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DENNIS PANES: Remarkable Young Corn Farmer



ZAC B. SARIAN AND DENNIS PANES



Healer 101, a biotech variety, is the favorite of Dennis Panes

DENNIS PANES is a remarkable young corn farmer we met during our visit to Sitio Rancho, Brgy. Wadya in the town of Banisilan, North Cotabato. From age 14, he used to work as laborer for a lady corn farmer, doing plowing, planting and other chores in growing corn. For many years he was a laborer, earning about P800 per month.

His good fortune came when the government awarded him five hectares of public land in 1994 when he was 21 years old. Because he used to grow corn as a laborer, he knew the fine points of corn production. He planted hybrid seeds and got at least five tons per cropping, two times a year.

What is remarkable about him is that after each cropping he sets aside a portion of his income either for buying an additional hectare or for taking over land that is mortgaged to him. At first, he just acquired one hectare after harvest at a time. Then when he had a bigger area to cultivate and more yield, he bought an additional two hectares, then three hectares, and so on. There was a time, he said, when the crop was very good and had a bumper harvest. He was able to buy 10 hectares in one swing.

Many of the lands he bought in the earlier years cost only P50,000 to P60,000 per hectare. Later, however, land became more expensive. Some of the farmlands mortgaged to him lately cost him P100,000 or more.

How many hectares does he own today, 18 years after he was given the five hectares by the government? Because of the systematic acquisition of land that he followed, he now owns 80 hectares! **Which he is planting with his favorite variety, Healer 101, distributed by Bioseed Research Company based in General Santos City.**

Aside from the 80 hectares that he owns, he is financing other farmers in **planting Healer 101 on 45 hectares**. He says that unlike many other financiers, he just charges a minimal interest because he realizes the difficulties the small farmers are going through.

In the last cropping season, Dennis made a net profit of P1.3 million. His earnings are spent on things that matter in corn farming. For instance, he has invested on a 6-wheeler truck, a 10-wheeler truck and a Commando jeep which he uses in hauling his harvests from the farm to the market.

What's really remarkable about him is how he systematically accumulated land for his corn production. His is a rags to riches story. Which means that if one is smart, one can take advantage of opportunities that are just around the corner.