

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE  
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE 1ST NATIONAL SOIL  
HEALTH SUMMIT: SECURING FOOD AND NUTRITION THROUGH HEALTHY SOILS**

[Delivered at the Diamond Hotel in Manila | 21 June 2023]

Thank you very much, the Science and Technology Secretary, Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. *[Please take your seats.]*

Senator Cynthia Villar and the other elected officials that are present here with us today; the Special Assistant to the President Secretary Anton Lagdameo; Senior Undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture Ding Panganiban; partner agencies in this 1st National Soil Health Summit.

I am a little surprised that it is the first because it is something that is so critical and that is something that we have been getting a great many requests from locals, the LGUs themselves, cooperatives, in that we have to go and do the soil analysis in their place. So, at least whether or not it has been much delayed, I'm very happy that we are now here to participate in this 1st National Soil Health Summit *[applause]*; to all the experts and members of the academe who have taken time to participate in this event, thank you very much for your participation and good morning to all of us. *[applause]*

Let me greet the Bureau of Soils and Water Management a happy 72nd anniversary *[applause]* and a joyful 12th anniversary to the DOST–Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic, and Natural Resources R&D. *[applause]*

So, congratulations to the different agencies who are celebrating their anniversary. I cannot think of a more appropriate way to do that than for us to be attending this 1st National Soil Health Summit.

We are all aware that our nation is blessed with rich and fertile lands that fed and empowered our people throughout our history.

While that has been the case, we will still find ourselves burdened by grave and urgent issues in providing quality and sufficient food for our people — some of which are caused by factors beyond our control, others are within in fact our control.

We recognize strengthening our agriculture industry requires a cohesive overall approach, especially if we want to address the systemic and perennial ills in the sector.

With this, we have begun the consolidation of farmers cooperatives and associations and their lands as well as the introduction of new technologies and machineries to our farmers, and giving them access to more efficient practices.

We have also welcomed major investments in the agriculture industry from local and foreign investors, as part of our plan to provide farmers with the capital and tools they need to boost productivity.

While all these initiatives have a great deal of potential, we still need to address the growing problem of the degradation, acidification, and pollution in our soils.

As the DENR has reported, 75% of our total cropland is vulnerable to erosion in various degrees, with agriculture losing about 457 million tons of soil annually.

The conversion of lands for settlements and the loss of about 47,000 hectares of forest cover every year contributes significantly to soil degradation. Aside from these, around 11 to 13 million hectares are considered degraded. This is on top of the 2.2 million hectares that suffer from insufficient levels of soil fertility.

Making matters worse is the improper use of fertilizers and pesticides that pollute and acidify our soil.

Needless to say, our soil is under threat and to continue to neglect this vital agricultural component will lead to even worse crisis in the future.

Therefore, I cannot emphasize enough how significant and influential this First National Soil Health Summit is.

With the discourse amongst our leaders and the agriculture sector's brightest minds, I anticipate that this Summit will spark more informed decisions and much-needed innovation in the coming years.

With the focus on sharing information and enhancing programs related to soil health, I believe that we can promote the sustainable use of our soil for the benefit of future generations.

On the part of government, we have come up with a 5-point priority agenda on soil and water management, such as the National Soil Health Program and the Implementation of Sustainable Land Management. *[applause]* This will ensure the proper use and management of soil resources, address land degradation, enhance crop productivity, and, hence, improve farmers' income.

The Administration shall empower the Bureau of Soil and Water Management to achieve these goals, especially through capacitating soil laboratories across the country to yield better data.

We are conducting a soil and land resources mapping and evaluation process that includes soil-based and land-based level assessments, soil sample analyses and digital map preparations under the Philippine Soil Land Resources Information program.

The Administration is also exploring Water Security for Climate Resilient Rainwater Technologies, and the conduct of Cloud Seeding Operations for Agriculture *[applause]*, all these to improve water conditions in production areas, in critical watersheds, and in our reservoirs. These are all part of the collective efforts to mitigate the effects of the El Niño phenomenon.

However, we in government cannot solve the issues affecting our soil and the agriculture sector as a whole, on our own. As such, this summit is an opportune time for all of us here to collaborate, to share our wisdom and experience to improve our soil and boost our agricultural productivity, all while promoting sustainability and environmental protection. This will play a pivotal role in nation building and uplifting the lives of our people.

Congratulations on the conduct of this 1st National Soil Health Summit and we look forward to the very useful production and output that will come out of this summit.

Thank you very much and have a truly fruitful gathering. *[applause]*

**--- END ---**