

Philippines unveils 3-year plan to boost food production and make farming, fishery viable investment options

19 January 2024 | News

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Philippines Department of Agriculture (DA), Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. unveiled his plan to increase agricultural productivity, lower food cost, ensure food security, and make farming and fisheries a more bankable investment alternative.

“Our goal is to modernize Philippine agriculture to spread benefits across the entire value chain. Farmers and fisherfolk should get fair value for their produce, prices of goods should be affordable, while traders, processors and retailers should be able to generate reasonable profits. It’s important to address the decades old inequity where farmers and fishers do not really benefit from the fruits of their labor. We also envision to make farming and fisheries viable for investors and a career option for young Filipinos,” he said.

To achieve this vision, the agriculture secretary laid out a **three-year plan** that involves:

- expanding and improving available agri-fishery areas to increase production
- mechanize and modernize agriculture and fishery production systems
- develop and improve post-harvest systems and infrastructures
- develop efficient logistics systems for input and production output
- improve and expand market access
- digitalization
- proper balancing of both the development and regulatory role of the Department of Agriculture
- strong partnership with farmers, fisherfolk, and the private sector

To expand production areas in both land and water, Sec. Tiu Laurel said DA needs to establish new irrigation facilities, zoning, and identification of key areas as well as enhancing existing infrastructures.

The DA has started to build post-harvest facilities that will increase rice and corn inventory by 23 days to help lessen grain imports without increasing production areas and just reducing post-harvest losses. The multi-year program will cost around P93 billion which could be recovered in under nine years, Sec. Tiu Laure explained.

"DA will also appoint an assistant secretary for logistics to help optimize costs for everyone involved in the value chain, from producers down to consumers. This initiative involves streamlining transportation, distribution and management processes for inputs and outputs, aiming to achieve a sustainable and cost-effective agricultural system," added the agriculture Chief.

Secretary Tiu Laurel further added "a multi-year program to digitalize DA operations seeks to uplift the agri-fisheries sector by equipping decision makers, food producers, and consumers with accessible technology and advanced tools. Accurate and real-time data will enable stakeholders to make smarter, data-driven decisions and efficiently manage emergencies and day-to-day operations".

The DA chief is also looking at pushing legislative reforms to update certain laws and regulations that will allow the agency to act more nimbly and respond more timely to challenges facing the farm and fisheries sector. In addition, DA is also looking at improving market access and reach for Philippine agricultural products to empower farmers and fisherfolk to increase their income and make the sector a viable investment alternative and farming a career option for the next generation.Â