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Philippines advances new growth agenda for coconut sector

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The Philippines is accelerating efforts to reposition its coconut industry as a globally competitive and strategically important agricultural sector, with industry leaders calling for enhanced financial access, expanded trade promotion capabilities and stronger policy support to drive long-term growth.

During its second-quarter meeting, the National Sectoral Committee on Coconut (NSC on Coconut) endorsed measures aimed at unlocking greater resources for market development and international compliance initiatives. Central to the discussions was a proposal urging the Department of Budget and Management to grant the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) unrestricted access to a dedicated special account established to support trade promotion and market expansion activities.

The move reflects growing recognition that the countryâ??s coconut sector faces increasingly complex regulatory and market-access requirements across international destinations. Industry stakeholders emphasized that strengthening compliance capabilities and export promotion mechanisms will be critical to sustaining the global competitiveness of Philippine coconut

products amid evolving trade standards.

The discussions were anchored on the implementation of the Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund established under Republic Act No. 11524. The landmark legislation created a long-term financing mechanism designed to modernize the coconut industry, improve farmer livelihoods and facilitate strategic investments through the utilization of recovered coconut levy assets.

Beyond funding concerns, stakeholders examined the effectiveness of ongoing productivity enhancement programmes, including the governmentâ??s salt fertilization initiative, with participants raising questions regarding cost efficiency and field-level coverage.

The meeting also reviewed legislative developments related to coconut oil processing, value-added manufacturing facilities and the broader implementation of biofuel-related policies. Policymakers underscored the importance of expanding downstream processing capacity to strengthen value creation within the coconut economy and reduce dependence on commodity exports.

Government agencies responsible for agricultural training, mechanization and farmer capacity-building outlined initiatives aimed at improving technical support services, enhancing production efficiency and expanding infrastructure access for coconut growers and cooperatives.

Industry representatives further highlighted encouraging developments in international cooperation, citing growing interest from foreign development partners in supporting programmes linked to coconut sector modernization and rural economic development.

To capitalize on emerging opportunities, the committee endorsed measures focused on enhancing market compliance systems, strengthening trade promotion efforts and expanding access to strategic development funding.

The meeting also addressed broader policy reforms linked to environmental sustainability and resource management. Among the proposals discussed was an amendment to existing national tree-planting legislation that would revise mandatory participation requirements to better reflect practical implementation realities.

In a move that could significantly elevate the industry's strategic importance, stakeholders also voiced support for formally recognizing coconut as a National Industrial Crop, a designation expected to strengthen its role within national economic planning and agricultural development strategies.

The recommendations emerging from the meeting will now be elevated to the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries for endorsement before submission to the Department of Agriculture, marking another step toward reshaping the future of one of the country's most important agricultural industries.