

ENHANCING RURAL WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN FISHERIES: POST-HARVEST LIVELIHOOD

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The aquaculture subsector contributes about 68% of the total fish production in the Ilocos Region, Philippines. Eighty seven (87) percent of the production is of milkfish, and thus more milkfish is produced than consumed in this Region. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), in collaboration with the Local Government Unit, decided to offer training to women to develop their skills for adding value to the excess produce and thereby increase their income and create jobs in fish deboning and smoking.

Through its Gender and Development Project, BFAR assisted nine Rural Improvement Clubs (RICs) namely Bulbulala Home Maker Fish Processing, Inc., Vintar, and Federated RIC of Batac of the Province of Ilocos Norte; Suksukit RIC, Sto. Domingo and Villa Garcia RIC, Sta. Cruz of the Province of Ilocos Sur; Rural Improvement Club of San Francisco Sur of Sudipen, RIC of Balaoan, Rosario Integrated RIC of Rosario in the Province of La Union; Calasiao RIC of Calasiao and Labrador RIC of Labrador in the Province of Pangasinan. The women's groups were each provided with capability building training like bangus deboning and smoking, gender and development orientation, value-adding, field tours (*laktbay-ara*) for the members, packaging and labeling, simple book keeping and financial management including leadership management training for some of the organization members. Through BFAR, these associations were granted equipment and materials to facilitate implementation, improvement and expansion of their fish deboning and smoking projects. These interventions enhanced project viability and eventually, will help them evolve as business and livelihood enterprises for the women members.