

## 26. FACILITATING THE FLOW OF INFORMATION ON TREE FARMING POLICIES FOR SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN LEYTE

Eduardo O. Mangaoang, Melissa Gordon, Ilean Russell, John Herbohn and Steve Harrison

---

Experiences from the previous Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)-funded research project on Smallholder Forestry suggest that improving the uptake of forestry particularly by smallholders requires increased financial returns from their tree farms. In order for smallholders to realize attractive financial returns they should have better access to markets of their tree farm products. Philippine smallholder tree farmers are governed by Department of Environment and Natural Resources policies and regulations which require them to register their trees before harvest and transport of tree farm products. Research findings, however, indicate that most smallholder farmers lack an awareness and understanding of the policies on tree registration, harvesting, transport and marketing. It was also found that Community Environment and Natural Resource Officers have varying ways of policy implementation due to the differences in their understanding and interpretation of the tree registration policy. Participants of a workshop conducted as part of the community survey study of Emtage *et al.* (2004), and those attending a number of policy workshops, suggested the need to improve the flow of information to establish a clear and common understanding of tree registration and associated policies. Researchers in the ACIAR-funded project on *Improving Financial Returns of Smallholder Tree Farmers in the Philippines* have developed the *Primer on Tree Registration, Harvesting, Transport and Marketing in Private Lands* to improve awareness and understanding of the policies among the smallholder tree farmers and plantation owners, Department of Environment and Natural Resources personnel and other stakeholders. The development of the Primer followed a participatory process and was done in a well-organized fashion to ensure that the concerns of all stakeholders were taken into consideration. This paper presents the details of the processes involved in the development of the Primer. New and more aggressive methods of dissemination for piloting are also presented to effectively improve the flow of information on tree farming policies among smallholders and other stakeholders. Other schemes of disseminating information that were perceived by the smallholder farmers and other stakeholders to make a difference to their awareness and understanding of the tree farming policies are also discussed. As action research activity, the undertaking also involves monitoring activities to assess what impact the Primer has on smallholders' attitude towards tree registration in particular, and the promotion of small-scale forestry in general.

---

### INTRODUCTION

Research conducted through the *Smallholder Forestry Project (ASEM/2000/088)* supported by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) suggests that improved market access and increased returns are needed to promote the uptake of smallholder forestry in the Philippines (Mangaoang *et al.* 2005). Smallholder tree farmers' access to formal markets outside the immediate locale of their tree farms is governed by policies and regulations of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on tree registration, harvesting, transport and marketing. In order for smallholders to access formal markets, they must obtain a transport permit, which can only be obtained when their trees are registered.

While tree registration had been a major requirement to marketing of tree products, only a small proportion of farmers and plantation owners register their trees with the DENR (Emtage *et al.* 2004). One of the major impediments is the lack of knowledge and understanding of the government policy on tree registration. Only a few farmers claim to know how to register trees while others think that registering trees is costly. Herbohn (2004) presented evidence relating to differences in the rates of tree registration among the Community Environment and Natural Resources Offices (CENROs) throughout Leyte Island. It appears that differences are largely due to the differences in the way CENRO personnel understand and implement the policy.

The lack of information and differences in the implementation of the DENR policies are major concerns of the ACIAR Project on *Improving Financial Returns of Smallholder Tree Farmers in the Philippines (ASEM/2003/052)*. One of the major objectives of this project is to assist DENR to overcome policy implementation constraints to tree registration and log transport currently restricting access to markets (Herbohn *et al.* 2004). This objective had been addressed by working with DENR, Local Government Units (LGUs), timber dealers, smallholder tree farmers and other stakeholders in order for the existing regulations to work more effectively. The development of the *Primer on Tree Registration, Harvesting, Transport and Marketing in Private Lands* has been identified as one of the major mechanisms to improve the flow of information about regulations affecting tree harvesting and transport approval from DENR to LGUs and smallholder tree farmers. The development and effective dissemination of the extension material is aimed at improving awareness and understanding of policies, rules and regulations related to tree farming on private land by concerned stakeholders, and eventually encourage them – particularly the smallholder tree farmers – to register their trees. Other mechanisms thought to improve the flow of information had been lined-up for piloting and evaluation to determine their effectiveness and suitability in particular situations.

This paper reports the processes that had been undertaken in the development of the Primer extension material. More aggressive methods of dissemination for piloting are also discussed, together with other information dissemination schemes that are perceived to have an impact on improving awareness and understanding of the tree farming policies, rules and regulations by concerned stakeholders, particularly the smallholder tree farmers.

## THE PRIMER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Primer extension material was developed following a participatory process, with the active involvement of representatives from various government line agencies, academic and research institutions, local government units, and the communities. The primer development process was conducted in a well-organized fashion following a stepwise procedure to ensure that the concerns of all stakeholders, particularly those of the DENR implementing units and the smallholder tree farmers were taken into consideration. The processes involved the following steps.

### Policy and Action Research Workshop

The initial policy and action research workshops held on 25–26 April 2005 in Tacloban City, Leyte, the Philippines, paved the way for the sharing of various interesting experiences on tree registration policy implementation by personnel of DENR Region 8 from the CENRO, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) and Regional Office, respectively. The workshop was attended by representatives from DENR Region 8 and CENROs all over Leyte Island, LGUs, Department of Land Reform and Department of Agriculture – Region 8, academics, research institutions and community representatives. Discussions were made about how the flow of information on tree registration, harvesting, transport and marketing can be improved. The outcomes of the two workshops provided insights on methods to improve the current situation. Among the highest priorities identified for action was to improve the flow of information on the policies among stakeholders, which can be done through the development and distribution of materials to smallholder tree farmers and other stakeholders through the CENRO personnel (Gordon *et al.* 2005). The workshop participants eventually arrived at a consensus to develop and distribute effectively extension materials to assist DENR in improving the implementation of the tree farming policies.

It became apparent during the two workshops held that various stakeholders, particularly the personnel of the various CENR offices, should contribute to a clear set of policies and guidelines in the development of the extension material which then can be distributed widely to assist the implementation of tree registration, harvesting, transport and marketing policies. This resulted to the development of the extension booklet called *Primer on Tree Registration, Harvesting, Transport and Marketing Policies in Private Lands*. The drafting of the Primer had been the combined efforts of people from the DENR Region 8, and researchers from the Leyte State University (LSU) and The University of Queensland, Australia. It went through an intensive research process and consolidation of policies and guidelines governing tree registration, harvesting, transport and marketing in private lands. A series of consultations also took place with the DENR technical group, LGU technicians, academics, smallholder tree farmers and other stakeholders as to

the kind of information that should be included and the way they should be presented in the Primer.

#### Validation of the Primer

The conduct of the Primer Validation Workshop was a timely opportunity for the presentation of the draft extension material to key personnel of DENR Region 8 in the regional, provincial and community offices. The workshop highlighted in more detail the existing tree registration practices among CENROs and magnified the extreme differences in the way they were implementing the policies. The presentation of the Primer triggered feedback and intense discussions on the provisions of the policies and guidelines presented. As a consequence, this levelling-off exercise resulted in the group arriving at a common understanding and interpretation of the policies related to tree registration, harvesting, transport and marketing.

The validation workshop finally led to the improvement of the content and presentation of information in the draft version of the Primer. Furthermore, a core group composed of representatives from the DENR Region 8 Office, CENR Offices in Leyte and Southern Leyte, the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) and the LSU-ACIAR team was formed to work together and produce the final draft version of the Primer.

#### Primer Review and Approval

The final draft version of the Primer was subjected to review by concerned authorities of the DENR to ensure that the information presented therein is correct and with a legal basis. The officers and staff engaged in tree registration from various CENROs on Leyte Island also participated in the review and polishing processes. The reason for the involvement of the CENRO staff in the review process is that they are the ones directly responsible for the on-the-ground implementation of the tree farming-related policies. The CENRO staff members are in better position to see to it that the content of the Primer is appropriate and presented in a way that can be properly understood and appreciated by smallholder farmers and other stakeholders. Copies of the Primer were also sent to the office of the Forest Management Bureau in Manila for review.

After passing through a mill of various discussion sessions and technical reviews, the final version of the Primer was finally approved by the key officials of the DENR Region 8 composed of the Regional Executive Director, Regional Technical Directors and CENRO representatives from Leyte Island. The Primer – which was produced in three versions (English, Cebuano, and Waray-waray) – was formally considered as DENR Region 8's official extension material on tree farming policies for dissemination on a pilot scale across Leyte Island.

#### Primer Dissemination Strategies

Making a difference to the level of awareness and understanding of the tree farming policies among smallholder tree farmers, DENR personnel, LGU staff and other stakeholders requires new and more aggressive dissemination strategies. The traditional style of merely handing over extension booklets and other reading material to farmers and other key stakeholders is believed to have been not as effective as was hoped for in improving the knowledge and understanding of key stakeholders. This led to new and more aggressive extension approaches being piloted to improve the flow of information on tree farming policies amongst smallholders and other key stakeholders.

##### *CENRO-based dissemination cum seminar*

This approach involves seminars conducted by CENR officers during which the Primer is distributed among key participants from LGUs, the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Army, other government line agencies such as the Department of Agriculture and Department of Land Reform, non-government organizations (NGOs), and private enterprises. The approach is perceived to open up the opportunity for key participants to ask questions and seek clarification about the contents of the Primer leading to better understanding of the policies and processes presented therein. The strategy will serve as a training opportunity for the key participants who later are expected to become key resource persons that will facilitate the effective dissemination of the Primer in their respective areas of coverage.

##### *LGU-based dissemination cum seminar*

The approach involves conducting seminars about the Primer upon distribution by LGU key resource persons at the provincial and municipal levels. The strategy is designed to improve information flow amongst barangay captains and officials, farmers and peoples organizations (POs),

and is expected later to produce key people from the barangay as resource persons to facilitate effective information dissemination at the community level.

#### *Dissemination through radio*

The program on radio LSU DYAC is an approach to facilitate immediate dissemination of information amongst a prospective target audience, which can be substantiated by the distribution of the Primer and the conduct of seminars. The 'School-on-the-Air on Tree Farming Policies', for example, is an action research activity of the ACIAR Smallholder Tree Farmer Project that is evaluating the effectiveness of radio broadcasts in improving information flow on tree farming policies, particularly amongst smallholder farmers in the communities.

#### *Other information dissemination strategies*

Other information dissemination strategies had been recommended by smallholder tree farmers, local government officials at the municipal and barangay levels, the Philippine National Police officers, and timber dealers in support of the Primer extension booklet. Several suggestions had been relayed by farmer-participants and community workers during the conducting of field interviews and discussions for the action-research activity in the School on the Air Radio Program on Tree Farming Policies (Gabrillo *et al.* 2007). Miguel Capiones, a smallholder tree farmer in Hindang, Leyte suggested during a personal interview session, that key members of people's organizations could be trained to become farmer-lecturers to fellow farmers and other community members on tree farming policies, nursery management, as well as tree growing and management. Ronnie Misa, an active participant and top-notch farmer-student of ACIAR's School on the Air (SOA) on Tree Farming Policies Radio Program, suggested the reproduction and distribution of the audio-recorded SOA lessons compact disk (CD) which can be used by LGUs as information material during the conduct of trainings and seminars. Marilou Betonio, a lady farmer and active barangay development worker (BDW) of San Vicente, Hindang, Leyte, recommended the barangay bench conference approach whereby the trained BDW can deliver a brief lecture on tree farming policies among officials during barangay council meetings. Debie Galos, a municipal agricultural technician in Isabel, mentioned the development of training material on tree farming policies, nursery and tree farm management as an effective means of disseminating information. Such material can be in the form of manuals, flip charts, and CDs that can be used by LGU-based trainers during seminars and training activities in communities.

As noted by Gravoso *et al.* (2007), the views elicited from the various stakeholders – tree farmers, municipal and barangay officials, PNP officers and timber dealers – during a series of focus group discussions conducted in four sampling municipalities in Leyte emphasized the usefulness of posters and poster calendars as information dissemination methods in municipalities and barangays. It was suggested that posters be placed on billboards in barangay and municipal halls, and poster calendars be distributed to individual households and offices in barangays and municipalities.

## **ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION STRATEGIES**

The effectiveness of the various dissemination strategies to facilitate the flow of information and eventually improve the knowledge and understanding of various stakeholders about tree registration is also worth evaluating. This will lead to designing schemes that can be adopted to be suitable for different target groups and varying situations.

As part of the ACIAR project's action research activities, the impact of the Primer on the level of awareness and understanding of farmers and other stakeholders about tree registration, harvesting, transport and marketing policies on private land is currently being evaluated. An assessment of the effectiveness of radio as a means of improving the knowledge and understanding of smallholder farmers and LGU staff of these policies is currently being conducted. A users' feedback study is continuing to ascertain the effectiveness of the Primer as extension material in terms of comprehensibility, acceptability, attractiveness, self-involvement and persuasiveness. The study also intends to draw insights and recommendations from smallholder farmers, LGU staff, the PNP, and timber dealers for a more strategic dissemination scheme for the tree registration and related policies. The activity also examines the influence of the Primer on the attitudes of farmers towards tree registration, and the rate of registration in CENR offices on the island of Leyte.

## CONCLUSION

Improving the flow of information on tree farming policies, rules and regulations has been perceived by many, especially the DENR personnel, LGU staff, and smallholder farmers as a key factor in promoting smallholder tree farming in Leyte. This, however, requires new and more aggressive ways in which the information will effectively reach the desired clientele and create a noticeable difference in their knowledge and understanding about the tree farming policies, rules and regulations. The development of the Primer is an initial step in this direction. Other schemes are worth trying to be able to identify appropriate methods that would suit specific target groups under certain conditions.

## REFERENCES

- Emtage, N.F., Cedamon, J.L., Cedamon, E.D. and Mangaoang, E.O. (2004), *Community Survey Policy Workshop Proceedings and Recommendations for Policy Reforms*, ACIAR Smallholder Forestry Project, College of Forestry, Leyte State University, Visca, Baybay, Leyte, the Philippines.
- Gabrillo, C., Mangaoang, E.O., Baldos, A.P. and Russell, I. (2007), *Improving Information Flow on Tree Farming Policies through School on the Air Radio Program*, Draft Research Report, ACIAR Smallholder Tree Farmer Project, College of Forestry and Natural Resources, Leyte State University, Visca, Baybay, Leyte, the Philippines.
- Gordon, M. (2005), *Proceedings of the Primer Validation Workshop (draft version)*, held on 21 June 21 2005 at Leyte State University, Visca, Baybay, Leyte, the Philippines.
- Gravoso, R., Mangaoang, E.O., Pasa, A.E., Gerona, M.A. and Russell, I. (2007), *Users' Feedback on the Effectiveness of the Primer on Tree Registration, Harvesting, Transport and Marketing in Private Lands*, Draft Research Report, ACIAR Smallholder Tree Farmer Project, College of Forestry and Natural Resources, Leyte State University, Visca, Baybay, Leyte, the Philippines.
- Herbohn, J.L., Harrison, S.R. and Mangaoang, E.O. (2004), *Improving financial returns to smallholder tree farmers in the Philippines*, ASEM /2003/052 Main Project Document, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.
- Mangaoang, E.O., Herbohn, J.L., Harrison, S.R., and Cedamon, E.D. (2005), 'Overcoming problems with tree registration and log transport permits for smallholder tree farmers in Leyte', *Improving Financial Returns to Smallholder Tree Farmers in the Philippines*, Proceedings from the ACIAR Project Planning Workshop held in Ormoc City, the Philippines, 15-17 February 2005.
- Russell, I., Mangaoang, E.O., Harrison, S.R., Herbohn, J.L. and Baynes, J.S. (2005), 'An approach to improving the flow of information for forestry regulation in the Philippines: trees for life and livelihood', in *Improving Financial Returns to Smallholder Tree Farmers in the Philippines*, Proceedings from the ACIAR Project Planning Workshop held in Ormoc City, the Philippines, 15-17 February 2005.