

STATUS REPORT 3 – AZAGRA FARM

The timetable has changed: the goat house construction is postponed until after we come back from the US sometime November. And the reason is because our order for long “gu-od” (thick base-bamboo) for the posts has not materialized, perhaps because of the rains (the bamboo source is in the mountains), but more so because Nitoy paid the party in advance and they are dilly-dallying (over a month) in delivery. We are trying to get the money back, the equivalent of \$50, or we just have Nitoy keep badgering them.



Left photo shows the newly-buried water line running to the goat shed site, shown in center picture above with stakes demarcating where the posts are to be. Right photo shows the coco-lumber to be used, recently sawed up in site from the 4 coconut trunks that were felled. Regular bamboo poles are seen further away.

Other construction developments: we have agreed to help Nitoy rebuild their toilet which had failed



recently; we provide the materials for the new septic tank, walls, roof, etc and they in turn provide their own labor. Left photo shows the partially completed septic tank, filled with water from the unseasonally early rains. On the other hand, these rains insure that the “tuba-tuba” plants placed

alongside the barbed wire fence (above picture) take root more readily, even without having to water them from the faucets we provided for the newly planted mango seedlings nearby. I don’t think we ever will have enough tuba-tuba to extract bio-diesel fuel from. There’s a huge plantation in Bayawan of these.

Finally, we also simplified. Instead of building a separate “kamalig” hut for Junjun, Nitoy’s son, (as a chicken tender – pardon the pun), he opted to build a sleeping platform at the roof rafters of the chicken house, locally called a “lauting”. It’s all completed now and we all kiddingly admonished him that no girls are allowed there.



Also, almost a week was spent by the carpenter in building elevated rat-secure cages for the newly-hatched chicks. What we first thought was a simple screened box turned out like a row of apartments. See picture on left.

With these cages located near the open end of the chicken house, we had to have nipa awnings and extensions made for weather protection, in addition to the plastic awnings we got for rain protection of the nipa nests. Note fresh nipa awnings.

And, timing was perfect. After 18 days with 3 hens brooding on their eggs, the first four eggs hatched yesterday. At night the chicks and the mother will be placed in those enclosures.

We also bought more hens in the market last week, but this was a bad batch of 10 because three have died despite the meds William the agri-expert had administered. They have been quarantined. Also, when we were at Malubog farm the other day, we convinced one of the tenants to sell us her second “pal-it” rooster, a hybrid of the Sasso lineage that has no feathers on its neck, and reputedly is delicious. Reminds me of a vulture. See picture on right. It hasn’t as yet done any impregnation of the hens, but it should, after it gets more “acquainted” with the ladies. Social graces, you know.



After all, the big Sasso we got 2 weeks ago (on left) has become very active now; we witnessed three mountings in the one hour we were there yesterday. Wow! And to think that after a few days of non-action, I was looking at that fat rooster ravenously. Now it’s paying its keep. It had had a huge “tapay”, that red corona-like thing above its head, but Nitoy cut it off a few days ago, an SOP operation according to him, using a razor. Good thing I’m not in on SPCA stuff.

And the cows are doing OK. Seems like two of them are pregnant after the AI’s administered by William. The third cow is still too young. We are still looking for a fourth cow to purchase. But it isn’t that easy. Other owners are reluctant to part with their good stock.

We intend to have about 1 hectare plowed up in preparation for planting of “napier” grass – that special grass that is great supplement for cow feed. Nitoy already has a plot, but we have to expand it if we will have more cows. We understand that much of the napier grass here is dried and then exported to Japan for their Kobe beef. Also, William is to provide a special grass for the goats, and the second hectare will be devoted for that. All these planting will have to be done soon, as the rainy season is upon us.

Now, we have a choice on how to plow. The confraternity of farm hands/owners in the area is pretty close knit, and Nitoy has allowed the neighbor’s tractor to sometimes park in our area (as his land is full of sugar cane). So we can rent that neighbor’s tractor-services, hopefully for a discounted price. Alternately, Nitoy has a carabao and a plow, and we can pay him or someone else extra to do it manually. It’s all a matter of simple economics; no need for me to brush up on “operations research” computer programs to get the min/max and cost/time benefits. But then, doesn’t the environmental-awareness revolution make the manual way more attractive? What do you think?

Time to go back to the farm to see how the chicks fared overnight, and this time, I’ll bring my camera so I can possibly record a “contact” as I know some of you (especially Tony), is eager to see.

Ciao.

Danny, 5/27/08