

## **Pula Potatoes and Vegetables Farmers Association (PPVFA) : supported by private partners**

*in Pula, Canlaon City, Philippines*

*Contributed by Dr. Victoria Demonteverde of Potato Systems Research and Training Center and Dr. Peter VanderZaag of Sunrise Potato Systems Institute*

The PPVFA is comprised of mostly subsistence farmers who generally have low income and lives within or adjacent to the Kanlaon National Park. Formerly, middle men or financiers provided the crop inputs at very high interest rates and either bought the harvests at the lowest possible prices or get an additional 10% commission from the crop sales. The newly formed PPVFA promotes sustainable production and marketing of potato, sweet potato, vegetables, and other rotational crops. It also advocates for good agricultural practices and use of technology for the pursuit of its aforementioned objectives. This farmers' association was organized in 2016 and was officially registered by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on June 19, 2017.

**Public and Private Partners:** PPVFA partners with various organizations to be able to attain its goals. The Canlaon Potatoes and Flowers(CPF) provided seed; Potato Systems Research and Training Center (PSRTC) funded by Sunrise Potato Systems Institute (SPSI) provided training, technologies & genetic resources. Private Canadian entrepreneurs provided financing for the Farmers' Fund that provides a credit facility for agricultural inputs for all the members.

PPVFA also established relationships with local government units as Canlaon City Agriculture Office, Provincial Agriculture Office, and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).



*PSRTC Staff seated in front row:from left to right, Regie Demonteverde, Victoria Demonteverde,Jessica Nemeño ,and Joseph Brillo  
PPVFA executive members are standing, Alijandra Mataberde, Flora Mae Marcos,Ramil Velando,Rodolfo Dulla, Epifanio Lejano and Anecito Moreno*

## **1. Collaboration and institutional support for the new Farmers Association**

In 2014 and 2015, CPF started to work with farmers in evaluating different varieties of potato from Northern Philippines Root Crops Research and Training Center, Benquet State University and from other countries. Progenies of True Potato Seeds were also evaluated by farmers. PSRTC was established in 2016 and introduced thematic programs that includes introduction and selection and evaluation of germplasm, research on improved technologies, and farmer's training. The research on the status of local potato production was done and farmers from potato growing areas were invited to "A Research Output Presentation and Planning Dialogue with Farmers" on August 29, 2016 at PSRTC.

During this dialogue, the farmers realized the need to preserve its declining local potato industry and saw the need to form an organization to promote potato production. After this, several trainings on potato production and orientation were conducted. By December 2016, the farmers conducted an organizational meeting and ratification of By Laws to formally organize the association. By January, the organization applied for Accreditation in DOLE and its application was officially approved on June 19, 2017. There was remarkable increase in the number of members and more interested farmers are joining the organization almost each week.

## **2. Quality & healthy potato planting material.**

PSRTC has a tissue culture laboratory to be able to produce and multiply pathogen tested materials. Clean-up of local clones retrieved from farmers' fields were also done and planting materials were multiplied by PSRTC.



*Mass production of apical cuttings by PSRTC in their greenhouses.  
Melanie Manusor, a PSRTC worker orients trainees Mernalyn Cogonon and Criston Suelas*

Planting materials were further multiplied by CPF for farmers by rapid multiplication techniques using apical cuttings. Another farmer, Mernalyn Cogonon from Cabagtas, Codcod, San Carlos City multiplies the clones in her greenhouse to produce G0 and G1 tubers for other farmers.





*Leonisa Impil Tribal chieftess of Cabagtasan Tribe shows off her field of seed potatoes*

### **3. Farm management & crop production techniques**

PSRTC conducts on-site and farm research on potato production. Foremost, is the evaluation of germplasm that is suitable in the area. It also conducts research on rotational crops that can be planted within the potato cropping systems. These are shared with farmers for adaption in their own fields.

The private Canadian entrepreneurs provided funds to support crop production by farmers through a credit portfolio whereby farmers can borrow funds for seed potatoes, potato cuttings and other agricultural inputs at a nominal interest rate. Along with technology, the production is improved with affordable farm inputs. PSRTC staff also conducts regular field visits and monitoring of farmers' fields.



*Farmer, Merlyn Alquezar, proudly shows her growing potato crop*



#### 4. Sustainable production and storage of potatoes

PPVFA's vision is to have a potato production and marketing network. Gradually, the vision is taking shape. With the seeds from Cabagtasan, several farmers were able to plant clean seeds of locally selected clones namely CPF 34 and CPF 35, named Choi white and Choi violet, respectively.

Initially, seeds were stored in diffuse light storage made of bamboo with GI sheets as roofing. Soon a small cold store facility will be operated in partnership with the LGU-Canlaon City. With this storage facility, farmers can better store their potato and other vegetables and sell when the demand is higher.



*PPVFA President, Rodolfo Dulla in his field of potatoes*



*Farmer Merlita Velarde shows off her research of new varieties*

## **5. Creating added value (packaging, excellent appropriate storage, transportation)**

CP&F provides clean planting materials to a group of farmers that produces quality tuber seed in a newly opened and isolated area. The value of seed tubers increased as the demand for good seed increased by other farmers. The establishment of village level processing that will serve as additional or alternative source of income is now being developed.

## **6. Marketing**

In line with its vision, marketing of potato is being done so that farmers' produce can have an assured market. A PSRTC staff supervises this activity with farmers. Additional market outlets are being explored especially for small and marble sized tubers.