



TUESDAY, JULY 3, 2012

## Landed Couple Used To Be Landless



Fernando and Josephine Fuentes used to be very poor and landless after they got married in 1994. By dint of hard work, they now own at least 24 hectares of land and they are also planting **Bioseed Healer 101** corn on 40 hectares mortgaged to them. They are from Brgy. Malapag, Carmen, North Cotabato.



Fernando Fuentes, corn farmer of Brgy. Malapag, Carmen, North Cotabato shows to Sherwin Magbanua of Bioseed, the bumper crop of **Healer 101** corn that he harvested from the first 4 hectares that he planted in March 2012 and harvested in June.



AILEEN LIBRETA of Bioseed Research Company is shown here with piles of corn-on-the-cob harvested by Fernando Fuentes from his farm in Brgy. Malapag, Carmen, North Cotabato. She is an agriculturist who is specializing in plant breeding.

Among the enterprising corn farmers we met recently during our visit to North Cotabato are Fernando Fuentes and his wife Josephine from Brgy. Malapag in the town of Carmen.

The Fuentes couple were landless when they got married in 1994 but now they have at least 24 hectares of corn land of their own and many more that have been mortgaged to them. They are planting the latest hybrid corn varieties such as those distributed by **Bioseed Research**

**Company based in General Santos City.** And that is why they get high yields and a good price, too, for their corn harvests.

How they were able to accumulate such a relatively big landholding is an inspiring story of industry coupled with some business sense.

Fernando remembers that when he and Josephine were just newly married, he used to sell cut-up vegetables from house to house just so they could have an income. Fernando would buy fresh vegetables from the market, slice them and pack together different vegetables that could be used in one cooking.

Then they decided to do their own corn farming just like what many of their neighbors were doing. But how did they grow corn when they did not have land of their own?

It happened that their godfather during their wedding had some land. They rented one hectare from him at P2,000 per year which they planted to hybrid corn first distributed by the Department of Agriculture. Fernando was quick to explain that in those early years, when you rented a piece of land, you only pay the rent after you have harvested your crop, unlike today.

They were quite lucky because they had good harvest from their hybrid corn. From the one hectare they rented, they were able to gross P18,000 from their first crop. And because they themselves worked on the farm, they only had cash expenses of about P6,000. They had a net profit of P12,000, and that's what they used to get hold of more farms which were initially mortgaged to them. Eventually, they would be able to buy the land mortgaged to them with the proceeds from their corn harvests.

These days, when there is good weather, corn farmers like the Fuentes couple could make a net profit of more than P40,000 per hectare. And because they know how to handle their finances, they have been able to increase their land holdings and, of course, their incomes from farming.

There are developments that have helped the corn farmers like the Fuentes couple. One is the introduction of herbicides. With herbicide, the farmer can wipe out the weeds so they can dibble their seeds without plowing the field. Even the rolling and sloping fields could be planted to corn the zero-tillage way.

Another is the coming of the hybrid corn seeds. With the hybrids that are genetically engineered, the yield is not only high but the farmers

also save on cost of spraying against corn borer. **The Bioseed Healer 101**, for instance, is not attacked by corn borers which are about the most destructive pest of corn in the Philippines.--ZBS