

Challenges faced by young farmers

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For farmers, land is the most precious asset. It is their main source of livelihood, and it sustains families. From the land they till, farmers are able to send their children to school.

Some farmers' children are even able to go to college where they are able to earn degrees which, sadly, would wean them away from farming, albeit enabling them to have higher-earning careers.

Thus, it is quite surprising that children of farmers, like Daylen Tandejon (16), get land bequeathed to them at a young age. Daylen hails from *Sitio* (hamlet) Megbadiang, *Barangay* Bacusanon, in

the town of Pangantucan, Bukidnon. Her father decided to bequeath his land as advance inheritance to his children, so that they can get their land ownership certificates while he is still alive.

While the chance of owning one's land is indeed welcome, it makes young people like Daylen a bit apprehensive. For one, most 16-year olds are still in school and tilling the land takes considerable time and effort. Daylen wonders about what she should prioritize: her studies or her land?

The fact that Daylen is a young girl makes the task of farming her own land even more difficult, since the terrain in her area is mountainous, and her patch of land is a considerable hike from their house. When Daylen goes to her land, she has to take someone else with her for safety and security reasons.

Also, going to the farm entails bringing food and other provisions, which is difficult given the poverty that besets the families in the community.

As with other females in the community, Daylen can work the land as well as the men can, but physical attributes simply put women at a disadvantage.

Then there is another not-so-small reason why Daylen is having difficulty in managing her inheritance: farming is not just planting a seed and watching it grow; it entails considerable know-how

often learned from trial and error, by apprenticeship under more experienced farmers, or from formal studies.

For now, Daylen and her family settled on a healthy compromise: her father and older siblings would till the land for her while she continues her studies (she is currently under the Alternative Learning System or ALS program), but she would help tend to her land when school is out.

Daylen's patch of land lies within the heart of their tribe's ancestral domain and is planted with coffee, bamboo, and falcata.

After receiving the Certificate of Customary Occupancy under the SALaR project, Daylen expressed that, "I am very delighted and grateful for the certificate as it helped me gain the sense of ownership and security to land. What is very important to me is to hopefully sow the land someday. I would ensure that even when I depart from this world, this inheritance from my father will also be bequeathed to my children."

Daylen may not be able to reap the full benefits of having her own land right now, but she appreciates what it means and looks forward to the day when she can finally farm it on her own.

She is blessed with the assurance that her family's most precious possession, bequeathed to them by their ancestors,

will remain in their hands. Even if she gets a college degree and has a chance to earn her livelihood through other means, she is determined to maintain her farm.

She will not sell it, she says, because it is her legacy and a way of honoring her parents and ancestors. ■

