



InangLupa

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

\$10-M corn seed facility rises in Pangasinan

The Philippines is poised to be the corn hub of Southeast Asia.

Thus is the vision of Senator Cynthia A. Villar, chairperson of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, when she led the inauguration of a \$10-million corn seed processing facility, in Rosales, Pangasinan, July 15, 2015.

"This state-of-the-art facility of Prasad

Seeds Philippines provides a big boost in the country's corn self-sufficiency goal, with the availability of quality processed hybrid seeds," said Senator Villar after unveiling a marker as part of ceremonies attended by more than 200 personalities, led by Prasad Seed Philippines chair and managing director Karumanchi Pra-

(Pls turn to p7)

FAO endorses new 'World Soil Charter'

Coinciding with 2015 the International Year of Soils (IYS), more than 100 member-countries of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have unanimously endorsed a new World Soil Charter (WSC), during the 39th FAO Conference, in Rome, on June 6 to 13, 2015.

The FAO said the new WSC will serve as a vehicle to promote and institutionalize sustainable soil management at all levels. It features four components: a two-paragraph preamble; a set of 9 principles; guidelines for actions; and respective actions to be undertaken by individuals, private sector, groups, science community, governments, and international organizations.

The first WSC was conceived and adopted by FAO member-countries in 1981, and that the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) was duty-bound to promote its principles.

Three decades later, the FAO said the challenges faced by the world have become more evident and severe.

The GSP Partners considered that the 13 principles listed in the first WSC are still valid, but needed to be updated and revised in light of new scientific knowledge gained over the past 30 years, especially with respect to soil pollution and its consequences on the environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and urban sprawl impacts on soil availability and functions.

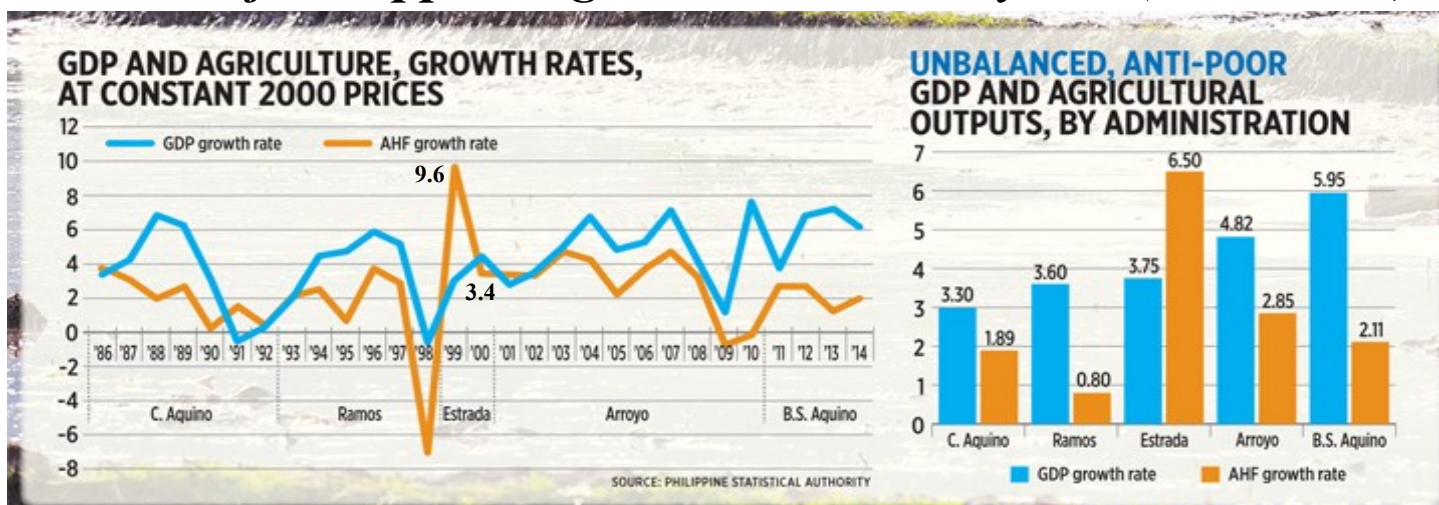
The FAO said the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) was

(Pls turn to p2)



Senator Cynthia A. Villar (4th from right) leads the unveiling of an inauguration marker of a \$10-million seed processing facility of Prasad Seeds Philippines, in Rosales, Pangasinan (inset), on July 15, 2015. Joining her (from left) are: Hemant Karamunchi, Senior Vice President of Prasad Seeds; Inang Lupa Movement President Dr. William Dar, who also serves as Prasad adviser for global expansion and; Pangasinan board member Alfonso Bince, Jr.; DA assistant secretary Edilberto de Luna; Desmond Tong, Syngenta Asia-Pacific regional head; Rosales Mayor Susan Casareno; former Senator Ramon Magsaysay, Jr; and Prasad Seeds Philippines chairman and managing director Karumanchi Prasad.

Growth of Philippine Agriculture over 28 years (1986-2014)



From 1986 to 2014, the agriculture sector grew by an average of 2.4%. The country achieved the highest growth in agricultural output during President Joseph Estrada's term, at 6.5%. The first year growth was 9.6% under the leadership of Dr William Dar as the Secretary of Agriculture while the second year growth was 3.4%, hence the average of 6.5% during the Estrada administration. (Philippine Statistics Authority and Business World)

FAO endorses ... (From page 1)

tasked to produce a new version of the WSC, conducting consultations within the international soil community.

The ITPS submitted a revised text to the GSP plenary assembly in July 2014. After further changes, the revised WSC was endorsed by the 24th session of the

Committee on Agriculture (COAG) in October 2014 and by the FAO Council in December 2014.

Preamble

Soils are fundamental to life on Earth but human pressures on soil resources are reaching critical limits. Careful soil management is one essential element of sustainable agriculture and also provides a valuable lever for climate regulation and a pathway for safeguarding ecosystem services and biodiversity.

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, *"The Future We Want,"* recognizes the economic and social significance of good land management, including soil, particularly its contribution to economic growth, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and food security, eradicating poverty, the empowerment of women, addressing climate change and improving water availability.

Principles

1. Soils are a key enabling resource, central to the creation of a host of goods and services integral to ecosystems and human well-being. The maintenance or enhancement of global soil resources is essential if humanity's overarching need for food, water, and energy security is to be met in accordance with the sovereign rights of each state over their natural resources. In particular, the projected increases in food, fibre, and fuel production required to achieve food and energy security will place increased pressure on the soil.

2. Soils result from complex actions and interactions of processes in time and space and hence are themselves diverse in form and properties and the level of ecosystems services they provide. Good soil governance requires that these differing soil capabilities be understood and that land use that respects the range of capabilities be encouraged with a view to eradicating poverty and achieving food security.

3. Soil management is sustainable if the supporting, provisioning, regulating, and cultural services provided by soil are maintained or enhanced without significantly impairing either the soil functions that enable those services or biodiversity. The balance between the supporting and provisioning services for plant production and the regulating services the soil provides for water quality and availability and for atmospheric greenhouse gas composition is a particular concern.

4. The implementation of soil management decisions is typically made locally and occurs within widely differing socio-economic contexts. The development of specific measures appropriate for adoption by local decision-makers often requires multi-level, interdisciplinary initiatives by many stakeholders. A strong commitment to including local and indigenous knowledge is critical.

World Soil Charter

5. The specific functions provided by a soil are governed, in large part, by the suite of chemical, biological, and physical properties present in that soil. Knowledge of the actual state of those properties, their role in soil functions, and the effect of change – both natural and human-induced—on them is essential to achieve sustainability.

6. Soils are a key reservoir of global biodiversity, which ranges from micro-organisms to flora and fauna. This biodiversity has a fundamental role in sup-



porting soil functions and therefore ecosystem goods and services associated with soils. Therefore it is necessary to maintain soil biodiversity to safeguard these functions.

7. All soils – whether actively managed or not - provide ecosystem services relevant to global climate regulation and multi-scale water regulation. Land use conversion can reduce these global, common good services provided by soils. The impact of local or regional land-use conversions can be reliably evaluated only in the context of global evaluations of the contribution of soils to essential ecosystem services.

8. Soil degradation inherently reduces or eliminates soil functions and their ability to support ecosystem services essential for human well-being. Minimizing or eliminating significant soil degradation is essential to maintain the services provided by all soils and is substantially more cost effective than rehabilitating soils after degradation has occurred.

9. Soils that have experienced degradation can, in some cases, have their core functions and their contributions to ecosystem services restored through the application of appropriate rehabilitation techniques. This increases the area available for the provision of services without necessitating land use conversion.

Guidelines for Actions

The overarching goal for all parties is to ensure that soils are managed sustainably and that degraded soils are rehabilitated or restored.

Good soil governance requires that actions at all levels – from States, and, to the extent that they are able, other public authorities, international organizations, individuals, groups, and corporations – be informed by the principles of sustainable soil management and contribute to the achievement of a land-degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development.

All actors and specifically, each of the following stakeholder groups are encouraged to consider the following actions:

Individuals, Private Sector

All individuals using or managing soil must act as stewards of the soil to ensure that this essential natural resource is managed sustainably to safeguard it for future generations.

Undertake sustainable soil management in the production of goods and services.

Groups, Science Community

Disseminate information and knowledge on soils.

Emphasize the importance of sustainable soil management to avoid impairing key soil functions.

Governments

Promote sustainable soil management that is relevant to the range of soils present and the needs of the country.

Strive to create socio-economic and institutional conditions favorable to sustainable soil management by removal of obstacles. Ways and means should be pursued to overcome obstacles to the adoption of sustainable soil management associated with land tenure, the rights of users, access to financial services and educational programs. Reference is made to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forests and Fisheries in the Context of National Food Security adopted by the Committee on World Food Security in May 2012.

Participate in the development of multi-level, interdisciplinary educational and capacity-building initiatives that promote the adoption of sustainable soil management by land users.

Support research programs that will provide sound scientific backing for development and implementation of sustainable soil management relevant to end-users.

Incorporate the principles and practices of sustainable soil management into policy guidance and legislation at all levels of government, ideally leading to the development of a national soil policy.

(Pls turn to p7)

DA 5-yr budget totals P339B

The Department of Agriculture said it received a total of P339 billion from 2011 to 2015, the highest budget it has been allocated in five years.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala said the amount corresponds to the budget allocated under the three previous administrations—from former President Fidel V. Ramos in 1994, to President Joseph Estrada, and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2010.

“The significant increase in the DA’s budget from 2011 to 2015 has enabled the DA to rationalize its programs, projects and services especially for small-holder farmers and fishers,” Alcala said in a statement.

The DA said the volume of palay and corn production from 2010 to 2014 grew by 20.3 percent (%) and 21.8%, respectively. The production value of these commodities also rose by 64.7% and 44.4%, respectively.

Alcala said the production of high-value crops such as coconut, sugarcane, banana and mango, as well as livestock, poultry and fish also went up in five years.

“Overall, these commodities registered an average increase in production value at 27.9%, or P350 billion higher than the 2010 total value at P1.25 trillion,” he said.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the income of rice farmers rose by 38.4% over three years, or an annual average of 12.8%. In absolute terms, income rose to P21,910 in 2013 from P15,830 in 2013.

Corn farmers’ net income per hectare also went up by 65.6%, the DA said. In absolute terms, this translated to P9,537 in 2013, from P5,760 in 2010.

“Incomes from other crops have, likewise, continued to improve as the DA implements its High-Value Crops Development Program,” Alcala added.

The DA said the value of fishery exports almost doubled to \$1.15 billion in 2013, from \$634 million in 2010. (*Business Mirror*)



The Philippines produced 19 million metric tons (MMT) of palay (unmilled rice) in 2014, the highest in the country’s history, 3% more than in 2013. For January to June 2015, palay harvest is forecast to reach 8.27 MMT. Corn production in 2014 topped 7.8MMT, 5% more than in 2013. Corn harvest is forecast to reach 3.4MMT, for Jan-June 2015. (Source: Philippine Statistics Authority)

Farmers could prevent soil erosion in hilly, sloping areas by at least 10 per cent annually, and they could also produce more harvest, and thus earn more.

These are the rewards farmers can enjoy if they practice a technology called sustainable corn production in sloping areas or SCoPSA.

Some 200 corn farmers in Northern Iloilo and Central Capiz will start employing the SCoPSA technology as they recently underwent training conducted jointly by the Department of Agriculture Regional Field Office in Western Visayas (DA-RFO 6) and the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM).

The trainings were conducted in two sites – in Barangay Agdahon, Cuartero, Capiz and in Batad, Iloilo, said BSWM assistant director Sonia M. Salguero.

Traditionally, farmers in Capiz and Iloilo usually spray herbicides to control weeds before planting corn in hilly, sloping areas, Salguero said.

She said the proper way is to establish first the contour lines across the slope, and not along the slope. With said technique, rainwater will not erode the topsoil, thus retaining the soil organic nutrients.

When SCoPSA technology is regularly practiced, soil erosion in hilly areas could be lessened by 10 percent (%) annually, Salguero said.

Further, farmers using SCoPSA would be able to increase their income by at least 10% through the adoption of appropriate soil conservation measures, said Joseph B. Rojas, BSWM soil erosion assessment and conservation evaluation section chief.

He said SCoPSA as a system will teach farmers to plant alternative legume crops such as mungbean, peanut, *kadios* and soybean in sloping areas.

These legumes help increase soil fertility, as they contain nitrogen-fixing

SCoPSA prevents erosion, increases farmers’ incomes



Corn intercropped with legumes.
(Photo by MBRLC)

bacteria called *rhizobia* in their roots, that captures or fixes nitrogen gas from the air. When the plants are harvested, their stumbles are left in the ground to decompose, thus releasing the fixed nitrogen in the soil, and making it available for other crops that would planted like corn.

Farmers can also plant *kakawate*, *ipil-ipil* and *tricantera* as barrier plants along the contour lines to prevent soil erosion, and also provide nitrogen for the soil, as their roots also contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria, Rojas said.

To encourage more farmers to learn the SCoPSA technology, the DA and BSWM have established techno-demo farms in Cuartero, Capiz and in Batad, Iloilo, said Kelzie Rennieth Aquino, DA-RFO 6 SCoPSA focal person.

“We have already given farmer-cooperators in these two towns corn seeds, pineapple suckers and production inputs. To ensure their success, we are closely monitoring the implementation of the SCoPSA, together with the local government unit,” Aquino said. (*By James Earl E. Ogatis, DA-RAFIS 6*)

Soil science group to give thesis grants

The Philippine Society of Soil Science and Technology, Inc (PSSST) will give thesis grants to qualified agriculture students in State Universities and Colleges

(SUCs) to encourage more college students to specialize in soil science.

Initially, the PSSST will fund four slots starting this school year, allotting Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000) as a grant to qualified SUC undergraduate students majoring in soil science, to partly defray expenses in crafting and completing their thesis, said , PSSST president Redia N. Atienza.

She said they will provide additional thesis grants to benefit more students, as their group raises more funds from benefactors and sponsors.

Their initiative complements the current orientation program they are conducting involving second and third year college students to encourage them to specialize or major in soil science, and subsequently aspire for the P20,000-thesis grant.

Under its career orientation program, (Pls turn to p6)

Villar supports farm tourism

Farm tourism, the business of attracting visitors and travelers to agricultural areas both for educational and recreational purposes, is beginning to get the much needed support it deserves from the legislative branch of Philippine government.

"Farm tourism is the sunshine industry in agriculture, having boundless potential to improve the income of smallholder farmers and fishers. That's why we need an enabling law that will allow our people in agriculture to seize this opportunity," said Senator Cynthia Villar, in her keynote speech during the 3rd Farm Tourism Conference, at Batis Aramin Resort, in Lucban, Quezon, last July 1- 3, 2015.

She has filed Senate Bill 2766 or Farm Tourism Act of 2015, aimed at developing the farm tourism in the country. Its main provisions are to identify programs that would promote farm tourism and creation of the Philippine Farm Tourism Industry Development Coordinating Council.

The proposed bill also aims to harmonize government policies and programs on the development of farm tourism, with the private sector taking the lead, added Villar, who chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food.

Farm tourism offers a viable solution to the perennial problem of rural folks' migration to urban centers such as Metro Manila, she said, adding that urban migration will be reduced once rural areas are developed through farm tourism, with the creation of additional employment and livelihood opportunities.

To date, the country has 32 farm tourism sites, including strawberry and organic farms in Benguet, and pineapple and coffee plantations in Bukidnon, she said.

Villar also shared her experience during a recent tour of several farm tourism sites in Taiwan (from June 22 to 25), along with several provincial governors and local chief executives.

She noted that the farms in Taipei are simple and have six infrastructure components, namely: the farm itself, a processing center, a training center, restaurant, store where products other than those produced in the farm are sold, a museum showing the history of the farm or the product, and lodging houses or rooms.

"We can also do those things in the Philippines, and even improve or innovate," said Villar.

Other Conference features

The three-day 3rd Farm Tourism Conference, with the theme "Healthy Soil for a Healthy Life" in support of International Year of Soils (IYS) celebration, also featured sharing by resource persons, visit to farm tourism site in Laguna, and healthy lifestyles as component of farm tourism.

Speakers on the first day, themed "Healthy Soils, Healthy Green," included:



Senator Cynthia Villar (middle) is flanked (from left) by: Aris Portugal, FAO ass't. rep. in the Philippines; BSWM ass't. dir. Sonia Salguero; former tourism secretary Mina Gabor, and Jaja Siena, BSWM chief information officer. (BSWM photo)

- DA-BSWM assistant director Sonia Salguero, who presented Philippine initiatives in support of the IYS soil and water resources management;
- Leo Libreja – owner of a strawberry farm in Camarines Sur;
- Avelino Lomboy – owner of grape farm in La Union;
- Flor Tariela – owner of Flor's garden in Antipolo; and
- Ramon Peñalosa – millionaire-farmer from Victorias City, Negros Occidental.

The second day of the conference, themed "Healthy Soils: Healthy Animals, ATBP," featured talks by:

- Atty. Rhaegge Tamaña, Director at Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, who talked on Taiwan leisure farm experiences;
- Dr. Rene Santiago, chief of DA-BAI

National Swine and Poultry Research Center, on advantages of raising Philippine native farm animals; and

- Edilee Rosales Omoyon, owner of Milea Bee Farm, in Batangas, on producing sweet-sour honey from stingless bees.

The day was capped by a visit to Costales Nature Farms, the country's first DOT-accredited farm tourism site, in Majayjay, Laguna.

On the third day, healthy lifestyles were discussed, starting with "glamping" (glamorous camping) in an integrated farm tourism island by Cherrie Atilano, followed by *hilot* and spa franchising by Nol Montalbo (CEO of Mont Albo Wellness Corporation), wellness facility by Cathy Brillantes-Turvill, and "bambiking" as a healthy farm tourism activity by Bryan McClelland.

(Pls turn to p6)

Brace up for El Niño

Five international weather agencies, led by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), are one in saying that the Philippines, despite the current rainy season, and other Asia-Pacific rim countries are now experiencing El Niño,

In its latest advisory, the WMO said the tropical pacific atmosphere and ocean are currently at moderate El Niño levels. The majority of ENSO (or El Niño Southern Oscillation) climate models suggest that tropical temperatures are likely to continue warming, and possibly reach strong El Niño levels in the coming months.

The WMO forecast is similar to the respective advisories of four international weather agencies that include: the International Research Institute (IRI) for Climate and Society, based in Columbia University, New York City, USA; Tokyo Climate Center (TCC) / Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA); Australia's Bureau of Meteorology (BOM); and APEC Climate Center (APCC)

in Busan, South Korea.

IRI said there is greater than 90% that El Niño will continue through Northern hemisphere winter 2015-2016, and around an 80% chance that it will last through early spring 2016.

TCC / JMA said El Niño conditions continue in the equatorial Pacific. It is likely that El Niño conditions will continue until the Northern hemisphere winter.

BOM said that El Niño continues to strengthen. All international climate models surveyed by the BOM indicate the El Niño continue to strengthen, and is expected to persist into early 2016.

Finally, the APCC said forecasts for JAS 2015 show the positive temperature anomalies to prevail over the globe. The forecasts for OND 2015 suggest further development of the El Niño conditions with above-normal rainfall in the equatorial Pacific and persisted dry conditions over the maritime continent and Central America. (By Noel Reyes)

Expert monitors joint ICRISAT-DA projects

As part of the regular monitoring of agricultural projects jointly implemented by International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the Department of Agriculture, ICRISAT visiting scientist Dr. Junel Soriano visited three project sites and consulted with farm-families and local government officials, from June 29 to July 7, 2015.

His nine-day monitoring task started in Sariaya, Quezon, where he attended the 4th Regional Technical Working Group (RTWG) meeting of the ICRISAT-DA Yamang Lupa Program (YLP). He shared with the farmer-beneficiaries and LGU officials the YLP accomplishments during the first year, the work plan for this year and 2016, and the highlights of the agro-ecosystem development and management training, held last June 23 to 25, 2015, at the DA-BSWM.

The following day, he along with YLP implementers and Sariaya LGU officials visited the demo-farms of several YLP farmer-cooperators in Brgy Manggalang Uno in Sariaya.

Soriano and his team then visited selected projects under the Sustainable Intensification for Prosperity and Growth (SIPAG) program in Ilocos Sur, where it aims to replicate the successful 'Bhoochetana' program of ICRISAT in India, transforming drylands into sustainable productive farms. Bhoochetana



ICRISAT scientist Dr. Junel Soriano (above, standing) explains to farmers and rural women in Barangay San Vicente, Lidlidda, Ilocos Sur, a proposed project on building resilient communities in San Vicente and nearby barangays. Below, he shares the same project with farm families in Barangay Malaya, Cervantes, Ilocos Sur.



means 'soil rejuvenation.'

SIPAG is a joint project of ICRISAT with the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) in the town of Sta. Maria, Provincial Government of Ilocos Sur, DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) and DA-BSWM.

He also participated in the SIPAG executive committee meeting, attended by officials and representatives from the ISPSC, Ilocos Sur and Sta. Maria LGUs, DA-BSWM, DTI, NGOs, and farmers' groups. Discussed during the meeting were updates of project implementation in four SIPAG pilot municipalities, namely: Sta. Maria, Cabugao, Cervantes and Lidlidda.

Part of SIPAG program is a "Building Resilient Communities Project" which will be piloted in Lidlidda. Soriano together with Lidlidda Mayor Jesus Sagay and other LGU officials visited Barangay San Vicente, one of the proposed project sites. They also visited other prospective SIPAG pilot sites in towns of Cervantes and Sta. Maria.

Finally, Soriano visited Barangay Cataguingtan, Rosario, La Union, where ICRISAT will implement a joint project with the DA and Provincial Government of La Union, called "Improving Productivity and Building Resilience Program" or IPBRP. He shared with Cataguingtan farmer-cooperators the goals and objectives of IPBRP, as their village is among the prospect pilot sites.

Soriano also had a fruitful interaction with the municipal agriculturist of Bacnotan, La Union, as it is one of the pilot municipalities being eyed under the IPBRP.

Lastly, on July 7, he joined a briefing on the implementation of a 'Bhoochetana' program at the Provincial Capitol La Union, attended by LGU officials (from provincial, municipal to barangay levels), representatives from the DA's Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) and Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), and Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU). (Story and photos By Paul Vincent Anareta, ICRISAT)

Phi has much to learn from India

The Philippines, which lags behind its Asian neighbors in agricultural output and land reform, can learn a great deal from India.

Rolando Dy, executive director at the University of the Asia and the Pacific's Center for Food and Agribusiness, said India has made significant strides in agriculture to overcome a severe food deficit and produce enough staples to feed its rapidly growing population.

India achieved a level of self-sufficiency in food through significant crop diversification, increases in labor productivity and widespread technology adoption.

Dy said the Philippines needs to take its cue from India's transformation from a perpetual basket case to an emerging global agricultural powerhouse.

The share of agriculture and allied sectors in India's GDP (gross domestic product) has been growing at a compound annual rate of three percent between 1980 and 2012, making the country the third largest agricultural producer by value behind China and the United States.

"The Philippines should look beyond Asean and China. It must add India in the list in terms of experience in agricultural diversification," Dy said.

Dr. William Dar, former Agriculture secretary and former director general of India's International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, echoed the same sentiment.

"The Philippines can learn a lot from the experience of India and reinvent its agriculture. One developmen-

tal goal the agriculture sector must pursue on top of food sufficiency is income security. This will enhance the development and growth of high value crops and commodities where value adding will be key," Dar said.

"Quantity and high quality of value added products will be key to compete with the rest of the world," he added. The Philippines has six of the important agricultural products produced by the countries in the world, namely: banana, coconut oil, canned tuna, pineapple, desiccated coconut and carrageenan. India, on other hand, has 14.

Last year, the country's total exports amounted to \$6.5 billion or only a tenth of India's \$44 billion. India's principal agricultural exports are rice, shrimps, prawns, grapes, vegetable extracts, castor oil and peanuts. Its food exports grew more than four-fold from \$9.9 billion in 2013.

The Department of Agriculture continues to push for a more competitive Philippine agriculture that is ready to take on the challenges of the Asean Economic Community, in which a single market and production base will be established.

The country seeks to minimize its dependence on food imports, particularly staple food, by optimizing the development of its natural and human resources.

To further improve the local agricultural sector, the government plans to construct more irrigation channels, dams and farm-to-market roads. (By Zinnia B. Dela Peña, *The Philippine Star*)

InangLupa partners with ALBACOPA and PhilMaize



InangLupa Movement founding president Dr William Dar signs a memorandum of understanding with the ALBACOPA (Association of Land Bank-Assisted Cooperatives of Pangasinan) federation of cooperatives, based in Pangasinan, committing to be a volunteer organization of InangLupa, shown signing and witnessing the MOU are ALBACOPA officers, led by Mr. Ignacio Dumantay; and Prasad Seeds Philippines officials -- Ashok Ja and Atty. Ezequiel Magsaysay. The signing was held at InangLupa Office, BSWM, Diliman, Quezon City, on May 19, 2015



Philippine Maize Federation, Inc. (Philmaize) also signed an MOU to be a volunteer organization with InangLupa. The group is led by founding chairman Rod Bioco and president Roger Navarro. The signing was held at Quezon City, in March 2015.

Soil science ... (From page 3)

Atienza said they invite PSSST members, particularly soil scientists and technologists, who share their knowledge regarding the many opportunities in the management, rejuvenation and conservation of the country's farm soils.

Starting this year, the PSSST complements their career orientation program by granting qualified graduating students with P20,000 to partly fund expenses in crafting, completing and defending their thesis, said Atienza.

Director Silvino Tejada of the DA's Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), who also serves as PSSST vice chairman, said there is a great need for the Philippines to produce more soil scientists, who will help the DA-BSWM attain national food security.

"I am supporting PSSST's objective to increase the number of soil science majors by giving them thesis grants, because our country greatly needs soil scientists, and the BSWM needs them, too. *At talagang konti na lang ang kumukuha ng agricultural courses, paano natin makakamit ang food security ng ating bansa?*" Tejada noted.

For her part, PSSST treasurer Angelita C. Marcia said the decreasing number of students pursuing agriculture courses is a common phenomenon in SUCs, and thus lesser of them pursue soil science as a major.

"*Yung sa agricultural courses nga paunti na nang paunti, lalo na yung sa soil science. At saka, konti na lang din yung mga universities and colleges na nag-o-offer ng soil science. Kaya, target namin na mabigyan at least four universities and colleges that offer soil science ng thesis grant, kung may mag-qualify ang kanilang undergraduate thesis proposal,*" Marcia added.

To arrest the decreasing trend, the PSSST has also launched an advocacy campaign to encourage high school students to pursue agriculture courses in college, and more importantly encourage them to major in soil science.

Director Tejada said this is where the DA-BSWM also helps, as it regularly showcases its soils laboratory and client center to visiting high school and college students during their 'lakbay-aral' and educational trips. (By Loraine D. Cerillo, DA-BSWM)

Villar supports ... (From page 4)

The conference was organized by Dr. Guillermina "Mina" Gabor, former tourism secretary and chairperson of the International School of Sustainable Tourism, together with the UN-Food and Agriculture Organization, Department of Tourism, DA-BSWM, DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research, DA-Bureau of Animal Industry, Department of Interior and Local Government, Provincial Government of Quezon, and Municipal Government of Lucban.

The DA-BSWM also set up an exhibit booth that featured soil test kits (STKs), different types of soils, mokusaku (wood vinegar) usage, and various IYS information materials. It raffled off 10 STKs to lucky farmer-participants during the conference. (By Marlo Asis, DA-AFID)

\$10-M corn... (From page 1)

sad, Indian Ambassador to the Philippines Hon. L D Ralte, Syngenta Asia Pacific regional head Desmond Tong, and Pangasinan local government officials.

"I believe technological innovation, as demonstrated by Prasad Seeds, can propel Philippine agriculture to greater heights, and the Philippines as a leader in corn production in South East Asia in the near future," noted Villar.

"Thus, I am one with the DA and companies like Prasad, in finding ways and means as well as in using pioneering technologies and innovations, in fast-tracking the growth and development of the agriculture sector," she added.

Prasad-Syngenta Partnership

For his part, company chairman and managing director Karumanchi Prasad noted the vital role of Desmond Tong of Syngenta, who was instrumental in their decision to come over and invest in the Philippines. He also thanked the strong support of Pangasinan local government officials, led by Governor Amado Espino, Jr., represented by board member Alfonso Bince, Jr., for their strong support in the establishment of Prasad facility, situated in a five-hectare lot, in Bgy Salvacion, Rosales, Pangasinan, near the boundary of Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija.

Citing their experience in Andhra Pradesh (now called Telangana), in India, where the company took its roots and propelled Telangana into becoming the seed capital of India, Prasad said "we aim to achieve the same here in Pangasinan, transforming it into the seed capital of the Philippines, and the Philippines as the seed hub in Southeast Asia."

Desmond Tong — Asia Pacific Regional head of Syngenta, a global seed company — shared Prasad's vision, saying the company will take the Philippines' seed industry to a higher level in succeeding years, and a major player in the Asia-Pacific region.

Initially, Prasad Seeds Philippines has forged a service agreement with Syngenta to process its hybrid corn seeds produced locally. Syngenta has also served as a staunch partner of Prasad Seeds in India.

Prasad will initially provide such services as corn drying, shelling, treating, conditioning and packaging, including fumigation, warehousing and cold storage, seed production research trials and commercial seed production.

Noel Borlongan of Syngenta Philippines said to date hybrid corn is planted to about 800,000 hectares, or one-third of total corn area in the country. Syngenta is among the country's leading seed producers, partly providing an estimated requirement of 14.4 million kilos of hybrid corn seeds every planting season.

Prasad to invest \$15M more

This early, the company plans to invest another \$15 million to expand the facilities in Rosales, Pangasinan, said former agriculture secretary William Dar, who serves as Prasad adviser for global expansion.

For now, he said Prasad will serve as the exclusive partner of Syngenta Philippines, providing the latter with tolling services, ranging from corn drying, shelling, treating, conditioning and packaging, including fumigation, warehousing and cold storage.

With the planned expansion next year, Prasad Seeds Philippines could serve other global seeds companies, and farmers' cooperatives that will engage in hybrid corn and hybrid rice seed production, as the company also sets its sights on providing tolling services for global hybrid rice seed companies in the future, added Dar.

Prasad is the third seed company in Pangasinan. The other two are Syngenta in Binalonan and East-West seed company in Tayug.

DA endorses Prasad to DA-BOI

For his part, agriculture assistant secretary Edilberto de Luna, who represented Secretary Proceso Alcala, during the inauguration, said the DA fully supports Prasad, having endorsed the company to be included under the "pioneering status" of the Department of Trade and Industry's Board of Investments, so it could enjoy tax incentives.

He said the DA welcomes the entry of Prasad into the country's seed industry as it will further encourage farmers to

use quality processed seeds for higher productivity and income. To date, corn production, particularly yellow corn for poultry and livestock feed, has been increasing for the past five years, and we aim to produce an average of eight to 10 tons of hybrid corn per hectare.

Convinced that its investment augurs well for the country's corn industry, Secretary Alcala has recently endorsed Prasad to DTI Secretary Gregory Domingo, citing the company's corn seed processing facility features improved fuel efficiency, power savings, and improved corn seed quality and recovery.

Prasad Seeds employs a drying technology that uses fuel efficiently and consumes 20% lesser LPG compared with existing dryers. It also uses US-designed blower and burner systems that result in shorter drying time and reduced power consumption by 20%. Hence, Prasad Seeds dryers achieve 52 to 54% recovery, six percentage points higher than similar dryers in Pangasinan, producing much cleaner seeds, with better vigor and germination, and therefore higher yields.

Alcala said the goals of Prasad Seeds Philippines are consistent with the thrust of the Department of Agriculture to increase corn production and address climate change by assuring availability of quality corn seeds for continued use by Filipino farmers, and during calamities and other eventualities.

Pangasinan Board Member Alfonso Bince, who represented Gov. Amado Espino, Jr, said Pangasinan is "very happy" for hosting the project as the facility will benefit farmers of Pangasinan and nearby provinces. He said Pangasinan has been a national awardee on quality corn seed achievement and the new facility will further boost the corn industry in the province, providing farmers more incomes and livelihood opportunities.

Bince and fellow Pangasinan board member Ranjit Ramos-Shahani said they will sponsor a provincial ordinance that would grant Prasad Seeds a five-year exemption from paying real estate taxes. (By Noel Reyes)

World Soil Charter (From page 2)

Explicitly consider the role of soil management practices in planning for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and maintaining biodiversity.

Establish and implement regulations to limit the accumulation of contaminants beyond established levels to safeguard human health and wellbeing and facilitate remediation of contaminated soils that exceed these levels where they pose a threat to humans, plants, and animals.

Develop and maintain a national soil information system and contribute to the development of a global soil information system.

Develop a national institutional framework for monitoring implemen-

tation of sustainable soil management and overall state of soil resources.

International Organizations

Facilitate the compilation and dissemination of authoritative reports on the state of the global soil resources and sustainable soil management protocols.

Coordinate efforts to develop an accurate, high-resolution global soil information system and ensure its integration with other global earth observing systems.

Assist governments, on request, to establish appropriate legislation, institutions, and processes to enable them to mount, implement, and monitor appropriate sustainable soil management practices. (FAO)



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