

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE PHILIPPINE COCONUT AUTHORITY**

[Delivered at the Coconut Palace in Pasay City | 29 June 2023]

Thank you very much, Secretary Conrad Estrella. *[Please take your seats.]*

Senator Cynthia Villar, who I think is finally finding a way to have all her plans that have been frustrated for so many years. We have been watching you from the sidelines to have some of the opportunities that we are laying out in terms not only of the coconut industry but also of all of our agricultural sector.

The Philippine Coconut Authority Administrator Bernie Cruz; our always reception committee – lahat ng mga function namin nandito kaya't ang ating second home dito sa Maynila ay Pasay City na and of course nandiyan lagi ang ating butihing Pasay City Mayor Imelda Calixto-Rubiano; my fellow workers in government; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good morning to you all.

It's with pleasure that I join you all to celebrate this golden milestone of the Philippine Coconut Authority.

Today, we honor the PCA and its fifty-strong years of developing a united, efficient, and globally competitive coconut industry.

On June 30th of 1973, my father signed PD No. 232 creating the PCA and it was to promote the accelerated growth of the coconut and palm oil industries.

It is mandated to ensure that coconut farmers participate in and benefit from development and from growth.

With fifty years of dedicated work and with a view to advance the coconut industry, it is worth recognizing the hard work of the men and women of the PCA who helped shape the policies, provide services, and distribute resources to empower our farmers across the country.

We are an agricultural nation. The Philippines now is a major exporter of coconut oil and other products such as copra meal and desiccated coconut.

We are thus in a prime position to harness this advantage to develop this crucial sector for the benefit of our economy and our people.

Often referred to as the "tree of life" or in my part of the country it's referred to as the "miracle nut", the coconut is deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of our society. It has become an integral part of our national identity.

We have used the coconut tree not only for food and nourishment but for shelter, for clothing, and as a source of livelihood for many generations.

Thus, it is important that we continue to develop and improve these products so that we can find new uses and expand its distribution to new markets.

The day is also dedicated to our diligent coconut farmers, who work tirelessly under the sun to cultivate these vital products.

Through their hard work, they are able to plant, take care of, and nourish resilient coconut trees necessary for the emergence of a stronger coconut industry that we may all reap the benefits of this essential product.

I thus encourage the PCA to continue to uplift [the] lives of our coconut farmers and empower them to improve their conditions, break free from the chains of poverty, and dream bigger for themselves and for their loved ones.

But to add to that, not just to say that we are leaving the responsibility of that development to the PCA, we have in this administration started to formulate the plans on how to redevelop our coconut industry, how to help our coconut farmers. There is no reason why the Philippines should not be the biggest producer of export in terms of coconut products.

Alam naman ninyo pagka ang pinag-uusapan ay coconut ay talagang wala tayong tinatapon. Walang kailangan itapon. At madali para sa atin ang magpalaki at mag-alaga ng coconut dahil siyempre kahit naman wala tayong gawin tumutubo 'yan.

Kaya hindi talaga tama, we cannot allow this very, very grand opportunity for our farmers to slip by. And we have now come to the point where we have been looking at the coconut industry as an industry. And it is now time to revitalize that economy *[applause]* for the betterment of not only coconut farmers but for the entire economy.

And the potential is really quite good and I think that with the plans that we have put together - - Senator Cynthia has been already talking to me about it. Now, we are going to sit down. We all have our own ideas. We are going to sit down to finalize that. We will start with the replanting of the older trees that have already – hindi na magamit at hindi na bumubunga.

We will also include in that will be the intercropping because, well, I don't need to explain to you we have to wait a few years until the tree starts to bear fruit, starts to be able to give us a coconut.

And, beyond that also the mills also, all the post-production so that we can keep the value-added which is what we are trying to do with all agricultural products, keep the value-added here in the Philippines so that when we export, we export a finished product.

Hindi na natin ginagawa 'yung raw material, i-export natin, ipro-process sa ibang bansa, tapos bibilhin naman natin 'yung end product. Parang nawala sa atin lahat nung advantage para sa ating mga farmers. Kaya't 'yan ang aming pinaplano ngayon.

At para sa akin, malaki ang pag-asa ko. Talagang I am very optimistic that we will be able to bring back to the coconut industry. Na-ano lang eh... When the government fell in 1986, all of those very important programs for the coconut industry stopped.

And lahat ng naging progreso ay dahil sa ating mga farmers, sa lahat ng mga PCA na workers, pinagpatuloy lang nila 'yung kanilang ginagawa kahit na hindi kasama, hindi bahagi ng isang malaking national plan. Kaya't nakakagulat din na kahit papaano na hindi masyadong plinano, hindi masyadong nasuportahan ay napakatibay pa rin ng coconut industry. *[applause]*

So as we celebrate this momentous event, let us also recognize the challenges that lie ahead of the coconut industry. Now, we have to attend to the effects of climate change, of pests, and diseases that remain a significant threat to our trees, endangering the future of our sector, our industry.

So, let us double our efforts to tackle these issues and invest in technologies and initiatives that will not only safeguard but also ensure the resilience of the coconut sector of our agriculture.

So, the PCA must intensify the implementation of the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan to accelerate the modernization of the coconut industry and to improve the lives of our coconut farmers and their families.

As we reflect upon the last half-century, we are reminded of the valued history of the PCA, and the challenges that it has withstood to get to where it is today.

So together, we will usher in a new era of progress by leveraging the power of the coconut to build a better, self-sufficient, and prosperous country.

Thank you very much. *Mabuhay ang PCA!*

Congratulations on this important day and I look forward to the next 50 – no, the next 100 years. Maraming salamat at magandang tanghali po. *[applause]*

--- END ---