

# **Cooperative Education Report**

Title: Advocating the world's oldest profession Agriculture

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Title: Advocating the world's oldest profession Agriculture

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We have approved this cooperative report as a partial fulfillment of the cooperative education program semester 2/2017

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Abstract

This internship is conducted at AGREA Agricultural Systems international, Inc., which is an enterprise working to help eradicate poverty for farming and fishing families based in Marinduque

Philippines. One of the major objectives of the company is to help establish food security in the

Philippines with its innovative models such as the model for the 'one-island economy'. AGREA aims

to reach its objectives by mobilizing communities, and other related parties to bring an 'Ecology of

Dignity' (AGREA, n.d.).

However, working in the field of agriculture is difficult. It is often seen as a tedious work, and

youths see lesser value in pursuing the profession. While the world population is ever increasing with

an ageing agricultural workforce, food security seems a massive challenge. It has been predicted that by

2050, we would require twice the food to be produced, but how can this be possible if the agricultural

workforce is ever ageing. This is why I chose to do internship at AGREA.

The challenges are massive and getting youths interested in agriculture would mean challenges

such as food security can be tackled. But to get youths interested in agriculture, the field must be more

appealing to them. In my internship, I helped formulated various communication strategies and

marketing tactics to help make agriculture more appealing to the youth. The task was to make agriculture

more elegant than it seemed in the past, and move its image from being a tedious and a so called 'back-

breaking' job.

Keywords: agriculture / food security / communities

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Ishan Bista

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#### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

#### 1.1 Company Profile

AGREA is an agriculture based company established in November, 2014 from Marinduque, Philippines. AGREA aims to help eradicate poverty for the farming and fishing families in the same region. AGREA moves forward with the aim to help alleviate the effects of climate change and to help establish food security in the Philippines (AGREA, n.d.).

The name AGREA is a compound of two words 'Agriculture' and 'Gaea' (which means Earth or Mother Earth in Greek). AGREA is an innovative inclusive social agricultural enterprise founded on the pillars of fair-trade and sustainable agriculture.

The company is based in Marinduque in the Philippines. The island is called the 'Heart of the Philippines' and is located in the South Western Tagalog region or MIMAROPA. In the past few years, AGREA has been mobilizing communities, businesses, academia, local and national government, international partners, and keen individuals to bring an 'Ecology of Dignity' to farming and fishing communities in the island of Marinduque (AGREA, n.d.). AGREA runs 'Ecology of Dignity' as one of their main values.

#### 1.2 Organizational Structure

President and Founding Farmer – Cherrie De Erit Atilano
Director of Agricultural Abundance - Jonathan C. Quinto
Director of Rapport and Communications - Rafael Constantino R. Seño
Director of Agribusiness and Farm Management – Benjamin Jorge L. Cadag
Associate Director of Social Programs – Vanessa Leah F. Nicopior
Capacity Building Program Coordinator – Lorie M. Licop
International Collaborations Officer – Miguel Codiñera
Administrative and Finance Head – Mary Ann Reyes
Administrative and Finance Officer – Mary Claire O. Limpiada

#### 1.3 Statement of the report

Agriculture is the world's oldest profession, but has been neglected for a long time. People feel that farming is a tedious job making the whole sector unattractive. The average age of a farmer is going up with 58.3 years in the

United States, 59 years in the United Kingdom, 57 years in the Philippines, and 51 years in Thailand as an example (Nations F. a., 2014). Young people find the sector unattractive leading to lesser people getting involved in agriculture. It is estimated that the world population will grow to 9.7 billion by 2050 which raises major doubts on food security of the world as the younger generation do not want to get into agriculture (Affairs, 2015).

The problem summed up into a sentence would be as follows:

"Food security is the single biggest challenge for the future as the younger generation find agriculture an unattractive sector."

#### 1.4 Objective

The objectives from my internship are enlisted below:

- i. To help advocate AGREA's aim of eradicating poverty for farming and fishing families
  - AGREA moves forward with an aim to eradicate poverty for farming and fishing families in the Philippines. This acts as the company's ultimate goal or the vision. At the moment, AGREA is working with such families in an island called Marinduque in the Philippines. My objective is to help AGREA move forward with their goal through the means of communication.
- ii. To help advocate AGREA's aim of alleviating the effects of climate change
  - Climate change has hampered crop science to a larger extend. Rising temperature and problems with the clean water sources came as a result from climate change, which is adversely affecting the possibilities for utmost production of fruits and vegetables, and sustainable agriculture. With communications as a mean, I would like to help attract more youths in to the field to collectively fight to alleviate the effects of climate change.
- iii. To help advocate the concerns present regarding food security
  - Food security concerns are major in today's world. The problem is believed to increase majorly in the next few decades, but no one realizes it. People have a believe that the problem is over exaggerated and can be solved easily. I would like to use communications as a means to help improve the awareness of the problem and raise concerns. The problem needs to be addressed immediately and I would like to help advocate it.

- iv. To help promote agriculture as an attractive field for the younger generation
  - There is a perspective attached to farming that it is a tedious, intensive and low-wage job (Boucher, 2016). This is why youths are moving away from agriculture, and taking up other profession. Philippines used to be an agricultural country, but the younger generation are not taking up the field anymore. The world population is projected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, and there is no one to produce food for so many people (Nations U., 2015). For this reason, I would like to use communications as a mean to help promote agriculture as an attractive field for the younger generation.
- v. To seek/search for the possibilities/opportunities of educating the younger generation about agriculture
  - AGREA runs many workshops and trainings for the youths and local farmers. I would also like to help the workshops and trainings, and give my inputs as to how communications can be used to improve the workshops and trainings.

#### 1.5 Expected outcomes

With the internship, the expected outcomes for me are given as bellows:

- i. Contribution in helping establish a better livelihood for farmers and fisher folks.
  - The farmers and fisher folks in Marinduque in the Philippines do not have a very good livelihood. The expected outcome of my internship would be to see my contribution work positively in helping these families achieve a better livelihood through AGREA's model.
- ii. Youths getting educated about the important issues (regarding agriculture and food security) and problems to help bring them into limelight, and find solutions for them.
  - The youths are generally unaware about problems related to food security, or neglect the problem most of the time. I would like to emphasize communications as a means to educate the youths about the problems, and also how one could find a solution working with AGREA's model. The youths starting to get more attracted towards agriculture would be my expected outcome.
- iii. Contribution in helping agriculture appeal to the youth.

 Communications as a mean can be used to make agriculture more appealing and attracting. I would like to highlight the better part of agriculture to get youths more involved in agriculture. This is something that AGREA had been working on, and I with my contributions would like to see youths getting more involved in agriculture as an expected outcome.

iv. Getting acquainted with the practices, culture, and behavior of Filipino farmers and fishing folks.

• I would also expect my self-learning about Filipino's practices, cultures, and behavior. I would expect myself to get acquainted with why they are doing what they do, and how they earn their daily livelihood. This would give me a global perspective about agriculture.

#### 1.6 Scope of the Study

As a requirement for the Bachelors in Business Administration (BBA), I am doing my internship at a company called AGREA Agricultural Systems International Inc. AGREA is based in Marinduque, Philippines. My study will strictly be a representation of the practices in Marinduque from primary information, but will possess a holistic global view from the reference of secondary information.

Marinduque is an island province in the Philippines located in Southwestern Tagalog Region or MIMAROPA. The island has a population of 236,594 and a land area of 959.25 sq.km. Coconut production and fishing is the main source of livelihood for an agricultural family. Besides this, farmers are involved in livestock and poultry, production of rice, production of crops (like bananas, root crops, mangoes, etc.), butterfly breeding, and others.

## **Chapter 2: Literature reviews**

# 2.1 Main theory and concept applied alongside with the given job descriptions

The internship at AGREA Agricultural International Systems, Inc. allows an application of the classroom learnt theories to be transformed into real life practices.

Some of the theories and concept that were applied during the internship are enlisted below:

i. Social media marketing and promotions is the easiest way to reach the audience/ Content marketing makes it easier to gain the attention of the audience

The internship includes various tasks directing to research about the various news and activities in the field of agriculture. As an intern for AGREA, my responsibility includes pushing out these materials into the social media pages of the company. Social media marketing focuses on providing users with content they find valuable and want to share it, resulting in increased visibility and traffic. This type of marketing also is an example of content marketing as it allows the emphasis of education over the promotion of the company. This is a very strategic approach to create the appropriate space for AGREA among its customers. And in today's time, social media marketing has been one of the easiest and the most efficient way to reach your target audience.

### ii. Cobranding between two companies increases outputs and efficiency

The internship allows a cobranding opportunities as AGREA indulges in many trainings, workshops, and seminars. These programs, generally, are an effort between two or more institutions (i.e one being AGREA). Many times AGREA collaborates or does combinable work with other organization to increase the output as more organization can share their resources and audience to generate greater results. Cobranding/ mergers/ partnerships are popular all over the world in any competitive scenario as combined efforts help generate greater outputs and overcome obstacles easily.

#### iii. Agriculture needs to overcome cognitive dissonance as stated in its theory

This is kind of a case of an oxymoron. While there are people who believe food security is a major concern, majority of the people have enough food for themselves on the plate. In this scenario, it is very difficult to make people believe that food security is a major concern. So, in the internship it was very important for me to beat this psychological thinking of the general person. Cognitive Dissonance is the psychological conflict that results from holding two

contradictory or incompatible beliefs or attitudes (Olasile, 2012). Only when agriculture overcomes the cognitive dissonance theory, people will start taking food security seriously.

#### iv. Agenda Setting Theory is very important to gain and retain the audience

Agenda Setting Theory believes how much attention a news story receives can determine what the audience considers newsworthy (Olasile, 2012). While working with communications and marketing for AGREA, it was very important to take a look at what AGREA's audience preferred in the past. These were crucial factors to build in the future as well. If AGREA moves away from such agendas or strategies, chances are that it might lose its current audience. The chances are that it might also not gain the type of audience that it wants to.

#### v. Social learning theory is most effective when working with communities

It is not possible to give directional orders to community to get optimum results. Local communities in provinces take time and work best when they work with each other. The theory also tells that people learn mostly from each other including the other person's behaviors, attitudes, and emotions. This should be taken as a very important factor when building a project through the community.

The internship stated to be in the field of communications addresses marketing needs and marketing opportunities. With the internship, my aim is to help market or sell off poverty for farmers and help them establish a better livelihood for themselves. Through the implementation and analysis of various theories and concepts learnt in class, we could understand more why the communities work and behave in a certain manner.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

#### 3.1 Roles and responsibilities assigned by company

Job Role: Development Communication Intern

The AGREA Development Communication Intern is responsible to apply the means of communication in development initiatives. The aim of this program would be to become a high-caliber communication professional in the future. The intern needs to focus on assisting the development and implementation of AGREA's communications plan which includes online activities. The intern is also responsible for helping manage the public relation aspect within and also, outside the organization. The intern is responsible to help build and sustain AGREA's reputation for integrity, quality, reliability, and customers, stakeholders, and partners' satisfaction using the means of communication.

#### **Primary Responsibility**

- Create, update, and release all sorts of content (Online such as social media and website write-ups, graphics, videos, etc.) on tight deadlines.
- Take the role as resident interviewer and note-taker for all things newsworthy.
- Take the responsibility as the author of press releases and articles. Also, assist in handling the events.
- Write various articles that assists AGREA in advocating the issues that AGREA is committed for.

#### Secondary Responsibilities

- Create visuals using online tools and software applications.
- Directly collaborate with the Director of Rapport and Communications, as well as other department heads in order to conceptualize, develop, research, and implement narratives that are aligned with the company's vision, mission, goals and objective as an innovative social enterprise.

## **Chapter 4: Result and Discussion**

#### 4.1 Contribution of student made during the internship

The contribution made during the internship was focused on 'Development Communications'. Along this, contributions in many other departments were also made.

The internship responsibility asked whoever filling in the position as the intern to take up the following responsibilities:

- Create, send, update, copy-read, and release all sorts of content (online such as social media and website write-ups, events-related communication, graphics, videos, etc.)
- Act as the resident interviewer and note-taker for all things newsworthy, and be the author of press releases and articles. Also, act as an extra hand in handling events.
- Create visuals to reflect AGREA's on goings with regards to AGREA's vision and mission.
- Conceptualize, develop, and research, and implement narratives that are aligned with the company's vision, mission, goals, and objectives as an innovative social enterprise.

With respect to the enlisted responsibilities, I was able to successfully make the following contributions during the internship:

- Researching for various materials to prepare for social media (majorly Facebook) postings for AGREA was one of the major contribution that I made. As a part of my task, I created a database which included various articles from various writers, facts, and figures to help promote sustainable agriculture through AGREA's social media. The articles were majorly related to youths, and the recent innovations/practices in agriculture.

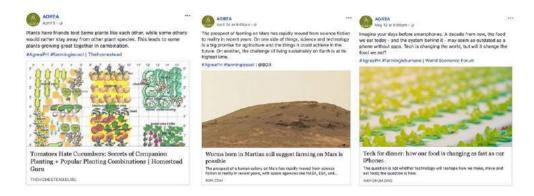


Figure 1: Social Media Posts prepared for AGREA

- Another similar contribution that I was able to make during my internship was promoting AGREA's event Leaders in Entrepreneurship and Agricultural Forum (LEAF 2018). I prepared various contents which included graphics, and informative articles to help promote the event through the means of social media. The research was based on 3 sectors – agripreneurship, agritechnology, and agritourism.

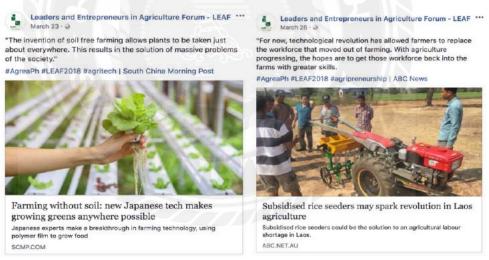


Figure 2: Social Media post prepared for AGREA's event Leaders in Entrepreneurship and Agricultural Forum (LEAF 2018)

My contributions for the company also included various blogs that I wrote for AGREA's website. I wrote blogs on various topics that were related to the contemporary agricultural scene. The task required me to interview many farmers as well as other members involved to gain an insight towards the topic. One of the article/blog that I wrote for the company even got published in the company's website and was

promoted through the company's social media. The article was entitled 'The 8 things you need to know when starting an organic farm'.



Figure 3: Blog wrote for AGREA's website

Along with the articles, I also used to click photographs of the crops growing in the farm and write about these crops. These write-ups used to be included in the 'fresh-pick' section of AGREA's website.



Figure 4: Fresh-pick section is AGREA's website

I was also able to capture various moments in AGREA's daily work schedules for promotions via social media. The photos that I used to capture used to reflect AGREA in their day-to-day activities. I was able to capture moments such as farmers in their daily work, the farm with

the crops, the students studying at the farm school as well as doing their practical work, farmers in their training programs and a lot of similar activities.



Figure 5: Photographs on AGREA's Facebook

- My contribution included a lot of research regarding information that AGREA required. It included research for events like 'Coffee talk show about sustainable coffee farming' where I researched for the venues and the content of the program, 'Sustainability Summit' where I researched about the content's structure to help make it more relevant and reliable, and research about venues for the event 'Leaders in Agriculture Forum (LEAF 2018)'. I was that extra-hand for AGREA to help polish the information and research.
- I also used to figure out leads (contact details) about various people from various companies to help AGREA with their programs, talk shows, and events. I helped form a communication directory for AGREA to help smoothen their operations.
- I was also able to assist in the Enrollment Day and Job Bridging program that AGREA took part at Marinduque State College. The main aim of the program was to attract more youths into agriculture as a full-time career.



Figure 6: Setup during the Enrollment Day and Job Bridging

- I along with my supervisor was also able to prepare a marketing strategy plan for AGREA to adopt for 2 months. The plan included how to get more viewers for the social media of AGREA and how to make agriculture more attractive to youths.
- I was one of the facilitators for the event YSEALI GROW 2.0. GROW 2.0 is an event/workshop sponsored by the US Embassy Manila and run by AGREA. During this week-long event/workshop, I helped prepare necessary materials for the sessions, helped facilitate the sessions, acted as the record-keeper for the event/workshop, helped in the documentation of the event/workshop, and helped prepare the final report for the event/workshop. The event/workshop was initiated with the purpose to educate the younger generation about the prospects of agriculture, and help them navigate their way.



Figure 7: YSEALI GROW pictures with the participants

Alongside these contributions which directly fall under my responsibilities, I was also able to make several other contributions to AGREA during my internship. The contributions are enlisted below:

- I was able to help AGREA with the routinely documentation tasks. I helped consolidate various evaluations from various students at the farm school, and helped document various activities that AGREA took the initiation in.
- I also helped in the preparation and packaging on AGREA's coco sugar. AGREA produces their own line of coco sugar for commercial purposes. They produce a total of 200 Kgs of coco sugar every week, which needs supervision before going to the market. I was an extra-hand for the supervision.
- I also helped prepare an inventory management system for the systematical arrangement of AGREA's assets and inventories. This was done with the purpose to help keep track of various items that the company has.

# 4.2 Details of related learning process and new knowledge student has received

The internship was very productive for me. It helped me stretch my limitations to shape myself in any possible given situation. The first and foremost biggest learning experience for me would be to work in a different situation to what I was used to. Marinduque, Philippines was a new destination and agriculture was a new field. Getting used to the arena of agriculture required lots of effort and adaptation.

Along this, I was able to give value to the field of agriculture and see its importance in a larger scale. I learnt a lot about agriculture, and more about agriculture in the Filipino context. I learnt about the possibilities of various agriculture products in the Philippines. With AGREA, we were working on a project to produce turmeric. A place called Malibago in Marinduque, Philippines had a lot of possibility for the crop. I learnt how projects as such as formulated and worked upon from the ground level. I learnt to attach the ground level work to the outside world. In AGREA, we used to be working with a lot of farmers, and my task was to make their work more appealing to the youths in the Philippines to get them attracted towards pursuing agriculture as a full time profession. Formulating strategies to materialize such possibilities are one of the major learnings that I took from the internship.

My learnings were under the supervision of my supervisor Rafael Seño and the CEO of AGREA Cherrie D. Atilano. They were very helpful, and tried involving me in most of the tasks to help me learn more.

The world is said to reach around 10 billion populations by 2050, and most of our farmers are ageing. Food security is a global concern which needs to be addressed urgently. This is where AGREA works on. AGREA's projects like the 'One island economy' has taught the importance of any place or a country being self-sufficient to produce its own food. This also acts as a major player in the economy. The internship has broadened my view on agriculture and allowed me to give it a distinct look. The possibilities it holds are immense. Farmers not only get their job done, but feed the world which is why the profession is also called a noble profession.

Another of my major learnings at AGREA would be related to the fusion of technology in agriculture. The world is moving into the technological path, and there is no way back. We are surrounded by tech, and our lives do not seem possible without it. With AGREA, I was able to learn the possibilities of improving agriculture with technology. This could range from various activities such as monitoring crops using drones, using various productions models, innovative irrigation system, or the use of AI. This makes the agriculture seem 'more-hip'. As a communication intern, I used technology in agriculture to formulate communications to help attract and appeal to the youth.

The internship was very fruitful, and was a multi-dimensional teacher. Along specifics related to agriculture, I also learnt a lot about Filipino culture and Filipino people. Being a part of AGREA as a Development Communication Intern, I was very satisfied that I was helping promote a social cause, I was helping market food security and farmers out of poverty.

#### **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

#### 5.1 Self-assessment as future professional

The internship was very fruitful, and full of teachings. Taking the internship somewhere else from my home country was a challenge for me, and took some times to get used to. Once I got used to it, I started performing. Marketing and communications have always been my forte. I believe I perform better at the sector, and create innovative creative strategies to reach the target customers. This is what I did at AGREA. My supervisor at the company was very satisfied with my work, and praised me for it. This is one of the major reasons I believe I would do good as a marketing and communications professional in the future. At AGREA, I was also helping promote social issues, and these issues are even more important for me. It is a challenge on how we can do so, and this challenge helps me create excitement to perform better. I believe I would do good as a future professional. This is also because I like formulating strategies to get people positively attracted to a certain idea, and urging them to adopt the idea.

#### 5.2 Comparison of practical learning VS theory

Practical learning is very different from theory. In theory, you have a set of formulas. You have a given set of procedures, and concepts. It becomes very easy to predict what happens next if you know the theory. In practical learning, you have to be very dynamic. Situations do not remain the same, and might change the very second. One must be fully ready to adapt to any situation at any given time. A lot of times decisions in practical learning are based upon intuitions and not theories.

Another big difference between practical learning and theory is that practical learning has a lot of external factor affecting it. It might be the people you're learning from or working from, or even any other condition. A theory remains the same in that particular situation where ever you read it.

In a theory, you read something that has been tried and tested. It comes from an experiment in the past. Whereas in the practical learning, you yourself are testing one of your theories to see if it works or not.

A good mixture of practical learning and theory is the best. When a person goes on for practical learning with a knowledge of the respective theories, he will save himself a lot of effort to not do something that is not going to work out. Theories have been tried and tested before. Knowing these would give one an upper hand towards his learning. Theories prepare a person for the practical world. This is one of the concepts that I believe in. It is never theories vs practical learning, but it will always be theories complementing practical learning or the practical learning complimenting the theory.

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