

Filipino Department of Agriculture executive earns top honor at Asia-Pacific food regulatory summit

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The Department of Agriculture (DA) highlighted a significant recognition for one of its senior officials after Assistant Secretary for Policy and Regulations Atty. Paz J. Benavidez II was conferred the Honor of Excellence Award during the 2026 Asia-Pacific Food Regulatory Authority Summit (APFRAS) held on May 11 to 12 at Hotel Naru Seoul-MGGallery in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

The award recognizes her contributions to the harmonization of food safety and regulatory systems across initiatives aligned with regional and international standards.

In her role as Assistant Secretary for Policy and Regulations, Atty. Benavidez leads the secretariat of the DA oversight panel responsible for the issuance of regulations, in line with the provisions of the Anti-Red Tape Act. Her work has been instrumental in strengthening regulatory coordination and improving policy coherence within the department.

Beyond her responsibilities in the DA, she also serves as Chair of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA), becoming the first Filipino to hold the position, marking a milestone in the country's representation in global agricultural governance.

The APFRAS 2026 gathered food safety and regulatory leaders from across the Asia-Pacific region under the APFRAS 2.0 framework, which focuses on enhancing regional cooperation, advancing regulatory science, and promoting safer and more resilient food systems.

Participating economies included the Republic of Korea, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, the Philippines, New Zealand, China, and Australia. Delegates engaged in high-level discussions, keynote presentations, and

collaborative exchanges on food safety management, international standards, and emerging regulatory challenges.

Observer countries and partner organizations, including Canada, Mongolia, the United States, Peru, Chile, Malaysia, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the World Health Organization, also took part in the summit, contributing insights on global food standards, scientific innovation, and regulatory cooperation.

The summit featured keynote sessions on next-generation risk assessment, global Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems, and food safety management for international events, reinforcing its role as a key platform for advancing harmonized food regulation across the region.