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## They Knew How To Save And They Became Rich



**A fully-filled ear of Healer 101, a favorite of the Acoba couple from Brgy. Buyon, Cauayan City, Isabela.**

One farmer may start from scratch but if he knows how to save, he could become rich. That's just what the couple Abraham and Josephine Acoba of Brgy. Buyon, Cauayan City in Isabela did.

They were just the typical high school graduates from the barrio who did not go to college after finishing their secondary schooling in 1987. They married when Abraham was just 18 and Josephine 22. And as is the usual case in the province, they became farmers.

Of course, they were quite lucky because Abraham's parents gave him two hectares to cultivate. And the newly married couple planted corn which is the usual crop planted by most farmers in Isabela up to this time. The province is considered the biggest corn producer in the country today.

From the start, they were also lucky with their corn crop. They were able to sell their first harvest for P3,000. That was a small fortune that time. And what did the couple do with their P3,000? They saved the amount without spending any centavo. They had an important goal. They wanted to save money which they could use to buy more land that they could use to grow more corn.

So where did they get the money for their daily sustenance? Josephine was smiling while relating what Abraham did to earn some money. He would ride his bike to the neighboring barangay to buy 100 pieces of ice candy which Abraham sold to his neighbors. He bought the ice candy at 50 centavos apiece and sold the same at 75 centavos. It took him just a few hours to sell the 100 pieces that made him richer by 25 pesos. By doing that every day, the couple made something like P750 a month which was not bad at all for one residing in the barrio.

They planted their two hectares to corn twice a year and like what they had promised to themselves, they would save everything that they earned from their corn crop. Another project became the source of their increasing requirements when their children came. They planted about 1,000 hills of Latundan banana in the periphery of their farm.

Abraham remembers that in the late '80s and early '90s, bananas were much cheaper than they are today. He said that they used to sell a hundred pieces of Latundan for only P15. Anyway, they harvested a lot of bunches so that even if the selling price then was low, they were able to earn more than what they needed for their daily upkeep. They were able to send their kids with the help of their income from bananas.

In the meantime, they kept on planting corn. Soon they were able to accumulate P30,000. That was the time when they were able to buy two hectares. As they grew more corn and saved more from the proceeds of their harvest, they continued to buy more farmland. Today, they have a total of 9 hectares which they are planting to their favorite crop. That's not including the farms that have been mortgaged to them.

He remembers one hectare that was mortgaged to them for only P3,000 more than 20 years ago. Since the owner had been asking for additional amounts in the past several years, the amount has ballooned to P150,000. Abraham believes that the owner won't care to recover the farm anymore. That's all right with them.

As their savings from their corn crops grew and grew, they undertook other projects. Today, Josephine is taking charge of a grocery where their barriomates source their daily necessities. But that's not all. Josephine is also helping Abraham in their financing operation of other farmers who are short of capital.

Today, no less than 100 farmers cultivating more than 200 hectares are depending on the Acoba couple for much of their cash requirements in planting their own corn crops. For every hectare that a farmer cultivates, the Acobas extend financing of inputs as well as cash amounting to P25,000. The borrower has seven months to pay with the proceeds from the sale of his corn harvest.

Usually, there is no problem for the corn farmer to repay his loan. After all, high yielding varieties are now available to the farmers. Many of the farmers can easily harvest six tons per hectare which at present prices are worth about P78,000. After deducting the cost of production and other expenses (shelling, drying, etc.), the farmer could still realize a profit of more than P45,000 per hectare. It is also possible that the yield is higher than six tons because of the new hybrids that are high-yielding and don't require spraying with expensive pesticides because they are genetically modified varieties.

One such variety is called **Healer 101 distributed by Bioseed** which has now become the favorite of the Acoba couple as well as the farmers that they are financing.

**Healer 101 can yield as much as ten tons per hectare under ideal conditions**. Normally, however, the farmers would already be satisfied with six tons or a bit more per hectare. Besides being high-yielding, it does not have to be sprayed against corn borer. **Healer 101** produces big kernels that are deep orange in color, a quality that feedmillers are looking for. The ears are also fully filled to the tip.

The Acoba couple have really gone a long way from their ice candy selling days. They have become prosperous, and their big secret has been that they knew how to save and how to invest their savings. With their savings, they were able to undertake additional sources of income.

The Acobas have two daughters who are now both professionals and are both working. Generous, the elder daughter is working with the Health Department in Isabela while the younger daughter, Jocelyn, is working for the multinational firm Nestle.



**The couple Abraham and Josephine Acoba with Zac B. Sarian at the Bioseed Office in Cauayan City.**