

ASec Villanueva Visits Cooperatives in the Province of Batangas Affected by the African Swine Fever (ASF), Taal Volcanic Eruption and COVID 19 Pandemic

To check on the present condition of cooperatives and the issues confronting their operations because of the occurrence of the African Swine Fever (ASF), the Taal volcanic eruption and the Covid 19 pandemic, Assistant Secretary Vidal D. Villanueva III of the Cooperative Development Authority, together with CDA Calabarzon Regional Office 4 Director Salvador V. Valeroso, Sr CDS for Cooperative Project and Development Section Romel Mabilangan and designated Provincial Cooperative Development Specialist Oliva A. Pacheca, visited, on June 30, 2020, two (2) cooperatives in Batangas Province, located at Bgy. Barigon, Agoncillo, Batangas, situated near the Taal Volcano and the Balakilong Credit Cooperative in Bgy. Balakilong, Laurel, Batangas.

During the group discussion with some of the members of the Board and Management Staff of Barigon MPC in Agoncillo, Batangas, the following issues and concerns were raised, upon which the CDA gave some recommendations:

- No operations after the eruption, barangay was abandoned, residents returned after several weeks, coop partially operated during the pandemic and resumed full operations only in June 2020
- Some members who were severely affected got help from the Department of Agriculture in the form of loans payable for 10 years.
- Capital formation is not strictly observed by the cooperative. ASec Villanueva suggested to them to have a membership campaign to expand their membership considering the big number of households in the area. He also emphasized the need to strategize the economic activities of the cooperative.



- For potential members who cannot afford to pay in full the amount of initial share capital contribution, the cooperative was advised to allow them to pay in installment. It was also advised to consider having a kiddie savings program.
- ASec Villanueva expressed that if the cooperative needs additional capital, the CDA will help it in establishing linkage with other financial institutions depending on its needs. He saw the potential of the cooperative to engage in dairy production, so he suggested to have a partnership with the National Dairy Authority and start preparing the necessary documents to acquire a milking cow.

The second cooperative visited was the Balakilong Credit Cooperative, located at Poblacion 3, Brgy. Laurel, Batangas.

The following questions were asked during the discussion: How did the cooperative survive amidst all the difficulties? How did the cooperative help its members? How did the members feel about the cooperative? How can the CDA help?



Chairperson Teresa Carandang said that the members suffered from difficulties, starting from the Taal Volcano eruption, followed by the effect of the African Swine Fever on their livelihood and finally, the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The cooperative extended assistance to its members by giving cash and food packages during the lockdown.

According to Manager Nelia Mayuga, during the pandemic, the members of the cooperative paid their loans religiously, but only in amounts they can afford to pay, and they were not charged penalties. The cooperative prefers the quality, not the quantity, of its members, most of whom are families. It also sends letters to those members who do not patronize its products and services. After the lockdown, members updated the status of their loans and deposited additional savings.

The cooperative requested the CDA to have a program or policy, similar to a pension, for the benefit of members who are senior citizens. It also requested for the removal of the age limit for insurance coverage of members of the cooperative. ASec Villanueva promised to study these suggestions.