

DA lines up key strategies to steer agri-fishery growth and transformation in 2021

Twelve key strategies will guide the Department of Agriculture (DA) in pursuing major programs and activities for the current year, and pave the way to attain a modest agriculture sector growth of 2.5 percent.

Agriculture Secretary William Dar issued a memorandum on January 4, 2021 to all DA executives, attached agencies and corporations, programs, and regional offices to “pursue an inclusive approach on these key strategies to accelerate the transformation towards a modern and industrialized Philippine agriculture.”

In his directive, Dar said it is imperative that “we in the DA support President Duterte’s priority programs and firm up our ‘One DA’ approach as we pursue our critical strategies for 2021.”

“We will vigorously pursue an inclusive approach that will cut across the strategies and involves setting up of safety net measures such as cash assistance, subsidized credit and crop insurance to directly benefit resource-poor farmers and fishers through our flagship ‘Plant, Plant, Plant’ program,” Secretary Dar said.

“Our first strategy features farm clustering, aimed at establishing ‘Bayanihan agri clusters’ or BACs, where we will effectively integrate support services from the local and national governments for better resource management,” he added.

Partnerships with local government units (LGUs) will also be encouraged by implementing the Province-led Agriculture and Fisheries Extension System (PAFES). The program — which involves providing support to develop one high-potential commodity for every province—is already being piloted in Ilocos Norte, and thereafter followed by one PAFES per region.

Agri-industrial Business Corridors (ABCs) will be another inclusive approach to be undertaken by the DA this year. Like the ones being pioneered in Clark and Taguig, the ABCs will be established to serve as inter-regional and trans-national agri-based economic activities.

“These hubs will help elevate Philippine agriculture and fisheries from resource-dependent to industrialized to inclusive and sustainable agri-industrial development,” said Secretary Dar.

Infrastructure investments like farm-to-market roads, trading posts, fish ports, as well as post-harvest processing and cold chain facilities will be mapped out and must consider supply, markets, and climate change impacts.

Lessons resulting from the quarantine lockdowns last year highlighted the need for the agriculture sector to strengthen post-harvest and processing, logistics and marketing support.

Secretary Dar said the DA will implement a more pro-active guidance on production schedules and monitoring supply from local production to avoid oversupply, post-harvest wastage, and depressed farmgate prices.

“This supply management and monitoring shall be complemented with active engagement with traders for more timely import arrivals and the strengthening of the “Bantay Presyo Task Group” and the Anti-Smuggling Task Group,” said Dar.

To realize DA’s “Agriculture 4.0” agenda, digital agriculture strategies will also be implemented. These include accelerating the completion of the National Farmers and Fishers Registry System, upscaling e-Kadiwa and using satellite technology to expand crop insurance coverage and estimates on crop damages and losses resulting from natural disturbances.

“We shall also harness ICT-enabled advisory services and vessel monitoring systems to effectively connect farmers and fishers in the regional/global agricultural value chain. We will continue mainstreaming PRISM as a tool to

effectively manage and monitor rice production (area planted, planting dates, crop damage, production, etc.) and expand this to other crops,” said the DA chief.

The Department will also pursue the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures to involve provincial and regional climate risk maps and climate vulnerability assessments. These will be used to assist DA in deploying climate-smart varieties and promote other management practices, as well as allow farmers to adjust planting schedules.

The Department will also work on mobilizing and empowering partners to attain economies of scale, including working closely with LGUs under the PAFES framework and with the League of Provinces.

Programs and projects are also being lined up in accordance with directives on ease of doing business, pursuing global trade, and export development and promotion, as well as shoring up food safety and regulations.

The DA chief has also directed the department’s communications team to hold information and education campaigns, in close coordination with bureaus, attached agencies, and corporations.

“We need to effectively communicate what we are doing and want to do, including possible threats, opportunities, and trade-offs,” he said.

“The above strategies’ overall objective is to modernize and industrialize Philippine agriculture’s value chains in an inclusive way to enhance productivity, uplift rural people from poverty, improve livelihoods and increase farmers’ income, so everybody—the DA family, officials and staff, farmers, fishers, partners, other stakeholders, and the public—can harvest the fruits of our shared success,” concluded Secretary Dar.

Ramon inaugurates its first completed FMR

The Municipal Local Government of Ramon, Isabela, being the first municipality to partner with the Department of Agriculture–Philippine Rural Development Project, inaugurated and turned over its first ever farm-to-market road to its farmer-beneficiaries, December 10.

Said FMR connects Oscariz and Nagbacalan, providing an easier access to Purok ni Bulan and Villa Beltran, where fishponds and vast rice fields are located and situated within the road influence area (RIA) of the FMR. The municipality is eyed as the Tilapia Capital of the Philippines.

“This is a wonderful project that will surely benefit the farmers here ... When you sincerely implement a project out of compassion and care, everything will turn out to be alright. When we were having the motorcade on the road stretch, I notice that it was meticulously constructed. This must be the PRDP way,” said Isabela Governor Rodolfo Albano III.

DA Regional Field Office No. 02 Regional Executive Director and DA-PRDP Project Director Narciso A. Edillo lauded the endeavor.

“I am very happy that Ramon has completed its first FMR. It has been noted, too, that this project was completed way ahead of schedule. It is now the duty of the barangay officials to maintain it, so that it will surpass its economic life,” said Edillo.

Meanwhile, Deputy Project Director Elma Mananes also congratulated MLGU Ramon. She stated that there are other subprojects being proposed by the MLGU and that the completed FMR is the first. She added that it was visited by the World Bank Task Team in November 2019.

The 126.9-million-peso project will not only benefit the municipality, but it can also serve as an access road for the agricultural activities of its neighboring municipalities–San Mateo and Alicia.

“Agricultural products and inputs will be easier to transport upon completion of the FMR. Further, from Bantug, Alicia, and from San Marcos, San Mateo; travel time will already be shortened using this road towards Santiago City, to Manila and other trading posts,” Ramon Mayor Jesus Laddaran said.

“We are grateful to DA-PRDP for this opportunity which will significantly change the lives of our rural folks ... It was completed two months ahead of the scheduled completion date,” added Laddaran.

Currently, Isabela has reached 700-million-peso worth of approved subprojects that is expected to reach a billion-peso worth once the other additional funding proposals from the province get approved.

PhilMech, nagdaos ng pagsasanay ukol sa mga makinaryang pangsaka sa Silangang Mindoro

Katuwang ang PhilMech, ang Kagawaran ng Pagsasaka ay naglunsad ng Hands- On Training on the Operation and Maintenance of Rice Machinery sa 34 magsasaka mula sa iba't ibang bayan ng Silangang Mindoro sa DA-Regional Integrated Agricultural Research Institute (RIARC), Brgy. Alcate, Victoria, Oriental Mindoro noong Nobyembre 24-27.

Layunin ng DA – PhilMech na ipaalam, sanayin, at linangin ang mga magsasaka mula sa iba't ibang lalawigan ng MIMAROPA ukol sa mga makinaryang pangsakahan na ipinagkakaloob ng Kagawaran ng Pagsasaka sa kanilang mga kooperatiba nang sa gayon ito ay wastong magamit at mapangalagaan, at maiwasan ang mga peligrong kaakibat ng pagpapatakbo nito.

Upang mapanatili ang social distancing, pinangkat sa dalawa ang mga magsasakang kinatawan ng iba't ibang farmer organizations kung saan ang bawat batch ay sumailalim sa dalawang araw ng pagsasanay.

Sa umaga ng unang araw ng bawat batch, isinagawa ang isang balik-aral ukol sa mga proseso ng pagsasaka sa isang paunang online class bago ang aktwal na gawain. Sinundan ito ng isang pantas-aral ukol sa mga panuntunang pangkaligtasan at pagpapanatili ng mga makinaryang pangsaka sa DA-Satellite Office, Brgy. Camilmil, Calapan City.

Sa hapon hanggang ikalawang araw, inihatid ng kagawaran ang mga magsasaka sa farm machinery training site sa DA - Regional Integrated Agricultural Research Center (RIARC), Brgy. Alcate, Victoria para sa kanilang hands-on na pagsasanay sa iba't ibang makinarya; Transplanter, Combine Harvester, Four-wheel Tractor, at Precision Seeder at iba pa.

“Kami pong nasa Technology Management and Training Division, kami po ang nangangasiwa sa trainings ng mga farmers para matutunan po nila ang pag-oooperate ng mga makinarya at maiwasan ang mga aksidenteng maaaring mangyari,” wika ni Science Research Analyst Percival de Guzman ukol sa pagpapatakbo ng mga makinarya, “Sa kabila po ng mga sakunang nararanasan natin, yun mga machineries na ipinamimigay ng DA PhilMech ay malaking bagay po para sa mga farmers lalo na po sa mga anihan, sa kanila pong postharvest, dahil bago pa po magbagyo ay makakapag-ani na po sila nang mabilis.”

Natutuwang ikinuwento ni Rosalinda Candido, nag-iisang babae sa buong pagsasanay at pangulo ng Farmers Association ng San Isidro na may 105 mga kasapi at 300 hektaryang sakahan, ang kaniyang mga naging karanasan, “Enjoy kami sa paggagawa ng seedbed, natuto sa ilang sukat ang dapat na ilalagay na binhi, saka yung pagpapatag ng lupa at yung tamang mixture nito, kaya talagang sinulat ko yung mga kagamitang kailangan. Ako po kasi ay lumaki sa pagsasaka kaya ako ay interesado sa ganitong mga seminars,” dagdag niya.

Winakasan ang aktibidad sa isang graduation ceremony kung saan tumanggap ang bawat magsasaka ng Certificate of Completion na palatandaan ng kanilang mga natutunan sa naganap na pagsasanay.

Kabilang din sa mga nangasiwa sa pagsasanay ng mga magsasaka sina DA – RIARC Farm Machinery Staff Engr. Johvan Cataloctocan at Engr. Erjhon Dinglasan.

PRDP-funded FMR in Catanduanes cuts LGU's response time to disaster, pandemic

Unlike previous years when some barangays in Caramoran, Catanduanes get isolated after the onslaught of typhoons last year was different for residents of Brgy. Maui and Brgy. Panique—two of the four barangays within the road influence area of the 7.37 kilometer Concreting of Junction Sabangan-Datag East farm-to-market-road (FMR) in this municipality. Mobility was unhampered and response time to emergency situation was cut short.

According to Mayor Glenda Aguilar, before the PRDP-funded FMR was implemented, communities in said areas were at risk of landslide and flooding. They also struggled in conducting clearing operations which delay rehabilitation and relief efforts for typhoon-stricken families. This is because of the decade-old existing road being maintained by re-gravelling which was passable only to single motorcycles. The Datag East to Maui portion was rough with protruding stones while the Maui-Panique-Sabangan portion was muddy during rainy season.

“Ngayon po, pagbagyo, hindi na-isolate yung lugar kasi nandoon po yung equipment (ng contractor)... Nagtulungan kami ng kontraktor kasi probleman namin yun kung sakali... Pagdaing nung kapitan, hindi nga inabot ng 24 hours yun, passable agad,” said Aguilar.

Engr. Elsie Reyes, Provincial Project Management Implementation Unit (PPMIU) Head of Catanduanes, affirmed the local chief executive's feedback saying, “Malaking tulong yung naibibigay noon kasi kung wala yung access road na yun, kung doon pa sila dadaan sa dating road na dinadaan, mas matagal ang response time in case of disasters. With the reduced travel time, may masi-save na lives and properties in times of disaster.”

Engr. Wilfredo Francisco, site engineer of Honeyville Construction, the project contractor, said that to reduce risks and typhoon damage at the project site, he immediately ordered the workers to secure all equipment. After Supertyphoon Rolly and typhoon Ulysses, almost one kilometer of the road, which was completed on October 27, 2020, was covered by landslide.

“Sa sobrang lakas ng buhos ng ulan, na-saturate yung lupa at dumami yung landslide,” Francisco said.

Thus, to fast track the clearing operations, he requested for additional equipment such as payloader truck and backhoe. Francisco assured the PRDP and the community within the RIA that they will make the necessary repair and installation of slope protection before leaving the project site. He also expressed his appreciation of the PRDP-funded infrastructure development (I-BUILD) project.

“Thank you sa opportunity. Malaking bagay sa contractor bukod sa amin, nakatulong din kami para ma-improve ang barangay na ito. Sa nakikita ko dapat lahat ng plano nasusunod, kahit mahigpit maganda naman ang resulta ng project,” he said.

Aside from reducing the response time during disasters, both the PPMIU and MPMIU-Caramoran cited the I-BUILD subproject's benefits in its efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19.

“During pandemic napakalaking tulong ng kalsada from PRDP. Hindi kami nahirapan sa pagdala ng mga relief goods kasi maganda na rin po yung daan,” Aguilar said. She added that the construction of the FMR provided job and income to local laborers.

The P126.99 million-worth FMR was designed to decrease travel time from 60 minutes to 30 minutes. Also, it aims to complement the P19.45 million-worth PRDP enterprise development (I-REAP) subproject Abaca Fiber Processing and Trading Enterprise being implemented by the Pinoy Lingap Damayan Multi-Purpose Cooperative (PLDC) as it benefits the 4,058 population of four abaca-producing barangays in Caramoran namely Sabangan, Panique, Maui and Datag.

DA rolls-out cash and food subsidy program to Aklan corn farmers

To alleviate the plights of small-holder farmers confronted by sectoral issues and to recognize their efforts in ensuring food adequacy amid this pandemic, the Department of Agriculture (DA) Western Visayas has started the distribution of ₱5,000.00 worth of cash and food assistance to some 241 corn growers in Aklan province.

According to DA Regional Executive Director Remelyn Recoter, corn farmers from Madalag, Makato, and Numancia had already obtained their food assistance valued at ₱2,000.00 for rice, chicken, and eggs, and ₱3,000.00 worth of cash.

“Other than them, coconut and sugarcane farmers and fisherfolk will also receive the same assistance from DA’s accredited cooperative/farmers association suppliers. The ₱5,000.00 cash and food assistance was funded under the Bayanihan Act II,” added Recoter who spearheaded the distribution on December 29 in the province.

Glenn Mariano, Agricultural Program Coordinating Officer for Aklan, said that the initial batch of recipients is from Batan with two corn farmers, Makato - 21, Numancia - 38, Lezo -20, Altavas - 70, Malinao - 32, Buruanga - 16, and Madalag - 42.

Using the e-voucher system, recipients in Aklan can claim their cash subsidies at MLhuillier Financial Service Centers as an accredited partner of the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) in this particular social amelioration support program of the DA intended to benefit the small and marginal farmers and fisherfolk.

“We are also tying up with the IBON Multi-Purpose Cooperative (MPC), SANDONA Development Cooperative (DC), Lezo MPC, and Libacao DC as suppliers of the food packs,” said Mariano.

Meanwhile, 6,582 coconut farmers and 4,792 fisherfolk in Aklan are also poised to receive cash and food assistance this year from the DA-Philippine Coconut Authority and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

DA7 holds corn-cassava training for NegOr stakeholders

The Department of Agriculture in Central Visayas (DA7) recently conducted a production and marketing training for the Corn and cassava stakeholders in Negros Oriental.

The training held in Dumaguete City was aimed to enhance the stakeholders' skills in production and marketing of cassava and corn.

A market matching was also held between the corn and cassava farmers and buyers where farmers were asked to commit on the volume they can produce and demand for a price based on the suggested retail price (SRP) of the year.

Sarah Perocho, DA7's Agricultural Program Coordinating Officer (DA7-APCO) for Negros Oriental said that a market matching is needed to help the corn and cassava farmers market their produce. "We need to help them so that they can feel that DA is always behind them, supporting them in all their endeavors," Perocho said.

According to Rey Liabres Negre, the Area Coordinator and representative of San Miguel Corp, (SMC), their company targets to buy around 3,000 tons of yellow corn for the year 2021 as the demand for animal feeds is increasing.

Nelda Silay, Chairperson of San Vicente Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association (SAVARBA)-a farmers group in Siaton, Negros Oriental said that they join the training to be able to link with a buyer.

"Sige ko attend ug mga trainings aron motaas among abot ug kita. Unya, if naa na mi buyer, di na mi magworry sa amo abot unsaon namo pagdispose. Sa pagkakaran wa sa ko mo-commit pila ka toneladas nga mais," Silay said.

(I always attend trainings in order to increase our production and yield. Once we have our buyer, we will no longer worry on how to dispose our produce. As of now, I have not yet committed as to how many tons of corn I can produce).

Dante Osorio, President of the Kalumbuyan Multipurpose Farmers Association (KAMULFA) in Bayawan City, Negros Oriental committed 200 tons of yellow corn which will be available by March 2021.

Adrian Enriquez, the assistant City Agriculturist said that they (Bayawan City) can produce more than 600 tons of yellow corn, while the Local Government Unit of Bais City (LGU-Bais City) shared that they have 55 hectares planted with yellow corn.

On the other hand, the Mabinay Farmer Scientist Organization (MAFSO) has committed cassava since they have around 2 hectares planted with cassava.

DA NorMin launches cash, food subsidy for marginal farmers and fishers program

DAMULOG, BUKIDNON - Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Agriculture – Regional Field Office 10 (DA-RFO 10) launched the Cash and Food Subsidy for Marginal Farmers and Fishers Program (CFSMFF) on December 21, 2020 in Damulog, Bukidnon.

DA-RFO 10 Provincial Operations Chief for Bukidnon, Dr. Janet D. Lopez, who represented Regional Executive Director Carlene C. Collado shared, the program aims to help farmers recover from the effects brought about by the pandemic.

In Region 10, around 29,426 corn farmers will benefit the cash and food subsidy at P5,000 each - P3,000 cash and P2,000 worth of food items comprising of 25kg rice (P1,000), 4.5kg chicken (P600) and 2 trays of eggs (P400).

In Damulog, Bukidnon alone, 1,813 qualified corn farmer-beneficiaries will receive said subsidy with a total of P9 million.

With allocation from the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act law or “Bayanihan II,” the agency seeks to provide direct food and financial assistance, highlighting the theme “Biyayang pang-agrikultura, hatid sa gitna ng pandemya.”

Implementing agencies include the DA under its Corn Program, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), Sugar Regulatory Administration and the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP).

For DA, criteria for the selection of corn farmer-beneficiaries include having one hectare and below landholding and must be registered under the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) and Farmers and Fisherfolk Registry System (FFRS); farmers from cities under 5th to 6th income classification or municipalities under the 4th to 6th income classification; and farmers who are not covered by other Social Amelioration Programs from other government agencies.

Damulog being a 4th class municipality, corn farmers from its 17 barangays will benefit from the program.

“The assistance will definitely help us with our needs, especially in this time of pandemic,” shared corn farmer Erlina B. Bosquit.

DA12 new thinking approach

The Department of Agriculture (DA) 12 under the leadership of Regional Executive Director Arlan Mangelen has set new directives to support and elevate the agri-fishery growth in the country.

In a meeting of division heads and section chiefs today, Director Mangelen has laid down the DA 12's 2021 Policy Thrusts and Directions.

"Kahit na may pandemya, napanatili nating sapat ang pagkain ng mga kababayan natin noong nakaraang taon...Ngayong 2021, mas palalakasin natin ang sektor ng agrikultura at pangisdaan sa rehiyon at palalawakin ang serbisyo ng ating ahensiya.," the director said.

With the country's new record of rice production level, he also lauded the efforts of all DA 12 personnel.

"Sa taong 2020, nakapagtala ang Pilipinas ng nasa 19.44 million metric tons sa rice production. Kaisa po ang rehiyon natin sa mga nakapagpalago at nakapagpanatili sa produksiyon ng palay sa ating bansa," the director added.

Further, this year, the DA 12 has a total budget allocation of more than PhP 2.4-Billion for the recovery of agri-fishery sector in SOCCSKSARGEN area.

"Sa pondo na meron tayo ngayon, mas maraming mga magsasaka at mangingisda ang mapagsisilbihan natin tungo sa "Masaganang Ani at Mataas na Kita," director Mangelen said.

Youth Scholars Pursue Agriculture, Agri-Related Courses under the ATI's EAsY Agri Program

QUEZON CITY – In support to the Department of Agriculture's advocacy to entice the Filipino youth in leaning towards agriculture, 223 scholars from all over the country were recruited and accepted under the Agricultural Training Institute's (ATI) newest scholarship program - the Educational Assistance for the Youth: Degree Courses in Agriculture, and Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering or the EAsY Agri Program. This program is dedicated to children of small-scale farmers and fisherfolk to encourage them in pursuing a professional career in agriculture and fisheries or to venture in agri-entrepreneurship.

The EAsY Agri Program will run from 2020 to 2025 to cover the four-year program for the BS Agriculture and related courses and five-year program for the BS Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering (BS ABE).

To date, a total of 160 scholars have been accepted where 119 will take up BS Agriculture, 13 for BS AgriBusiness, 11 for Bachelor in Agricultural Technology, 9 for BS Fisheries, 4 for BS Agro-Forestry, 2 for BS Forestry, and 2 for Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education in Agri-Fishery Arts. Meanwhile, 63 grantees are to pursue BS ABE. They are currently enrolled in different state universities and colleges where a Memorandum of Agreement has been forged through the ATI Regional Training Centers (ATI-RTCs). To date, the ATI has partnered with 58 SUCs nationwide to ensure the delivery of quality education to all youth scholars.

With the current pandemic situation, the education system is greatly affected causing the late opening of academic year, the earliest of which was August 10, 2020 and the last was last October 16, 2020. From the traditional face-to-face mode of learning, partner SUCs are on online, applying blended learning courses.

Some setbacks that scholars are experiencing are the unstable internet connection as most of them live in remote areas with very weak signal to participate in their online classes, or no available laptops or tablets. Despite the limitations, the scholars are committed to do their best as they are closely monitored and guided by the scholarship point persons of the ATI-RTCs.

By the end of the program, the Institute is expecting to produce 223 youth scholar-graduates.