CELEBES & FAIRTSA

Community Development 2014-2021

Producers are at the heart of FairTSA Fair Trade certification. Together through community development projects and capacity building we are helping to directly impact the agricultural communities that grow and process our food.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT 2014-2021

Celebes Coconut Corporation is a FairTSA Fair Trade certified producer of coconut and banana products. Located in Butuan City in the North of the Philippines' southernmost island, Mindanao, Celebes sources their coconuts from many small farmers of the surrounding villages and towns who grow their crop mainly in an agroforestry setting. Since 2012, FairTSA has been collaborating with these farmers on yearly infrastructure projects that aim to provide long-term benefit to their communities.

Pictured left, Celebes farmers have a meeting to discuss the annual Community Development Project, using communal decision-making processes to decide how to best leverage Social Premium funding. These meetings help ensure that the Social Premium funding is used most effectively. Once a proposal is chosen, FairTSA assesses it for feasibility and documents project progression, working in tandem with a network of authorized inspectors and certifiers.

2014: Training and Seminars

2014 saw seminars and trainings for farmers focused on the understanding of organic standards, farm management practices, community development services and FairTSA standards. It was also during this time that the plan to distribute

approximately 100 small solar panels among farmer families without access to electricity was developed.

2014-2017: FSUU Scholarship

The FairTSA scholarship fund was created for six worthy students to be awarded full scholarships for their education at Father Saturnino Urios University (FSUU) in Butuan City. FSUU requires from students a strong commitment to their communities and the completion of a community project before graduation. All six students successfully graduated in May 2017.

2014-2105: Solar Panel Project

For many remotely-located villagers working with Celebes, cell phone communication is the only way to coordinate for the collection of their coconuts – an often complicated process involving the maneuvering of large trucks across extreme terrain. Despite this necessity, many villagers lack access to electricity and must travel up to an hour to charge their devices (which are thus only charged for one or two days a week). In order to address this dilemma, community members decided to install solar panels in villager homes to provide basic lighting and allow for the charging of phones.

Now with fully charged mobile devices, villagers can efficiently coordinate coconut pickups without having to wait around, sometimes for days on end, to see whether the shipment trucks arrive. With this new energy source, villagers can now opt to have the coconut drying process at night which is more efficient and allows for greater flexibility with their schedule.

2015: Maya-os Deep Well Project

Maya-os is a coconut and banana producing village located in the north of Mindanao, Philippines. Previously their water system consisted of a 1 inch rubber tube

that fed to smaller lines leading to individual households. On good days, this system worked decently for families close to the beginning of the line, but on bad ones it proved incapable of providing water to the community. On community meeting attended by Dr. Winfried Fuchshofen in April 2015, it was decided that a new well was to be dug as part of that years' FairTSA Community Development project. A location was decided on, and the well was completed in September of that year.

2016-2017: Schooling

For 2016, the continuation of two scholarships, and the distribution of school supplies and uniforms was planned. Due to logistical problems, the distribution of the supplies did not happen in 2016 but was postponed for 2017 and was completed in July of that year. Producers also requested emergency funding to deal with a rodent infestation of their coconut. The solution — attaching metal strips to the bottom of the trees to make them insurmountable to mice — was simple and, although this request came after the project was submitted, funding was still made available promptly so as to protect thousands of coconut trees.

2018: Falcata & Banana Distribution Project

To develop supplementary income sources and create lasting economic sustainability, producers distributed banana suckers and falcata seedlings to almost 600 participants in Misamis Oriental, Agusan del Norte, and Agusan del Sur. Each farmer was given around 50 suckers as space allowed. The falcata seedlings distributed improve soil fertility due to nitrogen fixation from the air via soil bacteria. Falcata produce a wood usable for building projects, harvestable in as little as 7 years.

Working in tandem with the banana seedlings – which provide food security and an additional income source – the growth of Falcata will substantially bolster the financial security of the small holding farmers. Over the course of the project, 52,168 suckers were planted, with producers being paid labor costs per planted sucker.

Type of Cutting	No. of Farmers	Estimated Cost (Financed by Social Premium)	In-house Contribution Celebes (est.)	Monetary Value for Farmers over 7 Years
Falcata	600	US-$20,000	US-$7,500	320,000
Banana	600	US-$15,000	US-$7,500	95,000
Cacao	200 (est.)	US-$ 6,000	US-$4,000	30,000

The distribution of the seedlings is projected to result in annual $600 in added income over 7 years and adds about one month of additional income per year for the farmers. The project also creates a diversified income stream, increases food security and on top they will profit from the fertilizer effect of the falcatas. In addition, small farmers are trained to create their own cuttings from the grown trees, thereby extending the impact of the project for a considerably longer time frame.

2019: Solar Street Light Project

In discussions for this year's project, it was mentioned how effective the 2014 solar light project was, so for 2019 CELEBES increased the lighting project to cover more municipalities of the community. By and large, the neighborhoods in the area are limited in their activities to daylight hours. Bringing renewable solar electricity to charge devices and provide light during nightfall is a value tool in fostering community safety and communication. There was also another deep well project completed to better serve the community in providing a stable clean water source.

2020: Coronavirus Relief

As we began 2020, Celebes proposed to drill wells for 10 villages in order to give them access to clean drinking water. The villages in Barangay Jagupit, Magsaysay, Sto.Niño, Anomar, Victory, Colorado, Basag, Doña Rosario, Bangonay, Cabcabon were selected as the best sites to affect the most families. The drilling was to be done by a contractor, taking about two months. However, as covid-19 arrived Celebes acted to redirect the project to immediate aid for the situation for the affected small farmers and workers. It was decided to distribute rice for several thousand people and protective masks to the farmer and worker families instead of the well drilling. The population of Mindanao is especially hard hit by the virus: the Philippines closed their ports for several months, resulting in substantial loss of income for the farmers, and in many cases loss of work for the food workers.

2021: Solar Street Lighting

In view of the current pandemic, the Celebes fair trade committee were not able to conduct an assembly due to the restriction of large gatherings. Alternatively, the Fair Trade Staff have coordinated with the village officials in 32 villages in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur instead to determine community development-related priority projects in 2021. It was brought up how well received the previous street lighting project in 2019 went, with lots of good feedback from the community. It was decided to continue the solar lighting project to include more villages. Solar lighting in addition to being self-sustaining provides illumination and safety to all the community. It also enables the hours of operation to be extended beyond the daytime. The lights while providing safety also promote commercial, academic, or community activity in the establishments of these remote villages.