



## BSWM completes 9-yr irrig'n plan

The Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) has recently completed a "National Master Plan for Small-Scale Irrigation Projects (SSIP) for 2014 to 2022, which leads the agency's accomplishments last year.

"We are proud to complete the long-term master plan, after years of painstaking work and consultations with DA regional field offices, academe, farmers' groups and local government units (LGUs). We hope the identified small irrigation projects in various parts of the country would be appreciated and amply funded by our honorable legislators every year," said BSWM director Silvino Q. Tejada.

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## DA to conduct soil mapping nationwide

The Department of Agriculture is pushing for a nationwide soil health mapping to properly assess the condition of farmlands in all regions.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala said the task will be undertaken by the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) under the leadership of Director Silvino Q. Tejada.

"This will help us come up with the right decisions regarding food and agribusiness investments," Alcala said, who has tasked all DA regional field offices (RFOs) to use their savings to fund the activity.

In fact, he said several DA-RFOs

have already started soil health mapping. These include RFOs 2 (Cagayan Valley) and 5 (Bicol), which have already completed their soil mapping activities and will come-up with a report thereon, the DA chief noted.



DA Sec. Proceso J. Alcala

### InangLupa supports soil mapping

For his part, former DA Secretary and InangLupa Movement founding President William Dar said "this is a milestone in the history of Philippine agriculture if soil mapping is done for the whole country. We at Inang Lupa strongly advocate and fully support a nationwide soil rejuvenation program."

Early this year, on January 29, 2015, the InangLupa has forged a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the DA-BSWM to assist the latter in the conduct of soil health mapping nationwide and upgrading or national and regional soil laboratories, said Dar, who founded InangLupa Movement after serving 15 years as director general of the Institute Crops Research for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), in India.

### DA-BSWM to broaden programs

Alcala said Filipino farmers are expecting the BSWM will continue and broaden its programs and services, including the Water Resources Management Program.

The said program covers the implementation of Small-Scale Irrigation Projects (SSIPs) such as Small Water Impounding Projects (SWIPs), Diversion Dams (DDs), Small Farm Reservoirs (SFRs) and Shallow Tube Wells (STWs).

Among the major accomplishments of the BSWM in 2014 is the National Master Plan for Small-Scale Irrigation Projects, CY 2014-2022, which includes the Watershed Management Component. (Please related story.)

"We focus on the development of small irrigation systems, not only because they are cheaper to build

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## Phl should produce 'bioenergy' crops, too

Aside from sufficiently producing food crops, the Philippines will be better off in the future if it could produce more 'bioenergy crops' or biomass as sources of renewable and sustainable energy.

"Bioenergy will substantially contribute between a quarter and a third of global primary energy supply in 2050. Utilizing it will bring about significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and potentially other environmental benefits," said former Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar, at the 2015 Philippine International Biomass Conference, held June 17, 2015, in Clark, Pampanga.

"By substituting imported fossil fuels with domestic biomass, the Philippine could attain improvements in energy security and trade balances, and create more opportunities in economic and social development in rural communities," said Dar in his presentation, "Biomass Energy in the Philippines: A Global Perspective."

He discussed potential sources of energy that could be derived from various biomass such as trees, "energy crops," agricultural products and wastes, and other organic residues.

### Sweet sorghum

He cited sweet sorghum as an example, particularly its stalk, as a feedstock to produce bioethanol.

"Sweet sorghum for bioethanol could cut the country's importation of fossil fuels like gasoline, and therefore contribute in lessening fuel costs and carbon emissions," said Dar.

He said the long term potential of sweet sorghum and other biomass as potential sources of energy depend on land availability for their continuous,

*(Pls turn to p4)*

*InangLupa President Dr. William D. Dar addresses the participants at the recent Phil. Int'l. Biomass Conference, June 17, in Pampanga.*



*Note from InangLupa Movement President: As the election fever gathers steam, even 18 months away from the May 2016 Presidential elections, allow us to share the thoughts of former Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno, whose article below was published in Malaya Business Insight, on June 8, 2015.*

## Editorial: The next President should energize agriculture

That's the only way of providing meat and substance to the lofty goal of strong, sustainable and inclusive growth.

All talks about strong, inclusive economic growth will remain empty talks for as long as agriculture is being left behind. The consequences of ignoring agriculture are enormous. About one-third (11 million out of 37.4 million) of the country's workforce is employed in the agricultural sector. And more than half of poor Filipinos who live in rural areas depend on it.

A more productive agricultural sector will benefit the approximately 100 million Filipinos, especially the poor, in terms of cheaper food.

A more productive agriculture will also promote food manufacturing, and hence create a lot of decent jobs in industry, in two ways: first, agricultural inputs will be cheaper; and second, demands for higher wages will be tempered by lower food prices.

### **Cheaper to create jobs in agriculture**

This is not rocket science, of course. Policymakers know that it is cheaper and easier to create jobs in agriculture as compared to those in business process outsourcing (BPO), financial sectors, or even construction.

Policymakers know that half of the poor are in the rural hinterland; hence the easiest way of reducing poverty is by creating jobs in agriculture and in farm-related small and medium-scale industries. Yet they continue to talk about mega projects in urban areas, all of which remain unfinished.

By an ugly twist of fate, the agriculture sector has been neglected all these years. Four of five post-EDSA 1 presidents (Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Benigno S. Aquino III) have failed to prioritize agriculture.

### **Agri grew 6.5% under Pres. Erap**

Only under the truncated term of President Joseph Estrada did agricultural output grow, on average, much faster than GDP growth – 6.5 percent versus 3.8 percent.

In fact, during Mr. Estrada's first year in office, when international expert William Dar was head of the Department of Agriculture (DA), the sector soared by a stunning 9.6 percent, the highest growth rate in the post-EDSA 1 period.

Agriculture was not only neglected, it has also become the favorite

playground of corrupt government officials. Not coincidentally, the worst scandals in the use of public funds took place in the DA, the National Food Authority and the National Irrigation Administration: fertilizer scam, irrigation scandal, rice importation scams, and PDAF funded farm-to-market roads (or is it farm-to-resort or farm-to-vacation-home roads?).

It is revolting that while a big chunk of the annual budgets has been appropriated for the Department of Agriculture and other related agencies, very little output has been produced. Blame it to the bloated agriculture bureaucracy. And blame also the inept Secretary of Agriculture.

Remember the broken promise that the country will be self-sufficient in rice by 2013?

### **Agri grows slower vs. nat'l economy**

Historically, agriculture has grown much slower than the overall economy. There were two exceptions: in 1991 (when the sector grew by a weak 1.5 percent while the economy contracted by 0.6 percent) and in 1999 (when agriculture climbed by a historic 9.6 percent while the economy grew 3.1 percent).

Ideally, for an economy that has grown at 6 percent during the last four years, agricultural output should grow by about 3.5 to 4 percent, comfortably higher than the population growth of about 2 percent.

However, from 1986 to 2014, the entire post-EDSA 1 period, agriculture grew, on average, by only 2.4 percent. Agricultural production has barely kept up with population explosion. No wonder, poverty and hunger persist.

Per administration, the country had the highest growth in agricultural output, on average, during Estrada's term (6.5 percent). The sector grew 2.9 percent during Mrs. Arroyo's almost ten-year reign; by 2.1 percent during Mr. Aquino's term; and by 1.9 percent during Mrs. Aquino's watch. It sunk to its lowest average growth of 0.8 percent during Mr. Ramos' term.

### **Farmers, fishers remain poor**

Government statistics show that despite recent growth, fishermen and farmers remain to be the poorest groups in country. Three of ten farmers and almost half of fishermen

live below the poverty threshold.

The following observations and conclusions appear warranted.

First, average gross domestic product (GDP) growth from one administration to another is improving. This is to be expected as reforms in previous administrations benefit the incumbent.

Moreover, the steady inflow of remittances by overseas Filipino workers, now about US\$25 billion annually, has changed the dynamics of financing Philippine debt and its foreign exchange requirements. Unlike before, the country no longer runs out of foreign exchange whenever it is faced with a crisis.

Second, while overall GDP growth is improving, the growth of agriculture that affects the lives of a majority of Filipinos, especially the poor, is deteriorating. Not surprisingly, both unemployment and poverty have remained unacceptably high.

Strong economic growth cannot be sustained, and it cannot be inclusive, if agricultural output growth remains weak.

### **Next Pres. should launch agri modernization in 1st 100 days**

Third, the next President should hit the ground running by unveiling in his first 100 days in office a program of modernizing agriculture and his strategy of dealing with agrarian reform. The consensus among experts is that the latter is a major constraint to energizing agriculture in the Philippines.

Fourth, the next President should appoint an honest, competent, decisive and accountable man to head the Department of Agriculture. He should be an agriculture expert, not a politician.

Under the Aquino administration, there appears to be no pressure to hold the Agriculture secretary accountable for his poor performance. The outputs and outcomes of the agriculture bureaucracy do not tally with its annual appropriations.

Instead of firing the non-performing Secretary, President Aquino III opted to appoint another 'Super Secretary.' Instead of dealing with the problem, he complicated it. DA is now in an idiotic situation where it is run by two heads, with the additional costs and duplicating functions that it entails. This is a clear case where two heads are not necessarily better than one.###



# ICRISAT holds agro-ecosystem training-workshop

As part of the implementation of the Bhoochetana Philippines, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in collaboration with the Philippine

Department of Agriculture particularly the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) and Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) conducted a training-workshop, entitled "Agro-

ecosystem Development and Management (AeDM) for Building Climate Resilient Communities," on June 23 to 25, 2015 at the DA-BSWM, Quezon City, Philippines.

A total of 32 participants which composed of implementing and management group members of Bhoochetana Philippines as well as new partners from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) have participated in the three-day training course.

The training was conducted to learn science-based and practical options in building climate-resilient communities by understanding better the impact of climate change in agriculture, integrated natural resources management, significance of ecosystem services and their interaction towards sustainable development.

There were three technical sessions discussed as follows; (1) overview of AeDM; (2) impact of climate change to ecosystem services and natural resources; and (3) best-bet strategies and options for integrated AeDM. ICRISAT scientists namely, Dr KV Raju, Dr AVR Kesava Rao, Dr KK Garg and Dr Junel B Soriano have presented important topics during the technical sessions.

ICRISAT has tapped experts from the Philippines as part of the strategies in building/strengthening partnership in the country. Ms Emily Victorio, Senior Agriculturist of the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) discussed crop-tree-livestock integration to agro-ecosystem. While Mr Jose Manguerra, Supervising Agriculturist of BSWM, gave the overview of watershed development in Philippines.

A general workshop was commenced at the later part of the training where the participants are grouped into five and discussed about convergence and resource integration, AeDM implementing guidelines & processes/activities, indicators for evaluation of AeDM, improving agro-ecosystem policies, practices and knowledge to impact people and ecosystems, and research gaps and priorities on AeDM in the Philippines. A closed workshop was also initiated after the general workshop where individual Bhoochetana project sites has prepared and presented action plans for implementation starting this year.

AeDM was planned to be implemented as an integral part of Bhoochetana Philippines but as agreed by the group, AeDM will be implemented as a separate project alongside with Bhoochetana. AeDM as emerging project in the Philippines should require capacity development activities for the implementors, said Dr Suhas P Wani, IDC Director.

Dr Wani, provided directions in the conduct of the training course with the help of Dr Soriano, ICRISAT Visiting Scientist and Mr Paul Vincent Anareta, ICRISAT Project Staff based in the Philippines. ###



*Dr. Junel Soriano (2nd from left) leads members of monitoring teams during visits to three project sites of ICRISAT in Sariaya, Quezon (above), a Yamang Lupa Program pilot site, on June 29-30; in Lidlidda, Ilocos Sur (below), a pilot site for Agro-ecosystem of "Sustainable Intensification for Prosperity and Growth" or SIPAG program, on July 2-3; and in Rosario, La Union (bottom), a pilot site of an initiative called "Improving Productivity and Building Resilience Program (IPBRP)," on July 6-7.*







**InangLupa President William D. Dar (inset) stresses a point during his presentation on “International Agriculture: Needs and Challenges,” at the APEC High Level Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Biotechnology workshop, entitled “Fostering the Benefits of Innovation in Plant Breeding and Science Communication,” June 8 to 12, 2015, at Acacia Hotel, Alabang, Muntinlupa City. It was attended by 160 delegates from 21 APEC member-economies, composed of biosafety guidelines implementers/modern biotech regulators, policy-makers, scientists, and science communicators. The workshop tackled current research and innovations in plant breeding, government policies and regulations on agricultural R&D, and how to communicate biotechnologies and safety assessment of products to policy makers and the general public. The workshop was funded by the USDA, US–APEC Technical Assistance to Advance Regional Integration, USAID, Int’l. Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications, and co-sponsored by the Republic of the Philippines, Mexico and Sin-**

### **BSWM completes ... (From page 1)**

The Plan proposes to develop more than 303,682 hectares, comprising 30 percent of the country’s remaining rainfed areas for rice, corn and high value crops. It requires a total investment of P37,672,657,000, for an average cost of P124,000 per hectare, and will benefit 260,000 farmers, Tejada explained.

The nine-year plan was formulated to provide direction in prioritizing projects for irrigation development and targeting agricultural areas appropriate for SSIP. It is also in compliance with the requirements of the DBM, that is, participatory process involving consultations with key stakeholders, Tejada said.

It has four major components: infrastructure development; watershed management; research and development; and extension support, education, and training services.

#### **Technical adviser on soil, water**

One of the staff agencies, under the Department of Agriculture, the BSWM is the lead agency in providing advice and technical assistance to farmers, LGUs and other agriculture industry stakeholders on the effective utilization and management of soil and water resources.

It implements soil and water resources management technologies specifically small-scale irrigation systems, soil conservation and management, watershed development, organic agriculture and soil fertility management, and soil health, mapping, and analyses; and collaborative projects with the DA banner programs — on rice, corn, organic agriculture, and high value crops.

Further, it also operates and maintains soil and water researches and techno-demonstration farms in different pedo-ecological zones of the country, particularly in its three National Soil and Water Resources Research Centers in Tanay, Rizal; San Ildefonso, Bulacan; and in Malaybalay, Bukidnon.

Finally, it maintains a team of Soil and Water Area Coordinators (SWACs), who serve as vital link with the DA regional field offices, LGUs and farmers’ groups, in facilitating coordination and implementation of BSWM projects nationwide.

#### **Accomplishments in 2014**

Below are some of its achievements last year:

- Completed 13 SSIP engineering designs, operated and maintained 16 agro-meteorological stations;
- Installed 45 alternative irrigation systems under the DA national rice program;
- Established 100 small-scale composting facilities; and upgrading of the BSWM Soils Laboratory;
- Maintained soil conservation guided farms, watershed development in existing SWIPs; established and maintained three techno-demo areas on Sustainable Corn Production in Sloping Areas (SCoPSA); developed technical guidelines for SCoPSA on the implementation of and trainers of training module for agricultural extension workers (AEWs) in support of the DA national corn program;
- Established 35 techno-demo on different crops in three BSWM National R&D centers in Bulacan, Rizal, and Bukidnon; and
- Implemented 26 researches in support to the BSWM Soil and Water RD/E Agenda 2011-2016. (DA-BSWM)

### **Phl should produce... (From page 1)**

sustainable production. Bioenergy crops will not compete for land being used for food production as they can be grown in hilly, marginal and forest areas, he added.

#### **Govt, private sector initiatives**

To boost the development of the fledgling bioenergy sector, the government and the private sector should jointly pursue initiatives to address and surmount major challenges.

These include sufficient production and supply of feedstock, economies of scale and logistics, competition, and acceptance by the general public, said Dar.

Further, he said government policies and programs should be aligned in having greater access to bioenergy, further reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, energy security, and social and economic objectives.

#### **Imperatives, policy initiatives**

Moreover, government should focus on improving land productivity, fossil fuel replacement efficiency, and reduction of direct and indirect emissions from land conversion, among other related imperatives,” he reiterated.

He believes such policy initiatives should be part of a long term vision, specific to the national or regional characteristics and strengths.

“Government should take into account the development stage of a specific bioenergy technology, including access to markets and related sectors in the supply chain to ensure feedstock availability,” he noted. (by Anne Camille B. Brion, DA-BAR; and Noel O. Reyes, InangLupa Movement)

### **DA to conduct ... (From page 1)**

and manage, but also as part of our commitment to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change,” Alcala said.

Further, he said the DA-BSWM has to date established 100 agro meteorological stations nationwide, enabling us to use gathered data — on rainfall, temperature, wind speed and direction, sunshine duration and soil temperature and moisture — in daily decisions that have to be made in the field, especially when preparing for calamities. (DA-BSWM & DA-



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