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DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Division of Agriculture

SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT  
FINAL REPORT  
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CONTACT : MANNY M. PANGELINAN, Specialty Crop Project Coordinator  
Department of Lands and Natural Resources  
Division of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 10007  
Saipan, MP 96950

Tel: (670) 664-6004

Fax: (670) 664-6060

Email: [mmpangelinan@gmail.com](mailto:mmpangelinan@gmail.com)

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**Background:**

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) continues to import the vast majority of its fruits and vegetables from abroad. There exist a big gap on sales between imported fruits and vegetables and what is grown locally. Locally grown fruits and vegetables accounts for a very small percentage of sales. The CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the Division of Agriculture (DOA) in partnership with the Northern Marianas College – Cooperative Research Education and Extension Services (NMC – CREES), the Saipan Municipal Council, the Sabalu Market Association formed a Farmer’s Support Group to assist the local crop producer in the CNMI to become competitive in marketing their specialty crops as well as to increase production of locally grown specialty crops.

The Farmer’s Support Group objectives are:

1. To increase specialty crop production;
2. To open more market opportunity for local producers;
3. To develop standards that promotes “Good Agriculture Practices, “Good Handling Practices”, Good Manufacturing Practices”, and “Food Safety”.
4. To raise public awareness of the nutritional value in consuming specialty crops and the benefit of buying locally grown specialty crop;
5. To get youth involvement in the production of specialty crops;
6. To decrease produce importation dependency, and
7. To assist the local farmers develop Saipan Coop Farmer’s Market.

To address some of the above objectives, in 2009 the CNMI-DLNR applied for a grant under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) to fund the following projects:

- (1) **Multi-media campaign and production:** This project is to develop a multi-media campaign to provide greater outreach to the community through the use of television network and live radio talk show. The media campaign will talk about the CNMI Specialty Crop. It will provide information about the nutritional value of specialty crop and will educate and inform the consumers of the benefits of choosing and purchasing locally grown specialty crop.
- (2) **Specialty Crop Conference:** This project is to hold semi-annual and annual conference amongst local specialty crop producers, consumers, and buyers. Its objective is to open market opportunity for local growers.
- (3) **Web-Page Development:** To contract web-page developer to develop a CNMI Specialty Crop Web-Page. The web-page will become a very useful tool for marketing and advertising of CNMI Specialty Crop Producer. The web-page will contain information such as crop producer and buyers contact information, type of specialty crop grown, seasonal yielding, availability, location, etc. By making this information available on the web-page both on/off-island buyers will have easy access to CNMI specialty crop producer.
- (4) **Geospatial Mapping:** This is to purchase a Geographic Information System (GIS) software and extension to provide geospatial map information to existing crop producer, potential crop producer, buyers and consumer. Such geospatial data layer will include but not limited to,

location farmers, the farm sizes, soil types and characteristics, slope, and elevation, rainfall. The GIS will also enable us to identify on the map our clientele being assisted under this grant.

As a result of the CNMI-DLNR application, we were awarded \$121,660.00 in program funds under Fiscal Year 2009 to supplement the implementation of above projects.

During the grant period, the CNMI-DLNR encountered many challenges which impacted our ability to successfully carry through with some of the projects. The biggest problem that we faced during the funding period is the lack of local revenues and resources from the CNMI Government. Our government experienced continue decline in revenue collection and as a result a reduction in work hours was implemented across the board. We also experienced reduction in staff and change in management. As our challenges compounded, we have to re-evaluate all our projects and confine ourselves to the projects that we are able to accomplish. The following information is a final performance report on the status of the projects in 2009 SCBGP under Grant Agreement No. 12-25-B-0912.

## **PROJECT REPORT(S)**

### **Project 1 of 4:**

**Project Title:** Multi-media campaign and production

#### **Project Summary:**

This project was funded to develop a multi-media campaign through the use of television network and live radio talk show to provide wider range of community outreach in our effort to continue promoting the CNMI Specialty Crop. To accomplish this, the focus of the media-campaign is to exhibit and promote CNMI Specialty Crops by taking video footages at farm sites and at the local farmer's market. At the farm site, local farmers were interviewed. They talked about the challenges and reward of being a local farmer. The video also covered short segment of what its' like and what it takes to be a local farmer. They also talked about the value of buying locally grown produce as oppose to buying imported produce. The video also took footages of the specialty crop plants at the farm site. At the farmer's market, segment of the video production were allotted for the interviewing of consumers and vendors. Both the consumers spoke about the benefits of going to the farmer's market, buying local crops and supporting local farmers. The video also talked about the nutritional value of the local specialty crop. The end product of the digital video production was aired on local television talk show network.

On the other hand, the live radio talk shows were attended by Mr. Manny Pangelinan and Saipan Council Member Ramon Camacho. The talk shows was not only done at the radio station but also at the farmer's market place as well as the annual Saipan Agriculture Fair were thousands of people in attendance. The live talk show is more of a questions and answers format but the focus of promoting the CNMI Specialty Crop and reaching out to the community remained the same.

Ninety Five Percent of the CNMI fruits and vegetables were imported from the Asian countries, Australia, or the United States. The multi-media campaign is important to continue promoting the CNMI specialty crop. With the deteriorating economy, people being laid off from their work, rising

cost of fuel resulting to rising cost imported fruits and vegetables, this project is important to continue promoting the CNMI specialty crop by reaching out to the community for their support. If the greater part of our community continues to support local farmers, local farmers in return can produce and grow more local crops that can be sold and made available at the farmer's market. And as a result, more people will have access to healthy food that is affordable.

This project was not built on a previously funded project with the SCBGP or SCBGP-FB.

### **Project Approach:**

In launching our multi-media campaign, we used local television network and live-radio talk show as the media source. In carrying out the objective of this project we were engaged in three major activities; (1) planning, (2) production and (3) broadcasting or airing. Whether it is video production or live radio talk show, we spent majority of our time in the planning stage to ensure that we maximize the use of our multi-media campaign and that our campaign is in line with our approved objective.

CNMI-DLNR contracted John Gonzales Live Television Talk Show, a locally own company, to produce two digital video campaign that would exhibit and promote the CNMI specialty crops. After meeting several times with the media production staffs, the video, interviewing and editing of the digital videos were done solely by the contractor. CNMI-DLNR reviewed the videos prior to broadcasting the videos on the local television network. As stated earlier the video were taken at the farm sites and at the farmer's market. Local farmers, farmer's market vendors and consumers at the farmers market were interviewed and they became the main spokesperson for the video advertisement.

Each video is a little over two minutes long talking about the nutritional value of specialty crop, promoting locally grown crop, local farmers, instill the buy local concept, talk about good health, and touch little on agriculture produce sustainability tying it with a small segment of the video which talked about the challenges and rewarding of being a local farmer. All in all, the video production aimed to enhance the competitiveness of the CNMI specialty crop. The video were aired every

Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday on our Channel 7 at 7:00PM. The airing of the two videos went on for six months period. The planning, production and airing of the two videos were done between the period of 2010-2012.

In addition, we paid John Gonzales Live-Talk Show to place or hang one 4 x 8 banner as their backdrop during their shows for one year period (2011). The banner is one that we have created in our previous grant that promotes "Buy Fresh Buy Local".

On the hand, live radio talk show does not take as much planning as the video production. Between 2011-2012, CNMI-DLNR contracted Blue Continent Communication, dba KKMP Radio Station to do its live radio talk show. The talk show talks about nutritional value of local crops, the benefits of choosing and buying locally grown crops and promoting our local farmers. Between 7:30am and 8:30am morning talk show, KKMP talks about specialty crops. In addition, KKMP also

promotes specialty crops in the same context every Tuesday and Saturday Farmer's Market for period of three months. KKMP also did a live radio talk show during the entire day of our Annual Agriculture Fair in May 2012 where thousands of people visited the fair.

#### **Goals and Outcomes Achieved:**

The following are the activities completed in order to achieve the performance goals and measurable outcomes of this project:

1. During the funding period CNMI-DLNR completed two digital video that were used to launch the multi-media campaign to provide for a wider range of public outreach which continues to promote the competitiveness of the CNMI crop.
2. The video were aired every Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday on our Channel 7 at 7:00PM. The airing of the two videos went on for six months period.
3. The planning, production and airing of the two videos were done between the period of 2010-2012.
4. CNMI DLNR together with Municipal Council Member Ramon Camacho appeared on live radio talk show. The talk show also allowed members from the community to call in and ask questions.
5. Further live media coverage were done at Tuesday and Sabulu Market to promote the competitiveness of Specialty Crop.
6. Live media coverage were also done at the Annual Agriculture Fair talking about the benefits of specialty crop and promoting local crops and local crop producers.

Before the production, airing and broadcasting of the multi-media campaign, there were very little media coverage done in the past for specialty crop. The completion and broadcasting of the two video as well as appearing on live radio talk show has gained positive support from the community and most especially appreciated by the local farmers.

The John Gonzales Live Television Talk Show is well watched by local viewers particularly because John Gonzales talks in vernacular about local issues. On any given night hundreds of people are tune in to John Gonzales Live Television Talk Show. Each video is a little over two

minutes long and each was repeated three times between hours of 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM. The two videos were aired every Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday for period of six months on Channel 7, local network channel. After the six month period, we have estimated to have reached 12,500 viewers.

On a small community like Saipan, reaching hundreds of people on a given day is considered a very good publicity. During the broadcasting of the videos, CNMI DLNR conducted a survey sample in community and at the farmer's market to determine if the media production is reaching the community:

Of 200 people asked if they have watched the video publicity that we have aired 170 or 85% said that they have seen the video publicity. We asked the same 200 people what they think of the video publicity, the following are their respond:

- 55% said that they are very favorable of the video publicity.
- 30% said that they are favorable of the video publicity.
- 10% said that they are somewhat favorable of the video publicity.
- And, 5% said they have not sure or have no comment.

On the other hand, KKMP, the radio station did their own format of measuring their listeners. KKMP, on their own issued t-shirts to their listening audience who called in each day. KKMP issued a total of 150 t-shirts.

**Beneficiaries:**

This project was intended to continue promoting the competitiveness and enhancement of the specialty crop through the use of multi-media publicity. Its' primary objective is to reach as many people in the community for their continue support in buying locally grown specialty crop. The primary beneficiaries of this project are the crop producers, the vendors at the farmer's market. Indirect beneficiary to this project are the community.

**Lessons Learned:**

The most challenging part about developing a digital video is for publicity is knowing what you want, what message you want to send out, who are your audience and how to effectively attract your audience. Choosing the right spokesperson or getting the appropriate person to be interview is also a challenge. It is important to have all these issues addressed before developing digital video. Once all these issues are addressed producing digital video can be done relatively with ease. Because CNMI-DLNR do not have prior experience in developing a digital video for publicity, we depended on the professional for guidance.

**Project 2 of 4:**

**Project Title:** Specialty Crop Conference

**Project Summary:**

This project is funded to pay for semi-annual and annual conference. The purpose of the conference is to bring together local specialty crop producers, consumers, and buyers. The objective of this project is open market opportunity so that we can further strengthen and enhance the specialty crop competitiveness by bringing together specialty crop stakeholders to discuss and address marketing opportunity, quality assurance, partnering opportunity with Guam, gaps, and needs.

At the time when the CNMI economy is weak, the cost of fruits and vegetables continue to rise, people getting laid off, work hours were being cut and non-resident workers are being sent home by U.S. Immigration, this type of conference is needed the most to open marketing opportunity for the local crop producers. By opening marketing opportunity, local crop producers can produce grow more fruits and vegetables to be sold at the market place and at a competitive price and as a result more people can have access to affordable healthy food.

This project was not built on a previously funded project with the SCBGP or SCBGP-FB, however SCBGP funds was used on earlier grants to fund different conference.

**Project Approach:**

This conference is a coordinated effort between the CNMI-DLNR, the Northern Marianas College – Community Development Institute, and the Saipan Municipal Council. A lot of planning, meetings and coordination between the partners took place to discuss the following issues:

- What do we want to achieve and get out from this conference;
- What the conference format will be;
- Come out with an appropriate conference theme;
- Select the appropriate speakers;
- Select a venue, time and date;
- Who will be appropriate to be on the conference panel;
- Who do we invite from our neighboring islands of Tinian, Rota and Guam;
- Who will be the master or mistress of ceremony;
- How much the conference will cost;
- How will our off island speakers and guest be accommodated and pick up from the airport;
- Designing of the brochure and conference program;
- Coming up with the conference agenda;
- How we ensure that the conference is held live so that our neighboring islands of Tinian and Rota can also participate live.
- Preparing all the purchase orders on time; and more

The conference partners decided that less government official participation and more of the specialty crop stakeholder participation. Majority of the conference panel and speakers came from the private sectors as well as the crop producers with the exception of the Secretary of DLNR who delivered the Welcoming Remark and the CNMI Governor who delivered the “Charge”. The conference partners did a fantastic job to assemble a wide range of speakers for the conference. They come from mid-level, top level management as well as presidents of organizations. The organizations they represent are from wholesalers, super fresh markets, shopping center, Duty Free Shoppers, hotels, non-profit organization such as the Saipan Chamber of Commerce and the Hotel Association of Northern Marianas Island as well as the Mayor of Yigo from Guam. The topics covered in the conference covered a wide range of topics such as the CNMI Agriculture Statistical Snapshots, CNMI Specialty Crops Program & Promotions, Agri-Tourism, Quality Assurance Marketing, Specialty Crop Marketing Partnering with Guam followed by a breakout session panel presentation and lastly, the conference summarized the gaps, priority highlights and implementation timeline. This is a one day conference which was held on November 17, 2011 at Fiesta Resort & Spa and was attended by over 100 participants.

The discussion is controlled to ensure that everyone in the audience as well as the speakers talked primarily about specialty crop, whether we are talking about marketing opportunity, packaging expectation by the buyers, selling to hotels and duty free shoppers or making contacts in Guam.

Without our partners from the Northern Marianas College – Community Development Institute and the Saipan Municipal Council, this conference will not be possible. The success of this conference is greatly attributed to their active participation in planning and coordinating this conference.

**Goals and Outcomes Achieved:**

To achieve the performance goals and measurable outcomes of this project the following activities were done:

1. During the funding period, CNMI DLNR was only able to host one conference.
2. There are over 100 attendees at the conference.
3. Through live video feed, the conference was attended by our neighboring islands of Rota and Tinian.
4. The conference also opened marketing opportunities in Guam by creating a network with various Mayors from Guam. The conference invited several Mayors from Guam to talk about Specialty Crop Partnering with Guam. Their main speaker at the conference is Mrs. Melissa Savares, Mayor of Yigo and the President of Guam Council of Mayors.
5. By inviting various purchasing managers from wholesalers, retailers, and hotels, the conference further opened networking and marketing opportunities for the special crop producers.
6. This conference also provided valuable information to the specialty crop producers as to what stores, hotel and Duty Free Shoppers expects from sellers, the type of packaging is required and consistent supplies of commodity is mandatory.

Towards the end of the conference a survey form were past to participants to provide a feedback of the conference. The following are survey questionnaires that were asked:

1. How would you rate this conference?  
Of 98 participants that turned in their survey form the following answered in this manner.
  - Very Informative 44.90%
  - Informative 36.73%
  - Somewhat Informative 11.22%
  - No Comment 7.14%
  
2. Does the conference meet your expectation?  
The same 98 participants responded in the following manner.
  - Yes 58.16%
  - Somewhat 41.48%
  - No 00.00%

3. Do you recommend this type of conference to be held on an annual basis?

The participants in this conference overwhelmingly answered yes.

- Yes 84.69%
- No 12.24%
- Not Sure 3.06%

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4. Do you find the topics discussed in the conference useful?

Majority of participants finds that the topics discussed in the workshop

- Yes 71.43%
- Somewhat 28.57%
- No 00.00%

**Beneficiaries:**

The primary beneficiaries of this conference are the specialty crop producers. New farmers also benefitted from the discussion of the specialty crop programs. Some buyers also benefitted from this workshop through opening of network opportunity between the buyers and crop producers

**Lessons Learned:**

One of the key lessons learnt from in putting up a workshop is that you will need to have multiple partners with experience that are willing to engage and commit in putting up a workshop because there are many meetings, planning and coordination goes into putting up a workshop. Knowing the topics, having knowledge of the community or business leaders is also equally important.

**Project 3 of 4:**

**Project Title:** Web-Page Development

**Project Summary:**

To contract web-page developer to develop a CNMI Specialty Crop Web-Page. The web-page will become a very useful tool for marketing and advertising of CNMI Specialty Crop Producer. The web-page will contain information such as crop producer and buyers contact information, type of specialty crop grown, seasonal yielding, availability, location, etc. By making this information available on the web-page both on/off-island buyers will have easy access to CNMI specialty crop producer.

**Project Approach:**

In early 2010, Mr. Manny Pangelinan met with CD Consulting Services, a locally owned web-page designer and developer to discuss the project proposal, goals and objective. Through several meetings, CNMI-DLNR hired CD Consulting Services to begin developing the web-page. CD Consulting Services began developing the CNMI Specialty Crop web page layout to include text

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and graphics. The webpage was setup with a local webpage hosting company but was temporarily made inactive while under construction.

When the principal project coordinator was changed very little work went into completing the webpage development. When the Specialty Crop Program was returned to Mr. Pangelinan, there was insufficient time remaining to complete the project and personnel staff to assist with the project.

**Goals and Outcomes Achieved:**

Because the project was partially completed, the goals and objective of this project was not realized. If the project would have been completed, the eventual goal and objective of this project will be as follow:

This project is funded to contract web-page developer to develop a CNMI Specialty Crop Web-Page. The web-page will become a very useful tool for marketing and advertising of CNMI Specialty Crop Producer. With practically everyone having access to internet, information of farm producer and buyer can be made available via the web-page. The web-page will contain information such as crop producer and buyers contact information, type of specialty crop grown, seasonal yielding, availability, location, etc. By making this information available on the web-page both on/off-island buyers will have easy access to CNMI specialty crop producer. This project is not built on a previously funded project with the SCBGP or SCBGP-FB.

1. When completed the project will provide a list of all crop producers and buyers contact information.
2. It will also provide list of crops being produced on the island and the seasonal yielding of crops.
3. It will also give access for the crop producer to make available the types of crops they produce and the price they are selling the crops.
4. It will also use to continually promote locally grown specialty crop.

Although this project was not completed, DLNR will use local funding resource to complete and use the web page as intended. Once the webpage is completed, a separate report will be provided to the granting agency.

**Beneficiaries:**

This project is intended to benefit the crop producers, provide information of specialty crop grown locally to the consumers and buyer. If the web page is completed in the future, the beneficiaries will be the crop producers, the consumers, and buyers. This web page will also benefit the program because program information will be placed on the web page.

**Lessons Learned:**

Do not request for funding for project to be funded if there is no staff to follow through with the project. Make sure that there are staff available to provide continuity.

## Project 4 of 4:

### Project Title: Geospatial Mapping

#### Project Summary:

This project is funded to purchase a Geographic Information System (GIS) software and extension to develop geospatial map information to existing crop producer, potential crop producer, buyers and consumer. Such geospatial data layer will include but not limited to, location farmers, the farm sizes, soil types and characteristics, slope, and elevation, rainfall. The GIS will also enable us to identify on the map our clientele being assisted under this grant. The use of GIS will help the farmers to make better planting activity decision and as a result would help them improve achieve greater yield on crop production. It will also help buyers and consumers to easily locate crop producers on the map. The use of GIS will also help program managers and coordinators make better planning through the use of geospatial mapping. The GIS software that we are requesting to purchase is a ESRI ArcInfo License with Spatial Analyst, 3D Analyst, Maplex, and Network Analyst Extensions.

This project was not built on a previously funded project with the SCBGP or SCBGP-FB.

#### Project Approach:

CNMI DLNR purchased an ESRI ArcInfo License with Spatial Analyst and Network Analyst. With the available software, CNMI DLNR began developing and compiling different geospatial maps such as soil data, land classification, land cover, landowner, geographic property boundaries (metes and bounds), slope, elevation, farm location and farm owner. The geospatial soil data maps were developed using the USDA-NRCS Soil Data Viewer for the Northern Mariana Islands. There are many valuable soil data geospatial maps such as soil erosion factors, soil physical properties, soil qualities and features, vegetative productivity, water features. The land cover maps were made available from the USDA-Forest Service. Physical property boundaries and property ownership were made available from the Division of Land Registration and Survey. Slope and elevation were done using available Digital Elevation Model (DEM). All this geospatial data created and compiled are now available at the Department of Lands and Natural for the use of existing farmer, new farmers, and the community. Maps can be made available on PDF file, GIS shape file, or JPEG format. Because of cost, CNMI DLNR is not printing the maps for distribution. The creation of the GIS geospatial maps will not be possible without the ready access of the soil map from the USDA-NRCS website, the Division of Land Registration and Survey and the DLNR GIS Analyst who helped put these information together.

#### Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

The following were the work performed to achieve the performance goals and measurable outcomes identified in the approved project proposal:

1. CNMI-DLNR developed or compiled 13 different types of geospatial data that are available for new or existing farmers use. The following are the data layers compiled and developed:
  - i. (1) Soil erosion factors, (2) soil qualities and (3) soil features, (4) vegetative productivity, (5) water features, (6) soil taxonomy classification,

- (7) farmland classification, (8) property boundaries, (9) property ownerships, (10) land elevation, (11) slope, (12) forest vegetation mapping, (13) water features.
- ii. These geospatial data are available at the Department of Lands and Natural Resources ready for distribution upon request. The data are available in GIS shapefile, PDF or JPEG. Due to budget constraint, no hard copy of the map is available unless clientele is willing to pay for hard copy.
  - iii. DLNR GIS Analyst is available to explain or assist existing or new farmers find the soil types via location using GIS mapping.
  - iv. Because these geospatial data are newly compiled and developed, geospatial data has yet to be used by existing or beginner farmer.
  - v. DLNR-DOA will be advising all existing farmers and beginner farmers of the availability of the geospatial data through group meeting, community meeting, farmer's market and through the different government agencies.

**Beneficiaries:**

The intended beneficiaries of this project are the existing farmers and new farmers. Because this the geospatial data is newly compiled and developed, no existing or new farmer have used this data. We hope to see the farmers in the CNMI start using GIS for planning purposes once we beginning advertising or promoting the availability of the GIS data. Other beneficiaries to this project can also be the buyers and the community. Buyers and members of the community can use the GIS maps to identify farm location.

**Lessons Learned:**

When staffing is available that can provide direct technical assistance to the project, completing a project is easy. As such project coordinator should identify personnel resources prior to developing a project proposal to avoid incompleteness of project.