

## **Ensuring Seedling Quality through Fruit Tree Nursery Accreditation and Implications for Forest Nursery Accreditation**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The fruit tree nursery accreditation scheme implemented by the Philippine Department of Agriculture has been promoted to enhance the supply of high quality fruit tree planting materials and reduce the number of dubious seedling market players. This paper examines the advantages to participating nurseries in the fruit tree nursery accreditation scheme and draws implications for possible formulation of a scheme to accredit forest tree nurseries in the Philippines. Data were collected from interviews with accredited fruit tree nursery operators and the nursery accreditation officer-in-charge in Northern Mindanao province. A major advantage of nursery accreditation is that only accredited fruit tree nursery operators can participate in the bidding process of the government seedling procurement program, which always involves a substantial volume of seedlings. As a form of advertisement, accredited nurseries are posted on the government website thus creating a wide range of market opportunities which results in increased sales. Other advantages enjoyed by accredited fruit tree nurseries include receiving free training in improving seedling production and occasionally receiving high quality propagation materials (scions and seedlings), subsidies for pesticides and fertilizers and free soil tests. Observations of advantages gained by nursery operators adopting certification have encouraged other nursery operators to apply for accreditation. Accreditation by the Department of Agriculture places emphasis on maintaining high genetic quality as well as high physical quality of planting materials. Accrediting forestry nurseries is seen as a potential policy option that can expand the supply of high quality tree seedlings in the Philippines, as has been the experience with fruit tree nursery certification.

Keywords: accreditation scheme, certification criteria, preferential bidding, technical support, scion groves

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is currently a strong interest in improving the quality of forestry seedlings in the Philippines. The forestry sector in the neighbouring countries including Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam is engaged in large scale seedling production backed by strong research and stable market opportunities (Harrison and Gregorio 2009). The choice of