



## 💡 Cacaohibalo (*Cacao knowledge*)

# Evidence-based sustainable roadmap, vital in building a future-proof cacao industry



**W**ith its extensive use and value in the food and beverage industry, cacao has become a significant source of revenue and livelihood for developing economies like the Philippines. Its versatile use as a key ingredient in the manufacturing, pharmaceutical, and cosmetic industries has increased global demand. Given its suitable climate and soil conditions, the Philippines has been seen to have a competitive edge in the global cacao market, particularly in the Davao Region, which contributes 78% to national cacao production.

However, the 2019 Global Market Report on Cocoa by the International Institute for Sustainable Development highlights an emerging challenge: a projected decline in long-term global cacao supply. In the Philippines, cacao bean production falls short of meeting local grinding needs which is attributed to changing weather conditions, pests and diseases, low productivity, and unsustainable cacao farms. In Davao de Oro, the Sustainable Farming in Tropical Asian Landscapes (SFITAL) project site in the Philippines, the average yield is only 0.5kg/tree/year.

Consequently, low prices discourage farmers and youth from engaging in the sector. Furthermore, inefficient market linkages in the country have led to market failures, high transaction costs and risks, and service gaps, forcing local consumers to import cocoa products.

In response, the Philippines' agricultural sector is actively addressing these challenges. The Philippine

Cacao Industry Council created the Philippine Cacao Industry Roadmap, a strategic guide for industry stakeholders to achieve an environment-friendly, socially desirable, and economically viable cacao industry from 2021 to 2025. It commits to standardizing cacao production and post-harvest protocols across the nation and mobilize stakeholders to support industry-wide development efforts.

One of the immediate action plans is to encourage national and local government agencies to implement the cacao roadmap. However, although the goals and strategies in this roadmap have been cascaded at the local level, it has not been localized in actual provincial-level roadmaps.

Over the past three years, SFITAL Philippines has been collaborating with local stakeholders of Davao de Oro to develop a Sustainable Cacao Roadmap for the province. This roadmap aligns with the national roadmap and other existing development plans, promoting inclusive, sustainable, and transparent value chains for small-scale producers at the provincial level.

The data-driven and research-based roadmap is the first of its kind, created in collaboration with local stakeholders. One of its key features is the use of spatially explicit and computer-based assessment tool called R-FALLOW (Forest, Agroforestry, Low-value Land or Wasteland) to assess impacts of cacao development scenarios and inform the development of targets and indicators of the roadmap.

R-FALLOW uses various sets of spatial and non-spatial data to generate scenarios. These spatial data include slope, soil fertility, forest reserve, proximity factors like road, settlement, market, and industry, and crop suitability considering biophysical and climate factors. It also takes into consideration several socio-economic parameters. Through these input data, local stakeholders can determine strategies to balance economic and environmental conservation in the context of cacao development. For the context of SFITAL, some of these input data were gathered by

*Continued on page 2*

## Evidence-based sustainable roadmap, vital in building a future-proof cacao industry (cont.)

the project team itself, while some spatial data were obtained from concerned government agencies.

The use of such computer-based assessment tool allows key decision makers to decide on possible interventions objectively, with knowledge on how these interventions affect not just the present situation but also future scenarios. Therefore, it provides opportunities to future-proof the industry based on actual, projected data.

R-FALLOW is not just developed for SFITAL. Interested government units and non-government organizations can explore the online version of the software through <https://rfallow.agroforestri.id/>. A copy of the guide for its use is also available on Cacaomustahan.com through this link <https://cacaomustahan.com/r-fallow-users-manual/>. 📄

## Better together: co-investment towards sustainable cacao development

The cacao value chain, just like any other industry, involves various actors with different roles. It requires action and participation from the producers or the cacao growers, the consolidators, the processors, the chocolatiers, the exporters, the enabling institutions, and many more. Therefore, the sustainable development of the industry does not lie on one actor alone.

For instance, the current Philippine Cacao Roadmap aims to increase the nationwide production of fermented beans to 50,000 MT by 2025. Most of the plan's objectives focus on production, such as to raise the yield to 2kg/tree and increase the newly planted areas by 7,000 hectares. But the responsibility to achieve these goals does not only rest on the shoulders of the producers, particularly the cacao growers. Improving production alone requires investment and enabling conditions, such as availability of quality planting materials, accessibility of processing facilities, and enhanced technical capacities—all of which are impossible if only the cacao growers and the private sector will take action.

With this, the Sustainable Farming in Tropical Asian Landscapes (SFITAL) Project promotes co-investment of various value chain actors and enabling institutions to promote sustainable cacao development, even at the production- or farm-level. The Project demonstrates this in its four learning farms established in the

municipalities of Laak, Maco, Nabunturan, and New Bataan. These farms were not built from scratch, nor were these established using SFITAL resources alone. It was only made possible through the collaboration of the Project with farmer-cooperators, farmer organizations, and other enabling institutions, both from the public and private sectors.



Now, these learning farms are being used to demonstrate agroecological practices for environment-friendly and climate resilient cacao cultivation. Some of these learning farms were also used as venues for capacity building activities, not only those organized by the SFITAL Project but also those organized by partner institutions.

### *How did the co-investment happen?*

Promoting co-investment in this context required a series of site visits to know the situations of the proposed learning farms, as well as a series of stakeholder consultations to determine the available resources in each enabling institution. These activities also helped ensure that the objectives of the co-investment aligned with the goals of the Project, of the farmer-cooperator, and of the partner-enabling institutions.

Once the issues of the proposed farms were identified, the SFITAL Project proposed necessary interventions and identified the resources needed. The identified resources were then presented to the partner-enabling institutions to identify possible sources of these inputs.

For example, in the Nabunturan Learning Farm in Barangay Katipunan, the Project provided technical assistance to initiate the interventions, particularly in access pruning and thinning—since the farm has been neglected for a relatively long time. The Provincial Agriculture Office of Davao de Oro then provided fertilizers to hasten the recovery of the cacao in the area. Kennemer Foods Inc., one of the major private sector partners of the Project, was the source of the scions of new clones side grafted on the existing cacao trees, to promote clone diversification. The Department of Trade and Industry - Davao de Oro, through the Rural Agro-industrial Partnership for Inclusive Development (RAPID) Growth Project also helped in selecting

*Continued on page 3*

## Better together: co-investment towards sustainable cacao development (cont.)

the farm and farmer-cooperator to maximize the investments they have already made to the farmer's cooperative. The farmer-cooperator also has access to the farming tools and equipment given by DTI-RAPID to the cooperative.

In the case of the Laak learning farm, the University of the Philippines Mindanao – Land Reservation Management Office, one of the Project's academe partners, provided the farming tools and equipment for the interventions being done in the farm.

For all the learning farms, the farmers also co-invest, particularly through the use of their farms and their labor.

As a result of this co-investment, the farmer-cooperators have been noticing improvements in their own farms. For

instance, Mr. Fausto Juab, the farmer-cooperator for the Nabunturan learning farm, and Mr. Jun Villahermosa, the farmer-cooperator for the Maco learning farm, both expressed their joy and satisfaction seeing their cacao trees flowering as of June this year, giving them hope of an upcoming abundant harvest.

### Why promote co-investment?

Co-investment is beneficial, not just to ensure availability of resources but also to promote collaboration at the landscape level. For the case of the SFITAL Project, the period of implementation, so as the availability of resources, is limited. This is true as well for other internationally funded projects.

Promoting co-investment early in the process fosters a sense of co-ownership among enabling institutions. Therefore, it

helps ensure sustainability of investments and continuity of interventions, even beyond the project implementation period.

The SFITAL Project also promotes co-investment, not just in the learning farms, but also in the

roadmap of sustainable cacao development for the Province, which involves different sectors because sustainable cacao development, from farm- to landscape-level, is a feat that requires collaboration and active participation. 🌱

## 💡 Kahinguhaan sa kahibalo (New publications)

### Photo set: Second Planning Workshop for the Development of a Sustainable Cacao Roadmap for Davao de Oro



Stakeholders of Davao de Oro's cacao industry convened last 25 June 2024 in Nabunturan, Davao de Oro for the second planning workshop for the development of a sustainable cacao roadmap for the province. Photos from this event can be downloaded [here](#).

### Photo set: Training of Trainers on Soil Health and Fertility Management as Agroecological Practice for Cacao Cultivation



The SFITAL Project in the Philippines held a TOT on Soil Health and Fertility Management for Cacao Cultivation last 26-27 June 2024 in Nabunturan, Davao de Oro.

Photos from the TOT are downloadable through this [link](#).

### Photo set: Sharing session on cacao post-harvest activities for farmer organizations



The SFITAL Project in the Philippines held a Sharing Session on Cacao Post-harvest Activities for Farmer Organizations last 28 June 2024 in Nabunturan, Davao de Oro.

Photos from the sharing session are downloadable [here](#).

## 👤 Atong mga higala (Our friends)



Mr. Ronel delos Santos meets with the SFITAL Project Team at his farm. Photo: ICRAF/Isabelle Dela Paz

### Mr. Ronel delos Santos Farmer-cooperator, SFITAL New Bataan Learning Farm

Ronel, a 30-year-old cacao farmer from Camanlangan, New Bataan, Davao de Oro, is a testament that there is space for the youth to

*Continued on page 4*

## Atong mga higala (cont.)

be involved in agricultural activities. Inspired by the knowledge and skills he gained from various trainings and workshops he attended, Ronel decided to tend his grandfather's land, integrating cacao and coconut.

Prior to SFITAL's interventions to his farm on agroecological practices, a huge farm of Ronel's farm has been well-maintained. This can be attributed to the strength brought by his youth, enabling him to work regularly on his farm. However, due to insufficient resources, there are also unmaintained cacao trees in Ronel's farm. Pest and diseases can also be observed in his area, despite the relatively good harvest.

When offered to be a farmer-cooperator for SFITAL, Ronel agreed without hesitation. According to him, he sees this as an opportunity to learn more and improve his practices, while also encouraging other farmers to continue tending to their cacao trees. And staying true to his word, Ronel has been actively working with SFITAL in demonstrating agroecological practices for environment-friendly and climate resilient cacao cultivation. Some of the agroecological practices he has been practicing in his farm are: 1) surrounding cacao trees with dried coconut husks, 2) using prunings and litterfall as mulch, 3) collecting rotten and infected pods in a hole on the ground and exposing these pods to

*Continued on page 5*



Endri Martini demonstrates the difference of water-holding capacities of soil, compost, and soil + compost. Photo: CIFOR-ICRAF/Zarrel Gel Noza

Endri Martini, Agroforestry Systems and Extension Scientist from the Centre for International Forestry Research-World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) Indonesia, led the discussion on basic soil health concepts related to cacao agroforestry systems. She highlighted some of the unsustainable practices in cacao cultivation that leads to soil degradation, including use of herbicides and synthetic fertilizers, slash and burn clearing, and absence of slope management measures, among others. She likewise discussed the various indicators of soil health, such as the presence of soil organic matter and the soil pH.

Following this presentation, Erwin Albios, SFITAL agroforestry facilitator for Davao de Oro, discussed the key agroecological practices related to soil health and fertility management. These practices include recycling natural fertilizers, reducing dependence on synthetic inputs, increasing organic matter, and stabilizing slopes, among others. He also underscored the benefits of integrating cover crops like leguminous crops and nitrogen fixing trees.



Training speakers demonstrate the use of litmus paper to test soil pH at the Cacao Agroecology Learning Farm in New Bataan, Davao de Oro. Photo: CIFOR-ICRAF/Zarrel Noza

The participants also got the chance to visit one of SFITAL's cacao agroecology learning farms to see the actual application of some soil health and fertility management practices. In the farm, Albios and Ronel delos Santos, the farmer-cooperator of the farm in New Bataan, pointed out the different agroecological practices implemented in this farm. These include using dried coconut husks as mulch, collecting infected pods in a hole while exposing these pods to sunlight, and

*Continued on page 5*

## Gikan sa Yuta (From the ground) SFITAL capacitates DdO trainers on soil health and fertility management

Last 26-27 June 2024, the SFITAL project conducted a Training of Trainers (TOT) on soil health and fertility management for cacao cultivation at Qi Xiang Business Inn, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro.

Convening 31 extensionists and farmers from the province, this TOT is the second installment of SFITAL's series of TOTs on agroecological practices for cacao cultivation. It aimed to capacitate local field extensionists and farmer-leaders on agroecological measures to maintain and enhance soil health and fertility of cacao agroforestry systems.

To achieve this goal, the two-day TOT covered several discussions on soil health and soil and water conservation.

## SFITAL capacitates DdO trainers on soil health and fertility management (cont.)

regular and appropriate pruning. Martini also had the chance to demonstrate some methods of testing soil quality, such as observing the soil's biodiversity and testing the soil pH using litmus paper.

Additionally, Albios discussed soil and water conservation, emphasizing soil erosion as one of the common reasons for soil fertility decline. He highlighted the two common approaches in soil conservation, namely the barrier approach or establishing hedgerows, terraces, and natural vegetative strips, and the cover approach or integrating herbaceous plants and using crop residues. Moreover, he provided an overview of establishing contour lines using an A-frame and using the cow's back method.

To provide a different perspective, Martini also shared usual practices in the SFITAL sites in Indonesia in relation to soil health and fertility

management and soil and water conservation. Some of the unique practices she shared include the use of plastic cups for sleeving instead of plastic bags, and the integration of durian with cacao. She also provided some points for improvement for the learning farm visited.

Presentations from this training can be accessed through this [link](#).

Training evaluation results show that according to trainees, they gained relevant knowledge from the TOTs, specifically on soil and water conservation as well as the use of plastic cups for sleeving. However, many of them are also interested in conducting on-field trainings on contour establishment.

This series of TOT on agroecological practices for cacao cultivation still has upcoming installments towards the end of 2024. For more information, check out [CACAOmustahan on FB](#) for updates. 🌱

## DdO cacao stakeholders lay down strategies for sustainable cacao development

In line with the creation of a roadmap for sustainable cacao development for the province, stakeholders of Davao de Oro's cacao industry convened for the second planning workshop last 25 June 2024 at Café Noventa, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro.

Bringing together 37 representatives from local government units, farmer organizations, academic institutions, and private sector partners, the workshop primarily intended to present and gather feedback on the current content of the draft roadmap

## Atong mga higala (cont.)

direct sunlight, and 4) more regular pruning and maintenance. Also, he does not use any synthetic or chemical inputs.

Ronel has also been participating in the Trainings of Trainers on agroecological practices that the Project has been conducting. In fact, he opened his farm for hands-on demonstration during the TOT on soil health and fertility management for cacao cultivation last June 2024.

When asked about his expectations of the farm, he is looking forward to a good and sustainable harvest, especially in the upcoming peak season.

Several interventions, such as vermiculture and others, are still planned to be implemented in his learning farm towards the end of 2024 to ensure sustainability of his harvest and the health of his soil.

Ronel's story is a testament of what young farmers can do when given the space to grow and learn, and when provided with the supporting mechanisms that they need. Indeed, engaging the youth in agriculture is still an important feat worth pursuing. 🌱



Local stakeholders map the interventions identified in the current roadmap document. Photo: CIFOR-ICRAF/Laksemi Ni Put

document. This draft was created based on existing development plans and the inputs from the first planning workshop held last February 2024.

The workshop was divided into sessions: presentations to provide updates and other relevant information related to the development of the roadmap, and group discussions to gather inputs and feedback for

the current roadmap document.

Dr. Rachmat Mulia, SFITAL Principal Investigator for the Philippines provided a brief review of the entire roadmap development process.

Additionally, Grace Ann Salvan, Component 3 leader for the Philippines, presented highlights

*Continued on page 6*

## DdO cacao stakeholders lays down strategies for sustainable cacao development (cont.)

of current roadmap document, underscoring the five proposed strategies, namely: 1) sustainable land use allocation for cacao production, 2) improve access of the cacao farming community to livelihood capitals, 3) increase productivity and income diversification of cacao farms, 4) sustainable improvement of supply and market value chains, and 5) incentive ecosystems. An incomplete draft of the roadmap document can be downloaded from [Cacaomustahan.com](http://Cacaomustahan.com) through this link.

She likewise emphasized the unique characteristics of the roadmap, particularly its emphasis on agroecological practice for environment-friendly and climate resilient cacao cultivation and co-investment and incentives for smallholder farmers to adopt agroecological practices. According to her, the roadmap also uses spatially explicit and computer-based assessment tool to evaluate impacts of cacao development scenarios and the integration of monitoring and evaluation indicators related to six principles of sustainable cacao development.

To further provide context on the roadmap development process, Laksemi Ni Putu from SFITAL Indonesia also shared lessons learned from the development of a sustainable cacao roadmap

for North Luwu District in Indonesia, underscoring the identified strategies, interventions, and activities.

For the afternoon session, local stakeholders provided feedback and suggestions to the identified strategies and interventions. Farmer-participants also shared their suggestions on the key challenges they encounter in cacao cultivation that need to be addressed in the roadmap.

“One of our primary needs is support in the form of fertilizers—this is something that our members have always been saying in almost every meeting. Our cacao trees bear fruit; however, it is limited because we really lack fertilization. Our technicians from the Municipal Agriculture Office tell us that it is better to use organic fertilizers, and we would be willing to use those fertilizers if there is an available supply,” said Felixberto Puno, Chairperson of the Dumlan Association of Cacao Planters in the municipality of Maco.

“It will be beneficial for us, cacao farmers, if we will receive incentives for every kilogram of quality cacao beans that we are able to sell. That way, we will be more encouraged to produce quality cacao beans and apply the technical skills we learn in trainings,” Roberto Longo, a member of Laak Multi-

purpose Cooperative, pointed out.

They also ranked the interventions based on priority, using the capacity-impact scale. This feedback and suggestions will then be integrated into the roadmap document. Additionally, they identified other potential enablers

that they think should participate in the third planning workshop.

For further details on the second planning workshop, the complete activity report will be uploaded on [Cacaomustahan.com](http://Cacaomustahan.com). The First Planning Workshop recap video can be watched [here](#).

## SFITAL takes part in training-workshop on SARAI technologies



Workshop participants visit the SFITAL Cacao Agroecology Learning Farm as part of the Project SARAI activities. Photo: Project SARAI

On 5-6 June 2024, the University of the Philippines Los Baños - School of Environmental Science and Management (UPLB-SESAM) conducted a training-workshop on Smart Approaches to Reinvent Agriculture as an Industry in the Philippines (SARAI) technologies at Café Noventa, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro.

In partnership with University of the Philippines Mindanao through its Land Reservation Management Office and the Agri-Aqua Value Chain Lab and CIFOR-ICRAF Philippines through the SFITAL Project, the training-workshop aimed

to introduce innovative SARAI systems and technologies to the participants, particularly focusing on the use of these technologies on banana and cacao management and processing.

Participants of the training included extensionists and farmer-leaders from several institutions and organizations across Davao de Oro. SFITAL also sent representatives which included Erwin Albios, the project's site coordinator for Davao de Oro, along with the three farmer-cooperators for the SFITAL cacao agroecology learning farms, namely Ronel delos Santos, Fausto Juab, and Antonio Talle.

*Continued on page 7*

## SFITAL takes part in training-workshop on SARAI technologies (cont.)

The training included introductions to the innovative SARAI systems and technologies—among their extensive list of innovations, this includes Bantay SARAI, a mobile application that helps farmers report their crop planting date, expected harvest date, expected yield, and damages. Additionally, they received in-depth training in the Climate-Smart Environmental Analytical Model System (CL-SEAMS), as well as best practices in cacao management and processing, and banana agricultural management.

The SARAI team also trained the participants on the installation and operation of these advanced technologies, empowering them to enhance their farming practices and disseminate this knowledge within their communities.

The training also involved field activities on the use of selected technologies, like SPIDTECH. This was conducted in the SFITAL’s cacao agroecology learning farm in Barangay Katipunan, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro.

This initiative is part of the SARAI Project, funded by the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic, and Natural Resources Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-PCAARRD). DOST-PCAARRD is also a part of SFITAL’s technical advisory committee, who provides strategic direction to the Project. 🌱

## SFITAL upskills Nabunturan cacao farmers

In line with its commitment to promoting sustainable cacao agroecological practices, SFITAL Philippines partnered with the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAGRO) of Nabunturan, Davao de Oro to deliver a comprehensive Training of Farmers (TOF) series from 11-22 April 2024. This initiative is designed to elevate farmers’ expertise in Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM) and Shade Management while promoting environment-friendly and climate-resilient cacao cultivation.

In April 2024, three TOF sessions were conducted across Barangays Katipunan, Anislagan, and San Isidro, engaging 81 smallholder farmers. The sessions began with opening remarks from Wilmer Turing, Agriculture Technician from MAGRO Nabunturan, who outlined the training’s objectives.

Erwin Albios, SFITAL Site Coordinator for Davao de Oro, then elaborated on the principles and advantages of cacao-based agroecological practices. “Implementing

practices such as using nitrogen-fixing crops, mulching, and repurposing cacao pods significantly improves soil health and fertility,” he emphasized.

He highlighted that cacao, being a shade-loving tree, requires appropriate shading to minimize the risk of pest and disease infestations. IPDM provides smallholder cacao farmers with environmentally sustainable and cost-effective strategies to address these challenges. During the training, Albios offered practical advice on shade management, regular pruning, and the use of resistant cacao clones to combat prevalent pests in the country.



SFITAL Coordinator, Erwin Albios, demonstrates pruning techniques to participants. Photo: CIFOR-ICRAF/Erwin Albios

During the hands-on field sessions at the SFITAL cacao agroecology learning farm, Albios demonstrated effective IPDM and shade management techniques, including various pruning intensities and cacao side-grafting methods. Kenner Foods International, Inc. (KFI), our local partner, provided valuable technical support for these demonstrations.

Results of the pre- and post-training evaluations revealed an improvement in their proficiency. However, the trainers emphasized that the actual measure of the training’s effectiveness will be the participants’ application of these practices on their own farms.

Moving forward, SFITAL and MAGRO will continue to collaborate in organizing additional training programs and monitoring the implementation of these agroecological practices to ensure long-term sustainability in cacao farming. 🌱

### 🔍 Nakahibalo ka ba? (did you know?)



Nearly **5 out of 10** participants in SFITAL activities are **female**, and **2 out of 10** are **youth**.

## SFITAL and UPMin collaborate to train farmers in Laak

On 16 May 2024, the SFITAL Project partnered with the University of the Philippines Mindanao (UPMin) through its Land Reservation Office (LRMO) in the conduct of a training of farmers in Special Barangay Talle, Kidawa, Laak, Davao de Oro.

This session focused on enhancing farmers' knowledge of soil health and fertility management in cacao cultivation. With the rising demand and prices for both wet and dried cacao beans, the training underscored the importance of adopting sustainable agroecological practices.

The training welcomed 33 participants, including cacao farmers from Kidawa, and students and

teachers from Kidawa National High School. The program began with an opening address by Joel Sagadal, Chief of UP Min-LRMO, who outlined the purpose and goals of the training.

The first topic, presented by Carol Balgos from UPMIn-LRMO, focused on the current state and opportunities in the global and local cacao industry.

"The supply of dried cacao beans in the Philippines is insufficient for many processors which is why the country continues to import cacao products," she noted.

Balgos attributed this shortfall to factors such as poor crop management, pest and disease challenges, and fluctuating climate and weather conditions.

from the four SFITAL Cacao Agroecology Learning Farm sites in Davao de Oro, giving participants practical ideas for implementation on their farms.

Given the success of the event, two additional series of training will be conducted in Laak in the next months. These will focus on specifically Sustainable Cacao Production Integrated Pest Management and

Sustainable Cacao Enterprise Post-Production cum Trial Marketing. These efforts will be in collaboration with public and private stakeholders and research organizations, aimed at providing technical training on cacao production management and enterprise skills enhancements to smallholder cacao farmers within the UPMIn land preservation area in Laak. 🌱

## SFITAL convenes farmer organizations on a sharing session on cacao post-harvest activities

In line with its objective to promote a sustainable cacao value chain, SFITAL conducted a sharing session for farmer organizations on cacao post-harvest activities on 28 June 2024 at Café Noventa, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro.

With the goal to inform farmer organizations on government support available for them to improve their market access, as well as buying guidelines and standards they need to follow, the session convened around 20 representatives from select farmer organizations from Laak, Nabunturan, and New Bataan.

To provide information on current government programs that aim to enhance cacao growers market access, Kenneth Dela Cruz from the Provincial Agriculture Office of Davao de Oro discussed the Farm and Fisheries Clustering

and Consolidation (F2C2) Program of the Department of Agriculture. He provided an overview of the program and some updates on its implementation in the province, particularly the identified 'big brothers' and 'small brothers.'

Beverly Pantinoble from the Department of Trade and Industry – Rural Agro-industrial Partnership for Inclusive Development (RAPID) Growth Project, Davao de Oro Project Coordination Unit then shared about the supports they provide to qualified farmer organizations, such as production support (farming tools and equipment, planting materials, post-harvest equipment) and product development support. She also presented the various sustainable business models they developed for select farmer organizations in Davao de Oro.



SFITAL presents best practices for soil health and fertility management.  
Photo: CIFOR-ICRAF/Erwin Albios

To help participants tackle these challenges, Mr. Wilfredo Mata from Kennemer Foods International, Inc. shared best agricultural practices, including shade management and cacao pruning regimes which he demonstrated during the farm visit.

Emphasizing the significance of soil health and fertility management, the training highlighted practices like mulching, composting, planting cover crops, and adopting soil and water conservation techniques. Erwin Albios, SFITAL Site Coordinator for Davao de Oro, presenting photos

*Continued on page 9*

## SFITAL convenes farmer organizations on a sharing session on cacao post-harvest activities (cont.)

As one of the major buyers in the province, Kenneker Foods International, Inc., represented by Jenevieve Balangue discussed their buying guidelines. This presentation intends to inform members of farmer organizations on possible ways to improve their production and, eventually, their earnings.



Provincial Cacao Council President Armando Escudro shared how MAMPCO's cacao enterprise grew and what challenges are they still encountering. Photo: CIFOR-ICRAF/Laksemi Ni Putu

Since the sessions also aimed to encourage farmer organizations to maximize opportunities open for them, Armando Escudro, the current president of the Davao de Oro Provincial Cacao Council and General Manager of the Maragusan Multi-purpose Cooperative (MAMPCO), shared the experience of their cooperative venturing into cacao. He highlighted the supports that enabled them to grow their enterprise, as well as the challenges they are encountering.

The session also served as an avenue to discuss key issues in the cacao market in the province, particularly regarding prices. Representatives from the public and private sectors were able to clarify some points. For example, KFI explained about the process of determining the buying price of beans. They likewise explained how farmer organizations can meet their buying standards in order to avail themselves of a higher price.

Key proceedings from this session will also be integrated into the sustainable cacao roadmap that SFITAL is developing with local stakeholders. The Project is also set to partner with the Provincial Cacao Council in succeeding activities to strengthen the collaboration of cacao producers, buyers, and enablers in the province. 🌱

Editor: Zarel Gel Noza | Rachmat Mulia

Writers: Isabelle Claire Dela Paz | Zarel Gel Noza

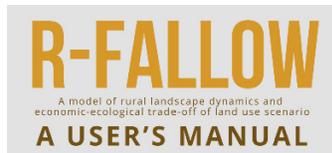
Layout: Isabelle Claire Dela Paz

## 🔗 SFITAL on the web



### Facebook Community: Cacaomustahan on FB

This Community serves as a knowledge exchange platform for SFITAL stakeholders based in Davao de Oro. This is open for cacao growers, extension officers, and government officials from the province. This is a platform for sharing cacao- and SFITAL-related information, questions, and concerns.



### R-FALLOW User's Guide

R-FALLOW is a model of rural landscape dynamics and economic-ecological trade-off of land use scenario created by World Agroforestry (ICRAF) for SFITAL.

This manual contains information on how to install, run, and use the R-FALLOW software. Read the full user guide [here](#).

## 📣 Pahibalo (announcements)

Are you interested in partnering with SFITAL to conduct Trainings of Farmers (TOF) on agroecological practices for cacao cultivation? Contact [z.noza@cifor-icraf.org](mailto:z.noza@cifor-icraf.org).

Join our [Cacaomustahan on FB](#) group to interact with other local enabling institution, post announcements, and learn about program information and cacao market information!



Check out SFITAL Philippines' knowledge resources on our knowledge portal! Go to <https://cacaomustahan.com> or scan the QR code!



Subscribe to our Cacaomustahan Newsletter by visiting <https://cacaomustahan.com/contact> or scanning the QR code!



### Join the Agroforestry Philippines FB group

CIFOR-ICRAF has a new, improved, and more Facebook group for Filipino agroforestry enthusiasts and practitioners to share their respective initiatives and experiences. We aim to make CIFOR-ICRAF's content and knowledge more accessible to our Filipino audience.

Join the group through this link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ciforicrafph>.



### Website: Cacaomustahan.com

This is the official knowledge portal of SFITAL in the Philippines. We want to here your thoughts!

If you have comments, just go to <https://bit.ly/CCMBetaTest> and answer the survey after exploring the site.