

## **Community-Assisted Urban Sustainable Organic and Ecological Agriculture in the Philippines: Experiential Learnings and the Ways Forward**

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### **Best Organic Farming Practices Abstract**

*The Kalipunan ng Sustenableng Agrikultura at Magsasakang Organikong Koopertiba* codename Kasama Ka Organik Koop (KK OK) or Sustainable Organic Farmers' Cooperative is a staunch advocate in the promotion of Sustainable Organic and Ecological Agriculture (SOEA) and farming systems. The establishment of urban techno-demo organic gardens cum livelihood and entrepreneurship development center is one of the hands-on strategies adopted. The objective is to demonstrate and showcase the urban and peri-urban organic farming technologies and practices that focused on organic vegetables, herbal and medicinal plants, fruits and free-ranged chicken production system, as source of safe foods which are indeed free from synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. The urban organic farmstead demonstrated on-farm diversity and crop-livestock diversification, farm resources recycling and zero waste management. The farm has been envisaged to serve as an eco-tourism venue to promote environmental awareness and knowledge to the subdivisions' residents, students, Senior Citizens, urban and peri-urban farm hobbyists and the general public; and to offer livelihood and employment opportunities to people around the community.

Three models were set up, namely: Sub-Division Homeowners-Based Model (Fairmont Park Home Owners' Association, Fairmont, Neopolitan Fairview, Quezon City); Government Project-Led Techno-demo Garden Model (2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District, SSS Village, Marikina City) , and School-Based Urban Techno-demo Garden (First Asia Institute of Science and Technology, Tanauan City, Batangas).

KK OK conducted awareness seminars, trained and capacitated the officers and project implementers, and together with the community set up, and operated the techno-demo gardens for six months, after which the project management is assumed by the Project Management Task Force of the project beneficiaries.

Community awareness level on safe food, free from chemical fertilizers and pesticides, healthy and wellness living, urban farming technologies and practices, environmental protection awareness was impressed upon and slowly internalized within the community populace. The Urban gardens supplied the residents in the community of organically grown vegetables and free -ranged poultry meat and eggs; herbal and medicinal plants. The venue also served as wholesome family picnic area to refresh and de-stress from hectic city living during weekends and learn to consume organically and naturally grown food and learn its basic to best organic farming practices.

Close technical supervision of the caretaker by the Project Proponent is very crucial especially during the early stage of project establishment to acquire the skills and internalize the organic materials and input preparation technologies and application. The sustainability of the Project hinges on the continuity of Project Management Task Force Leadership and commitment to mobilize the community towards a community-assisted sustainable and organic agriculture.

Techno demo gardens will encourage and promote urban gardening that will supply free from chemicals foods for the table that will address food insecurity, nutrition, health and environmental concerns.