

Philippines NRAM takes spot light at Cashless Expo 2023, introduces digital agri innovations

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In support of this year's theme, "Bagong Pilipinas, Cashless Payments Na!", the DA introduced various technologies and innovations that can benefit not only palay farmers but also the local rice industry.

Among those discussed was the Rice Business Innovation System (RiceBIS) of the DA-Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), which promotes improved technology adoption for enhanced rice production and processing, upgraded agri-entrepreneurship of farmers, and intensified partnerships and management for members of the rice subsector, among other benefits.

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) also introduced its assessment of the digital tools for data-driven decision-making on rice-based agri-food systems in the Philippines (D4AgPH), an online interactive inventory of digital agriculture tools and services (DATS) that promotes transparency and public awareness, fosters collaboration and co-development, and steers investments for the agriculture sector.

Private telecommunications companies PLDT and SMART also collaborated with the agriculture department for the implementation of the eBizNovation, which pushes for digital inclusion among smallholder farmers and fisherfolks, cooperatives, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through digital literacy training, internet connectivity plans, and access to e-commerce.

Provision of monetary interventions by the DA were also made possible through the Interventions Monitoring Card (IMC), an electronic wallet cum identification card for farmer- and fisherfolk-beneficiaries, in partnership with the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and the Universal Storefront Services Corporation (USSC). Since 2021, the Department has successfully distributed P13.6 billion worth of financial aid via e-wallets to a total of 2.69 million farmers and fisherfolk nationwide as per USSC data.

“Ang Department of Agriculture po, as we move forward in modernizing the agriculture sector through mechanization, training, events na katulad nito, as well as digitalization ay nagpo-provide ng inputs, seeds, fertilizer through discount vouchers, and unconditional cash assistance through Interventions Monitoring Cards with our financial technology partners. We also promote the utilization of drones in crop production, seed application, and fertilizer application,” DA Field Operations Service Director U-Nichols Manalo assured.

The Presidential Proclamation No. 524, series of 2004 institutionalized the celebration of the NRAM in recognition of the importance of rice as a staple food among Filipinos as well as its vital role in alleviating hunger, malnutrition, and poverty in the Philippines.

“Together with our rice farmers and our private sector partners, pino-promote po natin na maging accessible, available, at nutritious ang mga bigas na tinatangkilik ng ating mga kababayan,” Manalo said.