

# Revitalizing Davao's seaweed industry

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AS THE Department of Agriculture (DA) eyes the revitalizing of seaweed industry in the country, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) conducts specific activities and provides planting materials in different areas in the city, specifically in Tibungco, to support DA's campaign. Last Tuesday, April 4, Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol met up with Ocean Harvest Technology Ltd (OHT) Quality and Resource Manager Dr. Simon Faulkner. Piñol decided that a seaweed roadmap be made to give a clearer vision for the National Seaweed Program under the current administration. This is in connection with the country's preparation in bringing the Filipino farmers to the global and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) market. Faulkner proposed that their company will purchase ulva or sea lettuce from the Philippines which they would sell to Vietnam for processing to animal feeds. Currently, OHT targets 3,000 tons of dried local seaweed. According to National Seaweed Coordinator Irma F. Ortiz, BFAR targets to increase current seaweed production of the Philippines by five percent annually from 2017 to 2022. This is a project BFAR sees to be fulfilled in partnership with Department of Science and Technology and Department of Trade and Industry. As for her part, BFAR Davao Regional Director Fatma Idris said for Davao Region seaweed culture is promoted along coastal areas with calm water and no nearby freshwater supply like river. "Aside from income generating and economic boosting effect of culturing seaweed, seaweed serves as mitigation measure to address climate change," said Idris. As a means to further promote better seaweed production, BFAR came up with three programs. The first program, Mas Saganang Ani, intended for production of climate-resilient species. According to Idris, in connection with this program, they have provided seaweed propagules for the farmers' planting materials and for grow out specifically in Tibungco, Davao City. For the second program, Mas Siglang Saganahan (Entrepreneurship training), Idris said technical trainings as to how to grow good seaweeds for viable markets is conducted before the beneficiaries are given the planting materials. Idris added that for Davao City, Tibungco remains to be the community that BFAR eyes to develop into a seaweed production champion.

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