

Cargill and ASSIST partner to revitalize Coconut Industry in Philippines

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The CocoGrow Project, a groundbreaking initiative by Cargill and ASSIST supported by the Philippine Coconut Authority, officially launched at Barangay Bagacay, Alabel, Sarangani Province. The project aims to rejuvenate Sarangani's coconut industry by planting 75,000 coconut seedlings across three key municipalities: Alabel, Malapatan, and Malungon.

Focused on revitalizing coconut production, the project will introduce faster-growing, high-yield coconut varieties to replace aging, low-yield trees, and those damaged by recent natural calamities. Spanning 535 hectares of coconut farms, this initiative will directly benefit 500 smallholder farmers, with 50% of them being women. By backing sustainable agriculture and replanting initiatives, stakeholders can help farmers increase their incomes, strengthen the economy, and preserve the Philippines' status as a global leader in coconut production.

In addition to replanting, the project promotes sustainable agricultural practices designed to boost local economies and increase farmer incomes. Given the coconut's critical role in the Philippines' economy—contributing approximately 3.6% to the country's gross value-added (GVA) and solidifying its position as a leading global producer (PSA 2019, Lapina and Andal 2017)—this project offers both immediate and long-term benefits. The CocoGrow Project will not only secure the future of Sarangani's coconut industry but also support the economic resilience and sustainability of its communities.

Central to the project's success are seven dedicated farmers' cooperatives and associations, identified as key stakeholders. These groups will actively engage in capacity-building workshops to enhance their skills in critical areas such as improving consolidation processes, strategic and business planning, financial management, and cooperative governance. These efforts are aimed at strengthening the cooperatives' business acumen and governance, including policy formulation and access to credit facilities.

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Jonathan Sumpaico, Cargill's Copra and Palm Origination Commercial Director, stated, "We are honored to partner with ASSIST in strengthening Sarangani's coconut industry. This project reflects Cargill's unwavering commitment to building resilient agricultural communities and helping farmers thrive where we operate. Through this partnership, we aim to improve the livelihoods of Sarangani's coconut farmers in a safe, responsible, and sustainable manner, while also meeting the growing demand for sustainable coconut oil."

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Francis Macatulad, ASSIST Executive Director, added, "We are taking a significant step towards revitalizing our cherished coconut industry. The launch of this project is more than just planting seedlings; it's about fostering hope, creating opportunities, and building a sustainable future for our communities. Through our partnership with Cargill, and with the invaluable support of the Philippine Coconut Authority, we are committed to nurturing the coconut industry while empowering farmers to harvest more opportunities, ultimately transforming the economic landscape of Sarangani Province."

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Emily Lorion, Philippine Coconut Authority Region XII General Manager, expressed support, "Launching the CocoGrow Project is a great initiative. It will help enhance coconut tree cultivation in Sarangani Province, support farmers and stakeholders, and boost our economy by helping in strengthening the crucial coconut industry in the Philippines, particularly in Sarangani. We support Cargill, ASSIST and the CocoGrow project. Our office in the Philippine Coconut Authority, which has a mandate to continue to improve and develop our industry, will always be here to extend assistance through planting, fertilization, and other intercropping for our farmers. The same goes for our trainings so that they can earn more and their livelihoods can progress further."