

THE RIVER IN THE NOODLES

I Bannag Ta Pansi Batil Potun

CRITICAL VOICES (AGES 11–18) · SYSTEMS THINKERS (AGES 18–23) · GENERAL AUDIENCE

Food culture & climate

Extreme weather

Agricultural disruption

Food security

Local knowledge

DIRECTOR Jerome Lingan Dulin
PRODUCER Joseph Serna Arcegono
RUNTIME 32 minutes
FORMAT Documentary
LANGUAGE Filipino
LOCATION Cagayan Province, Philippines
FILM youtu.be/uR4yXqDiMJY
POSTER & STILLs tinyurl.com/2z6cvwbj



THE STORY

A local farmer and elderly pancit cook from Tuguegarao City reflect on how changes to the ingredients of the region's traditional noodle dish reveal a deeper story of adaptation, progress, and the growing impact of climate change. As rivers flood and fish populations dwindle, the dish that once connected a community to its land and history is quietly disappearing taking with it a way of life.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When food becomes scarce, we are reminded of how deeply it shapes our lives, communities, and sense of identity. The journey of Pansi Batil Potun — from a humble local meal to a symbol of changing social and economic realities reflects both the resilience of communities and the fragile state of our planet.

Climate change and human activity are placing growing pressure on food systems worldwide. Extreme weather and environmental degradation threaten not only livelihoods but the cultural traditions tied to food and farming — even as many of us grow disconnected from where our food comes from. By sharing stories alongside communities, rather than speaking for them, we hope to foster empathy and inspire a more sustainable, equitable future for all.

— Jerome Lingan Dulin, Director

WHY IT MATTERS

The River in the Noodles showcases the intimate connection between food, culture, and the environment. The message is one of empowerment and responsibility: preserving a local dish like *Pansit Batil Potun* requires caring for the environment that sustains it. Young people are encouraged to be mindful consumers, to appreciate the labour and resources that go into their food, and to recognise that their choices have a direct impact on the resilience and sustainability of their communities and their culture.

SCREENINGS

The film has been shown at schools and universities across the Philippines and at community events in key cities. Creative workshops with local youth development and environmental sustainability organisations have accompanied screenings. The film has also been fully integrated into several university courses focused on policy creation in Australia.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The River in the Noodles is designed for school students aged 11–18, university students, and the general public. It can be integrated into subjects including geography, environmental science, social studies, development studies, and climate education. At university level, it suits courses in government policy, development studies, human geography, sociology, anthropology, environmental humanities, climate science, public health, and food studies.

After watching the film, audiences will be able to:

- Understand the cultural significance of *Pansit Batil Potun* and how climate change threatens the ingredients and traditions behind it.
- Gain insight into the challenges faced by flood-affected farming communities and the local government responses to crisis.
- Develop a greater appreciation for food production, the labour behind it, and the importance of reducing food waste.
- Recognise the connections between food systems, cultural identity, and environmental sustainability.
- Feel inspired to explore climate change storytelling through personal passions such as food and culture.

SDG ALIGNMENT

The film connects to five UN Sustainable Development Goals:



LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

Full lesson plans, discussion questions & classroom activities — <https://tinyurl.com/4jcxm3rm>

THE RIVER IN THE NOODLES

CRITICAL VOICES (11–18) · SYSTEMS THINKERS (18–23) · FROM THE FIELD — NGOS & COMMUNITY FACILITATORS

This document provides facilitated discussion questions, debate and activities, and community workshop guides to accompany a screening of The River in the Noodles. Choose the format that best fits your audience and setting.

GUIDED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions to guide conversation after the film screening. They are designed to draw out the film's key themes: extreme weather, food security and supply, human-nature relationship and climate change.

- 1 How did the changing ingredients and methods of making pansit batil potun reflect the community's adaptation to climate change and economic pressures?
- 2 The film shows a shift from carabaos to cows in farming. What does this tell us about the specific challenges (like intense heat and river crossing) that farmers are now facing?
- 3 What is the significance of the younger generation choosing machine production over manual labour for the noodles? Do you think this choice helps or hurts the preservation of the traditional dish?
- 4 The film highlights the problem of food waste associated with pansit batil potun. How does this issue connect to the efforts of the farmers and cooks, and what can consumers do to show more appreciation for the food production process?
- 5 Considering the youth's reluctance to pursue farming due to climate risks and social stigma, what specific government or community initiatives could help make agriculture a more desirable and sustainable career path?
- 6 After watching the film, do you feel local leaders need to immediately review their plans on flood control and their programmes to support current and future farmers?
- 7 The film clearly demonstrates that a beloved local dish is not just about taste or a recipe; it is a direct reflection of the local ecosystem and the stability of the climate. Can you think of cultural dishes that might be or could be impacted by climate change in your country?



ACTIVITIES

The following activities are suited to student lectures, seminars, and student-led discussions. The film encourages young people to see the climate crisis not as an abstract global problem, but as a direct threat to their own food, family recipes, and cultural heritage.

Young Critical Voices — Ages 11–13

Discussion Points

- What specific weather problems did the film show the farmers dealing with? How did they change their animals (e.g. from carabaos to cows) or their methods to keep farming?
- Why was the noodle shop owner shown using a machine instead of making all the miki noodles by hand? What problem did the machine solve?
- The film mentions food waste. What happens to the environment or the farmer's hard work when people order too much pansit and don't finish it?

Activities

1 Before and After Climate Artwork Activity

Ask students to create artwork, posters, collages, or digital illustrations inspired by scenes from the film that show the effects of flooding and drought on people, homes, farms, rivers, animals, and daily life. Students should create two contrasting visuals: *Before* (a healthy, thriving environment and community) and *After* (the impact of flooding, drought, environmental damage, or food shortages), encouraging them to think about changes to landscapes, emotional impacts on families, and the role of hope, resilience, and recovery.

2 Pansit Waste Campaign Poster

Ask students to individually design a brightly coloured poster or a concise short comic strip (limited to 2–4 panels). The visual output must feature a clear, persuasive message encouraging consumers to consciously finish their food or commit to ordering appropriate non-wasteful portions of pansit or one of their own local dishes.

3 Intergenerational Interview Plan

Students will work in pairs to develop a 5-question interview guide designed for a grandparent, local elder, or community resource person. The questions must focus on documenting how their local food (or associated farming/fishing) practices have shifted or adapted over their lifetime due to environmental and climate change.

Older Critical Voices — Ages 14 –18

Debate Topics

- *"Discuss the inherent tension presented between preserving tradition (manual labour and time-intensive methods) and embracing progress (machine production) in the noodle-making process. Given the reality of increasing climate risk and labour costs, which approach is genuinely more viable for long-term food system sustainability?"*
- *"The film implicitly shows the community adapting by diversifying income sources (e.g. tricycle drivers, specialised rescue teams). Analyse how this economic diversification functions as a vital, community-level form of climate change adaptation and resilience."*
- *"Considering the powerful deterrents of social stigma, low profit margins and high climate risk, propose and justify three specific, actionable policy recommendations or community changes that could realistically transform agriculture into a more attractive and viable career path for the region's youth."*

1 Climate Change and Favourite Dishes Activity

Ask students to think about their favourite meal or traditional family dish. Students should identify all the ingredients needed to prepare the dish and explore where those ingredients come from. Students can then discuss how climate change could affect these ingredients through drought, flooding, rising temperatures, crop disease, or damage to fishing and farming industries, and whether these ingredients could become more expensive or difficult to access in the future. As a final activity, students could create a recipe card with climate-friendly alternatives or a class cookbook celebrating sustainable local dishes.

Systems Thinkers — Ages 18 – 23

After hosting a screening of the film for university students, use the guided discussion questions above to open conversation and identify concrete actions that individuals, the private sector, and the government can take to tackle the climate change crisis.

1 "Future of Food" Policy Brief

Have students collaboratively work in small groups to write a succinct (maximum one-page) policy brief addressed to a local government or relevant NGO. The brief should propose 2–3 specific, scalable, and potentially fundable initiatives designed to attract and train youth in climate-resilient, modernised agricultural techniques.

2 Climate Change Awareness Campaign: Mindful and Sustainable Food Consumption

Ask students to work individually or in groups to design a campaign that raises awareness about how food choices connect to climate change. Students could include posters, slogans, social media graphics, short videos, podcasts, or presentations; facts about climate change, food production, food waste, and sustainable eating habits; suggestions for reducing environmental impact; and community-specific issues such as flooding, drought, rising food prices, disappearing fish species, or reduced crop harvests.

From the Field — NGOs, Civil Society & Community Facilitators

Host a screening for local communities, NGOs, and climate organisations. Use the guided discussion questions above to open conversation and identify concrete actions that the private sector can take to tackle the climate change crisis.

- Host a government policy workshop — have the film serve as a foundational case study to formulate effective and relevant local policy on climate change mitigation.
- Host capacity building of farmers through climate seminars and farming systems.
- Host participatory workshops and discussions on addressing the impacts of drought and flooding.

RESOURCES

Resources are arranged by the film's four key topics and mapped to each audience group.

FOOD, CULTURE & IDENTITY

CRITICAL VOICES

What Is Food Culture?

ed.ted.com

Food Heritage Makes a Difference

mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/4/1509

SYSTEMS THINKERS

The Hidden Cultural Impact of Climate-Driven Food Security Threats

sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2949790625000667

Food Security and the Cultural Heritage Missing Link

pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9720156/

FROM THE FIELD

Traditional Food Systems and Climate Change

indigenousclimatehub.ca/2024/11/traditional-food-systems-and-climate-change...

How Climate Change Is Affecting Cultural Heritage

lunduniversity.lu.se/article/how-climate-change-affecting-cultural-heritage

EXTREME WEATHER & FARMING COMMUNITIES

CRITICAL VOICES

Extreme Weather, Rising Sea Levels, Devastating Floods — DW Documentary

youtube.com/watch?v=QjwhR99YdA

Farming the Floodplain: Trade-offs and Opportunities — USDA

[climatehubs.usda.gov — Farming the Floodplain](https://climatehubs.usda.gov/Farming%20the%20Floodplain)

SYSTEMS THINKERS

Flash Flooding Adaptation in Agricultural Communities — Bangladesh Case Study

doi.org/article/10.26907/269b8dbcb934673b0d4d130149e3d75

Climate Change Is Flooding Jakarta — Lifegate Documentary

lifegate.com/ciliwung-river-jakarta

FROM THE FIELD

Floods, Droughts and Agriculture — NRDC

nrdc.org/bio/ben-chou/floods-droughts-and-agriculture

CLIMATE CHANGE & FOOD SYSTEMS

CRITICAL VOICES

Understanding Food and Climate Change: An Interactive Guide

ecoliteracy.org/download/understanding-food-and-climate-change-interactive-guide

Food and Climate Change Guide for Middle School Students

[subjecttoclimate.org — Food and Climate Change Guide](https://subjecttoclimate.org/Food%20and%20Climate%20Change%20Guide)

SYSTEMS THINKERS

A Food System That Fights Climate Change — TED Talk, Gonzalo Muñoz

ted.com/talks/gonzalo_munoz_a_food_system_that_fights_climate_change...

Climate Change Effects & Food Security in Southeast Asia

nature.com/articles/s41598-024-65140-y

The Problem with Food and Climate — TED Talk, Jonathan Foley

ted.com/talks/jonathan_foley_the_problem_with_food_and_climate...

FROM THE FIELD

The Vital Role of Nutrition in Climate Resilience and Food Security in Southeast Asia — ISEAS 2024

[iseas.edu.sg — Vital Role of Nutrition in Climate Resilience...](https://iseas.edu.sg/Vital%20Role%20of%20Nutrition%20in%20Climate%20Resilience...)

FOOD WASTE & YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

CRITICAL VOICES

Food Waste Causes Climate Change — Here's How We Stop It — TED-Ed

[ed.ted.com — Food Waste Causes Climate Change](https://ed.ted.com/Food%20Waste%20Causes%20Climate%20Change)

Tristram Stuart: The Global Food Waste Scandal — TED Talk

ted.com/talks/tristram_stuart_the_global_food_waste_scandal

SYSTEMS THINKERS

Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems — FAO 2021

[openknowledge.fao.org — Youth Engagement in Agriculture](https://openknowledge.fao.org/Youth%20Engagement%20in%20Agriculture)

The Future of Food Security of the Philippines in the Face of Climate Change — CCAFS/CGIAR

[ccafs.cgiar.org — Future Food Security Philippines](https://ccafs.cgiar.org/Future%20Food%20Security%20Philippines)

FROM THE FIELD

World Food Forum: Youth Promoting Indigenous Agrifood Systems for Climate Action — FAO 2025

[sfcs.fao.org — WFF Youth Initiative](https://sfcs.fao.org/WFF%20Youth%20Initiative)

Dana Gunders: How to Turn the Tables on Food Waste — TED Talk

ted.com/talks/dana_gunders_how_to_turn_the_tables_on_food_waste