

## THE KAINGINEROS AS FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

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The Filipino peasantry is divided into a number of groups. One group is composed of the kaingineros or upland farmers. This paper focuses attention on this kainginero group and finds out how we could bring them to participate in national development.

### *Why the concern with kaingineros?*

Some of us may ask: why the concern with kaingineros? The answer is because they comprise a big portion of the national population.

It is estimated that there are about 500-700,000 families of kaingineros all throughout the country. At an average of six members per family, the group is around 3-4 million people — larger than the population of other countries.

It is not only their number that compels us to pay attention to the kaingineros. This group of people are also strategically situated all over the country in such high places that they are influencing, whether we like or not, the course of national development.

The slash-and-burn agricultural practice of the group is reducing the source of wood for all kinds of building materials. It is causing a lot of soil erosion resulting in heavy siltation of our hydroelectric power reservoirs, irrigation dams, riverbeds, and ricelands. Kaingin-making reduces the capacity of the uplands or mountains to absorb and conserve rainwater, thus, causing drought, brownouts, and loss of other services.

If we could only put monetary value to all negative effects of forest destruction resulting

from kaingin-making, it could easily amount to several billions of pesos every year. Unfortunately, we are not capable of determining the total effects of forest destruction on the entire nation, much less put monetary value to all negative effects.

Forest destruction does not show its bad effects immediately. The effects of what is being done today will probably surface several years, maybe centuries, in the future. What the future generations of Filipinos will experience will depend upon what we do today. Thus, we are concerned very much about the kaingineros who destroy our forest resources.

### *Who are the kaingineros?*

Researches, experiences, and observations indicate that there are three categories of kaingineros. These are the "born kaingineros," the "forced kaingineros," and the "speculator-kaingineros."

The "born kaingineros" are those whose parents were kaingineros. Thus, they were born to the kaingin-making activity as their main, if not the only, source of livelihood. Majority of the "born kaingineros" belong to the cultural minorities. Most of them reside within the public forest zones. Many of them live in the interior mountainous areas.

The "forced kaingineros" are mostly lowland farmers. They are landless tenants. Their family income from the lowland farms they are cultivating is insufficient to feed their families. Thus, they are forced to look for additional land to cultivate, and the easiest

way to find that land is to go to the public forest and clear a portion of it.

The "speculator-kaingineros" are the wealthy families who are motivated by the desire to accumulate more wealth. The nearby public forest is a "bait" they could not resist. And because they have money and powerful connections, and they could easily evade punishment if caught violating the forest laws. They hire workers to clear the forest and plant the crops they desire. The speculators rely on their tenants to work on the land. In many cases they pressure the government to release the land to them.

It should be noted that the "forced kaingineros" are not distinct from the lowland farmers. In many cases they are one and the same. It is, however, important to note the categories of kaingineros. The information should enable us to plan an appropriate way of treating and dealing with them.

*How should the kaingineros  
be involved in active and positive  
development?*

If we want the kaingineros to contribute most effectively to national development, let us reverse the current antagonistic relationship between the kaingineros and the forest law enforcers by getting them as partners in natural resources development. Let us take advantage of their sheer number, their location, and their skills in food production and cottage industries development. Let us show, guide and lead them to the right path of economic development.

Let us start involving them by earnestly implementing the kaingin management or forest occupancy management program of the government. Forest occupancy management implies giving assistance to and guiding the kaingineros to fully develop their kaingins so that it will produce more than sufficient income to feed their families.

By doing this, the kaingineros will be prevented from enlarging their present kaingin and from opening new areas. Thus, the existing forest will be protected. Besides protecting the remaining forests, permanent vegetation will be brought on open areas resulting in the enhancement of the capacity of the land to absorb and conserve rainwater.

Assisting and guiding the kaingineros in the development of their kaingin areas entail making important decisions with respect to the crops or combination of crops which should be planted in the kaingins. The crops chosen should be those that are permanent in nature and at the same time give maximum possible income from the area. This means that crops recommended for planting must be permanent crops so that the objectives of the government in soil and water conservation are satisfied. In addition, the crops should also grow well in the area and the produce should command a good price in the local or export market so as to maximize income from the land.

In order to make such vital decisions, a thorough knowledge on agroforest production and marketing is necessary. The kaingineros will not follow any suggestion if they are convinced that the suggested crops will not grow well in their respective areas and at the same time reap a reasonably good income.

Agroforestry remains as the most potent approach to the development of kaingin areas. It is in this approach where the skills of the kaingineros could be best utilized and where the highest possible output from the land could be attained. However, implementation of agroforestry throughout the country where 500-700,000 families are involved requires a sizeable amount of financing and some 3,000 subject matter specialists in different fields of endeavors.

My computation, based on the implementation of our current action-research on kaingin control, is that a satisfactory

nationwide implementation of agroforestry among the kaingineros require a minimum of P80 million a year. But this amount is too small and insignificant compared to the values of natural resources we are losing every year and the tremendous multi-billion peso benefits that could be derived out of its implementation.

*What do we expect to gain by involving the kaingineros in nationwide agroforestry development?*

A lot of good things may be obtained if we could get all the kaingineros to cooperate in the agroforest development of their kaingin claims. And there is no reason why we cannot get their cooperation if they are given security over the land and the crops they plant. Existing forest laws mandated the Bureau of Forest Development to issue forest occupancy permits to all kaingineros found occupying a portion of the public forest before May 19, 1975. Thus, all kaingineros who have been in the public forest before May 1975 are assured by law of their security over the land.

With assurance of security and a minimum assistance and guidance offered, we have not met a single family of kaingineros in our current research on a kaingin control who are not receptive to the idea. Actually, all those who learned about it are eager to be included. The eagerness of the kaingineros to cooperate indicates that a nationwide implementation of agroforestry could result to the following:

1. *Elimination of conflict between the kaingineros and the government in the use of the public forest land.* This is expected because the government no longer prosecutes kaingineros, provided they have their kaingin areas before May 1975. Instead it will give them forest occupancy permits and at the same time assist them in developing their claims in accordance with their and the public's best interest.

2. *Self-sufficiency in food, particularly in*

*meat, fruits and vegetables.* Numerous varieties of fruit trees, root crops and vegetables grow well in the uplands. And the best thing about this is that three, four or even five kinds of permanent crops can be raised together in the same piece of land through intercropping.

And if you select the proper combination crops, you could also raise livestock such as cattle, goats, swine, and poultry in the backyard using the leaves and refuse from the crops as feeds for the animals.

Such crops as mangoes, ipil-ipil, coconuts, coffee, cacao, bananas, jackfruit, blackpepper, pili, rubber trees, and a number of annual crops could be intercropped to maximize production from the land.

3. *Tremendous increase in family income of the kainginero families.* If the premium crops that are in demand in the local and export markets were chosen as the main crops for intercropping, the kaingineros could easily raise their family income within four years. It is estimated that a hectare of upland or kaingin which is not yet devoid of its fertility could produce income ranging from P40,000 to P50,000 per hectare per year five years after planting it with a combination of four chosen crops like coffee, cacao, blackpepper, ipil-ipil and coconuts or other combination of crops.

Our survey shows that the average area occupied by kaingineros is about four hectares. This area can be easily developed by a family if the members are motivated and properly guided. Thus, after five years, one kainginero family can earn a minimum of P40,000 and a maximum of P200,000 per year if they are given assistance in the development of their land and marketing of their products.

4. *Tremendous increase in the gross national product and in export earnings.* Considering the capabilities of the kaingineros to take care of their crops, we could easily produce 250 million kilos of green coffee

beans and another 250 million kilos of dry cacao seeds per year worth P16 billion at current prices if we could convince each of the 250,000 kainginero families to plant 1,000 coffee trees and 1,000 cacao trees.

That is only the income from two premium crops. There are many other permanent crops which produce fruits that command high prices both locally and in the foreign markets.

Actually, if we take the previous estimate that some P40,000 worth of produce could be attained from each hectare and that a family can easily develop four hectares which is the average area occupied by each family, then the estimated half a million families of kaingineros could produce some P80 billion worth of products per year. This is not even counting the value of some 300 million forest tree species which could be planted along the boundaries of kaingin claims.

5. *Curtailment of importation of raw materials for the manufacture of different chocolate products.* Some five years ago, the Philippines imported some 5 million kilos of cocoa products for the manufacture of chocolate candies and drinks. With agroforest development we could easily raise the materials here and save our precious foreign exchange earnings.

6. *Availability of sufficient wood for energy generation, cottage industries and housing purposes.* With the presence of the fast-growing Gaant ipil-ipil trees for use as nurse crops to fruit trees, we can easily produce in a few years enough fuelwood for dendro-thermal generation. We could also raise enough wood for pulp and paper and for housing purposes.

7. *Elimination of the causes of soil erosion, flash floods, droughts and brownouts.* With two million hectares brought back under permanent vegetation, soil erosion would be minimized, the capacity of the uplands to absorb and retain rainwater would be

improved resulting less frequent flash floods, droughts and brownouts.

8. *Simultaneous attainment of the economic upliftment of the poor kaingineros and the objective of government to conserve natural resources.* The best feature of agroforestry as an approach to kaingin management is that it simultaneously satisfies the desire of the kaingineros to improve their socio-economic status and the objective of the government to conserve natural resources and bring about permanent vegetation on denuded public forest lands.

9. *Reduces unemployment.* With two million hectares brought under intensive cultivation, all the kaingineros and their relatives would be kept busy caring for their crops. Harvesting and marketing will require assistance from other groups of workers. The availability of abundant supply of crops will spur the development of cottage industry type of food processing and packaging which would employ more people.

10. *Accumulation of capital for industries development.* The tremendous increase of income of the kainginero families could redound to the accumulation of billions of pesos of savings in banks which could be mobilized to finance the development of industries.

11. *Reduces inflation.* If it is true that production is the antidote to inflation, then intensified agroforestry production could also reduce the rate of inflation. An honest, sincere, nationwide implementation of agroforestry could, within five years, produce billions of pesos worth of products.

12. *Other benefits such as reduction of water and air pollution, protection of wildlife, and a more wholesome environment are likely to occur.* An increase of income taxes, business taxes, and the like could also be derived from agroforestry.

I have endeavored to show that if we focus our attention to getting the kaingineros involved in agroforestry development the nation will gain a lot. The estimated expenditure of P80 million a year within a period of five or even 10 years to help the kaingineros fully develop their kaingins is insignificant compared to the perpetual benefits the nation could get from it.

*Problems to be encountered*

Involving half a million families in a variety of jobs distributed nationwide is bound to encounter several problems. Among the problems to be encountered are:

1. How to get this kind of massive program accepted and financially supported by the government. Proposals coming from ordinary citizens like us do not ordinarily go through to the President for consideration. It needs people with cabinet rank, who may claim the proposal, to bring it to the President for his consideration.
2. If the proposal gets through to the President and is accepted and financed, the next problem is how to get trained, qualified and dedicated people to work with the kaingineros in the hinterlands.
3. How to get people presently employed in the bureaucratic machinery to support the problem with understanding and not to sabotage it by red tape and inaction is another problem.
4. Another issue is how to deal with the land speculators who may prevent the legitimate kaingineros wishing to get forest occupancy permit over the land he has been cultivating, but which is claimed by the speculators.
5. The insufficiency of trained and willing manpower to work on the job needs to be solved.
6. Marketing of the products would be a big problem when the crops start to bear fruits or when they are ready to be harvested.

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