



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Secretary
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DA SHIFTS F.I.E.L.D.S. IMPLEMENTATION TO HIGHER GEAR IN 2010

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is shifting the implementation of President Arroyo's centerpiece food security program dubbed FIELDS to higher gear this year as part of government efforts to enable Philippine agriculture and fisheries to cope with the twin challenges of climate change and global free trade.

DA Secretary Arthur Yap said that a major item in the Department's budget for 2010 of P47.29 billion is the FIELDS program, which represents the six areas where government support are focused on to attain food security and sufficiency.

FIELDS stands for Fertilizers, Irrigation and other rural infrastructure like farm-to-market roads (FMRs), Extension services and education for farmers, Loans, Dryers and other postharvest facilities, and Seeds and other genetic materials.

Under the Fertilizer component of the program, Yap said the DA is advocating balanced fertilization and will encourage farmers to practice this sustainable agriculture practice by providing them the necessary skills and inputs to capacitate farmers to produce organic fertilizers in 2010.

“Balanced fertilization will address farmers’ concerns on the high cost of inputs, and at the same time, trigger production increases,” Yap said.

The Department, he noted, will continue to build-up the capability of the farmer to produce organic fertilizers and other soil ameliorants in 2010 and will provide Minus-One Element Technique (MOET) kits, Leaf Color Charts (LCC) and Soil test kits (STK) to minimize wastage of fertilizer and soil ameliorants.

As for the Irrigation and other infrastructure component, he said that 16,358 hectares of new areas will be generated this coming year while 92,255 hectares will be rehabilitated, and 138,529 hectares restored to increase production and meet the demands of a growing population.

The DA will likewise construct or rehabilitate 3,107 kilometers of farm-to-market roads to link production areas, fishports and fish landings to markets, he said.

For the Extension, R&D and capacity building of FIELDs, Yap said the DA will focus on reaching out to farmers in palay production areas with yields below 3.8 MT per hectare.

The DA is also targeting, he said, to provide 26,441 training/seminars for agricultural technicians, farmers and fisherfolk, including the conduct of Farmers’ Field Schools and School on the Air; establish 19,570 techno demos; produce some 1,225 graduates of e-Extension courses; and conduct 1,358 research and development (R&D) activities to generate production-enhancing and cost-reducing technologies.

Yap said “the Department will also give priority to agriculture and fisheries biotechnology to not only spur increased productivity and incomes but also to develop a global niche market through our natural ingredients industry, which in terms of exports is estimated to be valued at \$1 billion by 2010.”

For the Loans component, he said the government will continue to provide credit assistance at low interest rates to farmers for purchasing farm inputs and other farm machineries. For 2010, the Department is targeting to assist some 305,445 individuals and 99 groups in accessing loans, guarantee, and insurance.

To reduce losses of agricultural commodities, he said that 157 dryers will be constructed and distributed this year, four (4) sites of postharvest processing plants and trading centers will be established and 525 trading points or bagsakan centers and barangay bagsakans will be set up as part of the Dryers and other postharvest facilities component of FIELDS.

Yap said that under this FIELDS component, the DA will also construct 10 (1 regional and 9 municipal) and maintain 9 (8 regional and 1 municipal) fishports; build three (3) ice plants and cold storages (IPCS) for the development of the fisheries sector.

The DA will likewise construct 5 slaughterhouses/ abattoirs in strategically located areas in the country, and through its National Dairy Authority's Philippine Dairy Development Plan for 2008-2030, plans to operate additional 5 dairy zones to increase the country's supply of ready-to-drink milk, he said.

To help increase availability of safe, nutritious, and affordable high value crops, he said the Department aims to construct 112 packinghouses, and 37 km of tramline systems to transport commodities from the highlands to the market.

Yap said that for the last component—Seeds and other genetic materials—the government's long-term policy objective is to ensure access of farmers to quality seeds by (1) empowering them to produce their own seeds, and (2) assisting commercial seed growers through infrastructure support.

“The first objective is being addressed through extension by training the farmers how to select good seeds together with proper handling and processing,” Yap said. “The second objective is addressed by assisting seed growers through infrastructure support, like seed laboratories and storage facilities, and improvements in the seed certification procedures.”

In the meantime that these long-term objectives are not yet met, he said the DA will continue to provide hybrid and certified seeds at subsidized prices targeted to be distributed this year.

He said the Department's seed subsidy program for 2010 also includes for distribution 1.10 million bags of inbred certified rice seeds; 17.57 million of planting materials; 37,947 heads of various farm animals; and 192.14 million fingerlings and 2.1 million broodstock.

As a result of the swift and stepped-up implementation of FIELDS and other DA programs, Philippine agriculture managed to grow 1.5% in the first nine months of 2009, with livestock, poultry and fisheries as the primary growth drivers of the sector.

The gross value of agricultural output amounted to P849.3 billion at current prices or 1.62% higher than last year's level during the January-September period.

Under the Fertilizer component of the FIELDS, the DA has so far distributed 9,377,997 kg of organic fertilizers and other soil ameliorants such as Bio-N, Vital-N and Bio-con to help farmers reduce the cost of inputs and increase their productivity; conducted Salt Fertilization Projects (SFP), in which 45,271 ha were fertilized with almost 4.5 million coconut trees benefiting 45,861 farmers; distributed 2,693 soil test kits and 8,023 leaf color charts and Minus-One-Element-Technique (MOET), which will help farmers determine the optimum amounts of fertilizer to be used for specific soil types.

On Irrigation and other infrastructure, the Department generated 9,023 ha of new irrigation areas, rehabilitated and restored 164,534 ha and 98,055 ha unserviceable and deteriorated irrigation facilities, respectively; completed some 1,841 kms of farm to market roads; established 13 Mariculture Parks (7 for launching) in addition to the 15 that were established in 2008, and set up 106 units of tramlines.

On Extension, R&D and capacity building, the DA conducted training and training-related activities to farmers/fisherfolk to equip them with farming technologies that will improve their production and productivity. To date, 327,157 farmers and fisherfolk participated in various training activities conducted by DA-Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) through its 75 series of Training of Palaycheck Trainers (TPTs), 2,790 Farmers Field Schools (08-09 dry and 09 wet season), 148 techno demos; 1,091 Regional Trainings; 3,094 Farm and Business Advisory; 206 Field Day/Mass Graduation; school-on-air, e-learning courses and info caravan.

On Loans, a total of P1.203 billion was released to 31,769 farmers/fisherfolk under the various lending facilities of the Agro-Industry Modernization Credit and Financing Program (as of November 2009).

For January to October 2009, through the LandBank, around P8.02billion was released to 257,198 farmer-beneficiaries for palay production. The Agricultural Guarantee Fund Pool (AGFP), which was established to encourage financial institutions to lend to farmers by providing guarantee cover of up to 85% of the unsecured loans extended to them, has so far provided P4.88 billion-worth of guarantee lines to farmers.

For the Dryers and other postharvest facilities component, the DA distributed 1,288 units of flat bed dryers in various provinces, while an additional 685 flatbed dryers will be distributed, of which 245 units have been installed or established.

The DA also established and started operating 11 Corn Post-harvest Processing & Trading Centers; completed the construction of 5 municipal fish ports located in Lingayen, Pangasinan; Quezon, Palawan; Pilar, Capiz; Dimiao, Bohol; and Catarman, Camiguin.

As for Seeds and other genetic materials, the DA, provided certified seeds to 2,959,820 hectares and hybrid seeds to 201,579 hectares in 2009 under its GMA Rice Program; and distributed the following (preliminary, as of December 2009):

- o 12.8 million pieces of planting materials (e.g. sugarcane, mango, coconut, cashew, citrus, lanzones, durian, cassava, mushroom (spawn), & forage cuttings) to increase production of high value crops;
- o 112,757 head of various animals (large & small ruminants, poultry, swine and Dairy) to improve the breeder base and upgrade native stocks; and
- o 303 million pieces of fingerlings and brood stock to increase fish production in aquaculture. ### **(DA Press Office)**