

FARMERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE RICE SEED PRODUCTION PROGRAM IN LEYTE

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the experiences and problems encountered by rice seed growers in Leyte; their contributions to agricultural development as well as their degree of participation and level of satisfaction in the rice seed production program in Leyte. Majority of the respondents owned an average seed farm area of 4 ha and produced an average of 99 cav/ha of certified seeds. Most had availed of credit from institutional sources and 59% obtained help from hired labor. The average seed disposal per farmer was 130 cav per cropping season, or an average disposal of 34 cav/ha per farmer per season. Three or four visits by the seed inspectors per cropping season were considered adequate by the respondents. While majority (59%) considered seed production to be quite laborious, they found it rewarding and profitable as certified seeds could command better price than ordinary palay. Generally, the problems encountered by the respondents were minor ones. This explains their high level of satisfaction and high degree of participation in the program. Of the selected variables studied, educational attainment, organizational affiliation, trainings attended, market outlets and problems encountered were significantly related to degree of participation. None of the independent variables was related to level of satisfaction. Likewise, no significant relationship was observed between level of satisfaction and degree of participation of rice seed growers.

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KEY WORDS: Rice. Seed production. Farmer's profile. Leyte.

INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, as in many other developing countries, improving the livelihood of the rural people through increased productivity and income has always been a major concern of the government. This is so because of the nature of our economy and the large number of people who depend on agriculture as their source of livelihood (Nicolas, 1977). Many of the country's development programs, such as the supervised credit scheme under the *Masagana 99* program and the revitalization of cooperatives through the *Samahang Nayon* and rural land reform are intended to accelerate agricultural production.

With the advent of *Masagana 99*, seed has become a necessary production input together with fertilizers and pesticides. The sustenance of this top priority program for rice self-sufficiency means that the need for quality seeds of the high-yielding rice varieties cannot be over-emphasized.

The current government move to solve problems associated with the improvement of good quality seed supply had led to the formation of private and public groups of seed growers in the country. The Leyte Seed Producers' Association (LSPA) is one of the associations operating on the provincial level under the current set-up which has attained some degree of success in providing benefits to farmer-members. However, unsolved problems have discouraged some members that they finally quit and

abandoned their seed-growing ventures.

This study was an attempt to bridge the gap relating to the demographic, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of the seed growers in Leyte, and determined what factors contributed to the farmers' participation or non-participation in the seed production program. Based on an increased knowledge and understanding of the rice seed growers, their characteristics, needs and problems, effective policies and strategies could be formulated to solve their problems.

METHODS

This study was conducted in the province of Leyte excluding the subprovince of Biliran. The population was composed of rice farmers who have participated in the seed production program for at least two cropping seasons during the period covering January 1976 to March 1980 regardless of membership in the Leyte Seed Producers Association. A complete enumeration survey was made of all the seed growers concerned.

A total of 32 seed growers were personally interviewed using a structured interview schedule. The data collected were analyzed with the use of frequency counts, percentages, ranks, means and ranges. Relationships between selected independent, intervening and dependent variables were analyzed with the use of the chi-square (X^2) test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Respondents.

More than one-half of the rice seed growers were male, relatively old with a mean age of 51 years, had reached third year high school and had 4 to 6 dependents. Majority of the respondents (59%) were owner-operators of the farms they cultivated. Average length of farming experience was 22 years.

In general, the respondents had low organizational affiliation although all were affiliated to at least one organization. Most occupied responsible positions in the organizations they were affiliated to. Majority had high levels of living, as indicated by ownership of house and residential lot, having durable houses, possessing valuable household items and farm properties. All the respondents expressed favorable attitudes towards farming.

Majority of the respondents utilized both personal and mass media sources of farm information. Almost all had attended educational trainings in the barangay, municipal, provincial, regional and national levels.

Experiences as Seed Growers.

The average area devoted to seed production was 4 ha with an average yield of 99 cav/ha. However, nearly two-thirds of the respondents (63%) produced 98 cav/ha or less of certified seeds. Most of the respondents (76%) availed of loans from institutional sources of

credit for their seed production operations. Majority (59%) indicated as their major sources of labor the family members supplemented by hired labor.

More than one-half (56%) reported having been visited by seed inspectors 3 or 4 times during the entire cropping season. Such frequency of visits was considered adequate, although they preferred more frequent visits.

While majority considered seed production as quite laborious, they found it rewarding and profitable. Majority said that seed production differed from ordinary palay production because the former required much attention especially on post-harvest activities such as threshing, drying, cleaning and storing. A seed grower has the advantage of getting a better price for his seeds. On the other hand, the foremost disadvantage consisted of more responsibilities and greater attention needed because of the intensive culture required in the production of certified seeds.

Contribution of Seed Growers to Agricultural Development.

The respondents had generally low seed disposal. On the average, a seed grower was able to dispose 130 cav/ha of certified seed per cropping season, or roughly 34 cav/ha per cropping season. Individual buyers, such as their fellow rice farmers and agricultural inputs dealers, were the most popular market outlets.

More than one-half (56%) of the

respondents were actively involved in extension activities related to farming. Majority (56%) had attended farmers' classes and trainings and other related activities as consultants or resource speakers. Likewise, many had been involved in conducting method and result demonstrations related to farm improvement.

Problems Encountered or Perceived.

Majority (63%) of the respondents assessed their problems as minor ones. However, of the 24 problems encountered, six were rated as "always a problem" and these involved organization-related problems and problems related to agri-support services. Their most frequently met problems were: difficulty in evolving a strong and united seed growers' association, difficulty in holding meetings and conferences among seed growers because of distance involved, lack of well-planned and sustained effort by the organization in a seed promotion program, high cost of farm inputs, lack of financial support to purchase needed facilities and equipment in seed production, and difficulty in marketing certified seeds.

Those considered as "usually a problem" were: lack of operating capital, difficulty in procuring new seed stock for the next planning season, difficulty in communicating with other seed growers, unfair competition from non-accredited farmers who are growing certified seeds, unavailability of credit for seed production purposes, ineffec-

tive system of seed distribution, and heavy rainfall.

Level of Satisfaction of Respondents.

The satisfaction level was determined based on how well the farmer-respondents' objectives in joining the seed production program were realized. The most frequently mentioned objectives were: to obtain bigger income, to help farmers increase their production, to increase knowledge on farming and to gain prestige and popularity.

The respondents had generally high levels of satisfaction. Most had achieved their objectives for participating in the program and were satisfied with the manner their objectives were achieved.

Degree of Participation in the Seed Production Program.

Degree of participation was determined by using the following indicators: current membership status in the seed growers' association, length of participation in the seed production program, average area devoted to seed production, regularity of attendance in meetings, conferences and similar activities, payment of dues or contributions, and adoption of recommended seed production practices.

Results showed that majority of the respondents (59%) were regular members of the seed growers' association. They had participated in the seed production program for

not less than 5 years. The major reason for their continued participation was higher profitability. The main reason for dropping out was inability to pay the required membership fee. Majority (53%) had attended 50-99% of the meetings, conferences, symposia and similar activities related to seed production. The seed growers had high adoption of the recommended seed produc-

tion practices.

Based on a scale specifically prepared to measure the respondents' degree of participation, results showed that slightly more than one-half (53%) had high degree of participation in the seed production program.

Tests of Relationships.

The degree of farmers' participa-

Table 1. Chi-square (X^2) values for the test of relationship between the selected variables and degree of participation.

Variables	(X^2) Value	DF	Level of Significance
Demographic Factors			
Age	0.500	1	ns
Sex	2.012	1	ns
Educational attainment	4.410	1	*
Number of dependents	0.012	1	ns
Socio-psycho-economic Factors			
Occupation	0.559	1	ns
Tenure status	0.003	1	ns
Farming experience	0.223	1	ns
Farm size	0.396	1	ns
Seed farm productivity	0.206	1	ns
Gross family income	3.486	1	ns
Source of labor	3.670	2	ns
Availment of credit	4.151	3	ns
Market outlets	7.010	1	**
Organizational affiliation	5.128	1	*
Level of living	2.010	1	ns
Communication and Educational Factors			
Source of farm information	0.531	1	ns
Trainings attended	15.880	2	**
Problems Encountered			
	3.845	1	*

* Significant at .05 level

** Significant at .01 level

ns Not significant

tion in the rice seed production program was hypothesized to be affected by such factors as demographic characteristics, socio-psycho-economic variables, communication and educational factors, and problems encountered. However, the chi-square test revealed that only educational attainment, market outlets, organizational affiliation, trainings attended, and problems encountered were significantly related to the farmers' degree of participation (Table 1).

Suggestions to Improve the Seed Industry in Leyte.

Some of the notable suggestions given by the respondents to improve the seed industry in Leyte were: improvement in the system of allocating and distributing foundation/registered seeds to seed growers (both regular and auxiliary members), early approval and implementation of the proposed Seed Act and strengthening of the Seed Growers' Association to make it more active and functional.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study showed that education significantly enhanced degree of participation in the seed production program. This implies that our educational system can be an effective instrument in improving one's capacities and capabilities in agricultural programs and projects. In like manner, membership in the various organizations

can improve a seed growers' participation behavior. Perhaps, the existing socio-economic, civic, professional and religious organizations can exercise some degree of influence as far as participation in agricultural programs is concerned. It is, therefore, suggested that these two characteristics be looked into when considering new applicants for the rice seed production program. Members with low educational attainment should be encouraged to attend non-formal education programs to enable them to acquire additional knowledge and skills.

Attendance in trainings also caused significant differences in the degree of participation of seed growers. The higher the level of educational training attended, the higher was the seed grower's degree of participation in the program. This implies that trainings on the regional and national levels were quite effective in providing participants broader knowledge and understanding of the seed production program. As such, members should be given the opportunity to attend trainings on the provincial, regional and national levels to expose them to more people and to broaden their insights on the program.

Seed growers who disposed of their certified seeds through a number of marketing outlets tended to participate in the program more than those who sold their seeds through a single outlet. This implies that participation is improved with an increase in seed disposal. However, the present low percentage of seed disposal implies that corrective

measures must be introduced in the existing marketing and distribution system to improve the sale of certified seeds. Seed growers should be encouraged to utilize as many market outlets as possible and to explore possible outlets for their seeds by establishing linkages with various individuals, groups and agencies involved in rice production. Weaknesses and strengths prevailing in the marketing and distribution system for certified seeds should be identified. Results of such studies could help much in formulating a marketing and distribution scheme that would benefit both seed growers and seed users.

The seed growers were able to meet the field and laboratory requirements without much problem. The problems they frequently met

were related to organization and agri-support services. With the present association, the seed growers have at least done the best part of organizing themselves. The next move is to put up a collective front to solve existing problems. The high cost of farm inputs calls for sound management of facilities and equipment for maximum utilization, for efficient purchasing strategies to eliminate laborious and expensive handling and improper canvassing of goods needed for production and for adoption of cost-saving farm techniques and practices from experts' suggestions. The association should try its best to identify their problems and seek the integrated support of government agencies.

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