

IMPROVING FURTHER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DFS PROGRAMME

Background

The Upland Development Programme (UDP in Southern Mindanao is a special project of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and is supported by the European Union. It aims to develop and test a replicable model for sustainable management of natural resources in the uplands of Region XI and enable upland communities to address their subsistence needs and produce new marketable surpluses through sustainable market-led production.

As part of its approach to sustainability, UDP promotes farming technologies that protect and conserve soil and water while increasing farm productivity. One such technology is the Diversified Farming System or DFS.

Adopters of DFS are given material assistance by UDP, specifically by providing seedlings of fruit trees and forest trees as part of the long term component and soil conservation strategy of the farming system. Part of the package is technical assistance starting from farm planning to farm management. While there are a great number of farmers who are interested to adopt the technology, the Programme would like to ensure that they get the right technology, more importantly on the aspect of soil and water conservation. As a strategy, the Programme made it a policy to give seedlings only to those who have appropriately established soil and water conservation interventions in their farms that are intended for DFS.

The limited number of technical staff from UDP and partner LGUs vis-à-vis the number of interested farmers has made the DFS programme unable to cope with the demand. As a strategy, UDP decided to tap the services of Barangay Extension Workers (BEWs) and members of the Farmers Training Groups (FTGs) particularly in the fields coaching and validation. As barangay and sitio-based partners of the LGU's Agricultural Technician, the BEW and the FTG member are responsible for teaching interested farmers of the specific technologies that are appropriate to given field and other conditions.

Improvements in the DFS programme process has increased the number of farms eligible and qualified for assistance. However, problems on the quality of eligibility, especially on the adoption of soil and water conservation measures as defined by the Programme, is still bogging the implementation process, hence, this proposal.

Proposed interventions

In order to improve on the current situation of the DFS programme, the following are hereby proposed for consideration:

1. **Review of the technicalities of the STOP and the procedures of the DFS programme.** Considering feedbacks on the STOP and on the DFS programme processes, a review of the technicalities of STOP and of the procedures of the

DFS programme is proposed. The review shall be organised by the PPOs and shall be conducted at the provincial level involving FTG representatives, BEWs, ATs, Barangay Captains, MAs/MAOs, MPTLs, UDP PPO and PMO representatives and ICRAF staff. This will clarify issues, applicability and acceptability of STOP and DFS particularly to farmers and members of the community-based extension teams. More options, especially on soil and water conservation strategies and practices are expected to be presented and agreed upon.

2. **Orientation of farmers who are interested to participate in the programme at the barangay level.** The orientation, *cum* basic training on DFS and on Slope Treatment Oriented Practices (STOP), shall be organised by the UBA. Resource Persons shall be provided by UDP and LGU and will be assisted by BEWs and FTG members. The orientation-training shall be conducted preferable at the Farmers Learning Site or neighbouring farm. It will be the UCO Chair who will endorse the farmer-participants to the UBA. At the end of the half-day activity, it will be expected that the participants will be fully aware of the DFS programme and its technical and procedural requirements, and able to prepare farm plans using STOP as basis. The farm plan will be the basis for an assessment by the FTG at the sitio level. For coordination, policy support and other purposes, Barangay Captains, Sangguniang Barangay Agriculture Committee Chairs, and landowners should be invited to the orientation. The landowners should be invited, maybe formally, by the Barangay Captain. (**Option: If budget allows, and if time is limited, the orientation may be done at the municipal level.**)
3. **Use of simple and farmer-friendly farm assessment form.** Farms with plans already prepared will then be assessed individually by FTG members using the attached proposed form. (Note: This form is suggested to be discussed for consensus by UDP with selected stakeholders: DFS cooperator, FTG, UCO/UBA, BEW, AT, Barangay Kagawad (Agriculture/Environment Committee) and Barangay Captain.

PROPOSED FARM ASSESSMENT FORM FOR DFS PROGRAMME

(To be accomplished by farmer and FTG member)

This portion to be accomplished by farmer

Name of farmer: _____

Location of farm (or farms) intended for the DFS programme:

Total area of farm (or farms): _____ hectares

Distance of farthest farm from house: _____ kilometers

No. of household members: _____

This portion to be accomplished by farmer for each parcel of the whole farm

Parcel #: _____

Crops/trees planted: _____

Slope - range: ____ to ____ % (or degrees? Depending on what is more understandable or acceptable to farmers.)

This portion to be accomplished by the FTG member together with the farmer, for each parcel**SWC**

Parcel #: _____

1. SWC intervention (pls check): ____ leguminous hedgerow ____ NVS ____
zero/minimum tillage ____ cover cropping ____ terracing ____ others2. % established or in place (quantity): ____ below 25% ____ 25-50%, ____
above 50-75% ____ above 75%3. Quality of SWC in place: ____ poor/needs major repair ____ needs little
improvement ____ good

This form was accomplished by:

(Printed name and signature of farmer)_____
(Printed name and signature of FTG member)

Date accomplished jointly by farmer and FTG member: _____