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## MARSSE social enterprise . . . sustainable timber products



Marsse Tropical Timber Plantations, Incorporated is a family-owned corporation founded by Mr. Mario S. Sebastian Sr. in 1992 and duly registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in 2007. It is a family-oriented social enterprise aimed at developing sustainable tree plantations that ensure a future where the need for wood is met in harmony with nature. *It has a 20-year old mahogany plantation located at the 60-hectares land in Brgy. San Vicente, Umingan, Pangasinan. MARSSE Plantations is a properly-accredited private tree farm certified by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region I Office, San Fernando City, La Union (2007).*

MARSSE Tropical Timber produces premium wood products like peppermills, salt mills, saltshakers, kitchen and other home decors utilizing the limited number of tools and machines in the small workshop. These few equipment were acquired slowly through the years and were funded with the help of family and friends.

The limited funds restricted the number of equipment that the company aimed to acquire. This also constrained the company's capacity to develop and produce more wood products from the plantation. Its major technical constraint on production line is the seasoning/drying of its products and other specialized facility/equipment. The use of these facilities were outsourced in Agoo, La Union, or in Silang, Cavite, depending on customer location. These resulted to the firm adjusting to the schedules of these companies causing some delays in manufacturing and scheduling, high transport cost, and double handling of materials and overhead expenses. The company is spending Php 5.00 to Php 35.00 per board foot for drying and processing service, Php 12.50 additional cost is incurred for hauling and Php 3.00 for transport documentation. The quality of the finished products is also affected by the lack of the needed processing equipment. The usual processing of the firm was manual measuring and markings using steel tape.



### DOST Assistance

"We heard that DOST is helping small and medium enterprises get bigger", quipped Mario Sebastian, the President and Chief Executive Officer. We then approached the DOST office located inside the Pangasinan State University in Urdaneta City.

The Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP) was introduced to MARSSE. Production equipment necessary to improve the firm's productivity were acquired. The equipment included a 3,000 bd ft capacity timber seasoner/dryer, thickness planer, spindle moulder, belt sander, and a jointer.

Technical assistance and consultancy services on the electrical plan of the production area, appropriate plant layout/process flow and energy audit were likewise extended to MARSSE.

## Add On

The additional woodworking machines helped the company design and develop more unique products like mobile phone stands, tablet stands, wine servers, liquor shots servers and different sized serving boards. It also helped produce higher quality and better finished wood products that command higher market prices.

The SET-UP assistance also provided the means for the company to build their own kiln-drying facility to be able to dry the wood they harvest from the plantation. The company now offers wood drying services to other wood working shops in the locality.

With the development of new products, MARSSE Tropical Timber was able to join exhibits and regular bazaars in Metro Manila, like the American Women's Club, global Pinoy Bazaar, Muny Bazaar, Maarte Artisan Fairs, Balik Bukid and Christmas bazaars. Furthermore, the commercial exposure guided them to distributors like AVA.ph and Human Heart Nature to market their products nationwide.

The company launched Sustainably Made as their brand for the wood products the plantation currently manufactures. As the orders for Sustainably Made products increases the SET-UP equipment assistance helped increase their production output and cope with the market demand. As a result, 5 additional workers were employed and other employment opportunities were made available to the local community.



Finished products

*For more information, please contact DR. ARMANDO Q. GANAL, OIC– Office of the Regional Director, at Telefax Nos. (072) 888-3399 / 700-2372 or e-mail at [dostro1@dost.gov.ph](mailto:dostro1@dost.gov.ph).*



**DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**  
**Regional Office No. 1**  
DMMMSU-MLU Campus  
City of San Fernando,  
La Union 2500

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