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Sustainable Farming in Tropical Asian Landscapes (SFITAL) Project

Inception workshop for the implementation of the Sustainable Cacao Roadmap for Davao de Oro 2025-2030, Vision to 2050

Activity Report

ACTIVITY DETAILS	
What:	Inception workshop for the implementation of the Sustainable Cacao Roadmap for Davao de Oro 2025-2030, Vision to 2050
When:	3 April 2025
Where:	Nabunturan, Davao de Oro
Prepared by:	Zarrel Gel Noza

1. Rationale and objectives

The Provincial Government of Davao de Oro, in cooperation with World Agroforestry (ICRAF) through the Sustainable Farming in Tropical Asian Landscapes (SFITAL) Project, launched the Roadmap of Sustainable Cacao Development for Davao de Oro 2025-2030, Vision to 2050, on 15 January 2025. After the launch, the Provincial Agriculture Office also presented the roadmap to the Provincial Development Council and was approved by the Governor for adoption.

As the province starts to implement the roadmap, orientation from the Provincial Agriculture Office (PAGRO) as the main leading agency for roadmap implementation to the supporting public and private agencies, is necessary. In addition, since the achievement of all targets set in the roadmap will strongly depend on close monitoring and evaluation activities, a description and introduction of a monitoring and evaluation platform for roadmap implementation is also needed. In this regard, an inception workshop to formally start the implementation of the roadmap will be conducted this coming April 2025.

The inception workshop served as a venue for PAGRO to provide updates on the integration of the roadmap into a provincial policy and on its implementation. It also allowed the SFITAL team to present the initial form of the online monitoring and evaluation (M&E) platform for the roadmap. The workshop also served as a venue for the SFITAL to gather lessons learned from the roadmap development process to produce a guide on suitable approaches to development a provincial roadmap of commodity crops.



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2. Participants and program

Participants

A total of 68 participants from local and national government agencies, academic institutions, farmers' organizations, and private sector partners attended the inception workshop. Specifically, the SFITAL team invited representatives from the following institutions:

- Provincial LGU
 - Provincial Agriculturist Office
 - Provincial Planning and Development Office
 - Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office
- Municipal LGUs
 - Municipal Agricultural Offices of all 11 municipalities
 - Municipal Planning and Development Offices of all 11 municipalities
 - Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Offices of all 11 municipalities
- Farmer organizations/Cacao cooperatives
 - Maragusan Multipurpose Cooperative
 - Laak Multipurpose Cooperative
 - Katipunan Multipurpose Cooperative
 - Comval Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative
 - Dumlan Association of Cacao Planters
 - Talle Farmer's Association
- Academe partners
 - Davao de Oro State College
 - University of the Philippines Mindanao Land Reservation Management Office
- Private sector partners
 - Kennemer Foods Internation
 - Apex Employees and Community Multipurpose Cooperative
- National government agencies
 - Department of Trade and Industry Davao de Oro (PCU RAPID Growth Project)
 - Department of Labor and Employment
 - Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- Cacao de Oro Provincial Council, Inc.

Out of the 68 attendees of the workshop, 17 (25%) are women, while 28 (41%) belong to the youth sector. This only shows that women and youth are indeed part of the sustainable cacao development in Davao de Oro, performing different functions, some of which are outside the cacao production in the farms.

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Attendance sheets from the inception workshop are attached as Annex.

Program

The detailed program of the inception workshop is presented on the table below.

Table 1. Program of the inception workshop

TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER
08.30 – 09.00 AM	Registration	
09:00 – 09.30 AM	Opening program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invocation • Philippine National Anthem • Introduction of participants • Overview of the workshop 	SFITAL
09.30 – 10:30 AM	Presentation 1: Updates about the implementation of the roadmap and its adoption to a provincial policy	PAGRO
10.30 – 10.45 AM	MORNING SNACKS	
10.45 – 12.00 NN	Presentation 2: Monitoring and evaluation framework for the roadmap (Discussion and walk-through)	SFITAL
12.00 – 01:00 PM	LUNCH	
01.00 – 02.30 PM	Group discussions on lessons learned in roadmap development	SFITAL
02.30 – 02.45 PM	AFTERNOON SNACKS	
02.45 – 03.45 PM	Continuation of group discussions	SFITAL
03.45 – 04.15 PM	Closing program	SFITAL

3. Highlights of activity proceedings

The inception workshop consisted of presentations on the roadmap, particularly updates on its progress and monitoring and evaluation, as well as interactive discussions on the lessons learned from the implementation of activities towards sustainable cacao development.

Updates on the implementation of the roadmap and its adoption to policy

Engr. Jesyl P. Gutierrez, PAGRO

Engr. Gutierrez started her presentation with updates on the adoption of the roadmap into a policy. According to her, last 10 February 2025, the Provincial Development Council, led by the Provincial Governor, approved the adoption of the roadmap (through PDC Resolution

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No. 3, Series of 2025) and endorsed it to the Provincial Council for their appropriate action. As of the writing of this report, the roadmap has already been adopted by the Provincial Council through Sangguniang Panlalawigan Resolution No. 2052-2025.

In terms of the activities, she also presented some key activities organized by PAGRO contributing to the targets of the roadmap. These include the following:

- Package of technology (POT) – Training on Cacao Rehabilitation (Montevista)
- Distribution of farm inputs (Montevista)
- POT on cacao production, particularly on cacao establishment and management

The detailed progress reported are presented in the table below:

Table 2. Progress of the implementation of the Sustainable Cacao Roadmap for Davao de Oro as of June 2025

Activity	Target	% accomplishment	Funding source
Strategy 1			
Intervention 1.1 Designate main cacao production areas and identify possible for expansion, rehabilitation and rejuvenation			
Stocktaking of available cacao suitability maps, identify parameters of sustainability and adopt the sustainability maps for the province	1 provincial cacao suitability map adopted	10% - BSWM conducted courtesy visit to PAGRO last March 12, 2025 for the collection of soil sample	BSWM, PAGRO, MLGU
Stocktaking of existing information on cacao producing areas and their conditions	1 provincial commodity profile	5% - conducted cacao profiling FCAs members 8 FCAs profile last Cy 2024 to Feb 12-18, 2025 (on going)	DA, PAGRO, MLGU, PSA, DTI , DENR, NCIP
Intervention 1.2 Development recommended models of cacao farms and suitable crop components to reconcile economic benefits			
Mobilization of resources for the establishment of learning farms through co-investment scheme	3 co-investment scheme	Ongoing	DA, ATI, TESDA, PAGRO, MLGUs, FCA
Strategy 2			
Intervention 2.2. improve access to farm inputs to include quality materials			
Conduct of capacity building activities for operators and aspiring farmer organization on	1 training/year	3 trainings conducted	PAGRO, Philippine Army, PSWDO

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Activity	Target	% accomplishment	Funding source
cacao nursery management			
Intervention 2.3. improve access to farm inputs to include quality materials			
Stocktaking of farmer organization and clusters who can engage in cacao consolidation and processing	5 cluster per year	On going	DA, and MLGU
Conduct of training focused on bean classification and grading technique with hands-on activity	2 training per year	1 training conducted funded by DAR, bene: Canidkid Upland FA. Conducted last jan.23 and Feb.04	DAR
Intervention 2.5. Improve entrepreneurial skills of cacao farming community including men, women and youth			
Integration of gender sensitivity financial literacy and entrepreneurial in cacao-related trainings	2 training session per year	50% - 1 training facilitated Integration and Promoting Gender into Environment Social and Governance (G-ESG). Conducted last March 14, 2025 at MAMPCO Maragusan	MEDA-RIISA
Conduct training on product development and promotion (packaging, labelling, etc.)	2 training session per year		DTI
Conduct mentorship activities by linking cacao farming community with experience entrepreneurs	5 mentorship activity		DTI
Facilitation of product investment and promotion through trade fairs, business matching activities	5 investment activity	20% 1 – Bulawan festival last march	PAGRO

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Activity	Target	% accomplishment	Funding source
Conduct training on product development and promotion (packaging, labelling, etc.)	2 training session per year		DTI
Strategy 3			
Intervention 3.1. Promote sustainable cacao farming practices through extension, integration of Cacao into education curriculum and provision of training manuals.			
Application of sustainable farming practices through Good Agricultural Practices and crop diversification in cacao expansion, rehabilitation and rejuvenation	2 co-investment plans for rejuvenation and rehabilitation per year every 2 years	150% 1- DTI RAPID GROWTH Project 1- DA- HVCDP-CFIDP project 1- PAGRO (AIP) (on going implementation)	DTI RAPID, DA HVCDP, PAGRO HVCDP
Provision of incentive programs such as grant, scholarship and recognition awards to encourage the participation of women, and youth in cacao farming	1 recognition award	100% Top 8 Regional Cacao Quality Awards Ms. Evangelyn To-ong and Peter Paul Cruz	DA, PAGRO

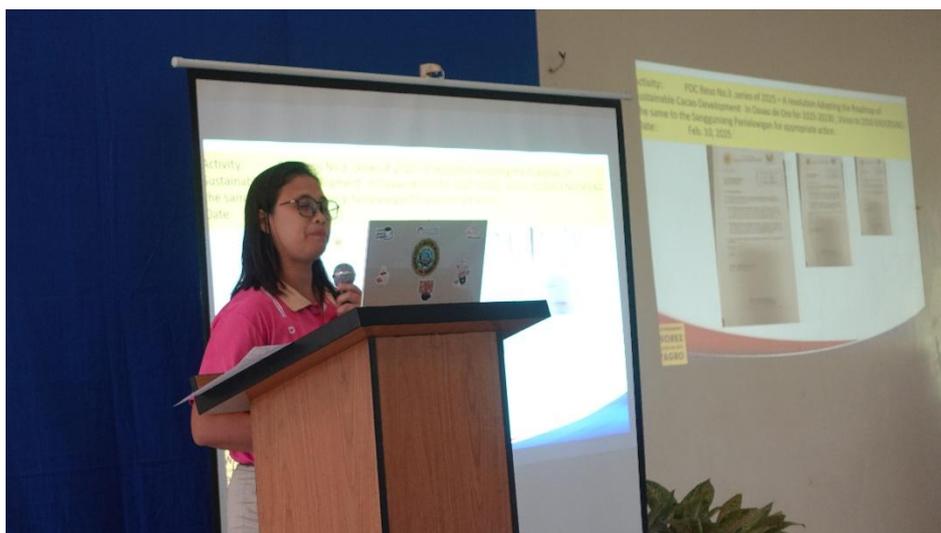


Figure 1. Engr. Jesyl Gutierrez presents updates on the implementation of the roadmap and its adoption to policy.



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Monitoring and evaluation framework for the roadmap

Zarrel Gel Noza, SFITAL

To ensure the efficient monitoring of the implementation of the roadmap, the SFITAL Project also developed a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. Ms. Zarrel Noza, SFITAL Project Coordinator for the Philippines presented the framework to the workshop participants, emphasizing the importance of M&E in enhancing the effectiveness of the plan, as well as in promoting accountability among concerned stakeholders.

Before presenting the actual framework and the initial features of the online M&E platform that the project developed, Ms. Noza defined the roles of the involved agencies in terms of the roadmap implementation and M&E. These are laid out in the table below:

Table 3. Role of agencies in the roadmap implementation and M&E

INSTITUTION	ROLE IN ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION	ROLE IN ROADMAP M&E
Lead implementing agency (PLGU through PAGRO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures the execution of activities according to timeline and targets Communicates with partner agencies to align efforts and resources effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracks the achievement of the roadmap’s targets through data from the activities Makes necessary adjustments according to current context and existing challenges
Partner agencies (i.e., Cacao Council, National Government Agencies, Municipal LGUs, private sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports implementation of roadmap activities by providing resources, expertise, and/or manpower Carries out tasks assigned by the lead agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide data on the implementation of specific roadmap activities wherein they led

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Figure 2. Ms. Zarrel Noza presents the M&E framework and platform to the workshop participants.

The workshop also shared as a venue to present the initial structure of the M&E platform that the project is developing and explain how it works. According to Ms. Noza, the platform is intended for all institutions (i.e., local government units, national government agencies, academic institutions private sector, the Cacao Council) who implement activities aligned to the targets of the roadmap. She also explained how the platform will work, which is laid down in the bullet points below:

- Various institutions involved in roadmap development implement activities laid out in the roadmap document. From the implementation, they generate data and information (means of verification).
- They upload the means of verification to the M&E platform.
- The data they upload to the M&E platform generates a summary of the roadmap's achievement.
- The data provides PAGRO with the status of roadmap implementation and informs its decisions and actions in terms of adopting to the current context.

She also highlighted the basic requirements to access the platform, which includes the following: a smartphone/tablet/laptop with an internet browser, Internet connection, and a Google account that they can access. The beta form of the platform is accessible through this link: <https://bit.ly/CacaomustaDDObeta>. She also provided a step-by-step process of uploading progress inputs to the platform.

The workshop participants then provided comments and suggestions to improve the platform. The comments and suggestions, along with the possible resolutions provided by SFITAL are presented in the table below.

Table 4. Questions, comments, and suggestions for improvements for the M&E platform.



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QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND SUGGESTIONS	RESPONSE/RESOLUTION
UPMindanao: Include the role (i.e., funding, collaborating) of the agency in the input details	SFITAL: Fields for funding sources and collaboration partners will be added for the input details.
UPMindanao: Will it be possible to add another strategy option for “multiple strategies” so the inputting will not be repetitive?	SFITAL: It is possible, as long as it will not affect the comprehensibility of the results or the summary.
MPDO Compostela: Who will upload the progress inputs for the MLGU?	SFITAL: The office responsible for the progress input will be responsible for the uploading. For example, for the land use maps, it will be the MPDO. This will be specified in the user’s guide of the platform.
MAGRO Montevista: If we will upload photos, should it be geotagged?	PAGRO: Yes, it will be better if the photos are geotagged.
Apex Mining: We can also add the field on the funding cost so that the contribution of various institutions can also be monitored.	SFITAL: Yes, a field on cost will be added.
UPMindanao: Hopefully, there is a public dashboard where everyone can monitor the progress, so the institutions would also be able to see which strategies are easier to implement.	SFITAL: Yes, it is possible to create a public dashboard once actual data is already uploaded to the system.
SFITAL: How do we determine the copyright of the documents and photos uploaded?	SFITAL: Every time documents uploaded in the platform for reporting, the source should always be cited. This should also be added in the user’s guide.

Group discussions on lessons learned

The inception workshop also served as an avenue for the SFITAL project to gather feedback from the participants on the strategies used by the project in promoting sustainable cacao development. This also served as the venue to harvest outcomes from local stakeholders of the project.

For the group discussion, the participants were divided into three groups: one group for the representatives from the LGUs, another for representatives from the academe and private sector, and another for members of the farmer cooperatives and associations, as well as the Provincial Cacao Council. The discussions revolved around four themes: 1) roadmap



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development, 2) co-investment schemes, 3) agroecological practices, and 4) knowledge management.

Roadmap development

In terms of roadmap development, the following criteria were assessed: 1) uniqueness of the roadmap development process as compared to the usual process of crafting plans and programs towards cacao development, 2) changes brought by the roadmap development process, 3) points for improvement, and 4) possible sustainability strategies.

Uniqueness of the roadmap development process as compared to business-as-usual

For this criterion, the participants particularly assessed the roadmap development process' distinctness in terms of stakeholder engagement and in terms of the jurisdictional approach. Actual responses from the FGD are attached as annex in this report.

In terms of stakeholder engagement

The responses from the FGD showed that the usual roadmap development process usually provides limited opportunities for participation of private sector actors. With this, local stakeholders have expressed appreciation for the active engagement of private sector partners in the roadmap development process. For example, AEC-MPC mentioned that the roadmap enabled them to integrate their own programs into the goals and related initiatives of the provincial government.

The participants also acknowledged the active involvement of academic institutions in the planning process, as well as civil society organizations, which according to them provided more diverse and comprehensive inputs for the roadmap.

Local stakeholders also expressed their appreciation of openness and flexibility of the process in terms of including various stakeholders in the planning process, from the beginning to the end.

In terms of jurisdictional approach

Based on the FGD responses, offices usually craft their plans and programs individually and coordination happens in the implementation stage. What sets the SFITAL roadmap development process apart was its holistic and participatory process from the beginning, while still being aligned with larger plans and policies. According to them, this helped ensure that interventions are not duplicated, but the resources of concerned enablers are optimized and used in synergy.

Local stakeholders also expressed appreciation for involving local enablers that have jurisdiction over Davao de Oro—not just the ones based in the province (e.g., regional bodies).



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Another aspect that local stakeholders found remarkable was despite the process being holistic and anchored in national and regional plans, the process still focused the prove-specific social and economic issues in the cacao industry of Davao de Oro.

Moreover, they pointed out that the data-driven and research-based approach to roadmap development made it distinct and more effective.

Changes brought about by the roadmap development process

The FGD also investigated how the roadmap development process changed 1) the degree of collaboration among stakeholders and 2) their knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for sustainable cacao development.

Collaboration among stakeholders

The local stakeholders shared that convergence among local enabling institutions has always been strong in Davao de Oro. However, the roadmap development process further strengthened their convergence, providing structure and references to make more informed decisions. In fact, they shared that the planning process helped upgrade their relation from “magkakilala” (acquaintances) to “barkada” (friends). They also shared that their interactions during the planning process opened up discussions for collaboration opportunities among the enabling institutions.

Knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for sustainable cacao development

The participants remarked that the process enhanced their appreciation of sustainability principles and components. They also expressed appreciation for the focus on environmental sustainability in terms of cacao development, and not just production. There are certain government agencies (i.e., community offices for Department of Environment and Natural Resources) who shared that learning about sustainable cacao development encouraged them to give more attention to cacao care and maintenance.

Additionally, according to the local stakeholders, hearing input from representatives from other municipalities/institutions enhanced the learning process. They underscored the sharing of SFITAL Indonesia colleagues and how it helped them understand the process more.

Points for improvement for the roadmap development process

During the FGD, the participants also provided suggested points for improvement for SFITAL’s roadmap development process, in case it will be adopted for a different commodity and/or a different landscape. Their suggestions include:

- Widening the scope of participants for the planning sessions, adding other concerned enabling institutions
- Inviting more members from the community, especially farmers



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- Establishing a technical working group at the municipal level, not just at the provincial level
- Involving funding agencies from the beginning to establish stronger commitment to the activities
- Creating a database of participants and their contact details for easier communication and collaboration
- Establishing a written agreement/commitment for the stakeholders involved, highlighting their participation in the planning process
- Including the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples in the process since there are several indigenous people groups in the province
- Sharing the lessons learned to the national level, and increasing involvement of the media to share lessons with wider audiences
- Taking into consideration the challenges encountered in the implementation of relatively similar development plans

Sustainability strategies

During the FGD, the local stakeholders also provided suggestions to ensure the sustainability of the roadmap implementation. These include the following:

- Strengthen the capacity of the Provincial Cacao Council to eventually lead the implementation of the roadmap
- Establish a strong roadmap monitoring and evaluation to easily see backlogs and determine adjustments needed, assigning focal persons for easier coordination
- Adoption of the roadmap into a policy both at the provincial and municipal to ensure sustainable sources of funds
- Provision of honorarium and incentives for stakeholders actively taking part in the implementation
- Continuous capacity building of stakeholders
- Regularly align the interests and vision of participating institutions to ensure effective multi-sectoral collaboration

Co-investment schemes

The process of developing and promoting co-investment schemes for cacao agroecological practices was also assessed by the local stakeholders. In particular, their evaluation revolved around: 1) the uniqueness of the co-investment scheme from business-as-usual, 2) changes brought by co-investment in collaboration between institutions, 3) benefits of co-investment for smallholder farms, 4) point for improvement of the co-investment scheme, and 5) sustainability strategies.

The FGD responses provided two different perspectives on the difference of co-investment in comparison to the existing processes and systems is: one from the enabling institutions who



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are the usual sources of investment and another one from the smallholder farmers who are the common recipients of the investment.

According to the representatives from local enabling institutions, their usual collaborations are established within the bounds of projects. The collaboration is usually among government institutions, with limited involvement of the private sector. They also shared that institutions usually work in silos, which commonly results to replication of interventions eventually leading to funds not being maximized.

With the development of the co-investment scheme, they have observed that, in collaboration with other institutions, they were able to implement the same activities, with more targeted impacts but less expense. It also changed the dynamic among enabling institutions to be more collaborative than competitive. They also expressed their appreciation

Points for improvement and sustainability strategies

In terms of points for improvement for the co-investment scheme, the local stakeholders identified the following:

- Improving communication through establishing group chats and organizing regular meetings
- Creating an inventory of identified strengths and available resources of concerned enablers
- Institutionalizing collaborative agreements, as well as the actual roles of concerned institutions

The sustainability strategies they have identified include the following:

- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation
- Increasing the awareness of all stakeholders on the roadmap and the co-investment scheme

Agroecological practices

The project also focused on promoting agroecological practices, primarily through the following:

1. Conduct of TOTs and TOFs
2. Development of a technical guide on agroecological practices
3. Establishment and maintenance of cacao agroecology learning farms



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During the workshop, the local stakeholders identified the following: 1) benefits brought by the project in the said area, 2) points for improvement, and 3) sustainable measures.

According to the local stakeholders, SFITAL was able to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of agroecological practices. This was specifically true for farmers and agricultural technicians. They also shared that the project was able to improve their appreciation of sustainable practices and intersections with cacao production.

On the other hand, they identified the following points for improvement:

- Longer duration, particularly of trainings and demonstrations in learning farms, that would have allowed for more solid results and its documentation
- Integration of digital technologies, particularly in terms of pest and disease management and post-harvest.

Moreover, they have identified the following measures to sustain the benefits brought by the project in terms of promoting agroecological practices:

- Conduct of benchmarking activities
- Establishment of more farmer field schools
- More regular farm coaching and monitoring
- Development of more IEC materials

Knowledge management

The project also implemented interventions to improve the knowledge management of the province, particularly in terms of cacao development. These efforts include the development of Cacaomustahan.com, a knowledge management platform, and its social media counterpart, Cacaomustahan on FB. The project's knowledge management strategies also involved face-to-face workshops, trainings, and sharing sessions to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange among value chain actors.

During the workshop, the local stakeholders shared that these methods enabled faster information sharing among them, which also provided a more efficient manner of addressing their issues. Additionally, they mentioned that these activities increased and enhanced the interaction among stakeholders, particularly by encouraging more open communication. Lastly, they expressed appreciation to the good references which they deem to be helpful in increasing and sharing their knowledge on sustainable cacao development.

In terms of points for improvement, they identified the following:

- Providing location-specific research results
- Compiling frequently asked questions and developing an interactive chatbot
- Use of more audiovisual materials that written ones



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Moreover, they identified the following sustainability strategies on knowledge management:

- Continuous trainings
- Regular coaching and mentoring from MAGRO technician