

Philippines to launch corn devp program to improve yield

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The Philippines government is gearing up to implement a production development plan for the Philippine corn industry that will benefit the livestock, poultry, and dairy sectors and ensure sustainable and sufficient food grains, which forms part of the food security commitment of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to the Filipino people.

The Department of Agriculture (DA), under the leadership of the President, is set to launch its sustainable corn breeding program this year to develop yellow corn varieties to support farmers' demand for location-specific and affordable types of animal feeds.

The program will strengthen the development of yellow corn varieties with improved yield potential of 5-6 tons per hectare, and improved drought and disease tolerance. These varieties will also have enriched protein content.

The program also aims to ensure the supply of quality breeder seeds for certified seed production by seed growers.

The corn development initiative, to be undertaken through the Regional Field Office Cagayan Valley, in coordination with the National Corn Program, Bureau of Agricultural Research, and the Agricultural Training Institute, will also develop open-pollinated white corn varieties for food staples and food processing.

As of 2020, the Cagayan Valley Research Centre has developed 18 open-pollinated varieties (OPV) of corn varieties approved and accredited by the National Seed Industry Council. Through the implementation of this sustainable corn breeding program, at least two types are expected to be commercialised in two years.

The Cagayan Valley region is a key growing area of yellow corn production in the country, contributing 31 per cent of the total national output in 2021. Analysis of the cost structure of yellow corn reveals high production costs, forcing the local industry to rely on imported genetically-modified corn hybrid seeds, which guarantee high yield.

The DA's comprehensive corn breeding program will not only support the local corn industry by utilising locally developed varieties and lowering production costs, but also boost the country's livestock, poultry, and dairy sectors.