



# InangLupa

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"Nurturing an inclusive, science-based, resilient & market-oriented Philippine agriculture"



The establishment of community watersheds is one of the long-term solutions against El Niño, said Dr. William D. Dar (above), in his keynote speech at the 2016 Annual Symposium of the Global Food Security Consortium, organized by the Seed Science Center of Iowa State University, USA, on April 13-14, 2016.

## Watershed mgmt, 'Bhoochetana' should get P100-M budget

The budget for water management and soil rejuvenation should be trebled to sustain the country's adaptation mechanism against El Niño and climate change.

This was suggested by former agriculture secretary William Dar, noting that the funds allocated for the government's Yamang Lupa program should be hiked to P100 million (M) from its initial budget of P30M three years ago.

"It should be P100 million for the next three years. If you don't improve your soil and water, even if you have the best crop varieties, you cannot fully optimize productivity," Dar said in a phone interview.

(Pls turn to p2)

## Phi farm sector needs P300-B annual budget

The next administration should triple the budget for agriculture to P300 billion (B) starting 2017 to allow the sector to boost its output by at least four percent (%) a year, a non-governmental organization said.

InangLupa Movement called on the next president to increase the budget for agriculture to "elevate" the state of the country's farm sector.

"With a P300-billion budget, the government will not only sustain the gains of the rice and corn programs, but also elevate other programs for other crops to boost the country's economy," InangLupa president and founder William Dar said.

"We should target a growth rate of 4%, which have been achieved earlier. [The sector] has even grown by 6.5% in the past. Investing more in agriculture will allow the sector to increase its contribution to GDP," said Dar, who served previously as agriculture secretary during the Estrada administration.

The agriculture sector used to account for 20% of the country's GDP. In recent

years, however, this figure has gone down to 10%.

Dar said the DA could also use the money to develop more agri-industrial hubs, which will encourage the private sector to invest in food manufacturing and processing.

He said these recommendations will be included in the group's position paper, which will be submitted to the agriculture secretary of the next administration.

"[The position paper] is a complete road map that can still be strengthened, but the basics will be there. It's about elevating Philippine agriculture. The vision is very clear, a modern and industrialized agriculture," Dar said.

He said the position paper will in-

(Pls turn to p6)

## Food crisis looms as El Niño cuts harvests

A repeat of the 2007-2008 Asian rice price crisis looms because of a strong El Niño, and the threat needs to be immediately addressed amid dwindling harvests.

The International Rice Research (IRRI) has renewed its call for tighter cooperation among all rice-growing countries, particularly across Asia to stem the crisis should such emerge.

Drought from the current El Niño episode has already caused lower harvests and irregular planting across several rice-producing countries and is expected to

(Pls turn to p3)

## InangLupa consultation a success

With about 100 active participants, the two-day InangLupa Movement consultation-workshop was a success, as the group further enhanced its framework on modernizing and industrializing Philippine agriculture.

"We successfully attained our goal to bring together various stakeholders for a productive two-way dialogue to craft a framework of a modern and industrialized Philippine agriculture, which we will recommend to the next administration," said Dr. William D. Dar, former agriculture secretary and founding president of InangLupa.

"We are sincerely heartened by the active participation of 94 officials of state universities and colleges (SUCs),

(Pls turn to p4)



Dr. William D. Dar (inset and at front row, in coat with red tie) extends his appreciation to the participants and resource persons of the consultation-workshop of InangLupa Movement, Inc., April 7-8, 2016, where they refined a framework on modernizing and industrializing Philippine agriculture. Among the invited guests and resource persons were: Senator Cynthia Villar, who was represented by her chief of staff, Atty. Rhaegee Tamaña (in red dress); former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor; Ramon Ilusorio, chairman of the board of trustees of the Management Association of the Philippines; Dr. Rolando Dy, executive director of University of Asia and the Pacific Center for Food and Agribusiness; Dr. Leonardo Gonzales, president of STRIVE/SIKAP Foundation; Dr. Ernesto Brown, of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development; and Dr. Felino Lansigan, dean of the UPLB College of Arts and Sciences.

## Watershed mgmt ... (from page 1)

"The country's farm soils have to be rejuvenated and farmers should adopt modern, yet sustainable soil and community watershed management technologies," he added.

The program is jointly implemented by the DA-Bureau of Soils and Water Management, Bureau of Agricultural Research, InangLupa Movement, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), and regional field offices (regions 4-A, 8 and 9).

"Effective management of community watersheds should be complemented with the provision of interventions, notably soil rejuvenation, quality seeds, and better technologies and cropping systems," said Dar, who serves as president of InangLupa Movement, he founded in January 2015, upon retirement at ICRISAT.

He said the Yamang Lupa program would be a long-term solution to the dry spell in drought-prone areas and to climate change eventually.

The program was inspired by the same model of community watersheds in India that enabled farmers to improve their crop yields to four (MT/ha) from a measly one MT/ha.

Since 2009, India has been implementing community watersheds and soil rejuvenation program, covering 3.1 million hectares and benefitting 4.4 million families whose average yield surged by as much as 66 percent. *(By Louise Maureen Simeon, Philippine Star)*

### Springboard for other interventions

"With community watershed as a springboard for other interventions, ICRISAT has enabled thousands of farmers in 66 watersheds in India increase their crop yields up to four tons per hectare from a measly one to two tons per hectare," said Dr. Dar, in his presentation, at the 2016 Annual Symposium of the Global Food Security Consortium, at Iowa State University, USA, on April 13-14, 2016. He was invited as the symposium's keynote speaker.

"Effective management of community watersheds should be complemented with the provision of interventions, notably soil rejuvenation or 'Boochetana,' quality seeds, and better technologies and cropping systems," added Dar.

He said the ICRISAT community watershed and Boochetana program has been implemented in India since 2009, covering 3.1 million hectares, and benefited 4.4 million farm families, whose average crop yield increased by up to 66%. In all, its accrued net benefit in four years amounted to US \$240 million or about P11 billion.

"The Philippines can also replicate the ICRISAT community watershed and Boochetana model, which in fact, is being piloted in three sites in Quezon, Samar and Zamboanga Sibugay, under the Yamang Lupa program," Dar said.

"Yamang Lupa features community watersheds and Boochetana, and after two years, about 900 participating farmers were able to increase their average yield from 50% to as high 230%, and their average net income to



*Dr. William D. Dar receives a certificate of appreciation from executive director Jovita Corpuz of the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) during the ACPC Policy Forum on Micro-banking and Micro-insurance for the Poor, on April 27, 2016, at Novotel, Cubao, Quezon City. Joining them are ACPC deputy executive directors Jocelyn Alma Badiola and Ramon Yedra.*

150%," Dar noted.

The BSWM has also developed 216 soil health cards, covering 4,927 hectares in the three pilot sites in Samar (Sta. Rita, Basey and Pinabacdao), Sariaya, Quezon, and in RT Lim, Zamboanga Sibugay.

In Samar, where 834 farmers volunteered to join 'Yamang Lupa,' they increased their harvest of lowland rice by at least 58% and 104% for sweet potato.

In Sariaya, Quezon, involving 48 farmer-cooperators, average yield of onion more than doubled, from 11.6 metric tons per hectare (MT/ha) to 25 MT/ha, for a 115.5% increase.

In RT Lim, Zamboanga Sibugay, with 31 farmer-cooperators, harvest of peanut doubled, from 3.3 MT/ha to 6.75 MT/ha

harvest from Yamang Lupa techno-demo farms.

"We are heartened to know of such favorable developments, as we are right all along that the country's farm soils have to be rejuvenated, and that farmers should adopt modern, yet sustainable 'Boochetana' soil and community watershed management technologies," Dar said.

"We thank Agriculture Secretary Alcala for partnering with ICRISAT to showcase and pilot Boochetana technology in the Philippines, and hopefully expand it nationwide," said Dar.

Given additional funds, the BSWM said it can increase Yamang Lupa program area to 16,600 hectares (ha), with the bulk in Sariaya, Quezon at 10,000 ha, followed by Samar (5,900 ha), and Zamboanga Sibugay (704 ha).

*(By Noel O. Reyes)*

## Not enough help for farmers in drought areas

The lack of government action to mitigate the impact of El Niño made it more difficult for farmers in drought-stricken areas to recoup their losses, a non-governmental organization (NGO) said.

Rice Watch and Action Network (R1) said farmers made this complaint, during a recent assembly of farmers and local government units (LGUs) in Koronadal City, South Cotabato.

"The interventions from the local and national government were delayed and not enough to cover for the losses we already incurred from the drought," said Joseph Tolentino, president of Koronadal City Integrated Climate Resilient Farmers Association.

"The provincial agriculture office distributed vegetable and fruit seedlings from the national government as alternative crops to palay. However, these were lost as well," said Tolentino, adding the LGUs were "amiss" in providing production support and other measures to prepare farmers from El Niño.

The LGUs cited the election prohibition to bid and purchase planting materials and other production support for farmers—as the main reason for the delay and lack of support.

R1 said farmers have not planted rice since last year because of the drought. Some of them resorted to eating rats and to stealing to feed their families.

R1 convenor Aurora Regalado said the

candidates in the coming election need to be clear on their programs to alleviate the impact of climate change on the people.

Regalado said the magnitude of losses on people's lives and livelihood deserves more than the candidates' "plain talk and promises."

"We are experiencing the impact now and we have seen the worst because of delayed action. We expect more extreme events and La Niña is looming in the horizon, following the drought we experienced," she said.

R1 is training farmers on how to adapt to the worsening impact of climate change. Farmers in different parts of the country have embraced the group's Climate Resiliency Field School (CrFS) that helped them improve their farming technology, used climate-resilient seeds and inputs, while diversifying in other crops for additional income in case their crops are damaged by extreme weather.

Farmers in several towns in South Cotabato, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat have attended the CrFS and were able to withstand the impact of drought, although, some of them still experienced production losses. They partnered with the DA Region 12 in the distribution of seeds and fertilizers to drought-affected farmers.

*(BusinessMirror)*

# DA seeks P83.7-B budget in 2017

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will propose a budget of P83.67 billion for 2017, 55 percent (%) higher than its P53.97-B budget this year, according to the DA planning and programming division.

Of the total P83.7-B proposed budget, P75.42 B is allocated for DA programs, of which more than half, or P43.12 B is for capital outlay, and P36 B for maintenance and operating expenses. It also proposes a budget of P8.24 B for its several GOCCs.

The DA said it will increase investments in rural infrastructure and logistics, particularly farm-to-market roads, at P19.2 B, 160% more than the P7.38-B budget this year. It proposes P9.59B for the Philippine Rural Development Program.

For the rice sector, the DA said it will prioritize "targeted support" for farmers in anticipation of the possible removal of the quantitative restriction on rice in 2017.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala said the government wants to increase *palay* or paddy rice output to 20 million metric tons (MMT) in 2017. To do this, the DA has proposed a budget of P9.06 B for the National Rice Program. The amount is 28% bigger than the P7.06 B allotted for the program this year.

The DA proposes a P6.12-B budget for the National Fisheries Program in 2017, 37% higher than the P4.46 B allocated

this year.

Proposed appropriations for the National Corn Program reached P2.8 B, 24% higher than the 2016 allocation of P2.25 B.

The DA is also seeking to increase the budget for the National High-Value

Crops Program by 26% to P3.67 B.

The livestock sector has a proposed budget of P2.46 B in 2017. This is more than double the P1.17-B budget this year.

The DA also proposes to spend P852.6 million for its Organic Agriculture Program in 2017, P227 M higher than the P635 M allocated this year. *(By Mary Grace Padin, BusinessMirror)*



*Dr. William D. Dar gives an inspirational message to the officers and members of the Association of Land Bank-Assisted Cooperatives of Pangasinan (ALBACOPA), during their 5<sup>th</sup> general assembly, on April 26, 2016, at the Pangasinan State University, in Sta. Maria, Pangasinan. The ALBACOPA Federation of Cooperatives is chaired by Ignacio Dumantay.*

## BSWM proposes P18M for reg'l soils labs

The Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Soil and Water Management (DA-BSWM) is proposing at least P18 million as budget for 2017 to maintain and upgrade regional soil laboratories (RSLs) nationwide.

BSWM Director Silvino Q. Tejada said fund will continue to capacitate all the RSLs and acquire new and modern laboratory equipment, as well as supervise and coordinate the technical operations of all private and government-operated soil laboratories.

The agency conducted its first orientation and consultation on soil laboratory operation and management, at Apo View Hotel in Davao City, on March 29-30, 2016, attended by BSWM officials and representatives from 29 government-owned and 19 private sector-owned laboratories nationwide.

The soil laboratories conduct soil analysis, and provide recommendations on the appropriate use of fertilizers, and soil amendments and inputs to increase crop yields.

Tejada said the BSWM will establish a data banking system to serve the needs of soil laboratories and farmers. He said they will continue to craft policies and implement programs to effectively use and manage the country's soil and water resources to contribute to attaining national food security, and serving farmers and all other stakeholders better. *(By Loraine D. Cerillo, DA-BSWM)*

## Food crisis looms ... (from page 1)

further cut rice stocks among the world's top exporters to levels not seen since 2008.

"Combined with lower stocks in some key countries, emerging patterns in regional and global grain supply threaten the repeat of the painful rice price crisis in 2007-08," the IRRI said.

### ASEAN food security

The 2007-08 price crisis led the ASEAN to put together the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and an accompanying strategic action plan.

Beyond this framework and plan, however, much more needs to be done.

"Regional cooperation is essential to manage a food crisis," said IRRI director general Matthew Morell in a letter to the secretary-general or agriculture ministers of the ASEAN member-countries.

IRRI said Asia must now take pro-active steps to fight the deadly effects of the prolonged warm weather.

To ensure maximum impact, cooperation would have to involve not only ASEAN member-countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) but also China, Japan, and South Korea (ASEAN+3) and India – which are the world's biggest producers and consumers of rice. Combined, 90 percent of the world's rice is produced in Asia.

IRRI has developed and offers its improved and resilient rice varieties, crop management technologies, and exper-

tise to rice-growing countries.

Upon request of the governments of some of these countries, IRRI had helped develop national rice sector strategies, providing policy advice and technical assistance.

### Regional cooperation

"The way to handle another crisis is for the ASEAN+3 and India to come together as a region with shared concerns and interests, and take advantage of IRRI as a regional and neutral resource," said Bruce Tolentino, IRRI deputy director general for communication and partnerships.

IRRI's call for action also includes an appeal for serious investment in rice research, which has borne the brunt of decreasing support in agriculture globally.

Rice research has historically been supported mainly by Western donor countries, and to a much lesser degree by rice-growing countries.

IRRI seeks to push this dynamic to a more appropriate balance, that is, for the biggest rice stakeholders to invest the most in research.

The Philippines, eighth largest producer of rice in the world in 2015 and one of the most at risk countries from climate change, has risen to the challenge and is now IRRI's fourth biggest donor.

Other Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, India, and Indonesia, are also now ramping up investment in rice research, and moving toward helping finance the science that benefits their own countries. *(The Philippine Star)*



At left, Dr. William Dar receives a plaque of appreciation from Dr. Pedrita Nayga Medrano, president of the Philippine Association of Research Managers, Inc. (PHILARM), after delivering a keynote speech on “Research and Extension: Key to Sustainable Development in the ASEAN,” during PHILARM’s 1<sup>st</sup> Int’l. R&D, and Extension Management Congress, and 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, at Kasetsart University, in Bangkok, Thailand, on April 20, 2016. Dr. Dar also inducted the new set of PHILARM officers and board of directors for 2016-2018, led by Ricarte Castro (of the DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research) as president, and Dr. Merian Mani (president of Marinduque State College), as vice president. They are shown above with fellow PHILARM officers, Dr. Dar, Dr. Medrano, Dr. Chongrak Wachrinrat (acting president of Kasetsart University), and congress resource persons and participants.

## Drought to linger after El Niño

An Australian expert on water management is at risk of massive water shortage even after the El Niño phenomenon passes because of inadequate policies to govern water use in the face of expanding roads, housing projects, malls and other infrastructure.

Prof. Stuart White, director of Institute for Sustainable Futures of the University of Technology Sydney said the Philippines needs to step up policy measures to mitigate the impact of drought as well as balance water supply and demand to meet infrastructure development.

### Manage supply, demand

Cities and provinces will have to live with drought beyond El Niño because of the lack of a water demand management policy, he said at the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) forum on water demand management, held at the Marco Polo Hotel, in Mandaluyong.

“Increase in water use as a result of development will put extra pressure on water supply in the sewerage system,” White explained at the sidelines of the water forum.

Dr. White said Australia’s drought was similar to that of the Philippines. He shared that Canberra has adopted a 10-year plan to mitigate water shortage and the impact of drought. So far, it has resulted in 145 billion liters of water being saved every year, he said.

### Amend Water Code

Former environment secretary and now USAID climate resiliency leader Elisea Gozun agreed the Philippines needed to amend the Water Code to manage unregulated ground water extraction.

She said the Water Code covers integrated water resource management, such as surface, groundwater and rainwater.

Dr. White said the measures should include improvement in the manufacture of appliances; addressing water leakage such as physical leaks at home, offices and commercial establishments.

White also said the government’s water providers “need to make it expensive by paying [water] per cubic meter to encourage water conservation.”

He said Sao Paulo in Brazil and California in the US are also currently experiencing significant drought leading to water shortages due to the lack of policy planning. *(By Estrella Torres, Inquirer.net, Philippine Daily Inquirer)*

## InangLupa Consultation ... (from page 1)

DA regional offices, farmers and fisherfolk’s associations, and non-government organizations (NGOs), who signified their genuine desire to help and build trust in modernizing and industrializing the country’s agriculture, fishery, food and agribusiness sectors,” added Dr. Dar, during the opening program of two-day event, on April 7-8, 2016, at the DA’s Bureau of Soils and Water Management (DA-BSWM), in Quezon City.

“The glory days of agriculture can still be revived, and modernizing and industrializing Philippine agriculture is key towards achieving it,” said Senator Cynthia A Villar, who was represented by her chief of staff, Atty. Rhaegee B Tamaña, who also serves as executive director of Villar Foundation, Inc.

“Farmers and fisherfolk are the central power units or lynchpin of Philippine agricultural development,” added former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor, who serves as president of the Federation of Free Farmers.

“Crop diversification will be a major strategy to improve agricultural productivity, and to achieve a meaningful change in the government system, meritocracy should be the guidepost for government,” shared Ramon Ilusorio, chairman of the board of trustees, Management Association of the Philippines Agribusiness and Countryside Development (MAP ABCD) Foundation.

The other resource persons during the two-day consultation were: Dr. Rolando Dy, executive director of University of Asia and the Pacific Center for Food and Agribusiness; Dr. Leonardo Gonzales, president of STRIVE/SIKAP Foundation; Dr. Roehlano Briones, of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS); Dr. Ernesto Brown, of the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD);

Ernesto Brown, OIC and Supervising Science Research Specialist SERD-PCAARRD

Felino Lansigan, dean of the UPLB College of Arts and Sciences;

Rodolfo Vicerra, director-general of the Congressional Planning and Budget Office; Evelyn Esquejo, of Benguet State University; and Napoleon Juanillo, CHED director.

A synthesis of the various papers presented by the resource persons revealed the following key messages:

Majority of participants said: ‘We should not ask to be included. Instead, we should act or take the initiative to be included.’

Credit is central in the development of the agriculture sector.

With a disconnect in support programs and that of the smallholders, there is need to revisit and craft more responsive strategies to reach possibly all smallholders nationwide.

The role of science is critical in addressing the demand for sufficient, quality (nutritious), and sustainable food especially in an environment faced with damaged or dwindling resources.

A science-based agricultural intervention must be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound).

Climate change (CC) is an inevitable phenomenon brought about by a gamut of human mismanagement of resources. There are short-term and long-term strategies to address CC’s effect on agriculture, one of which is the effective use of science and technology.

Modern farming systems are necessary to increase productivity.

Diversification must be based on market signals, and value-adding is an element of a modern farming system.

A competitive and market-oriented agriculture is central to realizing inclusive growth.

Food and agriculture systems in the Philippines are highly vulnerable.

Policy measures play a key role in promoting economic resilience. Policies can be directed towards underlying constraints to economic modernization and transformation, which simultaneously improves economic resilience; more specific development strategies can be aimed at developing range of initiatives for mitigating and addressing risk in agriculture and food systems.

Partnership will always remain as a preferred approach towards the pursuit of sustainable development. In partnership, transparency ensures and builds trust among partners.

To be competitive in agriculture, a key ingredient is education. This needs to keep pace not only to ensure direct engagement in agriculture but also for generating good jobs. *(With reports from Rosana Mula and Paul Anareta)*

Copies and/or highlights/summaries of the papers presented during the consultation-workshop are available upon request at email: [inanglupamovement@gmail.com](mailto:inanglupamovement@gmail.com) or [inanglupa@yahoo.com](mailto:inanglupa@yahoo.com)



The famous rice terraces in Batad, Ifugao. (Photo by Toni Tiemsin)

The author is currently a news producer of special reports and features for several GMA 7 news and public affairs programs like *Balitanghali*, *Saksi*, and *State of the Nation* with Jessica Soho. She is a media fellow of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism for Basic and Advanced Investigative Reporting, UP Diliman.



lish links with commercial farms and manufacturers. She also wants additional incentives for banks to lend directly to farmers.

Venturing into agri-industrialization is long overdue, says former Agriculture Secretary Dar, and the candidates are in the right place investing in modernization of farms. However, he notes that this can also be a tricky trade, and might put the small farmers in a tight situation if handled wrong.

“Go inclusive agri-industrialization strategy. Farmers should be part every step of the way of the development process. They should benefit from the markets that we are able to generate,” Dar said.

#### Crime and Smuggling

Among the candidates, Duterte and Santiago have stated clear opposition against crime and rice smuggling. According to a report by the *Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura* (SINAG), up to P64 billion is lost revenues from 2013 to 2014 due to widespread smuggling of agricultural products.

Smuggling can be declared as economic sabotage as large-scale smuggling of sugar, corn, pork, poultry, garlic, onion, carrot, fish and vegetables persists in the country.

#### Research and Development

Of the presidential candidates, only Duterte and Poe have expressed intention in focusing on research and development of the agriculture sector.

Duterte wants an inventory of natural assets and a plan to map the topography, soil quality and marine assets that best suit the needs of the market. This “agricultural guide map” will also indicate soil suitability, climactic conditions, and rainfall patterns, he said.

Meanwhile, Poe wants to conduct a nationwide soil health mapping and analysis.

This investment on research is also a long overdue project of the government, says Agriculture Czar Dar. “Today we are investing only 0.1% of our GDP while the recommendation of Unesco we have to invest at least 1% GDP,” he says.

#### High Time

We are an agricultural country, yet agriculture is one of the most neglected sectors in the Philippines. The presidential candidates know there is a need to focus on the agriculture to sustain economic development and food security.

The platforms, although needing more concrete and realistic goals, reflect an interest in making farming more sustainable. The question now falls on the implementation and execution of these plans.

And so the waiting game begins. ###

**Editor’s note:** This article is the printed version of the interview conducted by the author with several ‘presidentiables,’ and InangLupa president Dr. William Dar and vice president Sonny Domingo. Kindly watch the video by visiting this GMA 7 link:

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/video/365315/saksi/plataporma-ng-presidential-candidates-sa-agrikultura-binusisi-ng-ilang-eksperto>

## Agriculture:

# What Presidentiables have to say?

If you ate today, thank a farmer.

Food is crucial for survival, and yet, the agriculture sector remains the second poorest sector in the Philippines, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

We are dubbed as an agricultural country, blessed with water teeming with fish, thick forest for vegetation, and hectares of land that extend from mountain to mountain, and yet this is a nation where farmers beg for food, till the land they for decades, and still earn a measly salary by the end of the day.

Seventy percent of the poor families in our country are rural. The average income of a Filipino farmer working on a 1.5-hectare land is pegged at P2,250 a month.

To ensure food sovereignty and alleviate the burden of poverty in rural areas, agriculture plays a critical role in the next administration’s agenda. What are the current platforms of the President for the agriculture sector?

#### Irrigation

All presidential candidates have promised free or additional funding for irrigation. Free irrigation can really take some burden off the farmers’ shoulders, but according a farmer leader I interviewed, additional irrigation is what is truly needed at this point.

“Dapat dagdag na irrigation hindi libreng irrigation. Yung mga farmer na walang surface irrigation, dapat magka-shallow well irrigation,” farmer Sonny Domingo said. (There should be additional irrigation not free irrigation. The farmers without surface irrigation should have shallow well irrigation.)

Over 40 percent of total irrigable land area in the Philippines does not have irrigation. This accounts for 1,311,546 hectares out of 3,019,609 total irrigable area based on the data culled by the National Irrigation Administration.

Former Agriculture Secretary and InangLupa Movement President Dr. William Dar agrees: “We have underdeveloped irrigation systems. Water is one key investment area in agriculture.”

Amidst the promises of free irrigation, another question remains unanswered. Where will they get the funding?

The agriculture conundrum worsens as the Philippines is facing historic drought attributed to the El Niño phenomenon. Many provinces have declared state of calamity due to prolonged drought which destroyed tons of produce and hectares of lands.

#### Crop Insurance

While irrigation plays a crucial role in keeping the productivity of the land, persisting natural disasters and climate change must also be taken into the context when building a sound platform. Senator Grace Poe and Vice President Jejomar Binay push for crop insurance among farmers in the event of a disaster such as flooding or drought.

This concept is not new to farmers. It could be a game-changer in the lives of the small farmers. However, it could also really be taxing when red tape comes in.

“Dapat kasama yung dapat kikitain nya sa insurance . Dapat yung wala ng kailangan proof na nasira nya. Dapat ang magsabi na nasira ang lugar nya ay yung representative ng gobyerno na siya naman din panggagalingan ng bayad,” Domingo said. (They should include the earnings for insurance. Proof should not be required if it gets ruined. The government representative should be the one to attest that the irrigation broke down since the payment comes from them.)

#### Agri-Industrialization

All presidential candidates also agree that making the agriculture marketable and profitable is key in the success of farmers.

In order to increase productivity, Binay believes that there is a need to shift the agricultural framework from the limited scope of farming to agri-business. This is the same framework he did for Makati City: make the sector profitable for business partnerships, modernize the infrastructures, and increase productivity.

Poe, on the other hand, wants to invite agribusiness powerhouses to invest in the agriculture sector and transfer technology and expertise to our farmers.

Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte believes he can modernize agriculture by focusing on transportation system in the Food Basket of the Philippines: Mindanao. He plans to build a trail for an efficient food transport system as well as food terminals in major food hubs.

Liberal Party standard bearer Mar Roxas has a more tacky name for his platform: *Bukid Revolution*. Under this framework, he intends to modernize post-harvest facilities to reduce the wastage, losses, and production cost. Roxas also wants to focus on increasing the rice production in the country.

To ensure food security, Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago wants to promote contract-growing to help small farmers estab-



As a member of the Board of Regents of the Universidad De Manila (UDM), Dr. William D. Dar (left) — along with UDM president and co-chair of the Board of Regents, Atty. Ernest Maceda, Jr. (2<sup>nd</sup> from left), and UDM Board of Regents Donna Gascona and Cesar Fortuno — graced the graduation ceremonies of thousands of UDM students, at the Philippine International Convention Center, in Manila, on March 30, 2016.

### Phil farm sector ... (from page 1)

clude the need to “level up” the country’s action plan against climate change. Dar also urged the government to take advantage of the public-private partnership scheme to construct critical farm infrastructure.

“We need to ensure the country’s food security. We should sustain efforts to maintain a 95-percent self-sufficiency in rice. If we hit 100 percent, then that’s a bonus. If we go beyond that, then we have a volume to set aside for the ASEAN food reserve,” Dar said.

He said InangLupa will publish the policy document, including all the recommendations from other stakeholders. Dar said it will be available before the May elections and will be provided to all the presidential candidates. (By Mary Grace Padin, BusinessMirror)

### P6B for R&D

Furthermore, he said additional funding for research and development should be allocated, increasing up to P6 billion from the existing P2 billion.

“We should develop more of the high value crops, new hybrids, new varieties so that we can be competitive with the rest of the world,” he said.

In terms of climate change mitigation, Dar said the department should elevate its agenda on soil rejuvenation, rainwater harvesting, agro-forestry approach in far-flung areas, tree planting, and coconut planting among others.

“More vegetation means more mitigation because it absorbs more carbon. Farmers in communities have to be more

empowered in terms of knowledge and technology in using climate resilient crops and varieties,” Dar said.

With the public-private partnership (PPP) program of the Aquino administration, Dar said the agricultural sector should also be involved in projects that would help in the big infrastructure needed in the farming industry.

The former secretary added that higher rice self-sufficiency in the country could be attained through promoting newer technologies such as hybrids, which are considered one of the strong innovations today.

“We aim to sustain the efforts of up to 95 percent or higher rice self-sufficiency level to ensure food security and be competitive in the ASEAN region,” Dar said. (By Louise Maureen Simeon, Philippine Star)

### Meager agri growth

Dar said agri sector growth in the past years has been at a meager baseline of 1.6%, notwithstanding the year-on-year target of 3% to 3.5%.

The budget for agriculture in 2015 is P86 billion (B), including the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) P48.697-B appropriation and the budgets for four executive agencies under the Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization (PAFSAM).

Dar said the next administration should restore under the DA the four agencies -- the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (funded with P57.976 million in 2015); the National Food Authority (P4.25 billion); the National Irrigation Administration (P28.75 billion); and the Philippine Coconut Authority (P4.07 billion).

He said these agencies “should be part of

the whole architecture” of the agriculture sector.

PAFSAM was created in 2010 “to hasten and further intensify” projects aimed at curbing rural poverty, and was assigned the responsibility of overseeing management among the four agencies.

Dar encouraged more cooperation between the government and private sector to boost infrastructure and technological developments essential to agricultural growth.

“Our promotion of newer technology like hybrid crops in general will be one of the innovations,” Dar said, noting that hybrid seed varieties boost yield crops by up to 30% which makes the strategy viable so as to counter the impacts of drought.

Current DA secretary Proceso J. Alcala told reporters that hybridization, along with the livestock and poultry sectors, could serve as drivers for targeted 3% to 3.5% agricultural growth this year to offset a measly 0.11% output registered last year.

Dar also said farmers should be more empowered in terms of knowledge on technology, especially in the use of climate-resilient crops.

He cited soil rejuvenation, water harvesting, agro-forestry, among others, as means for preparation against climate change.

The former agriculture chief also encouraged setting in place early warning systems for farmers and fisherfolk on the impact of climate change.

Alicia G. Ilaga, director of the DA’s Climate Change Office, said the government is preparing an integrated map that would help monitor the impact of slow onset temperature and rainfall changes, as well as weather extremes and existing hazards for certain locations down to the barangay-level. This feature will also include advisories to aid farmers’ choice on what to plant and when to plant in specific areas.

Dar said his group has submitted their ideas to four of the five presidential candidates.

On InangLupa’s suggestion for the next administration to pursue 100% rice self-sufficiency, Dar said the next leader should aim to sustain efforts of up to 95% rice-self-sufficiency.

“But if we get fortunate and we meet 100%, why not? But we should ensure food security. That is our battle cry,” he said. “We will always go to that food security policy of looking at affordability and accessibility.” (By Janina Lim, BusinessWorld)



Dr. Dar and InangLupa officers Dr. Zosimo Battad (president of University of the East Caloocan) and Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero (president and CEO of Optiserve Technologies, Inc.) attended the Asia-Pacific Rural Finance and Community Development Conference, March 23-25, 2016, in Bangkok, Thailand, where he presented a paper, entitled: “Let climate change guide RDE in agriculture.”

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