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Philippines aims for higher rice production under the MaSaGaNa Rice Industry Development Program

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The Department of Agriculture is undertaking a comprehensive review of its Masagana Rice Industry Development Program, aiming to significantly enhance rice production to meet self-sufficiency goals, increase farmersâ?? incomes, lower consumer prices, and potentially enable the country to export rice again. The DAâ??s multi-year plan underscores its commitment to transforming the Philippine rice industry, with a strategic focus on enhancing productivity, supporting farmers, and securing food security for the nation.

The rice program also encompasses the production of the better rice seeds, optimization of the utilization of fertilizers, and development of a logistics network to bring harvests to market and inputs to farms more efficiently and cost-effectively.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said DA is evaluating the previous administrationâ??s program, which targeted to increase productivity while also ensuring significant increase in farmerâ??s income, an initiative inspired by the Masagana 99 program launched by the late President Ferdinand Marcos.

Current national averages indicate yields of approximately 84 sacks per hectare, highlighting the need for substantial improvements.

â??Weâ??re recalibrating the program to identify areas for enhancement, including the distribution of improved seeds, expansion of irrigation systems, and adjustments to rice cropping schedules,â? Secretary Tiu Laurel said. He expressed optimism that given the right inputs and technologies, rice yield could be increased to 7.5 metric tons per hectare or 150 bags (50 kg/bag) in targeted program areas or even higher in the ideal ecosystem.

Last year, the Philippines harvested a record-breaking 20.06 million metric tons of palay across 4.82 million hectares of rice fields. If successful, MaSaGaNa could propel annual palay production beyond 25 million metric tons, even if the target yield is reached only in the 3.39 million hectares of irrigated farmlands.

The average per hectare yield of palay in irrigated areas is 4.51 metric tons while in non-irrigated areas it is 3.34 metric tons, putting the national average at 4.17 metric tons, or around 84 sacks of play.

The average palay yield per hectare was 3.89 metric tons in 2013 and stood at 3.97 tons in 2018, the year before Congress passed the Rice Tariffication Law that set aside P10 billion in import duties every year to fund modernize rice farming and increase farm productivity.

However, Secretary Tiu Laurel acknowledged the challenges ahead, noting the necessity for substantial government investments in agriculture. â??After decades of neglect, we must adopt a more scientific approach to farming to boost output and manage costs effectively,â?• he asserted.