

SAFE-World Project/Initiative Summary

Country: Philippines

Project/Initiative Title: FARMI, Visayas

Nos. farmers: 300

Hectares: 300

Agro-Ecological Zone: III

Improvement types

1x	2	3x	4	5x	6x	7	8	9
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D. Contact Point for Project/Initiative

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E. Project Narrative

The Farm and Resource Management Institute, Eastern Visayas, Philippines

The Farm and Resource Management Institute (FARMI) of the Visayas School of Agriculture works with farmers in 14 upland villages of Matalom on Leyte island. The objectives are to adapt and refine research methodologies for the uplands by working on participatory technology development. The villages are remote and inaccessible by road during the rains. Soil erosion was perceived to be a widespread problem.

FARMI began by learning from farmers about their own approaches to soil conservation. About one third ploughed across the slope, leaving 0.5-1 metre unploughed strips every 4-10 m of slope. Some strips were straight, others more or less on the contour. According to the farmers, sometimes the strips were broken by heavy rains and animals. FARMI then took a group of farmers on a study tour to Cebu to see two upland projects of the Mag-uugmad Foundation, a local NGO. There the farmers saw for themselves and heard from other farmers about different contouring techniques using various combinations of grasses, trees and shrubs. On return, the farmers arranged for a community meeting, at which they presented what they had seen and learnt. This was then followed by various informal and smaller group meetings, including with the parents-teacher association. Photographs taken during the trip were important in helping to persuade everyone to support the initiation of a local soil and water conservation project using the traditional and reciprocal *alayan* labour exchange system.

The next stage involved *alayan* members testing and experimenting with a range of technologies. These included diking, in which soil is piled on the contour with legumes and grasses planted on both sides; slash and pile, in which cut grasses and shrubs were piled along the lines and branches used to pin them to the soil; and the establishment of contour hedgerows when the land was fallowed or directly in the crops. Side by side, farmers tested a

wide range of indigenous and introduced variations. Interest grew and faded, and grew again, until eventually farmers had chosen the most appropriate technologies for themselves. As a result, yields improved on these conserved fields. There are now 29 farmer *alayon* groups with 300 members in 14 upland villages. By early 1994, more than 100 farmers in neighbouring villages had independently adopted contour technology.

One emerging concern amongst farmers was their past experience of landlords grabbing improved lands - people were afraid that FARMI would do the same after they had put in all the effort. There have been many ingredients for success: the start with farmers' technology, the cross farm visits, and the gradual development and adaptation of new technologies, and the personal behaviour and attitudes of the project staff that have been central.

Data for this project is in hard copy format and is not currently available electronically. If you would like further information please contact Rachel Hine