

Sustaining Support to Vegetable Farmers through Public Service and Partnerships

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Abstract

Smallholder farmers belong to the poor and marginalized sector. As such, there are groups mandated and willing to provide assistance. Some of these are academic communities, government line agencies, local government units, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs). This paper illustrates the diversity of roles, resources, and directives of support organizations working toward a common goal: uplifting the lives of the farmers. It will look at the key success factors and challenges to achieving this goal. This case study centers on the smallholder vegetable farmers of Southern Mindanao in the Philippines who are members of an industry council. The research utilizes the qualitative method using participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and instructive events. Results indicate that one of the challenges is the capacity of the smallholder farmers to handle and be involved with simultaneous projects. Another is the perennial problem of aging farmers. On the other hand, the key success factors include the dedicated public servants who are very supportive of the farmers' efforts. In addition, there are also active farmer leaders and members who continue to volunteer their services. These dedication and continued participation had propelled the collaboration of the support organizations to provide services despite budget limitations. This continuous involvement of the stakeholders had enabled the support organizations to continue their public service. The social capital forged by the long-term engagements and partnerships also contributed to the sustainability of the farmer organization.