

Leyte ridge-to-reef rural program pushed

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The Leyte town Inopacan that's now being aided in planting of jackfruit, dipterocarps, and 'tilapia' raising may become a national model for being small but is "food secure" owing to a "ridge to reef" ecosystem-based rural development.

The socio-economic development at Inopacan, Leyte is being approached in a different light by the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture. Inopacan is a third class municipality with a mere 20,000 population.

Instead of identifying development sites based on political classification, a SEARCA project is developing Inopacan from farm areas to forests and water bodies.

"The project will focus more on the agro-ecological systems of a potential project site. It will be delineated based on pre-determined ecosystem using the ridge-to-reef approach or landscape continuum."

This ecosystem-based concept follows SEARCA's model called "Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development" or ISARD.

ISARD aims that projects in poverty-stricken areas should enable the poorest of the poor get out of poverty, according to SEARCA Director Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit Jr. At the same time, these communities should contribute to conserving the environment.

The ISARD project in Leyte is in partnership with the Visayas State University, Visayas Consortium for Agriculture and Aquatic Resources Program (ViCAARP), and Inopacan's local government unit.

The "ridge to reef" model raises success potential of a poverty alleviation project as communities may be easily tapped for partnerships.

Besides, use of all agricultural, rainforest, and fishery resources will be maximized with the proximity with each other of factors of production (labor and raw materials, machines, land, and management).

Demonstration farms have just been put up in the last quarter of 2016 at Inopacan. These are a vegetable farm, a tilapia fishpond, and two jackfruit farms. The vegetable plot of 1,000 square meters was planted to okra, alukbati, and eggplant.

A technology on low-cost protective cover was applied as developed in an Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research-funded project in order to protect the plants from continuous rain which is prevalent in the areas.

Ridge to reef

Under the ridge to reef concept, LGU-partners are tapped when these are around a "watershed or micro watershed, lake ecosystem including its tributaries." The concept also determines choice of beneficiaries based on landscape ecologies of upland, lowland, coastal and marine ecosystems including ecotones.

SEARCA's ISARD projects get small grants for technical assistance; institutional development and capacity building; knowledge management; and linkaging and networking support.

“Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping and Experts Systems developed by ViCAARP will also be deployed to support the project and growers in their decision-making processes.”

<http://www.thestandard.com.ph/sunday-lgu-section-pdf/vizayas/229087/leyte-ridge-to-reef-rural-program-pushed.html>