

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

Established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office

2020 UN Women Asia-Pacific WEPs Awards Regional Awardee Profile



AGREA Agricultural Systems International



Cherrie Atilano
Founding Farmer, CEO, and President

AGREA

Country: Philippines
Employees: 11-50
Industry: Agriculture

Website
www.agrea.ph



Supporting Philippine Women Farmers

There is a dearth of data on the women farmers of the Philippines, where the agricultural sector remains mired with challenges. To date, farming is still seen as a traditionally male profession, while women farmers are both expected to do farm work along with household duties, all while receiving less pay.

AGREA Philippines, an agri-business focusing on sustainable agriculture, fair-trade, and replicable model of an agri-based economy, has long focused on supporting and empowering women farmers through forWard (Finding Opportunities and Roles of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development). And when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, AGREA Philippines used the programs under forWard as response to the needs of the sector and of the nation.

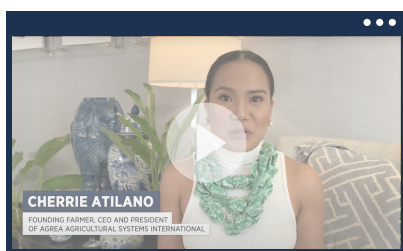
forWard's three core areas served as jump-off points for AGREA's COVID-19 response: food security, sustainable livelihood, and education.

As the Philippines was placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine, farmers struggled with selling their goods as borders between cities and regions closed down. Due to AGREA Philippines' work with farmers and in the agricultural sector, farmers knew to contact them for support. First, a group of farmers contacted AGREA Philippines who needed help selling 15,000 pineapples. Then, farmers from different areas in Luzon (an island group in the Philippines where Metro Manila is located) contacted AGREA Philippines for the same reason: they

“ I always say that economic empowerment is a powerful weapon for women in agriculture, coupled with education. ”
- Cherrie Atilano, Founding Farmer, CEO, and President of AGREA



needed to move and sell their produce to consumers. The same consumers who were challenged by the lockdown and worried about the food supply for their families—especially as food in groceries and markets quickly became scarce. Thus the Move Food Initiative was born, in line with forWard’s food security pillar. Move Food Initiative is an online fresh food ordering platform, providing both audiences with direct access to the produce—including fruits and vegetables harvested by women farmers.



Watch the testimonial video to learn more!

Immediate and Sustained Response to Farmers and Consumers Needs

By AGREA Philippines’ own words, the Move Food Initiative was a baptism of fire: farmers faced difficulty in moving their harvest to trucks because of the Philippines’ strict lockdown limitations that only allowed 3-5 people outside to process harvesting. Then, delivery trucks were put through stringent checkpoints across national roads—which led to longer travel time and affected the quality of the produce delivered to consumers.

“In spite of all these challenges, you always have to be patient, focused, and resilient. We’re working in agriculture, and are in the frontlines of ensuring food security in this challenging time,” said Cherrie Atilano, chief executive of AGREA Philippines. AGREA Philippines then hired a driver and

additional staff for a family-owned truck to aid in deliveries, supported by the application and acquisition for all necessary documents and permits to travel in ease despite the quarantine restrictions. They also set up a sorting facility to minimize quality issues.

As of 5 September 2020, the Move Food Initiative was able to move 183,706 Kilograms of fresh fruits and vegetables, supporting 20,902 Filipino farmers and ensuring food for 73,427 Filipino families. The initiative also partnered with and donated to 10 community pantries, which provided food for 4,690 frontliners in the Philippines.

Moreover, AGREA Philippines partnered with non-government organizations and other institutions to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to women in dire situations, including victims of domestic violence, women who are in correctional facilities, and mothers earning less than \$1 of income. They also provided food packs to families across the country, along with public hospital cafeterias.

Adapting to Change and Preparing for the Future

As the Philippines remains under quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AGREA Philippines continues to provide logistical support for farmers, and has augmented their online platform with customer service representatives. They are also in the process of providing financial and training support to their partner farmers, especially women farmers.

AGREA Philippines’ next COVID-19 response through forWard’s core areas focused on sustainable livelihood. Through AGREA Philippines’ urban gardening initiative called Growkits. Growkits sets come with seedlings, soilless potting mix, natural based fertilizer, and growing manual for users to start their own vegetable farmers at home.



To date, AGREA Philippines has provided more than a thousand Growkits to urban gardening enthusiasts, and organizations that support at-risk communities.

forWard's third core area is education, and AGREA Philippines provided COVID-19 support focused on this pillar through forWard's SAIL (Seasonal, Artisanal, Intentional, Limited) program. SAIL educates women on food rescue and repurposing for fruits and vegetables that are in season but have short shelf life. During the pandemic, AGREA Philippines gave 100 women who lost their jobs and women who wanted to earn extra income to provide for their family free access to the program. The month-long, 2-hour-a-week program utilized distance learning to ensure everyone's safety and maximizing knowledge transfer on how to make food rescue and repurposing can be a new business for women.

“

Most of the point persons on the ground are the women because they are the ones securing enough food on the table, keeping the family healthy and budgeting at home.

- Cherrie Atilano

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Women's Empowerment Principles



High-Level Corporate Leadership



Treat all Women and Men Fairly at Work without Discrimination



Employee Health, Well-Being and Safety



Education and Training for Career Advancement




Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices



Community Initiatives and Advocacy



Measurement and Reporting

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