



# *The Other Face of* **Plunder** *in Mindanao*

A BRIEFER ON MINDANAO PLANTATIONS

**Reap**  
MINDANAO NETWORK



**THE OTHER FACE OF PLUNDER IN MINDANAO:  
A BRIEFER ON MINDANAO PLANTATIONS  
2016**

RURAL MISSIONARIES OF THE PHILIPPINES-NORTHERN MINDANAO REGION (RMP-NMR)  
UNYON NG MGA MANGGAGAWA SA AGRIKULTURA (UMA)  
CENTER FOR TRADE UNION AND HUMAN RIGHTS (CTUHR)

PHOTOS BY GB VILLOCINO



# REAP Mindanao Network

*Network Resisting Expansion of Agricultural Plantations in Mindanao*

MINDANAO HAS BEEN TOUTED AS THE ‘LAND OF PROMISE’ because of its abundant natural resources and organic assets. Almost a hundred years since this promise of development was ushered in by foreign agri-plantations in Mindanao, the peoples of this war-torn island still wallow in the backward and impoverished conditions plaguing the rest of the Philippine countryside.

This island south of the Philippines is home to more than half of the total estimated mineral wealth in the country. Since the 1920s, Mindanao has also been host to vast plantations of raw materials and export crops controlled by intrusive transnational, multinational and conniving local agribusiness firms.

The island hosts the largest rubber, banana and pineapple plantations in the country. Giant fruit companies Del Monte, Sumifru and Dole’s plantations encroach into peasant communities and ancestral lands of indigenous peoples or lumad in Bukidnon, South Cotabato, Sarangani, Compostela Valley and Davao provinces. The island also boasts of about one (1) million hectares of grasslands that are now gradually being transformed into oil palm estates such as those in the native soil of the *lumad* and the Moro people in Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato, Caraga and Northern Mindanao region.



**MAN-MADE DISASTERS.** Heavy equipment is used for land preparation in this pineapple plantation in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon. Experts warn that the Kitanglad and Kalatungan mountains are now in terrible condition, with massive soil erosion and siltation of rivers caused by giant agricultural plantations. Cagayan de Oro City should brace for flash floods worse than the deadly torrents brought by Typhoon Sendong in 2011.

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Vast tracts of land in Mindanao remain targets for expansion of the world's biggest agribusiness companies operating these plantations. The neoliberal design of public-private partnerships (PPPs) and contract agriculture through various agribusiness venture arrangements (AVAs) sanctioned by state policy further highlight the dismal failure of agrarian reform in the country. The unbridled expansion of these

plantations – now at an alarming and unprecedented rate covering some hundreds of thousands of hectares only during the past few years – has pushed Mindanao's peoples deeper into poverty.

Mindanao is a land whose peoples are deprived of their right to land and life, whose peasants and indigenous tribes are driven off their lands to make way for disastrous economic programs. In truth, plantations bring only false promises of development and superficial growth founded upon plunder and exploitation.

Landless agricultural workers toiling these plantations remain dirt poor – exposed to hazardous working conditions, slave-like wages and brutal repression. Furthermore, plantations endanger whole communities with the adverse health and environmental effects of crop conversion and massive use of agrochemicals.

Resistance is the people's logical response to harsh conditions and atrocities brought about by agricultural plantations in Mindanao. The peoples' legitimate grievances often fall on deaf ears. Mindanao is a land militarized to allow for the continued plunder of its minerals, energy potentials and land resources by a powerful few.

Issues surrounding the existence and continued unbridled expansion of vast agricultural plantations in Mindanao remain unaddressed. The war for plunder is often an obscured aspect in the discussion of the centuries-old armed conflict in Mindanao. The dominance of agricultural plantations in Mindanao has not been scrutinized through public debate, principally with regard the question of national patrimony, agrarian reform, social justice, sustainable development and the environment.

Despite the hundreds of thousands of hectares of land devoted to plantations in Mindanao, pressing social and environmental issues surrounding these giant agribusiness ventures ironically seem too small. These issues are deliberately hidden from the public eye.

Through the initiatives of people's organizations, concerned institutions, advocates and affected communities and sectors, the REAP Mindanao Network was established to actively synergize efforts and struggles to resist the expansion of agricultural plantations in Mindanao. The network will also serve as coordinating center to create public awareness on critical issues related to Mindanao plantations.

The network aims to gain broad local and international support and will utilize various strategies and forms of engagement to address the following urgent concerns:

**(1)** End land monopoly, landgrabbing and dispossession. Stop the dislocation and marginalization of peasants, indigenous peoples or *lumad*, and the Moro people. Advocate for genuine agrarian reform to counter failed land reform policies which legitimize onerous public-private partnerships (PPPs) and agribusiness venture arrangements (AVAs) that allow for the aggressive and unbridled expansion of plantations.

**(2)** Respect for life, livelihood, beliefs and culture of the Moro people and the indigenous peoples or *lumad* in communities affected by the intrusion of agricultural plantations. Uphold their right to self-determination and right to defend their ancestral domain.

**(3)** Uphold agricultural workers' welfare against retrenchment, contractualization and other forms of flexible labor, slave-like wages, health and occupational hazards and inhuman working conditions in plantations and related mills, factories and packaging plants. Attend to issues of child labor and the conditions of women in the workplace.

**(4)** End impunity and uphold the peoples' civil and political rights. Stop extra-judicial killings, illegal arrests and detention, and threats against peasant and labor



**NO SUNSHINE WHEN LAND'S GONE.** *The future is dark for the lumad and peasants of Mindanao whose farm areas and ancestral domain – grasslands, forests and croplands – stand to be converted into oil palm plantations. Palm seedlings neatly arranged in this nursery ominously represent the government's target of one million hectares of land for oil palm expansion to boost the country's so - called "sunshine industry."*



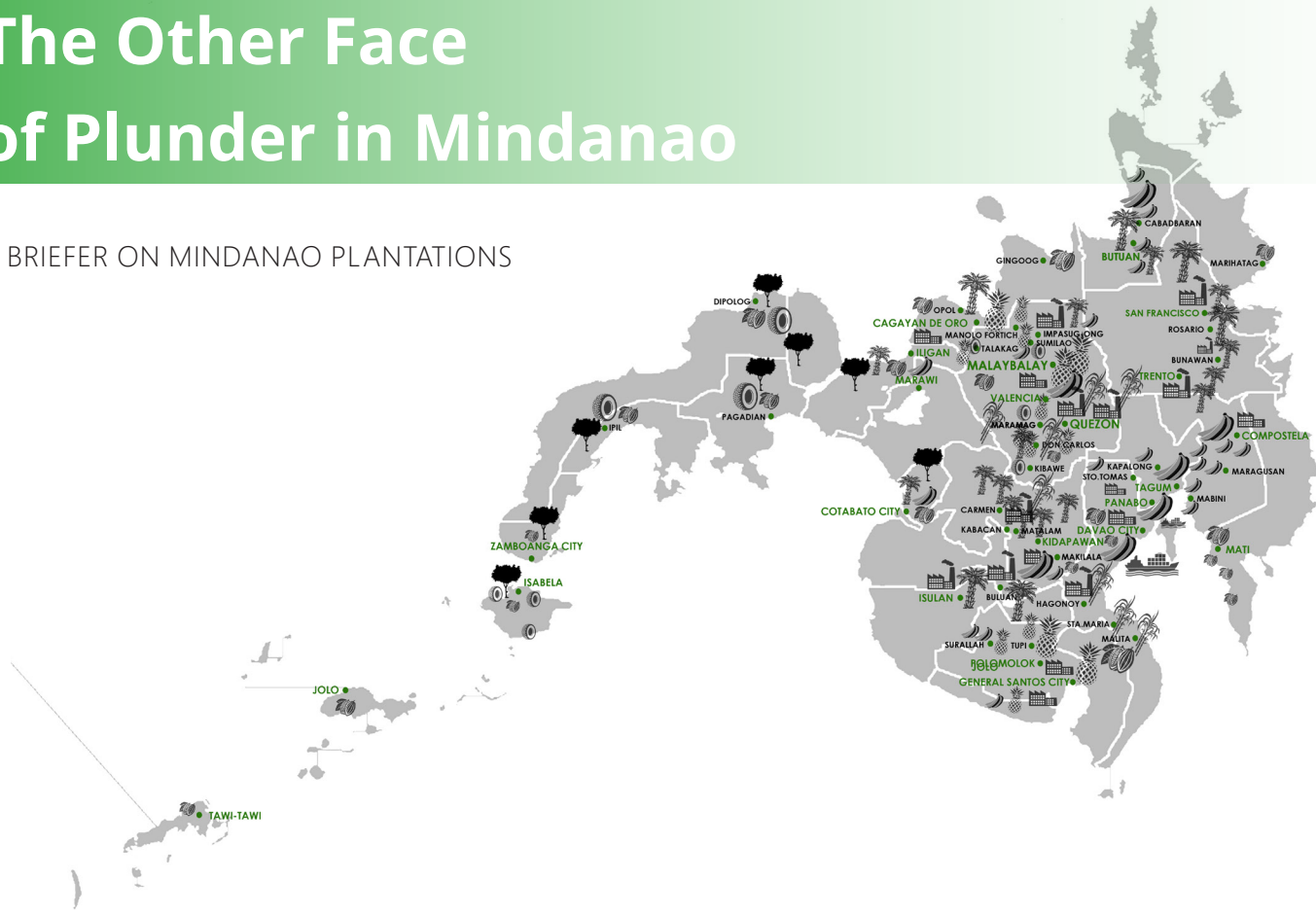
leaders and environmental advocates. End trade union repression, violent demolition, harassment, displacement and militarization of peasant, *lumad* and Moro communities caused by agricultural plantations.

**(5)** Stop environmental degradation and ecological destruction brought about by the expansion of plantations. Crop and land use conversion, deforestation, use of heavy equipment and rampant use of chemicals and pesticides for plantations result in land, air and water pollution, massive soil erosion, and increased vulnerability of communities during natural calamities.

**(6)** Highlight the agriculture sector's crucial role in achieving genuine national development through genuine land reform, national industrialization and other sustainable and pro-people measures. Tackle food security and food sovereignty issues and critique state policy allowing foreign big businesses to dictate national agricultural production with targets and priorities conflicting with the country's actual food needs. Bring attention to communities suffering hunger due to crop conversion, disappearance of staple crops and native seeds, and destruction of traditional food sources.

# The Other Face of Plunder in Mindanao

A BRIEFER ON MINDANAO PLANTATIONS

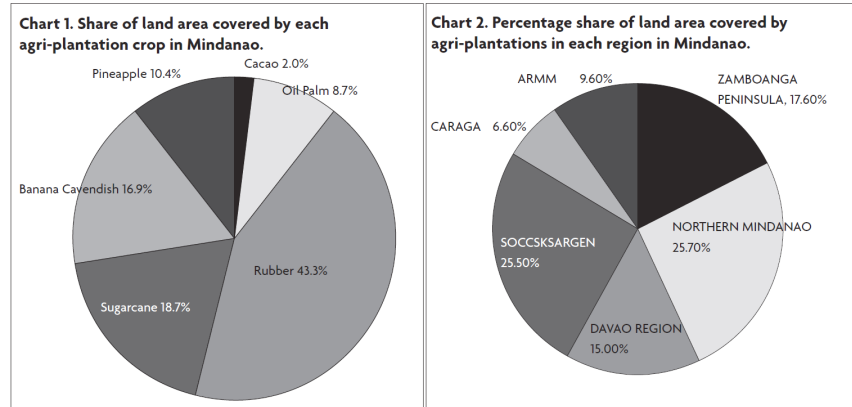




## PARCELING MINDANAO TO CORPORATE PLANTATIONS

About 500,000 hectares of land in the five regions of Mindanao are now covered with agricultural plantation crops primarily for the export market. This is equivalent to 12 percent of Mindanao's agricultural land.<sup>1</sup>

Major and emerging agricultural plantation crops include: rubber, pineapple, Cavendish banana, oil palm, cacao, and sugarcane. Rubber plantations cover almost half (43.3%) of the area used for these agricultural plantations in Mindanao (*See Chart 1*). More than half (51.2%) of these agri-plantations can be found in Northern Mindanao and SOCCSKSARGEN covering 127,105.71 hectares and 126,170.5 hectares respectively (*See Chart 2, Table 1*).<sup>2</sup>



**Table 1. Land area planted/harvested with agri-plantation crops per region (2014)**

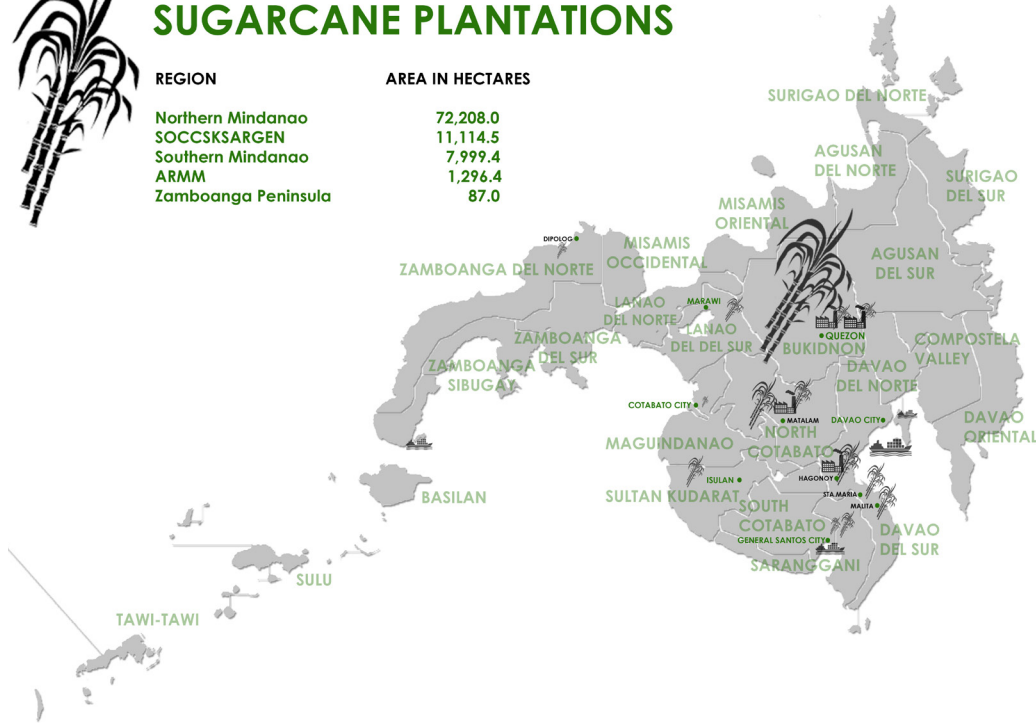
REGION/ CROP PLANTED	CA CAO	OIL PALM	RUBBER	SUGARCANE	BANANA CAVENDISH	PINEAPPLE	TOTAL PER REGION
Zamboanga Peninsula	340	18	86452	87	68	305	87270.00
Northern Mindanao	663	4290	8876.31	72008	17168	24100.4	127105.71
Davao Region	7451	961	8518.3	7999.4	47092	1978.25	73999.95
SOCCSKSARGEN	436	17775	60516	11114.5	11784	24545	126170.50
CARAGA	701	17369	11837	2.45	2545.71	219	32674.16
ARMM	431	2318	38115	1296.94	5072	93	47325.94
Total per crop	10022	42731	214314.61	92508.29	83729.71	51240.65	494546.26

Bureau of Agricultural Statistics



# SUGARCANE PLANTATIONS

REGION	AREA IN HECTARES
Northern Mindanao	72,208.0
SOCCSKSARGEN	11,114.5
Southern Mindanao	7,999.4
ARMM	1,296.4
Zamboanga Peninsula	87.0



Except for sugarcane plantations which also cover huge land areas in Negros and Central Luzon, areas covered by and total production of the five other agri-plantation crops are concentrated in Mindanao. Cavendish banana plantations in Mindanao, for example, account for 99.5% of areas devoted to such crop in the country, yielding a 99.9% share in total crop production (*see tables*)

## MULTINATIONALS IN CONTROL

Multinational companies and big compradors dominate and control these agricultural plantations either through directly-managed farms, contract agreements with local firms and big cooperatives, agribusiness venture arrangements (AVAs) with agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) or individual outgrowership schemes.



Multinational companies Dole and Del Monte which account for more than 20 percent of world supply of fresh fruits<sup>3</sup>, control a big portion of Cavendish banana and pineapple plantations in Mindanao. Japanese company, Sumifru or Sumitomo Fruit Co., has also become a big player in the production of these two fresh fruits for export. South America-based company Unifruitti also continues to expand its operations and outgrowership of Cavendish banana production in recent years.

*Agricultural workers in a pineapple plantation in Bukidnon.*

Rubber plantations supply natural rubber to big multinational companies based in the Philippines namely Yokohama Tires, Dunlop, Manhattan Rubber and Plastic Manufacturing Corporation and Mitsuboshi Belting Philippine Corporation. Valencia Rubbertext, FARMA Rubber, Pioneer Amaresa, Southern Peninsular Rubber and CTK Rubber Asia (the only ISO certified company) are the major exporters of natural rubber from the Philippines to primary markets in Malaysia and Singapore.<sup>4</sup>

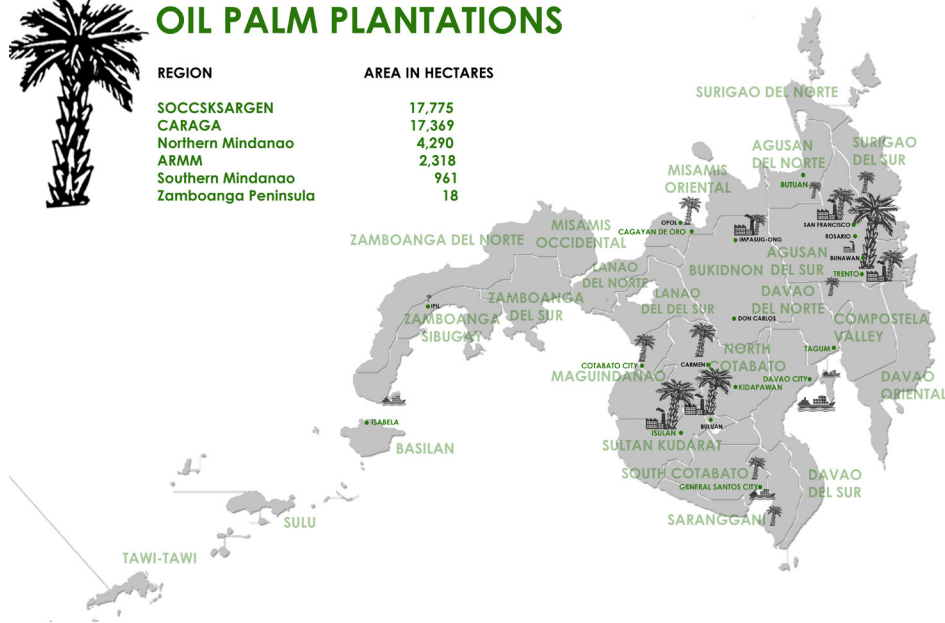
**Table 2: Percentage share of Mindanao in land area covered by and production of agri-plantation crops to Philippines total**

CROP	MINDANAO SHARE IN LAND AREA OF PLANTATION TO PH TOTAL	MINDANAO SHARE IN CROP PRODUCTION TO PH TOTAL
Banana Cavendish	99.5 %	99.9 %
Cacao	83.3 %	90.4 %
Oil Palm	77.6 %	88.7 %
Pineapple	83.1 %	89.0 %
Rubber	99.4 %	99.6 %
Sugarcane	21.4 %	17.9 %



## OIL PALM PLANTATIONS

REGION	AREA IN HECTARES
SOCCKSARGEN	17,775
CARAGA	17,369
Northern Mindanao	4,290
ARMM	2,318
Southern Mindanao	961
Zamboanga Peninsula	18



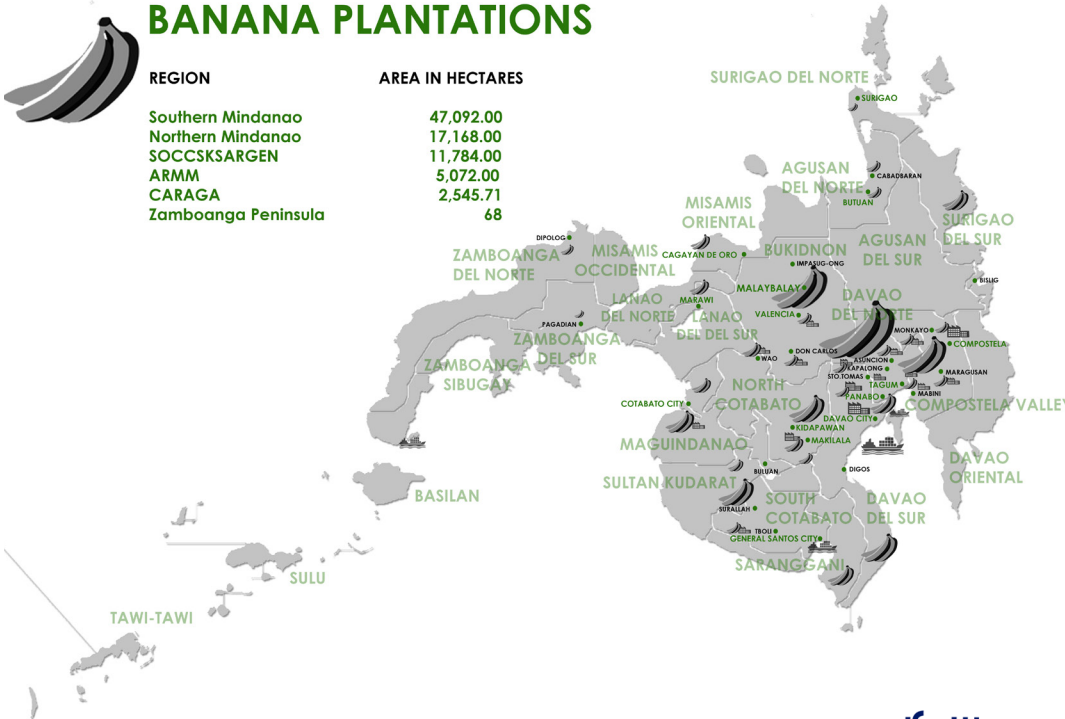
Oil palm plantations are dominated by Filipino-Malaysian companies Agumil Group of Companies (AGC), Filipinas Palm Oil Plantation Inc. (FPPI) and a relatively new-entrant, Filipino-American company A. Brown Energy and Resources Development, Inc. or ABERDI.<sup>5</sup> Another Malaysian company Bali Oil Palm, has started its operations very recently in Mindanao and is eyeing expansion of 45,000 has. of oil palm plantations Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental.<sup>6</sup>

There are five major cacao exporters in Mindanao. These are Kennemer Food International (KFI), CSI Trade Venture Trade, PhilCocoa, Seed Core Enterprises and Federation of Cooperatives (FEDCO). All of these are affiliated with global chocolate producers. KFI, is affiliated with chocolate and food giants, Mars Chocolate and Nestle.<sup>7</sup>



# BANANA PLANTATIONS

REGION	AREA IN HECTARES
Southern Mindanao	47,092.00
Northern Mindanao	17,168.00
SOCCSKSARGEN	11,784.00
ARMM	5,072.00
CARAGA	2,545.71
Zamboanga Peninsula	68



## DOWN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

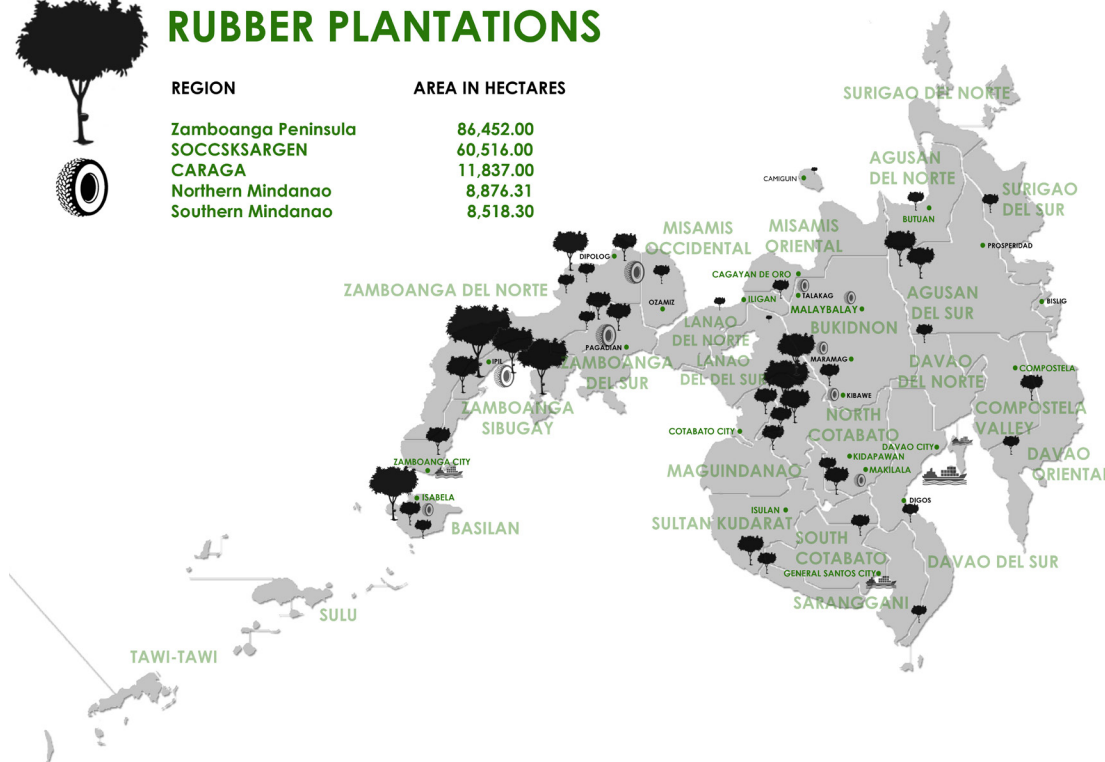
Produce of these agri-plantation crops are primarily for the export market. Cavendish banana in Mindanao are primarily exported to countries like China, Japan, Korea, Middle East and New Zealand. In 2012, the Philippines accounted for 93.9% of banana exports in Asia.<sup>8</sup> Also in the same year, the Philippines accounted for 10.1% percent of production of pineapple in the world. In year 2011, an estimated 262,690 metric tons (MT) and 329 MT of fresh and dried pineapples respectively were exported.<sup>9</sup>





## RUBBER PLANTATIONS

REGION	AREA IN HECTARES
Zamboanga Peninsula	86,452.00
SOCCKSARGEN	60,516.00
CARAGA	11,837.00
Northern Mindanao	8,876.31
Southern Mindanao	8,518.30



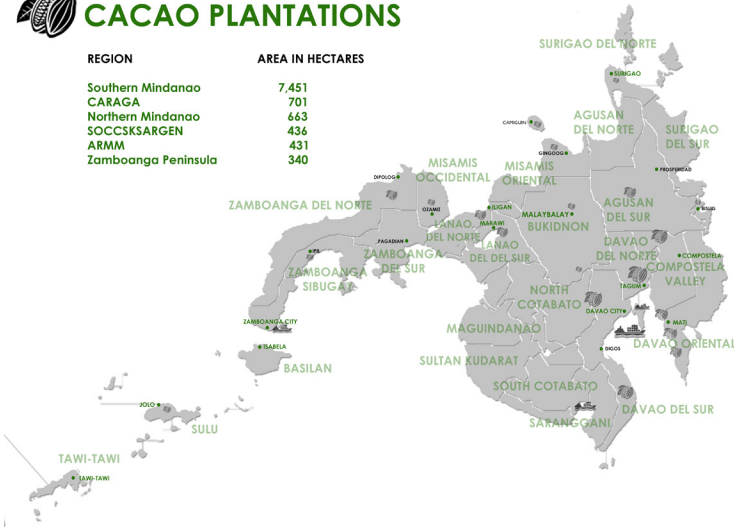
The Philippines is also a net exporter of natural rubber in various processed forms. In 2012, the Philippines exported at least 164,200 MT of rubber. Major markets include Malaysia, China, United States, Japan, and South Korea.<sup>10</sup>

The Philippines is a net importer of palm oil as local production is equal to only 15 percent of local market demand. However in the last five years, the exports of crude palm oil (CPO) increased from 3,513 MT in 2010 to 73,294 MT in 2013. Export destinations of CPO include Germany, Malaysia and India among others.<sup>11</sup>



## CACAO PLANTATIONS

REGION	AREA IN HECTARES
Southern Mindanao	7,451
CARAGA	701
Northern Mindanao	663
SOCCSKSARGEN	436
ARMM	431
Zamboanga Peninsula	340



The Philippine is also geared toward exporting more cacao in the future especially with the entry of big multinational groups like Kennermer. From 2010 to 2011, value of cacao exports already gradually increased from US\$ 5.24 million to \$5.4 million.<sup>12</sup>

**CORPORATE PROFITS.** A banana plantation worker holds up a receipt of his measly dividend earnings as member of a labor cooperative. He was required a fixed deposit of Php 10,000 and three days of work without pay before he became a member. Giant agricultural plantations utilize hiring agencies and service providers anomalously listed as “cooperatives” to forge labor-only contracts and press down wages. Most agricultural workers are contractuels without standard benefits and earning less than the prescribed minimum wage.





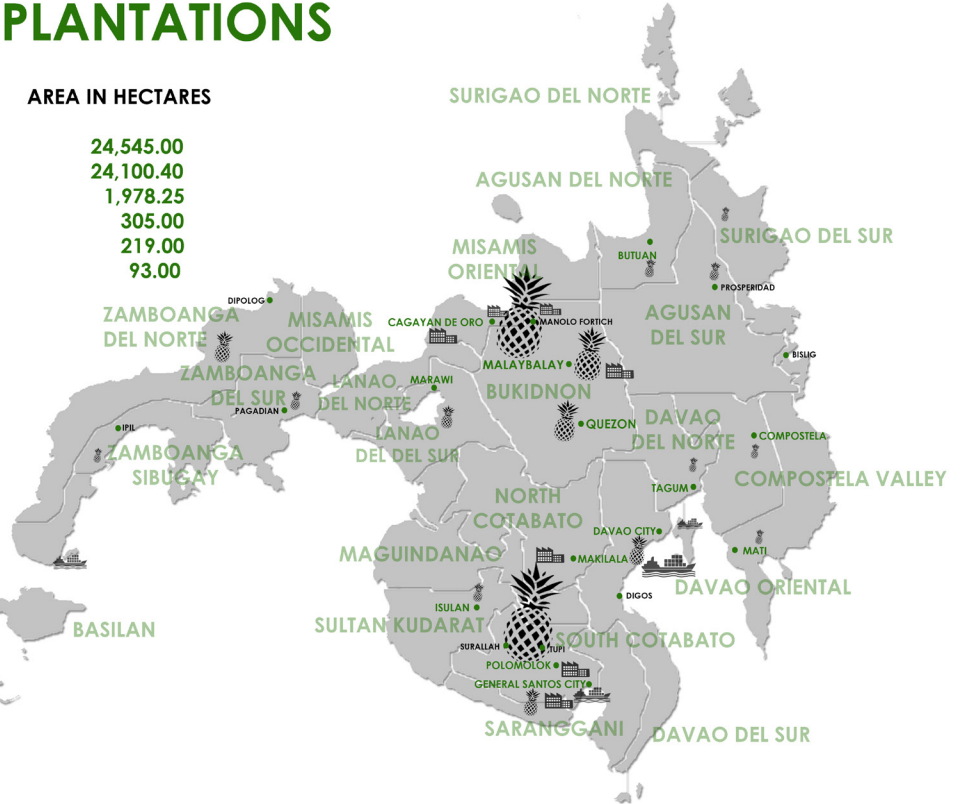
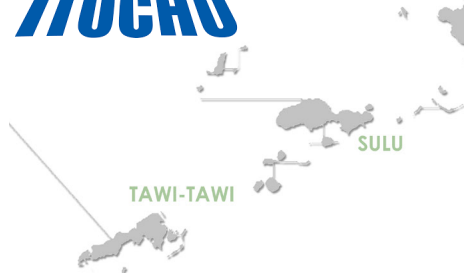
# PINEAPPLE PLANTATIONS

REGION

AREA IN HECTARES

SOCCSKSARGEN  
 Northern Mindanao  
 Southern Mindanao  
 Zamboanga Peninsula  
 CARAGA  
 ARMM

24,545.00  
 24,100.40  
 1,978.25  
 305.00  
 219.00  
 93.00





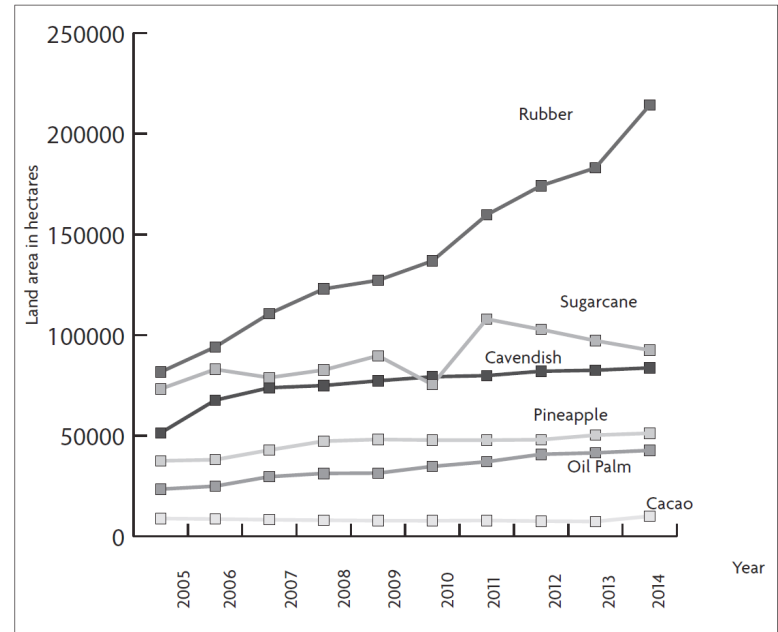
## AGGRESSIVE EXPANSION OF PLANTATIONS IN MINDANAO

In the last 10 years, land areas covered by agri-plantations in Mindanao have increased by a total of 79 percent. Rubber plantations nearly tripled its size from 81,667 hectares in 2005 to as much as 214,314.6 hectares by 2014. Oil palm plantations are also rapidly expanding and nearly doubled its spread in Mindanao from 23,478 hectares to 42,731 hectares in the same period.<sup>13</sup>

Agri-plantation companies, industry groups and the Philippine government are directed toward aggressively expanding agricultural plantations in Mindanao in the coming years. In 2014, Dole Philippines expressed its target expansion to at least 12,000 has. more for its pineapple plantation.<sup>14</sup> Unifrutti recently invested P3.7 billion for a 2,600-hectare expansion for Cavendish banana in Maguindanao.<sup>15</sup>

Despite impending competition due to ASEAN Integration, the sugarcane industry still identified 256,360 hectares of land suitable as possible targets for expansion of sugarcane plantations in Mindanao.<sup>16</sup> Cacao industry players are also targeting to expand its plantations by 150,000 hectares more by 2020.<sup>17</sup>

Chart 3. Expansion of agri-plantations in Mindanao 2005-2014





In 2013, the DENR through the National Greening Commodity Roadmap (NGP) 2013-2016 laid out its plan to expand plantations by 116,000 hectares for rubber; 87,903 hectares for coffee; and more than 60,000 hectares for cacao by 2016.<sup>18</sup> In its industry roadmap, the Philippine Palm Oil Development Council Inc. (PPDCI), also targeted to expand oil palm plantations with 300,000 hectares more all over the Philippines by 2023.<sup>19</sup>

In these target areas, plantation expansion is feared to affect and displace more peasants, the *lumad* and the Moro people.

### DISPOSSESSION, EXPLOITATION, VIOLENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

The development of agricultural plantations

in Mindanao is a history of dispossession, exploitation and violence inflicted upon the people of Mindanao.

During the Aquino administration, relentless and aggressive expansion of agricultural plantations has resulted in displacement of numerous *lumad* or indigenous peoples and peasant communities, as in the case of A. Brown expansion in Opol, Misamis Oriental.

**VANISHING SEEDS.** *A The aggressive expansion of corporate agricultural plantations poses serious threat to life and livelihood of the indigenous peoples or lumad of Mindanao. Plantations encroaching into their ancestral domain displace the lumad, consequently destroying centuries of traditional farming practices and endangering the survival of their heirloom seeds.*

The government’s sham agrarian reform program has worked perfectly for the interest of agri-plantation companies as they encouraged ARBs to become outgrowers or to lease out their lands through onerous contracts. In oil palm plantations in CARAGA where plantations have existed for over 20 years, the long-term land lease of up to 25 years leave landowners with rent equivalent to only Php 166 per hectare per month.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, outgrowers who supply Cavendish bananas to Dole-Stanfilco are tied to long-term contracts for a fixed buying price of only US\$2.50 per box of bananas (1 box = 13 kg).<sup>21</sup>

Government prides of employment generated by these agri-plantations, but such plantation crops can usually create work for only one person per hectare of land. For rubber plantations, employment generated relative to the plantation area can be as low as one (1) worker for every three (3) hectares.

Plantations have bred many forms of precarious employment. Big companies have generally kept regular employees at a minimum, and continue to hire more contractual or seasonal workers through manpower cooperatives. Dolefil in Polomolok, South Cotabato which employs around 20,000 workers has less than 4,000 regular employees.<sup>22</sup>

Many other forms of subcontracting and the middlemen or “kabo” system continue to exist in plantations. Because of unfair contracts between small growers and buyers, growers are unable to provide for minimum

**Table 2. Minimum wage rates of plantation workers in each Mindanao region\***

REGION	MINIMUM WAGE RATES OF PLANTATION WORKERS (IN PHP)
Zamboanga Peninsula	235-255
Northern Mindanao	291-306
Davao Region	307
SOCCSKSARGEN	257
CARAGA	268
ARMM	250

\*As of October 2015 from the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC)

**BITTER FRUITS.** *Fruits of labor are bitter for Filipino workers slaving away for foreign interests in their own land. Giant transnational and multinational companies practically dictate land use over 500,000+ hectares in Mindanao. Vast agricultural plantations yield tons and tons of pineapples, cavendish bananas and other fresh produce for export, along with processed sugarcane, palm oil and rubber used as raw materials for mostly foreign-owned products.*



standards to workers they employ. It is not uncommon that workers under small growers receive pay as low as fifty percent of the already meager minimum wage rate.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, plantation companies like Dole, FPPI and Sumifru have clear records of trade union rights violations like union busting among others.<sup>24</sup>

Child labor and unemployment among women are also relatively high in plantations. In oil palm plantations in CARAGA, a 2012 study reported that one (1) out of every four (4) workers is below 18 years old.<sup>25</sup> Similar situations occur in banana plantations in Davao del Norte and sugarcane plantations in Bukidnon. Women have limited work opportunities especially in oil palm plantations as the prevalent work type is physically strenuous.

The state through the military and other security forces have been violating rights of the people through continued harassment, vilification and even killings to protect the interests of these corporate plantations. Gilbert Paborada, a leader of the Higaonon

**UNSAFE.** Harmful agrichemicals such as Furan, Glyphosate and Paraquat are used in vast agricultural plantations. Many workers wear only these worn-out or flimsy overalls and do not have complete safety gear. Agrichemicals pose grave health hazards not only to agricultural workers directly handling these toxic materials but also to entire communities exposed to aerial spraying and affected by the contamination of land, air and surrounding water systems.

tribe who strongly opposed the expansion of oil palm plantations, was killed on October 3, 2012 in relation to the expansion of ABERDI (A. Brown) in Opol, Misamis Oriental.<sup>26</sup> The independent and militant trade union in Dolefil, Polomolok experienced intense vilification and harassment by the military as part of the previous administration's counter-insurgency program.

The existence and target expansion of plantations in Mindanao pose serious threats to the environment and health of the people living within and working in the plantations. It has been proven that the use of pesticides and other chemicals cause skin and respiratory diseases in workers in oil palm, banana and even pineapple plantations.<sup>27</sup>

Altering the natural landscape (i.e. flattening of mountains) and denudation of natural forests to be replaced with agri-plantation crops also prove to have negative impact on soil erosion, biodiversity and sources of water. Plantation-scale production for the export market endangers traditional food sources, local food crops and the survival of heirloom varieties. Continued expansion of agricultural plantations in Mindanao immensely affects the country's food production, contributing to the problem of hunger and poverty.



# STOP MILITARIZATION AND PLUNDER!

## RESIST EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL PLANTATIONS IN MINDANAO!

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Data culled from Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) url: [agstat.psa.gov.ph](http://agstat.psa.gov.ph)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2014. *The Changing Role of Multinational Companies in the Global Banana Trade*. Rome: FAO. url: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/019/i3746e/i3746e.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Philippine Rural Development Project. October 2014. *Value Chain Analysis and Competitiveness Strategy: Crumb Rubber, Mindanao*. Mindanao: Department of Agriculture. URL: [http://drive.daprdp.net/iplan/vca/VCA%20of%20Crumb%20Rubber%20\(Mindanao\).pdf](http://drive.daprdp.net/iplan/vca/VCA%20of%20Crumb%20Rubber%20(Mindanao).pdf)

<sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. September 2014. *Value Chain Analysis and Competitiveness Strategy: Oil Palm, Mindanao*. Mindanao: Department of Agriculture. URL: [http://drive.daprdp.net/iplan/vca/Oil%20Palm%20VCA%20\(MINDANAO%20CLUSTER\).pdf](http://drive.daprdp.net/iplan/vca/Oil%20Palm%20VCA%20(MINDANAO%20CLUSTER).pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Philippine Rural Development Project. November 2014. *Value Chain Analysis and Competitiveness Strategy: Crumb Cacao, Mindanao*. Mindanao: Department of Agriculture. URL: <http://drive.daprdp.net/>

[iplan/vca/Cacao%20Beans%20VCA%20\(MINDANAO%20CLUSTER\).pdf](http://iplan/vca/Cacao%20Beans%20VCA%20(MINDANAO%20CLUSTER).pdf)

<sup>8</sup> FAO, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> PRDP. September 2014.

<sup>11</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. October 2014.

<sup>12</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. November 2014.

<sup>13</sup> culled from BAS

<sup>14</sup> *Business Mirror*. April 25, 2014.

“Philippines: Dole to expand plantation area to meet new markets” from Fresh Plaza website. URL: <http://www.freshplaza.com/article/120256/Philippines-Dole-to-expand-plantation-area-to-meet-new-markets>

<sup>15</sup> *Business Mirror*. August 25, 2015.

“Unifrutti establishes 2,600ha Philippine banana farm” from Fresh Fruit Portal website. URL: <http://www.freshfruitportal.com/news/2015/08/25/unifrutti-establishes-2600ha-philippine-banana-farm/?country=philippines>

<sup>16</sup> Philippine Agricultural Development and Commercial Corporation as cited in Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. No date. “Investment Opportunity in Sugarcane Plantation” from Philexport website url: [http://www.philexport.ph/c/document\\_](http://www.philexport.ph/c/document_)

[library/get\\_file?uid=8f3ab5f7-ae8a-48f0-804b-9d2f47419a6b&groupid=127524](http://library/get_file?uid=8f3ab5f7-ae8a-48f0-804b-9d2f47419a6b&groupid=127524)

<sup>17</sup> Lumawag, Ruel John. December 31, 2013. “150,000 hectares of cacao plantations eyed in 2020” from Sun Star Davao URL: <http://archive.sunstar.com.ph/davao/business/2013/12/31/150000-hectares-cacao-plantations-eyed-2020-321177>

<sup>18</sup> *Business Mirror* as cited in Philippine Rubber Industry Association, April 8, 2014. “Rubber, Coffee and Cacao Plantation expansion in Mindanao from PRIA website URL: [http://www.philippinerubber.com/entries/newsletters/\\*\\*rubber-coffee-and-cacao-plantations-expansion-in-mindanao\\*\\*](http://www.philippinerubber.com/entries/newsletters/**rubber-coffee-and-cacao-plantations-expansion-in-mindanao**)

<sup>19</sup> Bernie Magkilat. December 26, 2013. “Oil palm industry roadmap drafted to develop 56,641 hectares” from Manila Bulletin website. URL: <http://www.mb.com.ph/oil-palm-industry-roadmap-drafted-to-develop-56641-hectares/>

<sup>20</sup> Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR). 2012. *Children of the Sunshine Industry*. Quezon City: CTUHR.

<sup>21</sup> CTUHR and Nonoy Librado Development Foundation Inc. (NLDFI). 2012. *The Labour and Environmental Situation in Philippine Banana Plantations*

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<sup>23</sup> CTUHR and NLDF. 2012.

<sup>24</sup> CTUHR Documentation.

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<sup>26</sup> Rural Missionaries of the Philippines NMR. Oct. 4, 2012. “Quick Facts on the Killing of IP Leader Gilbert Paborada” from the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines website URL: <http://www.humanrightphilippines.net/2012/10/quick-facts-on-the-killing-of-ip-leader-gilbert-paborada/>

<sup>27</sup> Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PAN-AP). March 2007. “Stop Trading Away Workers Lives for Palm Oil Profits!” from PAN Asia Pacific website URL: <http://www.panap.net/en/p/post/pesticides/331>

## Planting Hunger

*For the thousands of farmworkers toiling in sugarcane estates such as Hacienda Luisita, Hacienda Roxas or in the sugarland Negros, this anguished narrative is all too familiar.*



*AN ERRANT SIGNPOST  
interrupts the stretch of  
sugarcane fields in Butong,  
Quezon, Bukidnon in Mindanao,  
which is only a few kilometers  
away from the imposing facade  
of the Bukidnon Sugar Company,  
Inc. or Busco, one of the biggest  
sugar mills in the country.*

In other such haciendas, sugar workers call this interlude the *tiempo muerto*. It is dead season, and the bare quiet along the endless dirtroad seems to be the nagging hunger of farmworkers as they wait for the cane to grow. This painful lull of idleness will be broken by their hard toil when harvest time finally comes along.

Fifteen years after a collective land reform certificate was awarded to sugarcane farmworkers in Hacienda Carmen through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), the so-called beneficiaries are still slaving away as *tapaseros* or cane cutters. They are barred from cultivating their own land and growing their own food.

The area marked with a “NO TRESPASSING” signpost is now a barren field stretching a few hundred hectares towards the massive mountain ranges of Bukidnon. The former sugarcane hacienda is now claimed by a corporate agricultural plantation.

The land is reserved for pineapples.

In an interview with UMA, Mang Arnel, one of the original Hacienda Carmen agrarian reform beneficiaries, says theirs is a long and painful story. But for the thousands of farmworkers toiling in sugarcane estates such as Hacienda Luisita, Hacienda Roxas or in the sugarland Negros, this anguished narrative is all too familiar.



## BOGUS LAND REFORM

In February 2000, 52 out of the total 130 farmworkers in Hacienda Carmen were initially awarded a 288-hectare parcel through a collective Certificate of Land Ownership Award or mother CLOA.

The beneficiaries were eventually organized by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) as the South East Sugar Workers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (SESWMPC) where non-government organizations and so-called development groups closely linked with government agencies have brokered agricultural projects using land reform funds. The SESWMPC held the collective certificate for 319.47 hectares. If distributed, each beneficiary would hold 2.19 hectares of land.

The Hacienda Carmen sugarcane estate was assessed by the DAR and the Land Bank to have a market value so high each beneficiary would be obliged to pay the government almost a million pesos for their individual parcel. Under the CARP, the government must pay “just compensation” to the landlords which will eventually be sourced from amortization payments of beneficiaries. Amortization must be completed for a period of 30 years before beneficiaries could finally own the parcels of land awarded through land reform.

Farmers lament that these obligations are utterly inappropriate without adequate government support for their agricultural production. Each beneficiary was compelled to pay the Land Bank a yearly amortization of Php 27,813. After only three years of bad harvests and debt traps, it was estimated that 99% of the beneficiaries in Hacienda Carmen cannot fulfill these heavy payments.

Without any assistance from the government or its patently bogus land reform program, some of the beneficiaries were compelled to pawn their lands. Wealthy landlords and sugar planters saw the hapless and impoverished beneficiaries as easy prey. By 2003, beneficiaries were coerced to enter into lease agreements where they were paid Php 5,000 per hectare per year – an amount that Mang Arnel claims is not even enough to cover their yearly amortization obligations.

By 2008, the annual rent went as high as Php 15,000 per hectare. But as the sugar planters dictated the terms of these lease agreements, the supposed land reform beneficiaries have totally lost effective control over their awarded parcels.

At first, the beneficiaries were hired as farmhands in their own land until eventually, the sugar planters hauled in their own people to do work for cheaper wages. Before long, some of the beneficiaries were duped to sell their lands to unscrupulous buyers evading CARP restrictions through dubious waivers.

By 2012, the Land Bank and the DAR warned beneficiaries that the awarded land reform certificate will soon be cancelled because of their failure to pay amortization. By this time, the empty threat mouthed by these insincere and irresponsible government institutions was just like rubbing salt on their open wounds.

### BITTER PINEAPPLE

The shady deals forged by sugar planters with individual beneficiaries have now allowed the entry of giant agribusiness firms. According to Mang Arnel, wealthy sugar planters with the collusion of local government officials have entered Hacienda Carmen through a 15-year contract with DAVCO, without the knowledge of residents and land reform beneficiaries in the area.

The Davao Agri-Ventures Corporation, Inc. or DAVCO, a firm established by the late agribusiness mogul Antonio Floirendo Sr. and now headed by his son, Antonio Floirendo Jr., is notorious for encroaching into peasant and *lumad* or indigenous peoples' communities in Bukidnon as part of its aggressive and seemingly uninterrupted expansion thrust.

Originally engaged in fresh banana production, the Floriendos own the Tagum Development Corporation or TADECO which controls vast banana plantations with complete processing facilities in Davao del Norte. Since then, the corporation has ventured into several businesses including pineapple production. With its enterprise with global fruit giant Del Monte, DAVCO exports an average of at least 8.5 million boxes of Del Monte gold pineapples per year, sold to trading partners in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, the Middle East and New Zealand.

Since last year, Hacienda Carmen land reform beneficiaries with support from advocates and peasant groups such as Kahugpungan sa mga Mag-uuma (Farmers Association) or Kasama-Bukidnon, affiliated with the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and the Organisasyon sa Yanong Obrerong Nagkahiusa (Organization of United Farmworkers) or Ogyon, UMA's local affiliate in Bukidnon province, barricaded the area from DAVCO and embarked on a land cultivation initiative to produce food for the community such as corn, peanuts, cassava and other root crops.

## Shady deals forged by sugar planters with individual beneficiaries have now allowed the entry of giant agribusiness firms.

Farmers set up and manned the barricades unfazed. Even while engaged in production, farmers were constantly threatened and harassed by armed goons employed by DAVCO.

Earlier this year, after two successful harvests by the farmers, the company's bulldozers rolled in into their plots and completely destroyed their precious food crops.

The DAR Adjudication Board has finally intervened – but in favor of the pineapple plantation. Charges were slapped against farmers, barring them from their own land as bitterly prompted by the menacing “NO TRESPASSING” signpost.

This kind of violence – spawned by bogus land reform and impunity – is planting hunger among the country's food producers.<sup>^</sup>



### General Program of Action

The **REAP Mindanao Network**, functioning as coordinating center of efforts, struggles and campaigns of various sectors, organizations and institutions resisting expansion of agricultural plantations in Mindanao, shall:

1. Initiate scientific studies in support of plantation-affected communities of Mindanao. Mobilize experts and/or coordinate efforts among individuals, groups and institutions for fact-finding missions, documentation, investigative reporting, credible research and study on the impact of corporate plantations in focus areas. Initiate or assist in production, publication and dissemination of documentary videos, printed primers, mission reports, infographics and other information materials. >>>

## <<< *General Program of Action*

2. Conduct education campaigns to raise public awareness on the impact of corporate agricultural plantations in Mindanao through fora, round-table discussions, dialogues, public exhibits, and other means.
3. Highlight effects of corporate plantations in Mindanao by increasing mainstream media visibility through news releases, circulation of urgent alerts and social media presence.
4. Conduct lobbying work in local and national institutions such as local government units, legislative bodies, national government agencies, and others for dialogues, investigations and hearings to forge resolutions and legislation for the welfare of sectors and communities affected by corporate agricultural plantations in Mindanao.
5. Oppose expansion of agricultural plantations in Mindanao through mass actions and active mobilization of local, national and international communities and groups.
6. Conduct solidarity activities to support local mass actions in areas affected by Mindanao plantations, as well as related national and international efforts to tackle urgent issues regarding national patrimony, human rights, land reform and the environment.
7. Muster international solidarity for the people of Mindanao affected by corporate plantations. Forge alliances with like-minded organizations in other countries, and maximize networking with international human rights organizations and relevant UN bodies to generate action and support for the local movement against expansion of plantations in Mindanao.

## VOLUNTEER NOW!



*Field Research & Documentation*  
*Education & Public Information Drive*  
*Production of Publications & Information Materials*  
*Campaigns, Mass Action & Lobbying*  
*Solidarity Activities*

**NAME**

**AFFILIATION** (SCHOOL / OFFICE)

**E-MAIL / MAILING ADDRESS**

**CONTACT NUMBERS**

**TWITTER HANDLE**

I want to volunteer for the  
REAP Mindanao Network because...



# Contact Our Secretariat

## MANILA

### UNYON NG MGA MANGGAGAWA SA AGRIKULTURA (UMA)

#56 K-9th St., West Kamias Quezon City 1102 Philippines  
URL: [www.umapilipinas.wordpress.com](http://www.umapilipinas.wordpress.com)  
email: [uma.pilipinas@gmail.com](mailto:uma.pilipinas@gmail.com)  
Telefax +63 (02) 799 2009



## MINDANAO

### RURAL MISSIONARIES OF THE PHILIPPINES Northern Mindanao Sub-Region (RMP-NMR)

Room 01, Kalinaw Lanao Center for Interfaith Resources  
0016 Bougainvillea Puti, Villaverde  
9200 Iligan City, Philippines  
URL: [www.rmp-nmr.org](http://www.rmp-nmr.org)  
email: [info@rmp-nmr.org](mailto:info@rmp-nmr.org)  
Telefax No: +63 (63) 223 5179



email: [reap.mindanao@gmail.com](mailto:reap.mindanao@gmail.com)  
tel. # : (02) 799.2009



REAP Mindanao Network



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**#StopLumadKillings**



**MINDANAO NETWORK**

**STOP MILITARIZATION AND PLUNDER!  
RESIST EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL PLANTATIONS IN MINDANAO!**

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