

On the 31 July 2019, the closing ceremony of the summer school organized as part of the MS FSCC project was held. The summer course "Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems in Vulnerable Areas" was organized by the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), jointly with the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) and SEARCA. After a week of classes in UPLB, the students spent a dozen of days in the Bicol region, in the province of Camarines Sur (south of the island of Luzon) to conduct a diagnosis. This region was chosen because it is often hit by natural disasters (floods, typhoons or landings) but still remains a high productive region in rice. 44 students from 17 different countries were involved in the summer school. They were separated in two groups, each studying one of the two crops chosen for diagnosis: cocoa and rice. Then they presented the results of their study to the partners they met during the diagnosis: farmers, processors, cooperatives, local authorities.

On the occasion of this last day, 2 students agreed to share their summer school experience:

Rosawadee Sukkum, Thai student from Kasetsart University:

Please introduce yourself.

I'm currently a master student, of economy on agriculture and resources, at the Faculty of Economics of Kasetsart University. Next semester, I will be in Montpellier SupAgro for my last year, within the framework of their double degree agreement.

Why did you attend the summer school?

It was part of my module, it was a compulsory course for me as a MS FSCC student. This type of course is interesting for me, I know that other universities as doing that kind of course, and it will be useful for my degree.

What did the summer school bring you?

Friendship! I was able to meet people from so many different countries during this past two weeks, it was enlightening. The homestay (I just explained there the concept of homestay) put us in real position, we could really see the living and work conditions of the farmers, the courses were more realistic because of that experience, because they prepared us to interview, to do analysis etc. By that experience, I think I understood what sustainability and resilience mean.

What do you remember about this summer school?

The group work, because we had to share our experiences, our knowledge, and eventually we all gain more experience by sharing our point of view.

Jairus Jesse M. Tubal, Filipino student from Central Luzon State University:

Please introduce yourself.

I'm a master student in Agribusiness at Central Luzon State University in the Philippines. I also teach in parallel of my master degree, for 4 years now about agribusiness management and value chain.

Why did you attend the summer school?

I applied for the MS FSCC at UPLB, I was selected so I could join the summer school. I was interested by the subject of the master.

What did the summer school bring you?

A new way of teaching, I have never experienced the active learning approach before. I found it really interesting, because us as student are really involved, we are using our knowledge of actual topics and it put us in a work-like experience, especially when we had to present the results in front of all the people met during our fieldwork. I also enjoyed the group work, because I like to share our ideas, it brought interesting outputs.

What do you remember about this summer school?

I felt like I was a part of a scientific expertise, because of the different kinds of analysis or methods we used (interviews, soil and landscape analysis). I also liked the multidisciplinary approach.

Dr. Edna A. Aguilar, Director of the Institute of Crop Sciences, College of Agriculture and Food Science (CAFS), UPLB, Summer School Organizer

Why did you organize the summer school?

Our university wanted to host one of the three summer schools planned in the MS FSCC project. So I took part in the one that was last year in Malaysia, to understand how it worked, and how we could do it here. I also went to Montpellier SupAgro last year, for 2 weeks, to see another example of field course. The ICropS currently handles a graduate course on assessment and design of farming systems, which could adopt the field based active learning approach similar to the MSFSCC summer course. All of these reasons explain why I was in charge of its organization.

How did this organization go?

We have been planning for 9 months with the partners from BOKU (Austria), University of Gadjah Mada (Indonesia), SEARCA and Southeast Asian University Consortium for Graduate Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources. It was a challenge, especially for such a large group of 44 students! And we had also to count to the trainers and the facilitators.

Why the Bicol region?

We had some criteria set by the project: it had to be a vulnerable and resilient area, at least 100km far from UPLB. The region of Bicol is often concerned by natural disasters during the rainy season (typhoons, flooding), but it is still an important region of rice production, and they are currently developing their cocoa production, for sustainable reasons. We also knew the Office of the Provincial Agriculture (OPAg), which facilitated the contact with the farmers, and the choices of the areas for the fieldwork.

What do you remember about this summer school?

It was a challenge but I am quite satisfied by the results. The key was the good communication among the organizers, it helped a lot. We think that this kind of events helps to develop further collaboration among our universities. One of the objectives of UPLB is to develop its internalization, and to represent the interest of the Philippines of an international level, hosting a summer course is one of the ways. I think that by studying a

farming system of a country, we are facing the reality, and we are more able to assess the needs for rural development. Nowadays, we are in global systems, the fieldwork helped us to understand where are the leverages to help our farmers to have access to that international market, while having a fair salary. I think that this is a big challenge today, and the summer school help the students to face this reality.

Didier Pillot, project manager for Montpellier SupAgro

Why did you organize a session dedicated to lecturer-researchers in parallel with the summer school?

As part of the MS FSCC project, we worked with the five main Asian partners, University of the Philippines Los Baños, Kasetsart University, Thailand, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia, Universiti Putra Malaysia et Institut Pertanian Bogor, Indonesia, for two years on the development of the Master of Sciences Food Security and Climate Change curriculum. Currently, students are joining existing masters inside these universities, which is difficult to manage, and requires student mobility between two partners. One of the main objectives of the project is to create and to achieve accreditation in each of the four countries of the same of “Food Security and Climate Change” curriculum and to implement it in each university. Mobility will still be possible (and simpler) but not mandatory, which will increase the master capacity. One of the modules of the new master is “Sustainability assessment in agricultural production and food processing” is carried out in the field, a very unusual exercise in these universities. The summer school is a good opportunity for the teachers who will have to implement the master, to discover the particularity of these type of training and study the possible adaptations in their own university.

What did you think of the summer school?

The summer school has two objectives, to work with students and to immerse them in an international context. In this respect, this summer school was a perfect example of success, as exchanges between students were encouraged, as well as contacts with farmers, particularly with their stay with local residents. It went very well and everyone came out satisfied. Nevertheless, with a group of 44 students, it was more difficult for the organizers to put them in a situation of complete autonomy with regard to the analysis methods envisaged. But the students' confrontation in the field was already a major challenge and I think it was well met.

Why do you think this kind of course is important?

First of all, it is important for the training of students to exchange with the farmers, to be trained in diagnostic methods in real environments because nowadays in the professional world they are required to have skills. Secondly, the subject dealt with by the summer school corresponds to a local issue with strong international interactions. With the establishment of a single market in ASEAN, food security is now highly integrated at the regional level in Southeast Asia, and the climate change is also borderless. The future professionals we train will have to deal with this kind of problem on an international level, therefore it is important to train them now to work in international groups.

What will be the next step in the project?

We are currently working on the accreditation of the master's curriculum in each of the five universities, also considering organizing student exchanges on the European Erasmus+ model between the universities of South-East Asia. We would also like to develop to an international

PhD on the same subject, and develop thesis in co-supervision. Japanese and Taiwanese universities are also interested to be involved with such a regional system, in research and training. Eventually, an international network could be built by pooling with this core, and thus widening the exchanges envisaged.

Interviews provided by Lynda Ihadjadene, project manager at Agreenium