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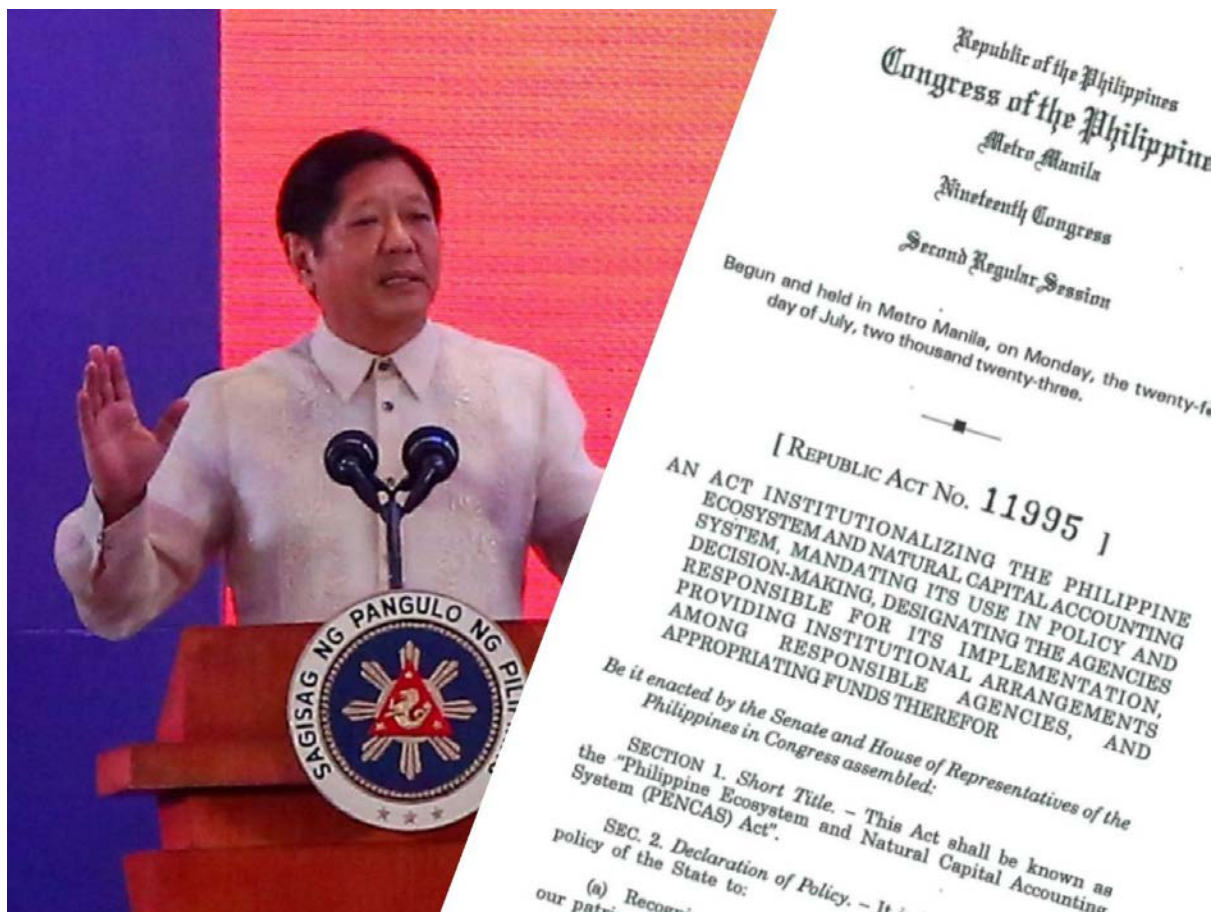
MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos signs into law Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System

BY BETHEENA UNITE

May 26, 2024 12:57 PM

President Marcos has signed into law a measure that will provide the government an accounting of the country's natural resources.



(Noel B. Pabalate; document courtesy of Malacañang)

The Republic Act No. 11995 or the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS) law, which was signed on May 22, aims to recognize, protect and promote the ecological balance and resilience of the country.

It institutionalizes environmental and economic accounting frameworks that are accepted internationally.

Included under the law's accounting framework is the list of officially designated statistics on the depletion, degradation, and restoration of natural capital; environmental protection expenditures; pollution and quality of land, air and water; and environmental damages.

The law is expected to support the government's economic, environmental and health policy development and decision-making. It will also help provide tools and measures that contribute to the protection, conservation and restoration of the country's ecosystems.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Board has been tasked to oversee its implementation. It will direct a relevant interagency committee to assist the body in addressing agency and sectoral concerns that may arise in the development of natural capital accounts.

Under the law, the PSA is ordered to constitute an interagency working group to issue the rules and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of PENCAS within one year from its effectivity.

Moreover, the Department of Agriculture (DA) will assist the PSA in the generation and provision of the National Capital Accounting information related to agricultural areas, and fisheries aquatic resources.

The DA will also closely coordinate with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) with regards to associated ecosystems.

Also playing important roles in the implementation of PENCAS are the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Education (DepEd), the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and the Department of Finance (DOF).

The law will take effect 15 days after its publication in the Official Gazette, or in a newspaper of general circulation.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/26/marcos-signs-into-law-philippine-ecosystem-and-natural-capital-accounting-system>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Signing of the Tatak Pinoy IRR

BY SENATOR SONNY ANGARA

May 26, 2024 01:48 AM

BETTER DAYS



Recently, Trade and Industry Secretary Alfredo Pascual led representatives from other government agencies in signing the approved implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the Tatak Pinoy (Proudly Filipino) Law (RA 11981), which we principally authored and sponsored. We are grateful that the DTI acted swiftly in developing these rules, as the law was signed by President Bongbong Marcos just last February.

Crafted mainly by experts from USAID-RESPOND (Regulatory Reform Support Program for National Development), the guidelines were a product of several public consultations and focus group discussions. Their approval signals that the full implementation of the law can now begin in earnest.

Some of the milestones we hope to see in the coming months include the formal call for nominations for the four private sector representatives in the Tatak Pinoy Council (TPC) to be appointed by the President; a roadshow by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to promote and explain directly to stakeholders on the ground the ambitious goals of the law; and the issuance by the TPC of a list of Philippine products and services that will immediately be given preference when it comes to government procurement.

In her message during the signing ceremony, DTI Undersecretary Fita Aldaba underscored that with the approval of the IRR, the TPC—chaired by the DTI with the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the Department of Finance (DOF) sitting as vice-chairpersons—is now enabled to issue whatever guidelines, circulars, and opinions necessary for the implementation of the law; and engage resource persons from the private and public sectors to attend council meetings. The TPC can now also establish working groups according to the key pillars cited in the law, namely human resources; infrastructure; technology and innovation; investments; and sound financial management.

The milestone we are anticipating the most is the Tatak Pinoy Strategy (TPS), which is perhaps among the more important features of the law. Covering the same time frame as the prevailing Philippine Development Plan (PDP), the TPS shall outline the plan and action components for the country, and for the regions, provinces, cities, and municipalities, to systematically support domestic enterprises to produce and offer increasingly diverse, sophisticated, and globally

competitive, products and services. Usec. Aldaba summed up the essence of the TPS, when she said it would “serve as the country’s integrated industrial strategy, complementing and harmonizing all ongoing industrial initiatives” across the country.

For years, the DTI had already pursued various industrial initiatives and strategies—starting from the Comprehensive National Industrial Strategy (CNIS) from 2012 to 2016, which included the Manufacturing Resurgence Program (MRP); the Inclusive Innovation Industrial Strategy (I3s) from 2016 to 2021; and then currently, the STI-driven (Science, Technology and Innovation) Industrial Policy in 2022, which evolved with the concept of “Mindfacturing,” emphasizing the importance of human creativity and intellect.

While the DTI had consistently done its best with its various industrialization initiatives through the years, the work of actually transforming the very structure of our economy should not be their responsibility alone. Such an endeavor requires no less than the collaboration and cooperation not only from other government agencies such as the DOF, NEDA, the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), or the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), but also industry champions in the Philippines, trade associations, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurs, and even the academe. Such synergy from all stakeholders appeared to be the missing element in our industrial strategies thus far.

Hence, as I explained in my message during the signing ceremony, filling in this gap was among our chief motivations for sponsoring and pushing the Tatak Pinoy Law. What we needed was a durable (meaning institutionalized) platform wherein relevant government agencies and private sector stakeholders can come together and push for the country’s industrialization in a systematic and strategic manner. And this is precisely the purpose or function we hope the Tatak Pinoy Law, particularly through the TPS, will serve in the years to come.

We gladly took note that DTI Secretary Pascual said in his speech that the law rightly highlights the need for a “whole-of-nation” approach. We were even more heartened when NEDA Secretary Arsie Balisacan emphasized that there were “quite a lot of complementarity and overlap in the objectives” of the current PDP and the Tatak Pinoy Law, and that he saw such mutual support continuing even with future PDPs and versions of the TPS.

Later on, DBM Principal Economist and Usec. Joselito R. Basilio said that the law’s implementation will most probably be enrolled under the department’s program convergence budgeting—where agencies involved discuss and coordinate everything that concerns a specific budget item. He added that since the law provides for the establishment of a Tatak Pinoy secretariat, it will be easier to coordinate, harmonize, and streamline the different programs and projects that the different agencies have that are aligned with Tatak Pinoy objectives.

Indeed, there is much to anticipate given that the rules and regulations for implementing the Tatak Pinoy Law have now been issued. (Email: sonnyangara@yahoo.com| Facebook, Twitter & Instagram: @sonnyangara)

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/26/signing-of-the-tatak-pinoy-irr>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Villar adds more teeth to law protecting agriculture sector

The Philippine Star

May 26, 2024 | 12:00am



Senator Cynthia Villar as she delivers the bicam conference report of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act in the plenary on March 20,2024.

House of Representatives

MANILA, Philippines — The hardships being suffered by Filipino farmers and consumers due to cartels, hoarding, profiteering and other corrupt practices will soon be stopped as the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act is closer to becoming a law.

Before the 2nd regular session of the 19th Congress adjourned last Wednesday, the Senate ratified the bicameral conference committee report on the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act.

Sen. Cynthia Villar, principal author and sponsor of the measure, stressed that this is an act of self-preservation against the manipulative scheme of economic saboteurs and the protection of farmers' livelihoods.

“The measure intends to repeal the seven-year-old Republic Act No. 10845, or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act and introduce several nefarious acts other than

smuggling, such as hoarding, profiteering, cartel of agricultural and fisheries products,” Villar said.

“This is also a protection of the State from tax evaders and non-payers of duties. This will ensure the well-being of our agricultural producers, consumers and the whole economy,” she emphasized. The Senate passed Senate Bill 2432 or the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Bill in December 2023 and it has been certified as urgent by President Marcos.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/26/2357982/villar-adds-more-teeth-law-protecting-agriculture-sector>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

‘Bangus’ bargain in Pangasinan: Boon or bane?

By: [Yolanda Sotelo](#) - Correspondent / [@yzsoteloINO](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:17 AM May 26, 2024



DAGUPAN BOUNTY “Bangus” (milkfish) grown in fishponds in Dagupan City is among the best-tasting varieties sought by consumers. Dagupan, a major economic center of Pangasinan, is also an important trading hub for milkfish. The city has been staging the annual Bangus Festival every April to celebrate the aquaculture industry that has given livelihood to Dagupeños. Among the festival’s activities (photos below) are street parties, street dance competition, Bangus Rodeo and bangus grilling. — Photos by Willie O. Lomibao

DAGUPAN CITY, PANGASINAN, Philippines — Susan Yadao, a grandmother of eight from this city, wasted no time in buying locally grown “bangus” (milkfish) in bulk after finding out that its price at the public market had gone down early this month.

“I was surprised when I saw that bangus were being sold at P125 per kilo at the Magsaysay wholesale market last May 10, so I bought 5 kilos,” Yadao told the Inquirer.

Records from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) showed that from May 4 to May 17, bangus was being retailed from P120 to P200, depending on sizes, in different Pangasinan markets.



During this period, the prevailing prices were P120 to P130 per kilo for small bangus (five pieces per kilo), P120 to P180 for medium (three to four pieces per kilo) and P130 to P200 for large (two pieces per kilo).

But prices in Ilocos Norte province were much higher, from P210 to P220 per kilo, as bangus sold there were sourced from Pangasinan aquaculture areas, and the cost of transport and other expenses had been factored in the prices.

Yadao said she was also surprised at the abundance and low prices of saltwater fish at the Dagupan market. “Galunggong” (round scad) were sold for only P120 a kilo, espada (cutlass fish) for P160 and whole tuna for P120 a kilo.

Supply, demand



But the low prices may just be a fluke, according to Rosario Segundina Gaerlan, Director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in the Ilocos region, adding the high fish production levels were driving prices down for both cultured and wild-caught fish.

“It’s the law of supply and demand,” she noted.

Fish cage operator Alex Soriano said the sea usually yields bountiful fish during the dry season, affecting the prices of cultured fish. Soriano is the president of the Tiera del Norte Realty Corp., a major player in Pangasinan’s aquaculture industry.

He believed that the farm gate prices might drop further to P115 per kilo, potentially impacting wholesale and retail market prices.

However, at this rate, producers and fish cage operators were already facing losses since they spent P125 to produce a kilo of bangus.



“Operators cannot dictate the prices of the fish. It is the middlemen who decide, depending on the volume brought to the wholesale markets at the time, or depending on their whims, and thus the prices are fluctuating. Worse, it is the operators who absorb the losses when prices nosedive,” Soriano said.

According to Gaerlan, it is the small-scale fish cage operators who bear the brunt when fish prices plummet, as they face challenges in accessing a market largely dominated by larger operators.

“If small-scale operators attempt to compete with larger ones, they risk losing out, as the market may become saturated with fish from the big-time producers,” she explained.

Gaerlan added: “The problem is that producers are not studying the market and are not mindful of whether they have buyers or none. Production should be based on market demand.”



The oversupply of bangus also happens when operators harvest at the same time, she said, stressing that prices would eventually surge once supply drops.

Soriano noted that small-scale fish growers, particularly those operating 30 or fewer cages, are at risk of losing in the pricing competition, especially as they must harvest when pressured by feed suppliers.

He said major players, meanwhile, could not afford to stop operations to ensure that “365 days a year, the cages are consistently stocked.”



“You cannot choose the season to operate or you won’t have fish to harvest after six or seven months. If local bangus production is stopped, local markets would be flooded with imported fish. Besides, we have regular and contractual workers to support,” he said.

Tiera Norte, which Soriano heads, has 800 workers that consist of caretakers, harvesters, net changers or repairers and others.

So if the prices drop, “kapit lang” (hang tight), hoping the next harvest would bring better prices,” he said. “What will happen to fish consumers if we stop producing?”

Skipping middlemen



COMPETITION Dagupan residents join the contests for the fastest “bangus” deboner and fastest bangus eater during the Bangus Rodeo in April. The other competitions include the fastest bangus classifiers and the search for the heaviest, longest, and “prettiest” bangus.

Fishery industry players also plan to stabilize prices by bypassing middlemen and joining the Department of Agriculture (DA)-BFAR’s Kadiwa program.

“We started joining the Kadiwa market in Malate, Manila. Through this project, consumers will have access to fresh but low-priced fish, while fish growers will enjoy fixed prices and would not be at the mercy of wholesale markets,” Soriano said.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the DA-BFAR implemented the Kadiwa project which brought aquaculture products direct from the farms to cooperatives in Metro Manila. The cooperatives paid farm gate prices to fish growers while BFAR handled transport, ice and other costs.



COMPETITION Dagupan residents join the contests for the fastest bangus eater during the Bangus Rodeo in April.

Gaerlan said the project was the DA-BFAR’s way to provide consumers in Metro Manila access to fish during the pandemic. The BFAR also regularly brings “bangus” to landlocked towns.

But funds for bringing “bangus” to Metro Manila had run out so the operation was stopped. The government, however, is hoping that fish growers and cooperatives in the capital region have already established linkage and will continue trading on their own.

The bangus culture industry has spawned another industry—processed and bottled bangus.



The Department of Trade and Industry has registered close to 100 bangus processors. During the International Food Exhibit at the World Trade Center early this month, four of the 10 exhibitors from Pangasinan were engaged in bangus processing and bottling.

These were Elisha Bay Dagupan Bangus and Seafood, Hou Yang Food Corp., Freshious Inc. and Mama Cili Inc., all ready to penetrate the international market.

But still, the biggest market of the aquaculture industry is the fresh produce market, as consumers can prepare the national fish into a variety of dishes—like sinigang, paksiw, fried or grilled—that have become familiar fares on Filipino dining tables.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1944879/bangus-bargain-in-pangasinan-boon-or-bane>

Fueling the Farmers

By Andy Sevilla

May 25, 2024, 8:10 pm

In a heartening display of corporate social responsibility, two businesses have joined forces to provide much-needed support to Philippine farmers. Go Traktora, a major distributor of world-renowned agricultural tractors, has partnered with Cleanfuel, a fast-growing fuel company known for its quality products and competitive pricing.

The collaboration aims to ease the financial burden on farmers, who have been grappling with rising fuel costs. Cleanfuel, which offers gasoline and diesel at lower prices compared to the industry's "big three" oil companies, is now providing an additional P3 discount per liter on gasoline and P2 discount per liter on diesel to Go Traktora's clients.

"We need to help our clients, especially the farmers, since the prices of fuels are going up, and this program is a big help for them," said Ralph Go, the Vice President for Sales and Business Development at Go Traktora. "This is a big incentive we can give them as we need to help them produce more agricultural products with lesser costs."

Atty. Bong Suntay, the President of Cleanfuel, echoed this sentiment, stating that the collaboration is part of the company's social responsibility efforts to support the economic recovery of the country. "The farmers, who are the main clients of Go Traktora, would be the main beneficiary here, and we are very thankful that we are now a part of this effort," he said.

The partnership is particularly significant for the Central Luzon region, which is considered the "food bowl" of the Philippines. By providing substantial fuel discounts to farmers, the two companies are directly supporting the productivity and profitability of the agricultural sector, which is crucial for the nation's food security and economic well-being.

"Those P2- to P3-discount to the already cheaper costs of gasoline and diesel these days is a big help among the Cleanfuel customers," the article notes. "With the collaboration with Go Traktora, farmers can now save big per day, especially when one is using around 30 to 40 liters per day in tilling their land."

This heartening partnership between Go Traktora and Cleanfuel serves as a shining example of how businesses can leverage their resources and expertise to uplift the lives of those in the agricultural sector, who play a vital role in the country's development.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/wheels-more-motoring-quarterly/314451212/fueling-the-farmers.html>

Food inflation fears rekindled as crop index erases 2024 loss

Bloomberg News

May 26, 2024



An index of major crops wiped out its 2024 loss as bad weather stokes worries about harvests from wheat to coffee, reviving concerns about rising food prices.

Droughts, frosts and heavy rain are popping up across key growers, threatening tighter supplies and lifting the cost of agricultural staples. A Bloomberg gauge tracking nine farm commodities has turned higher on the year and is headed for the largest weekly gain since July.

While the measure remains far from its 2022 peak, the gains could eventually spell higher consumer prices from bread to beverages after a period of subdued inflation in the grocery aisle. Climate change and geopolitical concerns are likely to keep crop prices elevated, said Paul Bloxham, HSBC Holdings Plc's chief economist for global commodities.

Chicago wheat futures on Friday traded near the highest since July as poor weather in major exporters from Australia to Russia raises concerns over supplies.

Deteriorating harvest prospects in top shipper Russia have fueled the gains, with more downgrades likely in the next couple of weeks, Dennis Voznesenski, associate director of sustainable and agricultural economics at Commonwealth Bank of Australia, said in a weekly report.

Robusta coffee prices—another component of the index—are headed for a roughly 9-percent weekly gain, the biggest since last December as dry weather in key producer Vietnam puts the world on track for a fourth year of robusta deficits. Orange juice set a fresh intraday record Friday on the back of a sinking Brazilian harvest, and weather woes have also lifted benchmark Asian rice prices to the cusp of a 15-year high.

Cocoa futures in New York are poised for a weekly gain of almost 12 percent. Futures have resumed a rally due to falling bean inventories in exchange-monitored warehouses amid uncertainty over next season's crop. Prices are expected to remain high throughout the current season's mid-crop, supported by the market fundamentals, the International Cocoa Organization said in a report Wednesday.

Bird flu

The United States Department of Agriculture has banned imports of some poultry products from Australia's Victoria state after the detection of an outbreak of avian flu.

The restrictions, announced Friday, cover both birds and eggs and will remain in force until further notice, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service said in a release. The curbs only apply to products that have originated from, or transited through, Victoria and does not include other Australian states.

Agriculture officials in Victoria reported Thursday that the H7N3 bird flu strain had been detected on a farm in Terang, about 212 kilometers (132 miles) southwest of Melbourne. The property is directly connected through joint management, staff and machinery to a farm at Meredith, about 130 kilometers northeast of Terang, where some 400,000 chickens were culled this week to stamp out the virus, according to the Sydney Morning Herald.

The outbreaks add to heightened international concern about avian influenza, especially the H5N1 strain that's spread globally, though hasn't been reported in Australia. In March, it was reported in dairy cows in the US and has infected two people exposed to sick animals.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/26/food-inflation-fears-rekindled-as-crop-index-erases-2024-loss/>

Level playing field needed for Zambales fishers –Gov. Ebdane

Henry Empeño

May 26, 2024

MASINLOC, Zambales — Zambales fishermen would need bigger boats and modern fishing gear, alongside safe access to traditional fishing grounds like Bajo de Masinloc or Scarborough Shoal, so that they can compete with well-equipped foreign fishers that venture into the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

This was stressed by Governor Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. at the recent public consultation conducted here by the House of Representatives' Committee on National Defense and Security and the Special Committee on the West Philippine Sea to examine the impact of Chinese incursion into the Scarborough Shoal.

Fishermen who attended the dialogue complained of poor catch due to bullying by Chinese militia boats, as well as stiff competition from legitimate fishermen from Vietnam, Taiwan, and Malaysia.

They said they have yet to receive assistance from the national government since China took effective control of Bajo de Masinloc.

Ebdane, a former Secretary of Defense, pointed out that while the situation at the shoal has socioeconomic, political, and security implications, the welfare of local fishermen is a primary concern.

He stressed that while the Philippines has won in the arbitration case over the Scarborough Shoal, the ruling has not been not acknowledged by China, thus rendering it unenforceable. “So, there has to be an alternative to this problem in Bajo de Masinloc,” he said.

Ebdane averred that as far as local fishermen are concerned, the Zambales government has short- and long-term programs in place to address their needs, including putting funds for fisherfolk to go into payao fishing, a system that uses fish aggregating devices in open sea.

“We’re laying the foundation to ensure development and progress for the next generation of fishers,” he said, adding that the long-term program starts with reorganizing fisherfolk into cooperatives to qualify for financing, followed by training and apprenticeship to ensure they are ready to undertake the project.

Ebdane said the provincial government is teaming up with local educational institutions, including the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy, to train the youth in new fishing technologies, as well as fishing boat operations, to provide “a better foundation” for fisherfolks.

Citing a recent survey, Ebdane said 65 fishermen’s groups in the province with about 4,500 members can qualify for financial assistance. “They can already get a big fishing boat with P1.5 million, and we can provide that at no interest,” he added.

Ebdane said that while access to Bajo de Masinloc is currently a “huge problem” to the government, the state of the local fishing industry is also a major concern. “If our fishermen remain doing marginal fishing, then they become another problem to local governments because we have to dole out food or cash assistance every time they cannot go out to fish,” he added.

China’s threat

The recent threat by China to detain “trespassers” in the South China Sea is another concern that must be addressed within the parameters of international law, he added.

In Friday’s hearing, Congressman Dan S. Fernandez of the lone district of Sta. Rosa, Laguna observed that the problem of limited access to Scarborough is exacerbated by the use of outdated fishing gears and technology.

“We have to evolve,” he said. “If our fishermen would continue to use small traditional boats, they would really be in a dangerous situation.”

Ebdane said a fishers’ cooperative in the town of Sta. Cruz would be the first group to avail themselves of the provincial government’s assistance to modernize their fishing boat and equipment.

He said fishers’ groups can apply for financial support starting at P5 for fishing implements, including payaos. He added that the provincial government can provide up to P60 million should fishers opt to own and operate bigger boats, depending on their developed expertise and capability.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/26/level-playing-field-needed-for-zambales-fishers-gov-ebdane/>

ABANTE TONITE

Agritourism magandang hanapbuhay sa kabataan – Lito Lapid

May 26, 2024

Isinulong ni Senador Lito Lapid ang pagpapalago at promosyon ng agrikultura sa bansa sa pamamagitan ng turismo.

Bilang bagong chairman ng Senate committee on tourism, nais hikayatin ni Lapid ang mga Pilipino na tangkilikin ang mga tourism destination sa sariling bansa.

Sabi pa ni Lapid, ang agritourism ay magbibigay-daan sa ating mga kabataan na mahikayat na mag-aral ng agrikultura dahil matanda na ang populasyon ngayon ng mga magsasaka.

“Ang promosyon ng farm tourism ay magbibigay sa atin ng magandang hanapbuhay at oportunidad sa mga kabataan para bumalik sa pagsasaka at may dagdag na kita pa sa ating turismo, mga magbubukid at lokal na komunidad,” diin ni Lapid

Nakasentro ang agritourism sa agricultural-based activities para makahikayat ng mga bakasyunista o turista na bumisita at matuto sa gawain ng mga magsasaka sa bukirin at rancho.

Kabilang sa mga aktibidad ang pagpitas ng mga gulay at prutas, paggawa ng alak, pagtanim ng palay at root crops o halamang-ugat, pag-aaral sa organic farms, paggatas sa baka, pagsakay sa kalabaw o kabayo, pamimingwit, pagpitas ng coffee beans, farm-to-table dining at maraming iba pa. (Dindo Matining)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/05/26/agritourism-magandang-hanapbuhay-sa-kabataan-lito-lapid/>