

Farm life after being a wage earner



Nelson Castro traces his roots to a clan of farmers in Gapan, Nueva Ecija.

“Pagsasasaka na ang naging ugat ng aming pamilya. Mga ninuno ko magsasaka. It runs in our blood,” he says.

But that wasn’t enough reason to convince him to continue the family tradition when he opted to join the corporate world in the early 1990s.

At first he enjoyed being a wage earner in one of Unilever’s third-party distribution networks which operated in in the Cagayan region. Eventually, he felt the longing to be farmer even though he was leading a decent life as wage earner.

“Pero ayoko kasing may amo kaya lumipat ako sa pagsasaka para sarili ko ang amo ko,” he says.

For starters, he set up his own poultry farm and later shifted to duck-raising. But his livestock ventures were all a failure.

Finally, he decided to buy his own farmland and began planting rice and vegetables.

He started with a half hectare property, while leasing adjacent farm lots. He eventually expanded, acquiring farmlands in Jaen.

For rice farming, he estimated that he normally had to invest P40,00 to P40,00 per hectare. If he used hybrid varieties, he can yield 150 cavans per hectare during harvest time, which readily amounts to about P50,000 per hectare profit after expenses.

“Sa farming medyo maganda naman ang nagiging kita ko. Halos tuwing harvest may magandang kita pero ‘pag rainy season, tsambahan. Paminsan-minsan wala pero pag season ng tag-araw ayun talaga ang jackpot.

Few may realize it, he says, but to be a successful farmer one also needs “wise” investments.

*“Kailangang mag-invest tayo sa makinarya, sa magagandang binhi, magandang gamit ng pataba para maganda ang kita,”*he explains.

Right now, Castro says he is trying to prove to his children — who are all trained professionals -- that being a farmer is really profitable.

“Sinasama ko nga sila sa bukid paminsan minsan para makita nila kung paano mabuhay ang mga magsasaka, paano kumita ng maganda, kung kelan ang timing para mapaniwala ko sila at para maconvince ko sila na magshift sa pagsasaka kaysa naman sa opisina lang sila

nagtrabaho,” he says.

Castro’s lament was that in school, they were being reminded that it was difficult to be a farmer so many students yearn for white-collar jobs. “Sa mga tinuturo nila, sinasabi nila na palagi na mahirap. pero ngayon dumadali na dahil sa mga farm machinerias na makabago. Hindi na pagsasaka na gumaguma ng kalabaw,” he says.

“Talagang profitable. Noong araw talagang napakaliit ng kita kaya yung mga anak ng magsasaka pinadadala nila sa eskuwela para mag-aral at huwag nang magsaka . Binenbenta na lang nila bukid nila,” he adds.

Castro also cited the need fo farmers to be organized by joining cooperatives to enable them to participate in seminars to update them on current trends in farming while gaining access to the collective use of farm machinerias and credit with small interest rates.

“Kaya’t kung dati kang employed at gusto mong magshift sa farming maghanap muna sila ng puhunan na tapos yung right technologies para maging successful sila sa pagsasaka,” he says.

He says an initial investment of P50,000 can be good start for small farming. “Hindi naman kailangang saktong-sakto puhunan mo. Baka may ibang paggastusang kasi ‘di naman laging maganda kaagad ang tanim mo at pwedeng pasukan ng insekto kaya magkakaroon ka ng ekstrang gastos para sa pesticide. Ganun din sa abono para siguradong lalaki at gaganda sila,” he says.