

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH DURING THE 125th FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City
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[00:00:00]

Usec. Ding Panganiban; also with us here is Senator Cynthia Villar na ipinaglalaman, matagal nang ipinaglalaman ang agrikultura dito sa Pilipinas; and of course iyong hinahanap nila sa... Akala ko naghihiyaw na naman. Parang rally na naman ito eh --- humihyaw sila at akala ko, ako na naman iyong sikat but of course it is actually Congressman Sandro Marcos; [applause] the UN Representative of the FAO Lionel Dabbadie; [applause] my fellow workers in government; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

It is with immense pride and honor --- nakangiti lahat dahil may ulan ano? Inaalala natin ng matagal kung ano'ng mangyayari doon sa El Niño. Sinuwerte naman tayo na imbes na tayo'y bagyuhin ay tayo'y hinila. Hindi naman tayo binagyo pero hinihila iyong ulan dito. So, kokontrolin na lang natin iyong flooding, make sure that the irrigation association is taking full advantage of all of this rain na ma-direct sa tamang lugar at baka naman masabi natin sinisuwerte pa rin ang Pilipinas. Mahal talaga ng Diyos ang mga Pilipino. [applause]

It's with very great pride that I join all of you here today to commemorate the 125th Founding Anniversary of the Department of Agriculture. As we look back to the long and storied past of this institution, it is crucial that we remember the development of the Department over the past 125 years and we must also recognize its impact on the lives of farmers, fisherfolk and Filipino people.

Starting as the Department of Agriculture and Manufacturing 125 years ago, the Department of Agriculture has seen the realization of many milestones such as the implementation of the Masagana 99 program, which made the country self-sufficient and a rice exporting country; the implementation of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997, this mobilized rural development and modernization of the country's agriculture and fisheries sector; and the promotion of urban agriculture to address concerns of food supply during Covid-19 pandemic.

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So first of all, let me recognize, kayo, ang ating mga kasamahan, fellow officials and employees of the Department of Agriculture and all the attached bureaus and agencies for your life-long dedication to serving and shaping our society into what it is today.

If there is one thing that I had always recognized, I really came to realize this when I was governor of Ilocos Norte and I was trying to promote some of the agricultural sectors, iyong aquaculture namin, iyong aming syempre, iyong aming rice expansion, lahat nung ating ginawa na pati na sa pagbabayad ng mga inputs, if there is one thing I learned at that time, ang dami talagang magaling na tao sa Department of Agriculture. [applause] At marami talaga na --- wala talagang iniisip at wala nang ibang ginagawa kung hindi makahanap ng paraan para pagandahin ang buhay ng ating mga magsasaka, para patibayin ang ating tinatawag na food supply.

And that is why, I am sure that we --- that the goals that we have set for ourselves in the next few years, that we have set for the Department of Agriculture in the next few years, are goals that we can achieve because we have all the different elements that are required. We have the expertise, we have the experience, we have the knowledge, we have the motivation to make things work. And so that is why --- that is what we are trying to do to put all your efforts into a single plan that everyone can follow.

Kaya naman para magkaroon tayo ng madalas na marinig na sinasabi na tayo ay mag-coordinate and there will be a symbiosis of our work and we will come to see that these far-reaching goals that we have put before us can actually be achieved, that they will come. But I cannot say that we can do it without any of you. We have to be together --- we have to work together. I know that it is something that all of you want.

Because marami na sa inyo ang nakausap ko. Alam ko naman ang motivation talaga ninyo, pagandahin ang agrikultura. At kaya naman malakas ang loob ko na masasabi na iyong ating mga pinapangarap na sinasabi na mga goals natin sa DA ay maaabot natin. Because with your help, we have harnessed the transformative potential of the agricultural sector in ensuring food sustainability, generating employment opportunities, mitigating poverty.

Agriculture is and will always be an important contributor to our national economy. In the first quarter of 2023, the sector grew by 2.2%, contributing 9.1% to our GDP. Despite some modest gains, marami pa tayong kailangang gawin. Kaya't kailangan natin pagmasdan, pag-aralan at bantayan iyong mga iba't-ibang pwersa na inaabot --- nararamdaman natin na kung minsan nagiging sagabal sa ating performance. Iyan iyong mga decreasing productivity, climate change, diminishing natural resources at nagbabago rin ang ating market.

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So, but through the years, the DA banner program and projects have continuously provided farm inputs, credit assistance, equipment, machinery, production and post-harvest facilities, kasama na rin diyan ang farm-to-market roads at ang ating mga irrigation para pagandahin ang ating productivity.

We must continue to adapt and utilize the latest technologies and practices that will not only enhance our productivity and our quality of life but will also open more doors to investments and market opportunities for our friends from outside of the Philippines.

Moving forward, the DA will continue to devise interventions to advance our agri-fishery practices, improve the competitiveness of our agri-fishery products, further boost the income of our farmers and fisherfolk. In addition, we will expand access to our markets and related enterprises by enhancing our physical and our digital infrastructure leveraging on private sector investment.

As I have mentioned, there is still a great deal of work to do. But it is on this note I enjoin each of you to continue to exert all efforts to address the concerns of our sector so that we can achieve the goals we have set for ourselves, our sector and for our country.

Let us continue to engage in collaborative dialogue with experts, researchers, rural workers to solve the roots of the lingering problems. Learn and adopt climate resilient and cutting-edge agricultural technologies so that we can be prepared for prospective contingencies.

Through these, we can motivate more people --- especially younger Filipinos to toil, to nourish our land and our seas, propelling the Philippines towards greater heights of security, prosperity, progress and sustainability.

So, as one Department, let us continue to champion the well-being of our farmers, fisherfolk and rural communities; let us promote agricultural productivity and resilience while also maintaining environmental stability; and let us nurture inclusivity and pride in the noble work of feeding our people. We must realize how important the agri sector is to the Philippines, not only to our economy but also to every single Filipino.

We have all heard the issues of food supply, of food prices, of supply chain problems. And these are all of the things that we have to overcome if we are going to be able to say that the Department of Agriculture has achieved its ultimate goal and that we are able to provide to Filipinos all of the food supply, and isama na rin natin dyan --- hindi na food supply lamang ang pinag-uusapan

--- that we are also able to provide the nutrition that we need to give to our people so we can say that the Philippines is a healthy country.

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Beyond that, beyond just the problems that we are facing in terms of providing adequate agricultural commodities to our people at a price that they can afford is if you... As you know, one of the great priorities of this administration is to pull out of the pandemic economy.

And every analysis, kahit hindi magsasaka ang gagawa ng analysis, kahit na iyong mga nasa bangko, kahit na iyong mga World Bank, mga ADB, lagi nilang sinasabi, hindi aahon ang ekonomiya ninyo kung hindi gaganda ang agrikultura ninyo, dahil lahat ng ating ginagawa sa ekonomiya ay pinagbabasehan ay ang matibay at masigla na agricultural sector.

Ganoon kahalaga ang trabaho ninyo. Ganoon ka-importante hindi lamang sa pagpakain ng tao kung hindi sa pagpaahon ng Pilipinas pagkatapos ng pandemya.

Let us always keep that in the back of our mind so we will always remember that this work is not just something that you do because you cannot find another job, you cannot find another work. *“O sige, okay na lang, papasok tayo.”*

Alalahanin natin lagi: napakalaki at napakahalagang bahagi ang ginagampanan ng agriculture sector at ang pagpaganda ng agriculture sector ay kasama na iyan, katumbas na niyan ang pagpaganda sa Pilipinas.

Kaya't mabuhay ang Kagawaran ng Agrikultura! Mabuhay tayong lahat! Maraming salamat sa inyo. [applause]

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