



BRIA-FARMERS in the Service of Local Farmers

The Philippine component of BRIA is better known as the Better Rice Initiative Asia-Fostering Agriculture and Rice Marketing by improved Education and Rural advisory Services (BRIA-FARMERS). More than a catchy acronym, it represents an ideal embodied in the general government direction of having sufficient supply of rice and food security in the long run. As intended, the project aims to help farmers be more productive and make rice farming generally profitable. In this two-fold purpose, the project is anchored.

As part of the implementation mechanism of BRIA-FARMERS, at the start of the project, Kleffmann Group (KG) was commissioned by Bayer Crop Science (BCS) to do a baseline survey on the capacity and training prerequisites of local extension workers and farmers. Assessing the training capacity and needs of the stakeholders and extension service providers implies that the project will not necessarily reinvent the wheel. Rather, the project will support the existing extension platform and infrastructure of the frontrunners of the rice extension works. The result of the said survey or assessment was used in order to package the training programme to be implemented by the project in the three (3) regions- 3 (Aurora), 6 (Iloilo) and 8 (Southern Leyte).

The project is nearing its completion in the Philippines. At the final stretch of its implementation, there is a need to undertake an end-line or post-launch survey to measure the extent of the initiative as may be reflected by key performance indicators. This write-up contains some of the highlights of the said survey. The survey has 390 respondents (150 each for Aurora and Iloilo; and 90 for Southern Leyte). The respondents were interviewed face to face using a set of questionnaire developed by the Kleffmann Group upon consultation with the implementing partners. The survey reveals a number of valuable lessons which are quite instructive, especially in terms of rural livelihood and development.

BRIA Philippines Priority Activities

BRIA Education and Training	BRIA Rice Production	BRIA Market Access
Strengthening of capacities of local extension service, i.e., LGUs and DA, providers	Introduction of enhanced farming technology concepts from seed to harvest.	Support farmer organisations' formation, improve market and price information.
Improvement of farmer access to extension services.	Focus on farming activities such as land preparation, planting, crop care and harvesting.	Link farmers to retailers

Fostering Agriculture and Rice Marketing by Improved Education and Rural Advisory Services (FARMERS)

The respondents and the knowledge they gained

The 390 respondents were, in one way or another, recipients of BRIA-FARMERS intervention in their respective localities. The intervention came in the form of participation in the BRIA School Days, BRIA-FARMERS Field Schools, technology updates, and discussion of specific BRIA-FARMERS topics in the demo plots. Majority of the respondents are smallholder farmers, with 1.5-5 hectares of land owned and tilled. On the average, the land owned by the farmers is 2.2 hectares planted not only with rice. Other commodities being commonly grown are coconut and mung beans. In terms of gain, the survey noted a great increase about farming knowledge among the respondents, from 44% to 67%. Most of the farmers recognised their knowledge about the growth stages of rice as a major knowledge gained. This specific knowledge guides better the farmers in deeper appreciation of the rice cycle and the concomitant technology and practice attached to each growth stage. Knowing the specific crop stage, a farmer is better guided on how to handle the issues in the field. For instance, based on the crop stage, a farmer may better be able to tackle the type of insect pests and diseases that may attack the rice plant.

The transfer of knowledge

The local government unit (LGU), through its agricultural extension workers (AEWs) and the local agricultural office, is the primary source of information or farming knowledge. The information provided by the LGUs is deemed important and useful by the farmers. The LGU is followed by technicians from the private companies and fellow farmers. The primary venue for knowledge exchange is the farmers meetings (in the form of field schools and technology updates) and consultations with AEWs and company technicians immersed in the fields. The LGU with its AEWs is also the main training provider. The learnings and the exchange in the trainings are further reinforced by the frequent visits by the AEWs and other LGU extension service providers. This is a positive trend given the provision of the local subsidy (LS), the primary purpose of which is to help in the extension work of the LGUs. From the average of 2 visits per year, the AEWs were able to visit 4 times on the average, almost doubling the frequency of the visits.

There is a noted increase or high incidence of trainings in the farm levels. Moreover, due to closer supervision of the AEWs and other extensionists, there is a higher adoption or application rate of technology learned and discussed in the trainings. However, there is still a certain percentage of farmers who do not adopt or apply the technologies learned. The reasons cited for this low adoption or application is the difficulty of abandoning the practice lived for countless years. There is also the reality that some of the technologies are not applicable to farms such as full mechanisation.

Furthermore, the trainings opened to farmers new opportunities to learn about new topics. While most of the topics are known to most farmers, the innovative way they were presented was greatly appreciated by the farmers. The topics given new appreciation by the farmers are the general rice culture (quite connected with the growth stages of rice); crop nutrition and fertiliser use; and pest management and the use of crop protection products. Due to the trainings, one major realisation among the farmers is the need for new and innovative rice farming products and equipment. The positive experience brought about by trainings and exposure to demo plots led the farmers to seek for ways they can be more competitive. Hence, innovative products and equipment are seen as one way to do it. As a complement to trainings in the fields, farmers prefer other modes by which information can reach them. Among these alternative modes are the mobile phones, radio and television. The latter does not necessarily have a cable connection for information to be disseminated to farmers.

Survey Specifications & Distribution of Interviews

Country	Philippines
Data Collection Method	Face-to-Face Interview
Sample Size	N=390
Cut-off Size in Hectares	Minimum 0.25 hectare / Maximum 10 hectares
Fieldwork Schedule	August 2017
Fieldwork Agency	KLEFFMANN GROUP

Province	*2016 Irrigated Rice Area	**Ave. Crop Size
Iloilo [N=150]	99,572 ha	2.2 ha
Aurora [N=150]	20,273 ha	ha
Southern Leyte [N=90]	18,975 ha	ha
TOTAL [N=390]	3,181,102 ha	ha

*Based on PSA 2016 Statistics

**Based on surveyed farms



The farmers and their investment

In terms of investment, the farmers spend heavily on labour and farm machinery, either owned or rented. The machines are mostly used during land preparation and harvesting. Other farm inputs also eat up a significant chunk of the budget. Expenses on seed are the least. For the farm inputs, chemical inputs comprise the bulk of farm expenditures. After the inputs, harvesting is the next most expensive.

For financial management, most farmers are able to segregate their household budget and their farm budget. Farmers are aware that the budget intended for the farm cannot be used for domestic allocation. The gains of the previous cropping become the capitalisation for the succeeding croppings season. In some instances, farmers resort to borrowing from private entities or individuals. These loans are usually paid after harvest either with paddy rice or money after selling the harvested paddy rice.

While most farmers express enhanced knowledge about the rice value chain, not all of them can claim better understanding (insecure) of the rice market. 75% of the farmers sell their harvest to private dealers or retailers. Private dealers are the main market followed by the government procuring entity and followed by middlemen. Farmers prefer to sell their produce to those traders who do not set their buying limits. One

important consideration why farmers sell to particular trader or retailer is if that retailer can pay in cash and immediately.

According to market demands, the farmers prefer rice varieties with tough or firm grains, as well as those varieties with solid grains. Such is the choice of farmers from Aurora and Southern Leyte. For Iloilo farmers, however, purity and cleanliness are more preferred characteristics of the seeds.

Crop insurance is availed of by the farmers because of its promise for financial help in the event of the crop being lost to natural calamities. The promise of cash assistance and refund are compelling reasons for farmers to avail themselves of crop insurance provided by the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation, the most preferred crop insurance provider. Nevertheless, farmers prefer that crop insurance be free or subsidised by the LGU.

Based on the survey, the project has brought about change at two levels--- perception and attitude. The farmers have begun to consider rice farming as a gainful enterprise. Because of such realisation, the farmers are now slowly rethinking how they go about their rice farming--- being more science-based and adoptive.

