How the BSU...from PAGE 1

organically-grown vegetables.

More farmers are now convinced to shift into organic farming, however, the tedious process of acquiring certification and marketing organic vegetables proves to be a challenge. Thus, the BSU-Internal Guarantee System was conceptualized in 2008 with the aim to help farmers understand and learn the standards of organic farming.

Beginnings of the BSU-Internal Guarantee System (BIGS)

BSU Internal Guarantee System or BIGS is a set of organic farming standards patterned from the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), Philippine National Standards for Organic Agriculture (PNSOA) and the Organic Certification Center of the Philippines (OCCP). Of course, it prohibits the use of synthetic chemicals in farming. BIGS also prohibits the clearing of forests for farming and the burning of grasses and other plant debris except if materials contain diseases and pests.

The first farmers who adhered to BIGS were the members of the Balili Organic Farmers' Association who finished the Certificate in Practical Organic Agriculture (CPOA), a training program of the OES. In 2009, BSU launched the Organic Market later known as the BIGS Center.

In 2010, the CPOA was re-named BIGS Qualifying Course to increase the number of farmer cooperators that can produce and supply safe and nutritious products to the BIGS center.

BIGS Center Group was organized in 2015 and used the terms "*naturally-grown*" and "*chemical-free*" instead of "*organically- produced.*"

BIGS Adopters

One BIGS adopter is Mr. Abelardo Sublino of Tuba. Before he became an organic farmer, he was coping with the problems of conventional farming which are the constant increase in the prices of chemical inputs and the effect of these chemicals to his health. Upon hearing about the opportunity that BSU has opened to all willing farmers, he immediately inquired about the requirements and complied to them.

When asked about his motivations in becoming a member despite some negative comments about organic farming, he answered that what is important is his mind is at ease and his conscience is clean knowing that the vegetables he sells are chemical-free and safe.

The BIGS Center has also set a standard pricing system of the naturally-grown and chemical-free products sold by the farmers. Mr. Sublino added that this inspires him to farm all the more because the prices do not fluctuate as compared to the prices of vegetables produced through conventional farming. Aside from that, Mr. Sublino looks forward to the benefits of being a BIGS Center member such as his acquisition of new knowledge and skills from seminars and trainings sponsored by OES. Government programs for farmers could also reach him through the organization.

BIGS Center members including Mr. Sublino are now freely availing of the seminars and trainings being conducted by the university's extension office and other government agencies. Their knowledge and skills are updated every now and then, and they have access to the university's current technologies to improve their farming practices.

When asked to compare his profit in conventional farming with organic farming, he said he earned more from organic farming.

"*Nu ijay synthetic, idi ket awan ti income, kaaduan na ket deficit, tadta ket in one year makaurnong ak ti Php 45, 000. Gain dayjay ta nai-minus amin dagiti expenses ti farm* (In conventional farming, I usually have deficits most of the time. Now, I can earn a net of income PhP 45,000 in a year)," he added.

When it comes to income Mrs. Sacley said, "*Almost all the proceeds from organic farming are the farmer's net income. In conventional farming, the proceeds are used to purchase farm inputs. With organic farming, if you harvest and deliver weekly, you earn money weekly.*"

They also added that they earn Php 5,000 to Php 10,000 delivering a few kilos of their harvest every week.

BIGS membership requirements

Benguet State University Internal Guarantee System is open to all interested farmers who wish to become a member. Farmers just need to inquire at the Office of Extension Services to register for the 5-day BIGS qualifying course with a registration fee of around 4,500 Pesos. After the training, the farms of the trainees will be inspected by the monitoring team composed of a soil analyst, farm technicians, pest and disease analyst, pesticide residue analyst, plant pathologist, crop specialist and documenters.

They (the monitoring committee) are the authorized individuals to inspect farms; determine plant diseases in the farm if there are any; analyze the soil type; recommend possible products that can be grown in the farm; and inspect buffer zones, water source and safety. If the farm is deemed at par with BIGS standards, the applicant may already claim his/her stickers and farm codes from the OES; sign commitments as BIGS members; and open their account at the BSU Multi-purpose Cooperative (MPC) where cash income from their products will be deposited.

Assigned farm coordinators and members monitor the farm of their co-members at least once a year to ensure that BIGS standards are being followed. A member suspected of violating the BIGS standard will be reported to the Office of Extension Services. Verification will be done and if proven that the member is violating BIGS standards, sanctions will be imposed. ***//ALBMarzo-Pagada***, *with reports from Gladys B. Longbabi and Jessa C. Erejedor. Reference: Kudan, S. 2016. Organic Farming: The Benguet State University Experience*



TUBIGS Nawal-Topdac...from page 9
assisted on the establishment of community-based technology demo farms or community-based livelihood among others.

After some consultations, the OES conducted training on organization management and policy formulation among the organic practitioners in Nawal. It aimed to reorient the farmers on the importance of organizing and formalizing the establishment of a farmers' organization in the area.

With the establishment of the new group, it was deemed proper to craft basic policies relative to the operations of the organization; hence the conduct of the writeshop. The discussion started from the preamble until the last article, which pertained to the effectiveness of the CBL of the organization. After the detailed discussion, the CBL was printed and distributed to the officers for their input and comments or suggestions. Having no further corrections and additions, the crafted CBL was signed by the secretary and president of the organization.

The write-shop aims to fulfill the requirements of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) toward the registration of the organization. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, it was registered to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The organization was registered as a non-stock and non-profit corporation to promote collective advocacy and initiatives on Organic Agriculture through the Benguet State University Internal Guarantee System (BIGS), and to foster harmonious and progressive farming relations towards the upliftment of moral, social, economic, and environmental well-being of the officers and members.



IT'S A SIGN! Barangay officials of Nawal, Bokod signing the approved MOA.

FINALIZING BSU PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM MANUAL OF OPERATIONS

The write-shop on Benguet State University Participatory Guarantee System (BSU PGS) Manual of Operation happened on July 13-14 at the Carnation Hall of the Research and Extension Building. Attended by the BSU PGS Core Team, who are also the participants in the previous training conducted by the Agricultural Training Institute-CAR. Other write-shop participants were the Office of Extension Services (OES) staff and student interns who facilitated and documented the activity.

The activity aimed to finalize the BSU PGS Manual of Operations as members of the Core Team re-internalize the BSU PGS concept, elucidate the mandates of the PGS based on the provisions of RA1151, and appreciate the implications of the BSU-PGS concept as an enhanced version of the BSU-Internal Guarantee System (BIGS).

As defined in the Republic Act (RA) No. 11511, an act amending the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 or RA 10068, PGS, a specific quality assurance system developed by local organic farming practitioners, PGS is a system "to certify producers and farmers as actual and active organic agriculture practitioners" (Department of Agriculture). It encourages the active participation of farmers in the entire process: certification, decision-making, and marketing.

The members of the BSU PGS Core Team were the following: Constantino T. Sudaypan, Alexander W. Fagyan, Casiano S. Pagadan, Valentino L. Macanes, Von Y. Amado, Normalyn T. Longay, Gennie B. Soyon, John D. Dolinas Jr., Jopher L. Galian, and Leo S. Laruan.



DON'T WORRY, IT'S ORGANIC! BIGS Center fills with organic produce displayed by BIGS farmers.

The twelve chapters of the Manual of Operations were discussed, which includes history and profile, where the participants suggested to have the dates verified. The organizational structure was showed that the College of Agriculture would be included in the structure just below the OES. At the same time, other organic agriculture organizations of farmers were also included, parallel to the Timpuyog Dagiti Umannamong iti BSU Internal Guarantee System (TUBIGS) Incorporation.

Regarding the membership and process flow for farmers and stakeholders, application procedure for certification, and competency requirements and development, the team agreed to place an introductory note and process flow for each chapter. In contrast, the process requirements suggested that the clauses and annexes should be verified.

Moreover, the records management shall have an introductory note added to this chapter, lifted from RA 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The policy on conflict of interest shall be dealt with accordingly by issuing a warning, suspension, or termination.

On updating and distributing the manual of operation, any proposed amendment shall be made in writing by the proponent to the management committee, and every member shall be entitled to a copy of the Manual of Operation. The effectiveness of the Manual of Operation shall take effect upon approval by the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS).

The Members also agreed that any provision on this Manual of Operation found to be inconsistent with the higher laws and policies shall be nullified by the separability clause. All annexes of each chapter should be placed accordingly.

After the team reviewed all the chapters of the Manual of Operation, it was decided that the output of the write shop would be sent to the BSU-PGS Core Team for further input, comments, and suggestions for improving the Manual of Operation.



ORGANIC GALORE. Customers flock the BIGS center to buy their organic produce.