

This all-female group is helping Cordillera farmers by bringing you their strawberry goods

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"Magtanim ay 'di biro," is a song many of us learned when we were young. But some people live it every day, growing produce, harvesting them, and then selling them so, in turn, they can have their own food on the table.



Strawberry farmer (photo by Larry P. Fabian)

This is the everyday life of the Cordillera farmers. Under the enhanced community quarantine imposed in many places in the country, selling their harvest has become a great challenge. “*Magtanim ay ’di biro* (Planting is no joke),” indeed!

Apart from local government units and the private sector giving a helping hand to the farmers, a group of young women has taken the task of providing these farmers a means of livelihood while delivering their produce to the metropolis.

Sadiwa, meaning “fresh” in Ilokano and “appreciation” in Tagalog, originally started out as a vegetable drive. Behind it are **Gian Cala**, **Maxine Carasig**, **Myrel Villa**, and **Dell Young**, and **Nikeia Salazar**. Their friendship goes way back to their high school days, but through Sadiwa, they have found a new common ground in their determination to help farmers earn a living from their hard work.

“There were several articles that said these farmers had to dispose of most of their produce since they couldn’t sell them to any customers due to the enhanced community quarantine. In some cases, they started to just leave their harvests around free of charge,” Nikeia says, “So Maxine suggested we should purchase their vegetables and donate them to a local non-government organization, FEED Ph, which delivers homecooked meals to the frontliners. In a way, it was hitting two birds with one stone and we are grateful beyond words to those who choose to help us out.”

Sadiwa has been working closely with **Eric Alvarado** (commonly known as *@FarmerInayan* on Twitter), their coordinator and partner. Together with the farmers, Eric makes sure that the goods being delivered to Metro Manila are of the best quality and they also educate the team regarding the various aspects of the produce.

https://www.instagram.com/p/B_hayFLph8O/?igshid=trgxmkks1yoy

“We wanted to extend what we have, in any way, to our farmers, who are often overlooked by society, when in fact they’re the most vital. We won’t be able to eat nutritious produce without them,” Nikeia says to *Manila Bulletin Lifestyle*. “So we wanted more people to realize just how vital their roles are. This is, in our own way, a means to express how thankful we are.”



While their initial goal is to help out farmers in need, the team also understands the vital role of having a healthy meal this time of pandemic.

“People can take part just by buying fresh produce from Sadiwa,” says Nikeia. “This initiative came from our hearts, the need to really help daily wage earners. While we are blessed with fairly comfortable lives, that doesn’t mean that we can ignore those who are worried about when their next meal will be. For now, we are only offering strawberries as well as strawberry jams. But very soon, we will also be including vegetable products. Proceeds will be given to our farmers.”

For orders, you can check Sadiwa’s Facebook and Instagram page. The strawberries are priced at P150/500g and the jam at P150/8oz and P180/12oz.

Read more: <https://lifestyle.mb.com.ph/2020/05/04/this-all-female-group-is-helping-cordillera-farmers-by-bringing-you-their-strawberry-goods/>

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