despite the positive attitude of farmers in Davao de Oro towards cacao-based agroforestry, results of the baseline study also emphasizes that there is still so much to be done in terms of supporting policies, programs, and projects. With most of the literature and data being concentrated on the profitability and productivity of cacao farms, most solutions and strategies still need to be narrowed down to address

the complex issues in these municipalities. For one, more information about municipalities' cacao agroforestry management practices must be provided. A complete picture of the cacao management and cultivation practices will inform the local enablers of possible strategies to support farmers to adopt cacao-based agroforestry.

Moreover, researchers found that most farmers need specialized technical knowledge and skills training to build their capacity to practice cacao-based agroforestry sustainably. Therefore, before cacao farmers can take advantage of the long-term sustainability agroforestry farming can provide, the government and private sector must invest in understanding the intricacies agroforestry requires to better enhance their smallholders to apply these in their own farming practices. 🌱

Sustainable landscape indicators, imperative in boosting cacao production over the years



These indicators, guided by a successful framework and tailored to the province's characteristics, are essential to thrive in Davao de Oro's landscapes. These principles suggest sustainable landscape indicators that balance environmental, economic, and social dimensions.

In the Philippines, indicators have played a vital role in monitoring landscape development and agricultural commodities like cacao growth. In line with this, the SFITAL project developed sustainable principles, criteria, and indicators (PCI) to promote sustainable cacao landscape development.

To start off, the Project conducted a literature review of existing sustainability indicators in the Philippines and the Southeast Asia Region

Atong mga higala (Our friends)



Mr. Allan Sumugat
New Bataan, Davao de Oro

Both a full-time farmer and public servant, Mr. Allan Sumugat is one of SFITAL's partner in Davao

de Oro. The Project is working with him in establishing a learning farm to demonstrate cacao-based agroecological practices. The 0.8-hectare farm is in Barangay Camanlangan, New Bataan, Davao de Oro. With around 700 cacao trees intercropped in his coconut farm, he integrated durian and coffee to create additional shade in the area.

A member of the Comval Farmers' Multipurpose Cooperative, Mr. Sumugat is the main provider

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Atong mga higala (cont.)

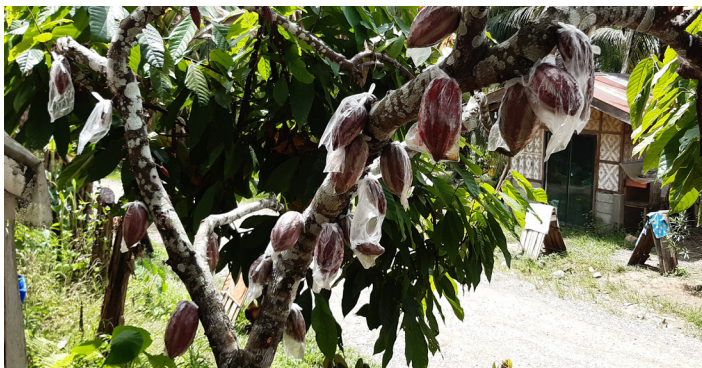
of his family of four but is also supported by his bookkeeper wife who works in the same farmers' cooperative and one of his children who is engaged in non-farm work. Meanwhile, his other child is currently studying a forestry-related course.

Some of the main issues in his farm are extreme drought, strong winds, rainfall, and flooding as the area is located along the Agusan River, as well as the challenges of low productivity and pests and diseases. Like most of the small-scale cacao

growers in Davao de Oro, Mr. Sumugat also lacks sustainable financial means to address these issues, most especially soil productivity.

As part of the Project's efforts to capacitate smallholder farmers on sustainable cacao production, the learning farm being established with Mr. Sumugat intends, not just to address these issues, but also to serve as a venue to capacitate other farmers in New Bataan on these sustainable practices. 🌱

Sustainable landscape indicators, imperative in boosting cacao production over the years (cont.)



to determine gaps. One of the key findings of the review was that there had been noticeable process in developing more sustainable indicators over the years. For instance, at present, sustainable indicators being applied in the country cover economic growth and well-being of cacao farmers (i.e., their net income, purchasing power, and food security), the strong and dynamic policy and institutional support (i.e., support to farmers groups and cooperatives), and implementation of sustainable cacao agribusiness through adoption of conservation and good agricultural practices.

However, gaps were still persistent in an attempt towards monitoring and evaluating diverse cacao landscapes, hence the need to further develop indicators. These gaps span diverse aspects, including women's participation, the implementation of labor law,

regulations on cacao commodity, non-burning methods for land preparation, and documentation of the cacao farming system.

In line with this, the SFITAL Project compiled a set of PCIs integrating these existing and missing sustainability criteria and indicators that can support the sustainable development of Davao de Oro's cacao industry. These were also presented to the local stakeholders for their feedback during the 2nd SFITAL Cacao Stakeholders' Forum last October 2023. These PCIs will then guide the development implementation, and monitoring of the sustainable cacao development roadmap that will be developed by the Province in cooperation with SFITAL this 2024.

Earlier studies on sustainable landscape indicators underscores that such gaps should be addressed in its

landscape implementation and documentation within its roadmaps and plans. Moreover, the power of developing sustainable landscape indicators lies in their adaptability to areas and situations. For Davao de Oro, this means effective monitoring and evaluation, empowering local stakeholders to create more informed decisions that promote cacao growth and sustainable practices in these regions. This empowers national and local stakeholders, aiming to solidify Davao de Oro as a national sustainable cacao hub and a global cacao exporter.

The presence of empowering national and local stakeholders

holds the key to the growth of the industry. The province's governmental efforts and innovations pave the way for better cacao leadership, wherein the cacao sector flourishes in its production and quality. All of which while encompassing environmental sustainability, economic growth, and social inclusiveness for sustainable cacao growth. With this, Davao de Oro's journey, powered by tailored indicators and strong support from authorities, holds a steadfast and better cacao future for all its stakeholders in the industry. 🌱

SFITAL traces cacao value chain governance in Davao de Oro; highlights need to boost relational governance



The growth of any industry is usually driven by efforts coming from all actors involved, the relationships between these actors, and the governance of these relationships. The same applies to Davao de Oro's cacao value chain.

In a recent value chain governance study conducted by ICRAF for the SFITAL Project, the value chain was segmented into six: input provision, cacao production, trading, processing, local consumption, and exportation. Meanwhile, seven types of actors were identified including farmers, collector agents, assembler-wholesalers, wholesalers, export companies, processors, and retailers. With this, the study looked at the

relationships between these various actors across the value chain.

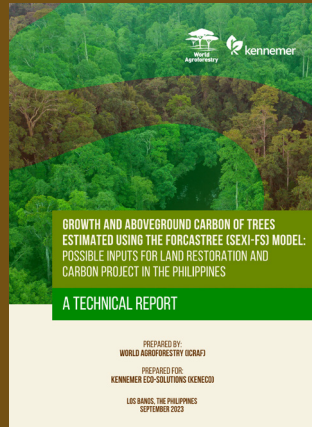
Farmers usually sell their cacao produce to local traders, particularly assembler-wholesalers, as well as to other farmer-buyers. The terms for buying and selling cacao beans in the province are mostly determined by buyers, participants of the study said. According to the majority of farmers interviewed, traders have the upper hand in determining the price. These traders then sell the beans to either directly to export companies or through the companies' buying stations.

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💡 Kahinguhaan sa kahibalo (*New publications*)

1 Growth and aboveground carbon of trees estimated using the FORCASTREE (SEXI-FS) mode: Possible inputs for land restoration and carbon project in the Philippines - A technical report

This technical report describes the methodological framework and assessment results of tree growth and an estimation of potential aboveground carbon storage of several tree-based practices using the FORCASTREE (SEXI-FS) model. The framework and assessment results can provide inputs to land restoration or carbon program especially in Mindanao region of the Philippines and encourage a wider application in other regions or other countries.



Read the full report [here](#).

2 Cacaosumahan Issues



The Cacaosumahan Vol. 1, Issue 1 highlights the findings of the study on policy and regulation for sustainable cocoa in the Philippines.

Read the first issue of Cacaosumahan [here](#).

Meanwhile, the second issue presents the land-use suitability maps and scenarios for targeted commodities and landscapes developed for the SFITAL Project.

Read the second issue of Cacaosumahan [here](#).

SFITAL traces cacao value chain governance in Davao de Oro; highlights need to boost relational governance (cont.)

In this case, the assembler-wholesalers still decide on the terms of buying and selling.

In terms of relationship among farmers, the study found that there is a high level of trust among them, which makes them comfortable dealing with each other. They also share information with each other, particularly details about prices, cacao production techniques, pest and disease management, and sources of inputs. Moreover, farmers reported benefitting from collective initiatives, like training programs and requesting assistance from government institutions, which

they usually do as one group. On the other hand, there is limited collaboration among farmers in marketing. Findings of this study showed that seldom do farmers talk to each other about where and to whom to sell their cacao.

Aside from relationships among actors, the study also covered the types of value chain governance present in the chain, and its respective effectiveness. Among the four types, relational governance was found to be the most effective type of governance. This type of value chain governance involves mutual reliance among actors, particularly in terms of information transfer and provision of related services.

Fortunately, when the relationship of farmers with input providers was assessed, it gained the highest level of satisfaction. This likewise provides a glimpse of the farmers' access to these inputs. However, it was also found that there is a weak relationship between farmers and the other cacao value chain actors. Among the other actors, farmers have the strongest, although still weak, relationship with assembler-wholesalers and buying stations as these are the ones who communicate product standards and product and processing specifications to them. This actually leaves farmers unsatisfied in their relationship with other actors in the chain.

This highlights the need to strengthen connections of farmer-producers with their buyers, with information exchange going beyond prices, and processing and product requirements. This requires, not just initiative from traders and companies, but also from facilitating bodies in the value chain like policymakers and government institutions. 🍃

SFITAL PH rep shares insights on youth-led agroforestry innovations at COP 28

On 11 December 2023, Isabelle Dela Paz, CIFOR-ICRAF Philippines Communication Associate and President of the International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA), took part at COP 28 side event titled "Rooted resilience: Youth-led small table talks on global agroforestry innovations" in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The diverse set of young panelists showcased their experience in working with agroforestry systems and their perspectives on how instrumental youth is in advancing these innovations.

Being involved in the SFITAL project in the Philippines since 2023, Dela Paz introduced the objectives and activities of the project in promoting sustainable cacao production in Davao de Oro. Despite the eminent significance of cacao in the province, she acknowledged that there is a current lack of youth involvement in the industry and interest in pursuing a career in agroforestry farming. She pointed out that most of the farmers encourage their children to pursue non-farming-related education and career trajectories because of its more lucrative nature, although some of them are studying forestry or agriculture-related programs.

"If no action is taken on this issue, this might entail a continuous disinterest among youth in partaking in agroforestry farming in the future", she added.

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SFITAL PH rep shares insights on youth-led agroforestry innovations at COP 28 (cont.)



SFITAL PH representative and panelists discuss their experiences with youth involvement in agroforestry innovations at COP 28. Photo: IAAS/Kristina Juchem

Furthermore, she highlighted the fact that the cacao farmers in Davao de Oro optimized their children's innate tech-savvy quality as a leverage to promote their families' cacao-based products on e-commerce platforms. With existing youth programs of national government agencies and local government units, and SFITAL's joint effort with the Philippine Cacao Industry Council on proposed curriculum of cacao-based agroecological practices, she underscored the promising potential among the youth in the digitalization of agroforestry systems once they are granted with capacity-building opportunities.

To overcome the challenges of the project, she supported the idea of equipping young people with much needed training on cacao-based agroforestry, from its production and harvesting, all the way up to product processing and marketing. According to her, this can be achieved by immersing them with on-the-ground experiences in the learning farms to be established by SFITAL in Davao de Oro, as well as theoretical training through the curriculum on cacao-based agroecological practices. Youth in the academe can also be capacitated by providing training on the use and application of land-use assessment tools, R-FALLOW and FORCASTREE, which are developed by CIFOR-ICRAF.

"As the next generation of agroforestry entrepreneurs and farmers, young people must be empowered by teaching them and, at the same time, giving them the space and opportunity to learn by themselves," Dela Paz emphasized.

Additionally, Dela Paz also outlined her research findings on financial costs and benefits of urban agroforestry systems and farmers' adoption decision on its development, equipping herself with an understanding of the ecological, financial, and social aspects of agroforestry while working on the SFITAL project.

Given the decline of the youth's interest in forestry and agriculture, she continued to convey about the urgent need to involve them in these practices and urge further promotion of agroforestry concepts and its importance in tackling climate change. At present, SFITAL intends to increase the engagement of youth in the Project through involving them in research and capacity-building activities. For example, the Project has opened doors for several undergraduate interns to take part in project activities. During the implementation of field activities for the Rapid Carbon Stocks Assessment, the project likewise engaged with youth volunteers from Nabunturan. 🌿

Gikan sa Yuta (From the ground)

IFAD takes stock of project progress



As part of the supervision mission, the team visited one of the sites in Nabunturan owned by Mr. Nicanor Huab. Photo: ICRAF

Last May 2023, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), represented by Dr. Larry N. Dugal, visited Davao de Oro together with the SFITAL Philippines Team and Project Investigator Beria Leimona for its second supervision mission to assess the project of the Project in its fourth year.

The mission involved meeting local partners, particularly the Davao de Oro Provincial Agriculturist's Office and the DTI RAPID Davao de Oro Provincial Coordinating Unit, visits to project sites, and a closing meeting with the Technical Advisory Committee and IFAD Philippines.

Key agreed actions from the mission include:

- Presenting the sustainable landscape principles, criteria, and indicators to the Technical Advisory Committee, and local stakeholders
- Synchronize training efforts with local enablers to ensure efficiency and consistency in delivery
- Engage with academic institutions and explore opportunities for partnership with them

in terms of research, and monitoring of demonstration farms

- Track and boost participation of women youth in project activities
- Strengthen collaboration with DTI RAPID to maximize resources

These agreements were then incorporated in the revised workplan of the project for 2023, which gave way to:

- The conduct of a Synchronization Workshop with local stakeholders last August 2023
- Exploratory meeting with the University of the Philippines Mindanao and the Davao de Oro State College for potential opportunities for partnership
- Engaging youth volunteers in project activities like the carbon measurement activity
- Partner with DTI RAPID in various training sessions on soil and water conservation

These will also be considered as the team prepares its 2024 Annual Workplan and Budget. 🌿

SFITAL synchs up capacity building efforts with local enablers

Following recommendations from the recent IFAD supervision mission, the SFITAL team in the Philippines conducted a Synchronization Workshop last 10 August 2023.

The Workshop convened representatives from PAGRO, Municipal Agriculturist's Offices of Maco, Nabunturan, and New Bataan, and Kenemer Foods International for the local enabling institutions in Davao de Oro. Representatives from farmer organizations in the three focal sites also attended, including the Dumlan Association of Cacao Planters, Katipunan Multi-purpose Cooperative, and Comval Farmers' Multipurpose Cooperative.

With the objective of gathering information on current capacity building activities implemented by local enablers in the province, the workshop was divided into two parts: a workshop on capacity building and another on farm establishment support. The participants were grouped into two—one group for representatives from enabling institutions and another for farmers and farmer organizations.

In the first workshop, they were tasked to identify the training programs being implemented and the topics covered by their programs.

Enabling institutions were able to identify the following topics to be covered by their existing trainings: cacao farming as a business, optimizing cacao farm profitability, ecosystem services and biodiversity and soil fertility management, good agricultural practices, post-harvest processing and fermentation, volume requirements, and bean quality and specifications, among others. Aside from production and post-harvest trainings, the enablers also implement capacity building activities on good manufacturing practices, gender and development, crop insurance orientation, financial literacy, strategic planning, organization development and record management, and entrepreneurship development. Farmers were able to validate that their respective organizations have attended such training.

For the second part of the workshop, the local enablers identified the existing support they provide for farm establishment. The identified support services include technical assistance, input provision (e.g., planting materials, organic fertilizers, rehabilitation tools), institutional buying, financing, and market linkage. Meanwhile, the farmers identified their needs to establish a farm, then marked which of their needs they had already acquired, and which are still

needed. The farmers identified quality seedlings, fertilizers, trainings, fermentation box, crates, tools, and crop insurance as some of the services their cooperatives have already received. On the other hand, they identified market linkage, better price monitoring, and grants, as some of the support they still need.

Results of the first part of the workshop informed SFITAL's development of a unified training curriculum for cacao and a technical guide for cacao-based agroecological practices. One

of the key observations from the workshop was the presence of rich and broad capacity building programs and support services for cacao growers in the province. With this, the Project decided to tweak the training outputs to be more complementary to the services already existing in the province.

For the second part of the workshop, the outputs from the participants informed the development of learning farm plans drafted by the project, which involves co-investment from other local enablers. 🌱

SFITAL meets with DDOSC and UP Min to explore partnership opportunities



SFITAL Philippines Team meets with partners from DDOSC and UP Mindanao Photo: ICRAF

As far of its efforts to increase the engagement of the youth in its activities, SFITAL Philippines met with partners from the Davao de Oro State College (DDOSC) and the University of the Philippines Mindanao (UP Min) last August 2023 to discuss opportunities for collaboration, particularly in research and extension.

The SFITAL team started off the meeting by introducing the project and its key objectives and outputs. DDOSC, led by the Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Gloryjean Altamera, presented their research and extension activities, particularly in terms of agriculture. UP Min, with representatives from their Agri-Aqua Value Chain Laboratory (VC lab) led by Dr. Larry Digal and their Land

Reservation Management Office (LRMO) led by Mr. Joel Sagadal, also presented their current research activities and opportunities for SFITAL to take part.

Various collaboration opportunities were identified during the meeting, such as SFITAL's training on assessment tools for roadmap development held last October 2023. This also led to the inclusion of SFITAL and CIFOR-ICRAF Philippines to the VC Lab's Knowledge Alliance. UP Min's LRMO also agreed and to establish with SFITAL another learning farm in Laak, within their land reservation site.

In 2024, more opportunities for cooperation will be discussed with these academic institutions. 🌱



Workshop participants demonstrate how a normal cacao training looks like in Davao de Oro. Photo: ICRAF

SFITAL conducts RaCSA of cacao farms in DdO



SFITAL Philippines Component 3 leader Grace Ann Salvan, together with youth volunteers, measure the diameter of the trunk of a cacao tree. Photo: ICRAF

In line with its research efforts, the SFITAL team conducted a Rapid Carbon Stocks Appraisal (RaCSA) of cacao farms in Davao de Oro last August 2023.

RaCSA is a method of measuring aboveground carbon stocks of trees. For the context of this activity, the team measured the diameter of cacao trees and other trees integrated in dominant agroforestry systems in Davao de Oro, which include cacao + coconut systems, cacao + fruit trees, and cacao + timber. Data from this activity are inputs to the conduct of the FALLOW analysis that the project is doing to simulate land-use scenarios for the province. Results from this analysis will then inform the development of a sustainable cacao roadmap for Davao de Oro.

For efficiency, SFITAL also involved youth volunteers from Nabunturan to take part in the carbon measurement activity. This is also in line with the agreement during the 2023 supervision mission with IFAD to boost the engagement of the youth in project activities.

SFITAL convenes local stakeholders in Davao de Oro; preps for roadmap development

As part of SFITAL's effort to strengthen the collaboration between and among local enablers of the cacao industry, the Project conducted the 2nd SFITAL Cacao Stakeholders' Forum in Nabunturan, Davao de Oro on 24 October 2023.

The forum convened local partners from the Provincial Local Government Unit (LGU), Municipal LGUs, the Department of Trade and Industry, farmer associations and cooperatives, academic institutions, and private sector to present their ongoing programs and projects in support to the development of Davao de Oro's cacao industry and consult with them SFITAL's current and planned activities and outputs.



SFITAL welcomes participants during the 2nd Cacao Stakeholders Forum. Photo: ICRAF/Isabelle Dela Paz

In full stride: Highlighting SFITAL partners' milestones

As one of the Project's key partners in Davao de Oro, the Provincial Agriculturist's Office, represented by Agricultural Technician Jake Sacay, presented their programs and projects on cacao, as well as their key accomplishments. According to him, PAGRO-DdO had remarkable accomplishments in 2023 by providing livelihood to more than 300 beneficiaries, planting more than 60,000 cacao trees, and rehabilitating 50,000 cacao trees with the Cash for Work activities in the province.

DTI Davao de Oro Provincial Director Atty. Lucky Siegfred Balleque also graced the forum, highlighting their goal of continuously supporting the provinces' agro-enterprise development. Joining him was Beverly Pantinoble, Project Officer of DTI Rural Agro-enterprise Partnership for Inclusive Development (RAPID) Growth Project Coordinating Unit - DdO, then discussed key activities of their Project. According to her, 88 capacity-building training activities were conducted on a wide range of topics such as financial management and entrepreneurial competencies to nearly 2,000 participants. Upon assessing the participants' learning before and after the training, its design and methodology were found to be effective; however, there is a need to conduct a competency-based assessment tool to determine the level of improvement in their skills and knowledge. Aside from their remarkable results in capacity-building, DTI-RAPID successfully increased the cacao plantation area in Davao de Oro to 580 hectares and 330,475 trees, while simultaneously supporting smallholder farmers in certifying their cacao products in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The Kenner Food International (KFI) similarly conducted knowledge transfer and skills development training to smallholder farmers in the region as part of their Grower Program. Through the CacaoPreneur Project, KFI was able to plant 68,710 cacao trees to 96 farmers, graft more than 4,500 trees, distribute nearly 40,000 seedlings, and aid more than 4,500 farmers on certifying their products under the Rainforest Alliance Certification.

Our partner from the private sector, Apex Employees & Community Multipurpose Cooperative (AEC MPC), has made long withstanding efforts since 2009 in providing livelihoods to local community members and Apex Senior High School scholars. They were also granted an FDA license to operate and sell cacao-based products that were sustainably sourced from cacao farmers at the highest price possible.

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SFITAL convenes local stakeholders in Davao de Oro; preps for roadmap development (cont.)

Setting the stage for sustainable cacao production

Zarrel Gel Noza, the Project Coordinator for the Philippines, kicked off the forum by presenting its objectives and introducing the participants.

Dr. Rachmat Mulia, the Project's Principal Investigator for the Philippines, then re-introduced the project, highlighting its key activities in 2023 and its relevance to the Project's overall goal of raising smallholders who are both entrepreneurs and environmental stewards. Some of the key activities he presented include the training sessions conducted with DTI-RAPID and KFI in Davao de Oro, wherein CIFOR-ICRAF served as resource speaker on cacao-based agroforestry and agroecological practices. In addition to this, four learning farms in New Bataan, Maco, Nabunturan, and Laak are being established to supplement the cacao growers and non-adopters' on-the-ground training on cacao production techniques, materials, and practices.

To provide further details on these activities, Grace Ann Reynoso, SFITAL's Component 3 leader and researcher for payments and ecosystem services, presented the learning farm plans for Maco, Nabunturan, and New Bataan. She highlighted the need for co-investment to establish these farms, and the actual inputs needed based on the identified

key issues of the selected farms.

Noza likewise discussed the development of a unified cacao curriculum and the production of a technical guide on cacao-based agroecological practices. The curriculum, according to her, is composed of trainings on cacao cultivation being implemented already in Davao de Oro, infused with additional topics on agroecological practices. The curriculum will be implemented through in-class and on-field modes of learning, focusing on 4 themes, specifically: cacao farm agribusiness and financial literacy; cacao agricultural practices and ecosystem services; cacao-based agroecological design and business plan development; and post-harvesting technique and packaging. The technical guide, on the other hand, will feature key cacao-based agroecological practices, which aim to complement the existing materials already being used by local training providers. She likewise highlighted that these knowledge products were decided based on the results of the Synchronization Workshop held last August 2023, which emphasized the sufficiency of trainings already being provided focused on cacao cultivation, but also the need to integrate agroecological principles.

The forum also covered technical discussions on agroecology. Erwin Albios, SFITAL Site Coordinator in Davao de Oro, shared some agroecological practices that could be adopted

by cacao farmers which include recycling of organic materials, reducing purchased inputs, incorporating shade and terrace formations, diversifying agrobiodiversity and crop/plant components, and fostering co-creation of knowledge. He underscored the huge benefits these practices can bring to cacao growers not only on ecological health, but also on productivity and income stability.

Additionally, Salván talked about payments for ecosystem services, specifically potential schemes that can be implemented by private sector partners in Davao de Oro. These include carbon trade, commercial partnership agreements, and cacao doctor programs. She emphasized that such schemes must be implemented in collaboration with our multi-sector partners to encourage growers to adopt cacao-based agroforestry farms and agroecological practices.

Moving onward and upward

This 2nd Stakeholders' Forum serves as a sequel to the first one conducted last March 2023. Unlike this one which highlighted local enablers' programs and projects towards cacao development, the first forum featured key research outputs of SFITAL to validate

and disseminate these findings. These outputs include the baseline study conducted by the Project on the profile of Davao de Oro's cacao growers, the value chain governance study, and the profitability analysis of different land uses.

Proceedings from these two stakeholders' fora will be included in the preparatory inputs for the upcoming planning workshops in line with the development of a sustainable cacao roadmap for Davao de Oro. These three planning workshops will be done on the first, second, and third quarters of 2024. This roadmap, which basically integrates all the research and capacity building activities of SFITAL, aims to provide a guide for policymakers to integrate these strategies into new or existing policies, in alignment with national, regional, and provincial roadmaps and in consideration of site-specific conditions. It is envisioned to provide an overview of the main issues encountered in cacao development; the opportunities and strategic approaches to address them; as well as the expected impacts of these efforts. The draft of this roadmap is expected to be launched by the end of 2024.

Watch the recap of the 2nd SFITAL Cacao Stakeholders' Forum [here](#). 📺

DTI RAPID taps SFITAL for trainings on soil and water conservation

As part of its capacity building activities for its farmer organizations, the Provincial Coordinating Unit in Davao de Oro of the DTI RAPID, another IFAD-funded initiative, tapped SFITAL to serve as resource speaker on soil and water conservation measures for cacao-based agroforestry systems in the recent trainings they conducted from May to June 2023.

Capacitating 232 farmers, 101 of which are female, SFITAL Site Coordinator for Davao de Oro Erwin Albios discussed key concepts of cacao-based agroforestry and techniques on soil and water conservation in cacao farms. These trainings were implemented in Laak, Maco, Maragusan, and New Bataan.

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SFITAL and local stakeholders during the 2nd Cacao Stakeholders' Forum. Photo: ICRAF/Isabelle Dela Paz

DTI RAPID taps SFITAL for trainings on soil and water conservation (cont.)

Joining SFITAL in these trainings are technicians from Kennemer Foods International Inc., another partner of DTI RAPID, discussing cacao management.

If you are a farmer, a farmer organization, or a government institution in Davao de Oro and you want to tap us for trainings on cacao-based agroforestry and soil and water conservation, feel free to reach out our team through Erwin Albios, with email E.Albios@cifor-icraf.org.



Erwin Albios shows farmer-participants how to use an A-frame for contour establishment in sloping lands. Photo: DTI RAPID/Dexter Dande

SFITAL to establish four learning farms on cacao-based agroecological practices

In line with its effort to promote cacao-based agroecological practices, SFITAL Philippines will be establishing four learning farms in 2024 in Laak, Maco, Nabunturan, and New Bataan.

These farms will not be established from scratch as the selected farms already have existing cacao agroforestry systems in place.

With assistance from DTI RAPID PCU Davao de Oro and the University of the Philippines Mindanao Land Reservation Office (for Laak), farmer-cooperators were selected after a series of interviews and site assessments. These farmers include:

Farmer-cooperator	Farmers' organization	Municipality
1. Antonio Talle, Jr.	Talle Farmers' Association	Laak
2. Liberato Vilahermosa, Jr.	Dumlan Association of Cacao Planters	Maco
3. Nicanor Huab*	Katipunan Multipurpose Cooperative	Nabunturan
4. Allan Sumugat	Comval Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative	New Bataan

*for further discussion

From August to November 2023, the SFITAL team has been talking to these farmer-cooperators and conducting site assessments and zoning to determine the needs of the farm. These activities resulted in farm plans detailing the key issues and recommended interventions for the farms.



SFITAL team, together with farmer-cooperator Mr. Nic Huab, surveys his farm for zoning and assessment. Photo: ICRAF

Primarily, these learning farms intend to demonstrate different agroecological practices in cacao farming, particularly in terms of soil and water conservation and nutrient cycling. These are also expected to be venues of capacity building activities of SFITAL and other local enablers.

These learning farms aim to demonstrate, not only agroecological practices, but also co-investment towards sustainable cacao development. Resources for the establishment, including labor and inputs, will be co-invested by SFITAL, the farmer-cooperator, the respective MAGRO of the municipality, PAGRO, and KFI. Specific co-investments of each institution were determined during the Stakeholders' Consultation Meeting conducted in November 2023 and is being written.

Starting January 2024, SFITAL will commence activities in these farms, beginning with clearing, brushing, and other preparatory activities as necessary.

SFITAL consults 2024 plans with local stakeholders; invites co-investment for farm establishment



The SFITAL team discusses specific needs of the learning farms with local enablers. Photo: ICRAF

To formally close 2023 and set the stage for 2024 activities, SFITAL Philippines convened local stakeholders for a consultation meeting last 28 November 2023 at the Provincial Capitol of Davao de Oro.

Participated by representatives from the Municipal Agricultural Offices across municipalities of the province, the Provincial

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SFITAL consults 2024 plans with local stakeholders; invites co-investment for farm establishment (cont.)

Agriculturists' Office, DTI RAPID PCU Davao de Oro, University of the Philippines Mindanao Land Reservation Office and Kennemer Foods International, the meeting served as an avenue to 1) present 2023 accomplishments of the project and express gratitude to local partners for making all these activities possible, 2) discuss the project's 2024 annual work plan and budget for stakeholders' comments and suggestions and 3) present the plans for the four learning farms to be established and invite local enablers to co-invest.

Dr. Rachmat Mulia, principal investigator for the Philippines of the project, presented a quick overview of what that project were able to do in 2023, highlighting its efforts to promote agroecological practices through capacity building.

Zarrel Gel Noza, project coordinator for the Philippines, discussed the key activities planned for 2024, particularly the trainer of trainers, training of farmers, roadmap development workshops, and research collaborations with local universities. She invited participants, particularly the representative from the MAGROs to request training on agroecological practices they think are needed by their cacao growers. She also mentioned that the project will launch a Training Request Form in 2024

so local stakeholders can easily coordinate with the SFITAL team regarding capacity building. In support to this, Site Coordinator Erwin Albios also presented a roster of topics on cacao-based agroecological practices that can be covered by the training. These are based on the technical guide that the project is also developing.

Grace Ann Salvan, component 3 leader of the project and researcher for landscape economics and governance, then presented the farm plans for the sites in Laak, Maco, Nabunturan, and New Bataan, highlighting the inputs required to enhance these farms and apply agroecological practices.

The SFITAL team then discussed with specific local enablers like PAGRO, KFI, DTI RAPID, and the respective MAGRO of the municipality to encourage them to co-invest in these learning farms, which will be turned over to them after SFITAL. Local enablers then committed to provide some of the inputs such as additional scions for clone diversification, farming tools, crates, and other inputs. These commitments are being written in consultation with the farmer cooperators and these local enablers.

Check out the Puhon section of this newsletter for our upcoming activities during the first quarter of 2023! 🌱

SFITAL levels off with PCIC at NCC 2023



SFITAL levels off with PCIC leadership on capacity building opportunities- Photo: ICRAF

To strengthen its ties with national partners, the SFITAL Philippines team met with the leadership of the Philippine Cacao Industry Council (PCIC), led by Consul Armi Lopez Garcia, last 15 November 2023 on the sidelines of the National Cacao Congress in SMX Convention Center, Davao City.

During the meeting, Consul Garcia, who also serves as the chairperson of SFSITAL's Technical Advisory Committee, was joined by PCIC Vice President for Luzon Mrs. Sylvia Ordonez, PCIC Vice President for Visayas Mr. Buen Mondejar, and PCIC Vice President for Mindanao Mr. Christopher Lindo.

Following a virtual meeting with Consul Garcia and Ms. Rabi Mendez of the Department of Agriculture High Value Crops Development Program last October 2023, this face-to-face meeting served as a venue to provide the PCIC leadership an update on what SFITAL has been doing in Davao de Oro and to explore potential opportunities for collaboration.

SFITAL presented the training materials being developed, including the technical guide on cacao-based agroecological practices and the unified curriculum for cacao agroforestry. The team likewise proposed for the said technical guide to be integrated in the harmonized guidebook on cacao production which is being developed by PCIC. With the PCIC leadership agreeing that the current draft of the guidebook does not include a chapter on agroecological principles, the two parties then agreed to conduct a joint review on the technical guide in 2024, convening various experts on sustainable cacao production nationwide.

After the meeting, the team also got the chance to participate in the 2023 National Cacao Congress, with the theme "Sustainability. Productivity. Quality." 🌱

📅 Puhon (in the future)

First roadmap development workshop
Quarter 1, 2024

Second Training of Trainers
Quarter 1, 2024



Local enablers from Davao de Oro participate in the Stakeholders' Consultation Meeting. Photo: ICRAF

SFITAL shares experience in KLMPE 2023

The SFITAL Philippines Team, represented by principal investigator for the Philippines Dr. Rachmat Mulia, got the chance to share its experience on promoting co-investment towards sustainable cacao value chains during the Knowledge Learning Market and Policy Engagement Forum last 22 November 2023 at the Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City.

Dr. Mulia primarily shared highlights of SFITAL's efforts to encourage co-investment in Davao de Oro towards sustainable development of its cacao industry. He talked about the project's efforts to promote agroecological practices through capacity-building, and development of co-investment schemes. He highlighted the rich support that local enablers in the province have been providing cacao growers and farmers' organizations, and how SFITAL, through the establishment of learning farms, is demonstrating examples of co-investment.

He likewise mentioned that this co-investment is also a preparation for the development of a provincial roadmap for sustainable cacao development, which will be jointly develop by different local enablers in the province.

KLMPE is an annual forum that intends to gather organizations from the government, academe, research, and civil society to share best practices in agriculture and rural development. This year, it was co-organized by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Department of Agrarian Reform, and Department of Agriculture, together with civil society organization and partners from the academe.

SFITAL on the web



CACAOMUSTAHAN on FB

[Facebook Community: Cacaomustahan on FB](#)

This Community serves as a knowledge exchange platform for SFITAL stakeholders based in Davao de Oro. This is open for cacao growers, extension officers, and government officials from the province. This is a platform for sharing cacao- and SFITAL-related information, questions, and concerns.



[Website: Cacaomustahan.com](#)

This is the official knowledge portal of SFITAL in the Philippines. The website is still in the beta test, so we want to here your thoughts!

If you have comments, just go to <https://bit.ly/CCMBetaTest> and answer the survey after exploring

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Daghang sugilanon (Lots of stories)

Here's a quick recap of the SFITAL-related blogs we have published



It's a match: Maximizing Davao de Oro's potential for growing cacao

Researchers have confirmed that Davao de Oro is moderately suitable for cacao. What does that mean for local growers and policymakers?

Read more [here](#).



Getting the right mix: Agroforestry as an effective strategy to boost Davao de Oro's cacao industry

ICRAF researchers recently found that Davao de Oro is moderately suitable for cacao production, showing the province's huge potential. But there is room for improvement in current cacao management practices. In terms of strategy, specialists suggest going back to basics—agroforestry.

Read more [here](#).

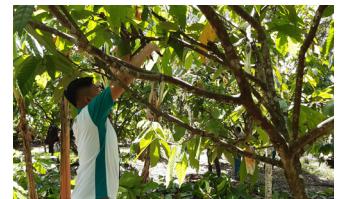
Check out other stories from ICRAF's [Agroforestry World](#) or scan the QR code!



Eyes on the prize: making sustainable farming with cacao attractive to farmers in the Philippines

Technical knowledge and sufficient inputs are important to encourage farmers to adopt sustainable farming practices. But is it enough? Researchers say, not always.

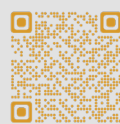
Read more [here](#).



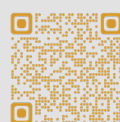
Better together: institutionalizing a multi-stakeholder partnership for Davao de Oro's cacao industry

As cliché as it may sound, synergy between stakeholders from a range of sectors is necessary for any industry to thrive – including the cacao industry of Davao de Oro in the Philippines.

Read more [here](#).



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