

Japan and Philippines strike strategic alliance to develop high productive Agri-Tech solutions

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The Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA), through the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), formally solidified its partnership with the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on August 9.

Under the MoU, the DA-BSWM and JIRCAS will be working on two projects that are centered on the development and promotion of agricultural technologies to enhance agricultural production while also improving natural resource management in the tropics.

The first project will develop approaches and technologies for carbon storage in farmland soils in the Philippines as a means to promote soil health and fertility and to enhance sustainability and resilience in agriculture.

For its second project, representatives from both DA-BSWM and JIRCAS will be studying environmental conservation technologies for tropical islands through the *Yama-Sato-Umi* (Mountain-Village-Sea) perspective, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of land, sea, and society. This particular project aims to develop technologies for the prevention of soil erosion in hilly agricultural lands and reduction of fertilizer inputs, gather and analyze scientific evidence that can contribute to the conservation of mangrove ecosystems. It will also develop a basin model for the evaluation of

environmental conservation effects on river water quality and quantity.

“These projects are supported and are very much in line with the National Soil Health Program, which is one of the top priority agenda of the DA to contribute towards sustainable management of soil and water resources as well as the productivity of the agriculture sector,” DA-BSWM Director Dr. Gina Nilo explained.

She added that as the national focal agency of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation (UNCCD), the Bureau welcomes its collaboration with JIRCAS, especially since the agriculture sector is being riddled with the impacts of climate change and ecosystem degradation.

Philippine agriculture's sole national soil resource agency, the DA-BSWM is an attached bureau of the department of agriculture. Among its services are soil conservation advocacy, sustainable agricultural land management advocacy, soil resources assessment and mapping, agricultural water resource management, analytical services, and research and development related to soil and water resources.