COOPERATIVES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:

AN INQUIRY INTO THE ACTIONS OF ORGANIC PRODUCER COOPERATIVES IN SELECT PROVINCES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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BACKGROUND

- Offshoot of an on-going project of ICOPED, CEM-UPLB, DA-BAR and the UPLBFI
- Focus: Organic product producers: rice, vegetable, organic fertilizers and pesticides
- Coops, associations, individual producers, and all other organic market stakeholders along the value chain
- Regions III and IV

INTRODUCTION

- **International Cooperative Alliance (2008)**
  - "a cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically controlled enterprise"
- **Philippine Cooperative Code of 2008**
  - "a cooperative is an autonomous and duly registered association of persons with common bond of interest, who have voluntarily joined together to achieve their social, economic, and cultural needs and aspirations"
- **Note: definitions do not explicitly declare environmental needs/aspirations**

INTRODUCTION

- Many respondent-cooperatives were noted for their unambiguous embrace of actions consistent with sustainable development
- Cooperatives have been organized in response to many different challenges, including environment concerns, while servicing needs of members (business-as-usual).

INTRODUCTION

- According to Gertler (2006):
  - Cooperatives have a number of capacities that made them appropriate vehicles to promote integrity of the environment in particular and to support sustainable development in general
  - …can integrate complex combinations of concerns to achieve closely joined economic, social, and environmental objectives.
- Make coops ideal to pursue both business-as-usual activities (eco-social and socio-economic optimization) and sustainable development

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- On-going discussions about the health and environmental implications of agriculture production technologies and about appropriate methods for achieving sustainable forms of agricultural growth.
- "Environmental sustainability is the ability to maintain health of natural capital for the long-term which "consists of water, land, air, minerals and ecosystem services… although environmental sustainability is needed by humans and originated because of social concerns, environmental sustainability itself seeks to improve human welfare by protecting natural capital." [Goodman, 2002]

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Given environmental concerns, what is the role of cooperatives in promoting environmental sustainability?

RISE OF ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATIVES

- Organization in which farmers collaborate to integrate environmental values into their production process (Glasbergen, 2000)
- Innovative associations at the local or regional level, which promote and organize activities related to sustainable agriculture and rural development in their locale (Renting and Van der Ploeg, 2001)
- An association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common needs and aspirations with a focus on environmental sustainability (Horwat, 2009)

THE ORGANIC AGRICULTURE ACT OF 2010

- **State policy to promote, propagate, develop further and implement the practice of organic agriculture to:**
  - condition and enrich soil fertility,
  - increase farm productivity,
  - reduce pollution and destruction of the environment,
  - prevent the depletion of natural resources,
  - further protect the health of farmers, consumers and the general public, and
  - save on imported farm inputs.

THE ORGANIC AGRICULTURE ACT OF 2010

- Comprehensive national organic agriculture program (NOAP) through development, promotion, commercialization, and adoption of sustainable organic farming technologies, practices, and methods

THE ORGANIC AGRICULTURE ACT OF 2010

- With the RA 10068, cooperatives found a strong policy support to interplay cooperatives principles with environmental concerns.
- Challenge: organic farming in the Philippines is still in its early stage.

THE "ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATIVES"

Bataan
- Abucay MPC
- Capitangan Organic Farmers Marketing Cooperative (COFMACO)
- Saguing MPC
- Samaleno Organico

Nueva Ecija
- Ditao Green Forest MPC
- Lakas Magsasaka MPC
- Damayang Kristiano MPC
- Kooperatibang Likas ng Nueva Ecija
- San Jose Primary Multi-Purpose Agricultural KB

Bulacan
- Ahlulalas MPC
- Ligas Cooperatiba ng Bayan sa Pagpapaunlad
- Plaridel Vegetable Growers MPC
- Basuit MPC
- San Ildefonso Mango Growers MPC
- Bubulong Malaki Vegetable Growers MPC
- Bulusukan Palay and Vegetable Growers MPC
- Soil Concervation Guided Farm MPC

THE "ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATIVES"

Pampanga
1. Bangon San Matias MPC

Tarlac
1. Capas Organic Farmers Producer Cooperative (COFPC)
2. Unifarm KSK 28 Marketing Cooperative

Rizal
1. Kasamahan sa Kalikasang Pagsasaka MPC
2. Baras Municipal Employees MPC
3. Conservation and Natural Farming Cooperative

Zambales
1. ABMC Belbel MPC
2. Amungan Farmers MPC
3. Masinloc Agri-Aqua Consumers Cooperative
4. Pinaglaisang Samahang Magsasaka at Mangingisda MPC

Mindoro Oriental
1. Yakad at Halik MPC

REASONS CITED BY FARMER-MEMBERS FOR ENGAGING IN ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Economic	Environmental	Others
• reduced competition in organic market • market potential/emerging market • price premium • cheaper to produce own inputs/high costs of commercial farm inputs • low capital requirement	• solid waste management (e.g. animal manure and farm waste disposal) • provide safe food to members • protect the environment • environment and agricultural sustainability concern • cleaner production • health benefits of organic products • environment-friendly practices	• interest • recipient of government assistance (e.g. shredder, vermiculture training) • encouraged by government, cooperators

Source: Key informant and business development services interviews, 2012

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

- **Voluntary and open membership**
- **Autonomy and independence**
- **Democratic member control**
- **Cooperation among cooperatives**
- **Member economic participation**
  - *Profits are not the bottom-line of cooperatives, so they can engage more genuinely in environmental endeavors; more flexibility in achieving environmental goals*
- **Education, training, and information**
  - *Support ecological and environmental education which foster greater appreciation for the environment and an understanding how to protect it*
- **Concern for community**
  - *Local people may be more innovative in developing solutions because they are closer to the environmental problems*

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS IN SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION

Information, Education, Orientation, and Promotion of

- Organic agriculture
- OCCP certification
- PNSOA / PNS - BAFPS
- Minimization of use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides/better use of locally available resources
- Internal control guarantee system
- Participatory guarantee system

Trainings on and production, use, and/or marketing of

- Inputs (vermi-based products, compost , bokhasi, fermented fish, fruit, and plant extracts/juices, botanical sprays, carbonized rice hull , bio-fertilizer, *trichoderma*
- Organic rice (brown, red, black), vegetables (salad, herbs), and other organic products (fruit-based soap)

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS IN SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION

Trainings/seminars on the adoption of

- Eco-labeling/labeling
- Organic products marketing
- Internal quality control system (IQCS)
- Agri-ecology
- Seed production/banking
- Natural farming system
- Farming technologies and dissemination (bio-dynamic, LEISA, SALT)

Assistance on

- OCCP certification process
- Organic output and input market linking
- Sourcing for commercially available organic inputs
- Credit for organic-based production

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS IN SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION

Other Efforts

- Organic farm visit/showcase/study tour
- Farmer-to-farmer sharing of information
- Genetic conservation and improvement of traditional rice varieties
- Development of alternative guarantee system
- Subsidized/discounted price for organic inputs
- Farm investments for exclusive use of organic producers

COOPERATIVES AND SUSTAINABILITY

- SD requires social capital – positive working relationship, mutual trust, and goodwill (Roseland, 1999) – makes it easy to create a guarantee system and quality control consistent with the requirements of OA
- Coops are well placed to facilitate the dialogue necessary to shift culture – e.g. transition from traditional to organic agriculture
- Coop links between producer-members, processors, and customers (along the value chain) allow coops to mandate and capture the benefits/premium of sustainable practices.
- Education, training, and information initiatives on inputs, technologies, and practices were a major part of cooperative activities covered– reach out to members and the local community in general to achieve environmental goal.

CONCLUDING REMARK

- Gertler (2006) said that cooperatives become more vital and viable institution with explicit adoption of synergistic eco-social agenda.
- The "environmental" and organic producer cooperatives in Regions III and IV appear to be striding along this observation.