

## A 'balikbayan' enjoys retirement life being a farmer



Herman Lopez, a native of San Antonio, Nueva Ecija, was really determined to be a successful farmer. He even studied in an agriculture school and after his graduation, he joined the National Food Authority (NFA), knowing he can gain enough experience in government and possibly save for his much-needed capital to set up a farm.

But as his four children are growing, Lopez realized that he needed to work abroad if they want their children to finish schooling. "I was difficult, but our priority was our children's education," he says. He left in 1995 for work in Japan with his wife, a registered nurse.

Despite the global pandemic on COVID-19, Lopez decided to return home in 2021 after nearly 26 years as an overseas Filipino worker. After nearly

26 years in Japan, he says, "I knew that I'm old, but I have a pension and all of my children have finished schooling so it was time to return home, and go back to farming."

When he personally took over the rice farm he acquired in Barangay Pamacpacan, Lopez decided to shift to hybrid rice varieties in an effort to modernize farming practices with his farmhands.

*"Malaki na kasi ang pagkakaiba. Nung mga bata kami nag-aararo lang ang kalabaw. Ngayon hanggang ng post-harvest , lahat makinarya na,"* he says.

*"(at) Noon mga thresher lang. Ngayon... napakamoderno at madali lang matapos ang anihan. di na gagapasin at iipunin. 'Pag tinutukan ng harvester nakasako na."*

According to Lopez, now is the right time for his fellow OFWS to venture in modern farming. *"Dahil 'di na ganun kahirap kamukha nung tayo ay bata pa."*

*"Yung mga nagpunta sa ibang bansa lalo na kung medyo matatagal-tagal na sila kahit paano nakapagbukod na pagpaparal sa mga anak nila. Kahit paano siguro sa tagal nilang nagtabaho may naipon na,"* he says. *"Ano na pagbalik natin lalo na yung kamukha ko na tumanda. Ano kaya ang pagaaksayahan natin ng panahon?"*

*"Kahit 'di mo na kaya dahil meron kang pera, meron kang means para mag-farm. Meron kang mga tauhang pwedeng gamitin na hindi ikaw ang gagawa. 'Di naman pwedeng pag-uwi mo mahiga't bumangon na lang,"* he says.

Lopez remains confident that the younger generation can be encouraged to farm if they decide to venture into agriculture work, especially since there is

already enough assistance from the government in modernizing agriculture in country.

Apart from rice farming, Lopez says he had recently ventured in growing vegetables, which provide continued supply of harvested yields during the months the rice fields were being put to rest.