

Expanding Davao Region's agriculture, fisheries sector

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DAVAO Region is generally an agriculture-based economy but the region's agriculture sector has been growing slowly in the past couple of years.

"While Davao Region's economy is largely agriculture-based, the growth of its Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (AFF) remained to be the slowest among the sectors and its farmers and fishermen remained to be the poorest among the basic sectors," the Davao Regional Development Plan (DRDP) 2017 to 2022 states.

The sector only grew by 1 percent in 2011 and in 2012 it dropped to 0.4 percent, which is below its target of 2 percent for the year. The AFF sector's growth took a hit in 2013 when it had a negative growth of 8 percent after typhoon Pablo struck in December 2012.

However, the region's agriculture sector grew by 2.6 percent in 2014 but in 2015 it slowed down to 1.4 percent brought about the El Niño Phenomenon in the same year.

"The sector's contribution to the region's total output is consistently the lowest among sectors," the DRDP states.

Data showed that from 2010 to 2015 the AFF sector's contribution to the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) only averaged at 16.7 percent as compared to industry sector (31.1 percent) and services sector, which has the biggest contribution at 52.2 percent.

With this, the Regional Development Council (RDC)-Davao has laid down strategies under DRDP 2017 to 2022 that seeks to expand the sector by improving "the productivity and quality of the agricultural and fisheries produce," which are "expected to spur the development of the agribusiness industries and shall open up wide opportunities for the industry clusters to engage in the global value-chains.

"Under the DRDP 2017 to 2022, the RDC seeks to expand the AFF sector's growth to 1.5 percent to 2.5 percent by 2022 from 1.4 percent in 2015.

According to the development blueprint, this can be achieved through the promotion of value-chain development, improvement of competitiveness or quality of products, harnessing export market opportunities, improvement of productivity within ecological limit, increasing access to technology, and increasing access to financing.

Among the key strategies the RDC will pursue is strengthening research and development and extension services and pursue commercialization of research outputs.

"Investing in R&D shall significantly lower production costs and increase the competitiveness of commodities. It shall also allow the development of climate-smart technologies that will make farms resilient to severe and extreme climate conditions," the DRDP states.

Another key strategy is providing farmers and fisher folks with a simplified credit facility.

The DRDP said that the "inability of farmers or fisherfolk to access credit has been the long-standing problem of the agriculture sector."

"This has been partly attributed to the inability of the farmers or fisherfolk to comply with the qualifications and requirements for credit availment," the DRDP said.

The DRDP added that this can be addressed through an easy access financing program for the fisherfolk and farmers.

"Through the Agricultural Credit Policy Councils, funds shall be downloaded to reliable non-government organizations or local government units for relending to farmers or fisherfolk in the provinces," the plan states.

Other key strategies include roll-out of the National Color-Coded Agriculture and Fisheries Map, pursuing massive investments in logistics and infrastructure, providing weather index based insurance and crop insurance for all product lines, capacity building to strengthen farmers and farmers' organizations, establishment and implementation of quality standards in agriculture and fishery products, strengthening the enforcement of agricultural and fisheries laws to ensure the sustainability of crop production and fisheries, strengthening of the capacities of the agriculture and fisheries sector on Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation and Climate Change Adaptation, and fast track the resolution of land tenure issues. (RJL)

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