

## Status and Prospects of the Basi Industry in Ilocos Sur

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### Abstract

*Basi" is a popular folk wine of Ilocanos; it comes from sugarcane.*

*This study aimed to know the present status of the basi industry in Ilocos Sur and determined its prospects to widen its market and be considered for product export.*

*The descriptive method of research and purposive sampling technique were utilized. Interview was the gathering tool.*

*Findings show that most of the basi producers have big families, cultivate small size of land area which are mostly leased, borrowed or inherited the livelihood from their parents or grandparents, and have an estimated net income of above P5,000 per cropping. Further, "basi" is used for gift-giving, as a daily drink, and for offering during a quack doctor's healing ceremony. It has also medicinal benefits, gives longer life, good for health maintenance, and it is a milder drink than the commercial ordinary wine. Moreover, its market location is mostly at the producer's residential house; buyers include tourists, balikbayans, or vacationists; demand is greater than its supply; most are packaged and sold in unsealed and unlabeled gallons and bottles; and market pricing is claimed as "just and fair". Finally, the traditional process in cooking the sugarcane juice with a spoon of lime, then stacking in jars with the barks and/or leaves for months till the "basi" or wine taste occurs still prevails.*

*It is recommended that to have a continuous supply of "basi", the Local Government Units (LGUs) through cooperatives or other organizations should provide wider land areas to be planted with sugarcane.*

## Introduction

### Background of the Study

In Ilocos Sur, there are many sugarcane farmers. As per survey, they are found in the municipalities of Sinait, San Juan, Magsingal, Sto. Domingo, San Ildefonso, Bantay, Vigan, Sta. Maria, Burgos, Galimuyod, Banayoyo, Lidlidda, Del Pilar, Suyo, Tagudin, Sugpon, Quirino, Cervantes, Alilem, Sta. Cruz, Sta. Lucia, and San Esteban.

Almost all of them are producing "*basi*", however, not all are registered with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) as *basi* producers. It is assumed, therefore, that the others produce *basi* only for their consumption, for entertaining visitors, for gift-giving, and not for profit. Mr. Yolando Quioco, Trade and Industry Specialist at the DTI, Vigan City gave the list of registered *basi* producing organizations. Said organizations are found in the municipalities of Sta. Maria, San Ildefonso, and Bantay, Ilocos Sur

The producers don't have the same strategy in making "*basi*". Some cook the sugarcane juice or "*bennal*" while others, don't. Some add lime when cooking the *bennal* while others don't. Some add *samak* tree bark when placing or stocking in a jar (*bumay*) while others use the bark of *kariskis* tree or the bark of the blackberry tree. It, therefore, follows that they differ in taste as they differ in processing strategy.

The number of sugarcane farmers have declined; more so on *basi* producers. If the *basi* product will be developed and promoted, more sugarcane farmers will be motivated to produce *basi*. And *basi* will be among the *Ilocano* products giving good revenue to the government and this will help the sugarcane farmers have better income.

Shortening the length of days to harvest sugarcane and easing the job on sugarcane milling are being eyed in Tinaan, Sta. Maria. Sugarcane can be planted and harvested twice a year already. Machine-operated sugarcane mills are also available nowadays. *Basi* is also coming out in the market. The technology of improving the flavor, aroma, and packaging are the only things dreamt to be done so as to be recognized among the products for export. Also, the sugarcane farmers, would like to have trainings on the new technology of *basi*-making so as to grow in the market

It is, therefore, high time to move in promoting sugarcane planting and *basi*-making until it is recognized as product for export.

## Objectives

Generally, this study aimed to find out the present status of the *basi* industry in Ilocos Sur.

Specifically, it sought to:

- I. determine the profile of *basi* producers in Ilocos Sur in terms of the following:
  - 1.1 number of family members,
  - 1.2 size of land tilled,
  - 1.3 ownership of the land being tilled,
  - 1.4 number of years of planting sugarcane and producing *basi* and
  - 1.5 estimated net income per cropping;
2. determine the uses and benefits derived from *basi*;
3. find out the market status of *basi* in terms of:
  - 3.1 location of marketing,
  - 3.2 buyers of the *basi* product,
  - 3.3 demand and supply,
  - 3.4 packaging the *basi* product, and
  - 3.5 pricing the *basi* product;
4. determine the traditional process of producing *basi*; and
5. identify the aspirations or support services needed by the *basi* producers along:
  - 5.1 production of good quality *basi*,
  - 5.2 packaging the product,
  - 5.3 advertising the product. and
  - 5.5 marketing the product.

## Review of Related Literature

The following studies are cited to relate in this new study in some aspects.

Pablico (2005) wrote that in the Ilocos, "*basi*" made in Naguilian, La Union is recognized as the best among the different kinds of *basi* made in the region. It is distinctly different from *basi* made in Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte, as it has a color and taste no found elsewhere. This is especially true with those aged for at least five years which is of world-class, premium quality.

He further wrote that Mayor Reynaldo J. Flores laments that only a few Naguilian farmers have continued to plant sugarcane and produce "*basi*" for a number of reasons. One, many of the veteran farmers and "*basi*" producers have already gone to their rest. Unfortunately, they were not able to transmit the technology to their children who have most likely opted to choose professions other than fanning. Second, many of the farms that

used to be planted with sugarcane, most especially in Lioac and Baraoas, are now being serviced by an irrigation system, making the land no longer suited to sugarcane production. For one thing, sugarcane does not thrive in irrigated areas. With the provision of irrigation water, those fanns have been turned eventually into rice farms. Third, many people are now interested in the fast buck, and hence, shy away from sugarcane and "*basf*" production because of the long investment period. It takes a year to produce sugarcane and at least six months to ferment "*basi*". To business-minded individuals, that is a relatively long time to wait for the returns on investment.

He cited, too, that the traders in the local public market are already selling "*basi*" elsewhere because of the dwindling local supply and persistent high demand.

Further, he stressed that the low quality of the products from other towns is detrimental to the reputation of Naguilian as a producer of high quality "*bast*" since buyers might think that what they bought were produced in this town.

Pajarillo (2001) recommended in his study on folk arts marketing that industry promotions must be pursued to boost the economic viability of the age-old industries of Ilocos Sur through "Buy Ilocos Sur Products" advertisement. Likewise, a book or manuscript be formulated and published in order that *Folk Arts Marketing* which includes "*bas?*" be properly documented as a new idea in the marketing study and literature.

Cabanting et al (2000) recommended in their study on status and prospects of fruit production in Ilocos Sur that through lectures and seminars, the Fruit Research Center of the Bureau of Plant Industry should disseminate new technologies on how to improve fruit production in Ilocos Sur where return on investment, postharvest operations, and packaging materials are included.

Their recommendation can be adopted for "*bast*" production. Instead of the Fruit Research Center of the Bureau of Plant Industry doing the dissemination of new technologies, the "*basz*" experts in Naguilian, La Union, the DOST, and other agencies or personalities who can share their knowledge and expertise can do the extension service.

## Methodology

This study was limited to the detennination of the present status and prospects of the *basi* industry in Ilocos Sur. The respondents were the sugarcane farmers of Ilocos Sur.

The study utilized the descriptive method of research.

The sampling employed was the purposive technique since the respondents are purely sugarcane farmers and processors.

Data gathering was done through interviews. The interviews were done in the *Aoco* language for better comprehension of the respondents.

The statistical tools used were the frequency and percentage in all the responses gathered.

## Results and Discussion

### **Profile of *Basi* Producers**

Majority (34%) of the *basi* producers have a number of family members belonging to brackets 3 and below and 7-9.

The finding indicates that farmers usually have big families because of the manpower needed in the farm. The family no longer needs to pay manpower to help or do the farm jobs. On the other hand, farmers with small number of members have applied the family planning program of the government.

Majority or 29.5% of the respondents are tilling below one hectare, followed by below two hectares with 11 (25%) respondents. Two hectares and above are claimed to be being tilled by only 10 or 22.7 % of the respondents.

This manifests that sugarcane farmers and *basi* producers need more motivation to plant more lands because the small farmers have no big lands to cultivate.

Most 32 or 60% of the respondents leased the land they are tilling. This implies that many farmers still don't have their own lands.

Majority or 66% have been planting sugarcane and 39% have been producing *basi* for seven years and above. This proves that the sugarcane and *basi* producers have inherited the job from their parents and even their grandparents.

Finally, majority 15 or 34% still have an estimated net income belonging to the range of above P5,000 though most sugarcane farmers are tilling small areas and are leasing their lands.

This means that the estimated net income depends on the knowledge of technology being applied by the producers. Some are planting the Australian variety which grows

faster, can be harvested after six months, and have bigger or stouter stalks and have more juice.

### Uses and Benefits Derived from *Basi*

It can be seen on Table 1 that 12 or 27.27 % of the respondents claimed that *basi* is usually used for gift-giving to friends, visitors, politicians, and vacationists and as a daily drink to have a vigorous feeling as long as drunk moderately.

The finding indicates that *basi* is beneficial to the health, that it is worthy as a gift to visitors or vacationists and even to politicians.

**Table 1. Uses of *basi***

Uses	<i>f</i>	%
For offering during quack doctor's healing ceremony	9	20.45
For gift-giving	12	27.27
Use as beverage during occasions	11	25.00
For a daily drink to have vigorous feeling	12	27.27
Total	44	100

**Table 2. Benefits derived from *basi***

Benefits	<i>f</i>	%
Milder drink than commercial ordinary wine	11	25.00
Medicinal	12	27.27
Gives longer life	9	20.45
Good for health maintenance	12	27.27
Total	44	100

Table 2 shows that 12 or 27.27 % of the respondents admitted that *basi* is good for health maintenance and truly medicinal.

The above finding implies that *basi* is the same as those red wine from grapes sold in the market locally and internationally claimed by drinkers to be good for the heart. Take note, therefore, that *basi* is a redwine from sugarcane and the wine of *Ilocanos*.

### Market Potential of Basi

The market potential of *basi* is discussed in terms of location of marketing, buyers of the *basi* product, demand and supply, packaging, and pricing the *basi* product.

**Table 3. Location of marketing *basi***

Places	<i>f</i>	%
Residential house	23	41.82
Other towns	15	27.27
Other provinces	0	0
Other regions	0	0
Local markets(own town)	17	30.91
International market(export)	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

multiple response

On Table 3, it is seen that majority 23 or 41.82 % of the respondents sell their *basi* product in their residential houses. This manifests that *basi* needs promotion on a wider scale up to the international market.

**Table 4. Buyers of *hasi***

Buyers	<i>l</i>	%
Local consumers	19	28.79
Foreign consumers (tourists/balikbayans/vacationsits)	18	27.27
Wholesalers	13	19.70
Retailers	16	24.24
Exporters	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority 19 or 28.79 % of the respondents claim that the buyers of their *basi* product are local consumers, followed by foreign consumers with 18 or 27.28% of the respondents. This implies that there is a good prospect of the *basi* industry for it is bought by not only local consumers but even tourists, *balikbayans*, or vacationists.

**Table 5. Demand for *basi***

Description	£	%
Little (Supply is greater than demand)		2.00
Moderate (Supply equals demand)	18	41.00
Great (Supply is not enough)	25	57.00
Total	44	100

Table 5 shows that majority 25 or 57% of the respondents stressed that the demand of *basi* is great because their produce is not enough to meet the needs of the buyers. This proves that *basi* is beneficial and useful that makes buyers love and buy it.

Those *basi* producers planting one hectare and above claimed that they produce 280 liters (2 containers having 140 liters per container) of *basi* from the 420 liters (3 containers having 140 liters per container) of sugarcane juice per harvest or process. (Harvesting or processing is done four times, at an average, per cropping. Cropping is done twice a year with the new technology, thrice in two years when using ratooning and imported variety of sugarcane, and once a year when planting local variety of sugarcane. The sugarcane farmers, however, could not identify the exact variety of the sugarcane. They call it imported if it comes from other places and uttered by those bringing it into the place.)

On the other hand, *basi* producers planting below one hectare and those who don't plant sugarcane but merely buy the sugarcane juice mentioned that they produce 240 liters (15 cans having 16 liters per can) of *basi* from the 288 liters (18 cans having 16 liters per can) of sugarcane juice per process. (It is observed that the estimated ratio of sugarcane juice to *basi* is about 3:2.)

Table 6 shows that most 25 or 57 % of the respondents mentioned that the supply of their *basi* product is little because supply is already zero while there are still buyers. This supports that *basi* industry has truly a good prospect.

**Table 6. Supply of *basi***

Description	f	%
Little (supply is not enough)	25	57.00
Moderate (Supply equals demand)	18	41.00
Great Supply is greater than demand)		2.00
Total	44	100



Only those *basi* producers buying the sugarcane juice (retailers of sealed and labeled *basi*) said that the supply is great. This is due to the many suppliers or sources of their sugarcane juice.

**Table 7. Packaging of *basi***

<b>Packaging</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Galloons, not sealed nor labeled	26	46.00
Gallons, sealed and labeled	0	0
Bottles, not sealed nor labeled	25	45.00
Bottles, sealed and labeled	5	9.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>S6</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of the respondents claimed that *basi* is currently sold in unsealed and unlabeled galloons packaging with 46 % and 45 % in unsealed and unlabelled bottles packaging. A minimal percentage or 9 %, however, claimed that *basi* are sold in sealed and labeled bottles.

The finding indicates that a new technology has been eyed by the *basi* producers. Therefore, wider dissemination of the technology and better promotion of the industry are among the assistance that the government can provide to the *basi* producers.

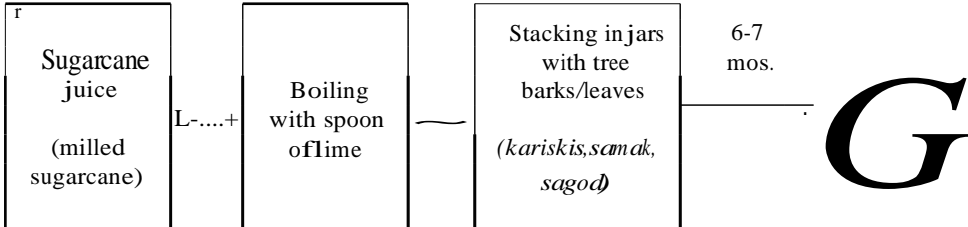
Table 8. Descriptive pricing of *basi*

<b>Descriptive Pricing</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Cheap (The producer wants a higher price)	16	36.00
Just and Fair (The producer is satisfied with the price)	28	64.00
High (The producer wants a lower price to attract more buyers)	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 8 shows that majority 28 or 64% of the respondents mentioned that their pricing of P10.00 per 350 ml, P50 to P75 per liter and P250 to P 350 per gallon of *basi* (unsealed and unlabeled) or P25 to P35 per 350 ml, P80 to P100 per 750 ml and P100 to P120 per liter of *basi* (sealed and labeled) are just and fair. This indicates that the drinkers love the taste of *basi* and are aware of its beneficial effects.

### Traditional Process of Producing *Basi*

Most of the *basi* producers still perform the traditional process of producing *basi*.



**Figure 1. Process of producing basi**

The traditional process of producing *basi* is cooking the sugarcane juice with a spoon of lime, then stacking in jars with tree barks and/or leaves for months till *basi* or wine taste occurs, usually a period of 6-7 months stacking.

The longer the sugarcane juice is cooked, the sweeter is the taste.

The *kariskis* and *samak* gives reddish and blackish color, respectively. The *sagod* gives aroma. The volume of *kariskis*, *samak*, or *sagod* depends on the volume of cooked juice to stack and on the *desired* color and aroma.

### Aspirations or Support Services Needed by the *Basi* Producers

The *basi* in Ilocos Sur has a good prospect because buyers include local consumers, tourists, balikbayans/vacationists. A better prospect is seen if the aspirations or support services needed by the *basi* producers are fulfilled with the intervention of the Local Government Units (LGUs) and the business sector.

Table 9 states that all of the respondents need the assistance of the government and non-government agencies on the production of good quality *basi*, packaging and advertising *basi*, marketing strategies, channels, methods, and outlets of *basi*.

Table 9. Needs of the *basi* producers

Aspirations	t	%
<b>A. Production of good quality</b>		
Dissemination of new technology on "basi-making" for export	44	33.33
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Seminar/workshop or training on making export quality <i>basi</i>	44	33.33
Showcases of export-quality wine	44	33.33
<b>B. Packaging the product</b>		
Seminar/workshop or training on packaging and labeling a product	44	33.33
Showcases of packaged and labeled wine	44	33.33
Assistance on patent application	44	33.33
<b>C. Advertising the product through:</b>		
Publications in magazines of national and international circulation	44	16.67
Leaflets distributed in every public market, hotel and restaurant	44	16.67
Posters or Billboards	44	16.67
Internet	44	16.67
Televisions	44	16.67
Radio (AM/FM stations)	44	16.67
<b>D. Marketing strategies for the product through:</b>		
Annual promotion program (e.g. Ilocano Wine Week, Exhibits, Trade Fair, etc.)	44	16.67
Ordinance of patronizing Ilocano products	44	16.67
Advertisement	44	16.67
<b>E. Marketing channels through:</b>		
Cooperatives/Livelihood Organizations and other Associations	44	33.33
Entrepreneurship	44	33.33
Businessman/Traders	44	33.33
<b>F. Marketing methods</b>		
Wholesale	44	33.33
Retail	44	33.33
Contract/Agreement	44	33.33
<b>G. Marketing outlets</b>		
Local markets	44	20.00
Stores	44	20.00
Groceries	44	20.00
Hotels and Restaurants	44	20.00
International market	44	20.00

multiple response

The finding indicates that the *basi* producers want to know new technology from processing to packaging the *basi* for export and believe that *basi* needs direct assistance on the development of its marketing strategies, channels, methods and outlets.

## Conclusion

1. Farmers usually have big families, however, there are already those applying the government's family planning program, thereby having small families. Small land areas are being cultivated by most of them and most of the lands cultivated are leased. The sugarcane farmers and *basi* producers have been doing the job for many years because they borrowed or inherited the livelihood from their parents or grandparents. They earn an estimated net income of above P 5,000.00 per cropping.

2. *Basi* is being used for gift-giving, a daily drink to have vigor feeling a drink for occasions and for offerings during a quack doctor's healing ceremony. It is also good for health maintenance, milder to drink than commercial ordinary wine, medicinal, and gives longer life.

3. *Basi* needs promotion because its current market location is mostly at the producer's residential houses. It has a good prospect since buyers include foreign consumers like tourists, balikbayans or vacationists. Also, it is beneficial and useful. Its demand is greater than its supply. A new technology on its packaging has been eyed for it is already sold in sealed and labeled bottles though most are still packaged and sold in unsealed and unlabeled gallons and bottles. The drinkers love the taste of *basi* and are aware of its beneficial effects as the producers describe their market pricing as "just and fair".

4. The traditional process of producing *basi* is cooking the sugarcane juice with a spoon of lime, then stacking in jars with tree barks and/or leaves for months till *basi* or wine taste occurs.

5. The *basi* producers need new technology from processing to packaging, developing *basi*, for export, and assistance on advertisement, marketing strategies, channels, methods, and outlets.

## Recommendations

1. To have a continuous or sufficient supply of *basi*, the Local Government Units (LGUs), through cooperatives or other organizations should provide wider land areas to be planted with sugarcane.

2. The uses and benefits of *basi* should be well disseminated in the internet, (e.g., [www.basiusesandbenefits.ph](http://www.basiusesandbenefits.ph)), through advertisements on television/radio/magazines, leaflets/posters/billboards, *basi* month celebration through programs (e.g., *basi* contest on

taste or aroma, slogans, trade fair, parading *basi* with different attractive packages, skits, etc.) active campaign through posters, streamers, billboards, or through seminars/symposiums/forums.

3. The LGUs should help in the promotion of *basi* through information dissemination using mass media. They may tap the cooperatives or other organizations and the business sector for wider or more effective *basi* promotion.

4. The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) should spread its assistance on the new and improved technology of producing *basi*. The non-government agencies or the business sector are requested to assist in the technology development and marketing of *basi* as export product.

5. To promote the *basi* industry, the needs of the *basi* producers should be addressed with the intervention of the LGUs and business sector; and

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