

## **DA allots P454-M budget for Cebu agri sector**

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has allocated a PHP454-million budget for Cebu's agri sector for 2021, Secretary William Dar said during the launching of Cash and Food Subsidy for Marginal Farmers and Fisherfolk (CFSMFF) program on Dec. 7, 2020 in Pinamungajan, Cebu.

Secretary Dar said that next year's budget for Cebu has increased from P431 million and expressed DA's commitment to further support the initiatives done to boost the agricultural output in the province.

The DA has provided financial assistance to marginal farmers and fishers, whom Dar described as the "true frontliners" amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Among those who will receive this assistance include our sugarcane farmers, coconut farmers, our fishers, and other marginal farmers," he said.

With a budget of P4.5 billion under the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act or "Bayanihan 2," almost 900,000 marginal farmers and fisherfolk in the country will benefit from the DA's cash and food assistance.

Sec. Dar said eligible beneficiaries who are enrolled in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) will receive direct food (P2,000 worth of rice and chicken or egg) and cash (P3,000) aid for a total amount of P5,000 each.

Using the e-voucher system developed by the DA-Information and Communications Technology Service, the beneficiaries can claim the cash assistance at the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP)-accredited payout centers by presenting their government-issued ID and the unique reference code sent by the implementing agencies.

The food assistance, on the other hand, can be claimed at any Kadiwa supplier and cooperatives recognized by the DA.

To further support the farm sector, Sec. Dar also announced that the Department will give out starting early next year the so-called "excess tariff" through a cash aid to rice farmers tilling land measuring one hectare and below.

The DA earlier said that the Senate already approved the excess tariff in 2019 and 2020 that reached almost PHP5 billion, which will be given to rice farmers.

According to the DA, the cash assistance for each farmer would be PHP5,000.

On Oct. 16, the Senate Committee on Agriculture approved a resolution giving financial assistance to rice farmers who cultivate small plots of land.

The resolution authorized the use of the excess collection of the Bureau of Customs for 2020 under the Rice Tariffication Law. Under the law, tariff collections in excess of PHP10 billion per year may be earmarked in the General Appropriations Act as additional support for rice farmers.

During his one-day visit to Cebu, Sec. Dar turned over some agri-fishery projects and certificates of commitment to identified beneficiaries.

He also signed the release of indemnity checks to farmers covered by the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC).

Some of the projects turned over were biogas digester and farm animals from the DA in Central Visayas and cocohub from the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) for the Pinamungajan-based Lamac Multipurpose Cooperative (LMPC); 90 units of fiber boats from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources for Cebu province;

and the sisal (*Agave sisalana*) processing center from the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA) for the FARMS-Mantalongon Barili.

Sec. Dar also handed over the certificates of commitment for the SugBUSOG Program of the Cebu provincial government, the establishment of urban agriculture-community garden for Cebu City, and monolithic dome for Dalaguete town in southern Cebu.

A memorandum of agreement on agricultural interventions was also signed between the DA, Virginia Farms, LMPC, PCA, and PhilFIDA.

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