

## Face To Face

### An Interview With Mr. Paulo P. Mamangun Jr., President, Philippines Virgin Coconut Oil Association, Philippines.

Muhartoyo



*Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) industry in the Philippines is quite vibrant. It is interesting to know about the industry with a view to disseminate the information for other coconut producing countries. Muhartoyo, Documentalist, Asian and Pacific Coconut Community, and Managing Editor, COCOINFO INTERNATIONAL has successfully interviewed Mr. Paulo P. Mamangun Jr, President of Philippine Virgin Coconut Oil Association. Below is the excerpt of the interview.*

**C.I.: Mr. Mamangun, I am really pleased to have an interview with you. Can you tell me when the Philippine Virgin Coconut Oil Association began?**

Informally it was established in September 2003 but the formal establishment of the Association was in early 2004.

**C.I.: What is the mission and objectives of the Association?**

The mission is to produce and promote the best quality virgin coconut oil (VCO). While the objectives are:

- To increase local and international market share of VCO
- To disseminate information and promote consumer education on the benefits and uses of VCO
- To establish quality standards of VCO and develop VCO benchmark/s
- To set a code of ethics and promote harmony and loyalty among members
- To improve farmer productivity and output (production and process) by

being instrumental in technology transfer and provision of training and assistance

- To participate in local and international exhibits
- To establish a one-stop shop VCO center.

**C.I.: What is the strategy to**

**achieve the above objectives?**

- Solicit government support and initiatives from good contact with government agencies
- Acquire available technologies and machineries from members who are willing to share



VCO and VCO based products on sale during the Cocoweek Expo in Manila



VCO Fountain during the Cocoweek Expo in Manila

- Create the linkage necessary to acquire financial support and funding to utilize by-products and minimize waste
- Pool supply among members and combine to meet growing market demand
- Develop product quality standards the soonest possible time while there is a high level of interest among members (“Strike while the iron is hot.”)
- Develop partnerships to promote investment, marketing, and branding
- Consolidate strength among members to overcome exploitation by local traders
- Develop online trading
- Develop proposal and summit to local and

international institutions for possible funding

- Lobby for support in the funding and advocacy for replanting

**C.I.: How many members do you have at the moment?**

When it was informally established 17 VCO producers were registered. Now we have 37 regular bona fide members. We have about 30 applicants for memberships whose pares are being processed prior to acceptance.

**C. I.: What is the program of the Association?**

There are several programs which fall under four main categories i.e.: Production Support, Promotion and Marketing, Organizational Development, and Resource

Mobilization or Ways & Means.

**C. I.: Is there any training provided?**

Yes, especially on marketing strategies because to penetrate US and European markets need additional data base and information.

**C.I.: Is there any standards implemented for VCO production?**

We are in the process of putting the three and a half month old Philippine National Standards on stream. While we do not claim that this is the best standard, we are proud to say that we have developed this and it is adequate enough for a start. Standard setting is a dynamic process and as new and conclusive scientific data are made available, the standards will have to experience the corresponding adjustments.

**C.I.: What process of VCO production does your member usually use? What is the best one?**

Combination of traditional process using low heat cooking, quick dry process, and no heat process (cold process). The best one is cold process as it preserves the natural properties of coconut.

**C.I.: How many nuts (medium size) are required to produce 1 liter VCO?**

It varies depending on the size of the nuts and the process used. If the proces involves

heat, it will produce more oil. Generally, about 12 – 17 nuts are needed to produce 1 liter VCO.

**C. I.: How many people are involved by each VCO processor?**

A small processor with a production capacity of 40 liters per day employs between 7 to 8 people.

**C. I.: What kind of machineries are usually used?**

Processors utilizing cold process usually use graters, mechanical press and mixer.

**C. I.: Do you think the market potential of VCO is good?**

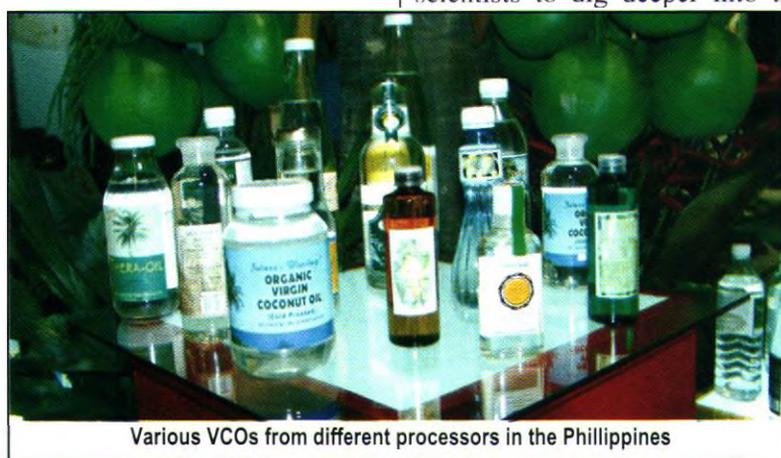
Yes, I think so. It is indicated by the tremendous demand and the high price quoted from Internet sources and from direct buyers from different countries.

**C. I.: What activities have been and will be done to promote the use of VCO?**

There is a plan to undertake activities not only for VCO use but to counter the oncoming wave of smear campaign being again perpetrated by the soya bean producers of the US. We have formulated plans for a massive tri-media campaign not only to explain the benefits that can be derived from VCO but also to make available the truth about coconut oil. This will be undertaken not only in the Philippines but internationally as well.

**C.I: What is your future plan (in the short, medium, long terms) ?**

Well, in the short term, we have that plan to go on a rational information campaign on VCO by way of participating in exhibitions, media releases, organizing symposia and forums both here and abroad. We also have lined up membership knowledge enhancement activities on VCO to equip them with the tools of not only producing but of marketing the products both domestically and internationally.



Various VCOs from different processors in the Philippines

The medium term plan is concerned with putting into play the mechanics of trading VCO through the association. This is something that some of the officers have been mulling about for the past year and is something really worth considering so that we do not fall prey to some of the 'vultures' in the industry.

**C. I.: Do you think the Government provide enough support to the VCO industry?**

The industry could do better with additional government support not only in making capital more accessible to possible producers but also in undertaking more in-depth research on VCO. The

industry is in its infancy stage in the Philippines. It is only now that a number of government and non government institutions have shown avid interest in it. We have barely scratched the surface in as far as the VCO characteristics are concerned. There is a lot more that is needed to be discovered about this wonderful product. As the saying goes, there is more than meets the eye for Virgin Coconut Oil. And I would like to take this opportunity to exhort our coconut scientists to dig deeper into the

recesses than and crevices of scientific data and try to discover those that have eluded knowledge over the past four millennia.

**C. I.: Mr. Mamangun, the APCC Secretariat appreciates your efforts in marketing Virgin coconut oil which will benefit coconut stake holders, especially coconut farmers and processors. We wish you all success. Let the Association work for the cause and promote quality virgin coconut oil.**

Thank You very much.

*Muhartoyo is Documentalist, Asian and Pacific Coconut Community.*