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2023 POST-SONA DISCUSSIONS: FOOD SECURITY
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MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Magandang hapon po sa ating lahat and welcome to the 2023 Post SONA Discussions.

After a successful State of the Nation Address by President Marcos Jr., let us continue to dive deeper into his message as we tackle specific issues in our cluster panel discussions. Pag-uusapan natin ngayong hapon ang pagkain, let us know more about the progress we have made in the past year when it comes to food security, food production and even food self-sufficiency. What are the wins that we should be proud of and what are the other areas that need more improvement? Alamin natin iyan with our panel this afternoon starting with Undersecretary Mercedita Sombilla, Department of Agriculture; Secretary Manuel M. Bonoan, Department of Public Works and Highways; Usec. Ruth Castelo, Department of Trade and Industry; Usec. Odilon Parasaba, Department of Interior and Local Government; Secretary Conrado M. Estrella III, Department of Agrarian Reform; Secretary Renato U. Solidum Jr., Department of Science and Technology; and Secretary Arsenio Balisacan, National Economic and Development Authority.

Okay, since we are talking about food, let's begin with the Department of Agriculture. Ma'am, the successful return of the Kadiwa stores has been proven to help both farmers and consumers. What is the long-term plan for the Kadiwa program? How does it contribute to the administration's goal of attaining food security?

DA USEC. MERCEDITA SOMBILLA: Thank you very much for that question. Magandang hapon po sa ating lahat. Before I answer that question, I would like to explain that there are three types of Kadiwa: The regular Kadiwa which are the retail stores na nakikita natin araw-araw siguro. Mayroong isa sa DA, mayroon din sa iba't ibang lugar sa NCR and ever other places in all over the country. There are 471 sites of regular Kadiwa wherein 997 farmers, cooperative and associations are already contributing. So, sila po ang nagbibigay ng mga produkto na naibebenta po dito sa Kadiwa.

In addition to the retail, regular Kadiwa, we have also the Kadiwa ng Pasko and then later on naging Kadiwa ng Pangulo. So, there are 115 sites. The first one was I think in Cebu, was put up in Cebu. And there are 1,584 FCAs, Farmers Cooperative and Associations that are contributing to the products that are sold here.

And the third one is the seafood Kadiwa, wherein about 500 fisherfolk, farmers' cooperative and associations are contributing to the maintenance and continued operation of this Kadiwa.

It has been really very successful, especially during the pandemic. Noong pandemic, especially iyong sinasabi nating pushcart Kadiwa or roll-on Kadiwa that went into the subdivisions, primarily for those na hindi talaga makakalabas sa bahay, talagang napakaimportante ito noon.

And I think the importance of Kadiwa remains, kasi it's a direct market for the produce of our producers, our farmers and our fisherfolk. It cuts logistics costs and it assures them of a ready market for their produce. So, basta nagkaroon ng peak harvest, punta lahat sa Kadiwa. And then, it also tries to stabilize the prices, because of these logistics cost cut and there is no more

middleman that these produce go from one place to another, talagang napakababa iyong presyo. And it really benefited a lot of consumers.

Actually, iyong regular Kadiwa, 1.83 million of consumers have been benefiting from this regular Kadiwa. So, that is the main reason kung bakit natin kailangan na palawigin and, as the President has already mentioned, he really wants or wishes to have a Kadiwa in every locality and every municipality. And you know, this will assure ready market to the producer, I mean ready market for producers, assure the availability of sufficient supply sa ating mga consumers at lower prices, so talagang very affordable. And it really, you know, also absorbs excess produce, kasi hindi natin naiiwasan na tayo ay nagkakaroon ng bumper harvests, so with all these Kadiwa centers around, you know, there is always a place for our producers to have their produce marketed.

But you know this has to be put in a strategic place and I think it's high time that we really need to make some assessment and how the Kadiwa has really been performing and how it really has benefited both the farmers and the consumers. And, I think we will need to have a study with regards to that so that we can identify more specific interventions where we can place these Kadiwa where they are most needed and that will make them a little bit more, much more valuable than what they are probably giving now.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Usec. Sombilla, we will get back to you later. Let's move on to DPWH Secretary Bonoan. Many of our country's farmers and fishermen still face challenges in transporting their produce. What are the DPWH's efforts towards establishing an efficient food logistic chain that will help farmers and fishermen sell their produce?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Thank you, Daphne, for that question. Well, the Department of Public Works and Highways, the infrastructure arm of the government is actually supporting itong food security program of the President. Well, before actually DPWH was just implementing iyong farm-to-market roads, but I think the President says that it's not only farm-to-market roads, we have to actually develop other facilities that will support iyong mga production areas in agriculture. From July of last year to May of this year, the department was able to build 216 kilometers of farm-to-market roads and 8 kilometers of farm-to-mill roads. Pasimula pa lang po iyon, nagsisimula pa lamang ang Pangulo noong mga taon na iyan.

But now, alam po ninyo, in 2023, the Department of Agriculture has downloaded to us a total of, I think more than P14 billion worth of farm-to-market roads, about 1,000 kilometers yata iyong gagawin namin. This will significantly support the food security program of the government. Recently, we have entered into a memorandum of agreement with the National Irrigation Administration, iyong tinatawag po naming "Kalsada tungo sa katubigan Program". It's a convergence program that aims to implement small water impounding projects, small river impounding projects, and service road infrastructure projects.

Now, we are again just starting in 2023 with a small amount of less than half a billion pesos. For now, para doon sa mga service roads inside the production areas of the National Irrigation Administration, and then, we are going to start developing iyong mga small water impounding projects. 2024 we will be a more robust allocation for NIA, for National Irrigation Administration kasi ito iyong in-emphasize ni Presidente, iyong small water impounding projects at saka small river impounding projects and, actually, if we can tap iyong sa mga flood control programs namin for a possible source of water sa National Irrigation Administration.

Of course, hindi lang naman iyan sa Department of Agriculture or NIA, mayroon din kaming convergence program with the Department of Trade and Industry for the construction of road

access to small and medium enterprises all over the country. This is a big program that we are undertaking, medyo malaki iyong budget din namin dito and we are coordinating closely with DTI in the identification and prioritization of their projects all over the country. Thank you.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Secretary Bonoan. The Department of Trade and Industry, the DTI has been a key partner of the Department of Agriculture in putting-up the Kadiwa stores around the country having served more than 1.8 million families in total, kasama ring natutulungan ay ang mga MSMEs. Would you please tell us more about the DTIs commitment not only in protecting consumers but in helping our Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise?

DTI USEC. CASTELO: Yes, thank you for the question. Just for context, we would like to say that the DTI since 2007 has been having this program of Diskwento Caravan. If you are familiar with the Diskwento Caravan, this is a project of the DTI where we bring in all manufacturers of local basic necessities and prime commodities for the consumers to be able to purchase at manufacturers' cost. So, came 2017, 2018 with our collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, we converged them into the Kadiwa, Diskwento Caravan Kadiwa Project and so, now with the order of the President, we decided to just have the Diskwento Caravan incorporated into the Kadiwa ng Pangulo.

So, now we just provide full support. I understand that basic necessities and prime commodities that are manufactured are still found in Kadiwa Centers all over the country and prices are still bought, these goods are still bought at prices from the manufacturing. So, hindi natin inalis iyon and then we continue to of course, encourage other MSMEs to be able to assist or provide their goods there kasi it's a platform where everyone is able, everyone is invited to bring in their goods for purchase of the consumers provided that the cost is low.

We, of course continue to help Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises by doing this kasi hindi naman lahat ng nagdadala doon sa Kadiwa ay malalaki, these are micro and small, hindi ba, kakaunti nga lang iyong medium diyan. And then the platform that we provide for them is for them to be able to sell their wares at minimal cost siguro, if at all. And then there are, of course, we cannot discount the collateral businesses that are created through this. Secretary Pascual would like to call it as a nano enterprise – those that supply the small enterprises, those that supply micro enterprises with may be baskets, for containers of their produce or maybe assisting them in the arrangement, goods and services actually, even the person in the bicycle who can assist the micro enterprise and bringing in or completing his display in the Kadiwa Center.

So, the DTI does not discount any enterprise here and in fact, we support even the nano enterprises in all Kadiwa stores nationwide.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Usec. Castelo. And we are still talking about Kadiwa, and since this is really a multi-agency effort, the DILG recently signed a memorandum of agreement with the DA to assist local government units to facilitate the establishment of Kadiwa Centers in their respective localities. Please tell us more about this MOA and papaano po ito ipapatupad ng ating mga LGUs? What are the benefits of opening a Kadiwa store in every locality, Usec. Parasaba.

DILG USEC. PARASABA: Hi Miss Daphne, good afternoon and of course sa lahat ng nakikinig at nanunood sa atin, magandang hapon sa ating lahat. The Department of the Interior and Local Government is composed of the interior sector and of course the local government sector. And why we are here? Secretary Benhur Abalos himself, the leader of the DILG is a champion for food security, supportive of course of PBBM's agenda. And aligned with Secretary, of course, of

PBBM's SONA instruction, paulit-ulit na binanggit po ng ating mahal na Pangulo ang suporta at ang tulong ng ating lokal na pamahalaan sa pagtataguyod ng food security sa ating bansa.

It is in this essence wherein we had inked with various national government agencies, a memorandum of agreement that formalizes the inter-connectedness and of course the collaboration and partnership of various national government agencies na mararamdaman at mas klarong nai-implement natin ang Kadiwa ng Pangulo sa lahat ng mga 81 na probinsiya, 146 na urbanized cities and of course independent component cities and of course 1,400 plus na municipalities and 42,000 plus na barangays.

It is really a gargantuan task, malaki ang responsibilidad ng ating mga lokal na pamahalaan, Miss Daphne. And for that MOA on last July 17, 2023, no less than the very good President Bongbong Marcos had really launched and at the same time witnessed the MOA signing with the big department agencies na tumulong at tutulong sa ating lokal na pamahalaan. Paano ipapatupad ang Kadiwa ng Pangulo sa ating mga lokal na pamahalaan? Proactive as he is, Secretary Benhur Abalos issued a memorandum circular outlining and at the same time, defining the operational mechanism of the Kadiwa ng Pangulo of course sa ating mga lokal na pamahalaan. Mas klaro dahil nandiyan ang Department of Agriculture to really help for the food supply, Department of Trade and Industry for non-agriculture products, Department of Labor and Employment as well for the TUPAD projects and of course, DSWD as well as PCO and PMS and the DILG to institutionalize and at the same time to establish one Kadiwa ng Pangulo Centers sa lahat ng ating probinsiya, siyudad at munisipalidad strategic dapat.

Strategic dapat, strategic wherein our local community residents must have a good access for an adequate and available food supply na mura at dekalidad. At ano naman ang benepisyong Kadiwa ng Pangulo? As mentioned by the Department of Agriculture, mas mura, mas presko, mas may kalidad at mas nutritious, kasi siyempre direct from the source and at the same time maa-access ito ng iba't ibang sectors ng ating mga lokal na pamahalaan, Miss Daphne.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Usec. Parasaba. Kitang-kita naman natin na this multi-agency effort is really working at parang gusto ko nang bumili ng mga fresh produced. Okay, let's move on to the Department of Agrarian Reform; Secretary Estrella. The President said, isang taon mula noong aking unang SONA, naisabatas na ang bagong Agrarian Emancipation Act. Dahil dito, ang 57 bilyong pisong utang na pinapasan ng mahigit anim na raang libong benepisyaryo ay tuluyan nang nabura. The Agrarian Emancipation Act is now a law; truly is a gift to our farmers. Please tell us more about this and the status of its implementation and how was this received by our farmers?

DAR SEC. ESTRELLA III: Thank you, Daphne. Unang-una ang pamimigay ng lupa na may kasama pang utang noon ay inumpisahan ng ama ng ating mahal na Pangulo, si President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. at a certain Secretary Conrado Estrella Sr. Sila ay namigay ng lupa noon at ito ay confined lamang sa rice and corn. At noong araw, mayroong kasamang utang iyan, mayroong amortization na babayaran sa Landbank of the Philippines. Sapagkat noong araw ay wala namang mga weather disturbances gaano, wala naman tayong pandemic, wala naman tayong mga masyadong problema noong araw, kaya ang mga magsasaka noon ay nakakabayad; sila ay kumikita kahit papaano.

Fast forward. Sinibak-sibak natin ang lahat ng lupa, including crops that require vast tract of lands for them to engage in economies of scale kaya nakita naman doon na bumaba ang ating produksiyon. Statistics will not lie: Bumaba ang ating production. Pagkatapos mayroon na namang mga sumunod na developments na nag-isyu naman tayo dahil siguro gusto nating

magmadali, gusto nating pag-ibayuhin ang pagdi-distribute ng Certificate of Land Ownership Awards, kaya't nag-isyu tayo ng tinatawag na collective CLOA. What is a collective CLOA? Collective CLOA means the title that is distributed and this title for example covers about 200 hectares. At mayroon ding nakalagay doon na dalawandaan din ang may-ari. Fine! I don't see anything wrong with that, except that nalimutan natin na i-parcelize.

So, can you just imagine, how confusing it would be if there will 200 owners for a 200-hectare land and without telling, ikaw Juan, dito ko sa malapit sa paanan ng bundok, ikaw Pedro doon ka malapit sa daan, ikaw Daphne doon ka sa malapit irigasyon. So, it's very confusing, plus nagkaroon ngayon ng pandemic at grabe iyong climate change ngayon, iyong weather disturbances and then, nagkaroon pa ng problema because the payments of amortization fees were not exactly updated. So, if you compare the data of Landbank and you compare the data of Department of Agrarian Reform, mayroon kang makikitang deperensiya, you cannot reconcile it.

Pagkatapos mayroon pang mga developments na talagang global developments, uncontrollable global developments kaya nahirapan na iyong mga magsasaka natin ngayon and because of that, they are unable to pay already the amortization fees that they have to pay. Nahirapan na ang ating mga magsasaka na makabayad. Kanya't napag-usapan namin ni Secretary Ben Diokno at gayundin ang ating mahal na Pangulo na hindi rin naman nakakabayad ang ating magsasaka at mahihirapan na talaga sila. Noon, namigay naman ng lupa ang ating ninuno, eh bakit hindi natin gawing mas maigi ngayon. Mamigay tayo ng lupa na libre na para matulungan ang ating mga magsasaka, hence, the emergence of Republic Act 11953, which is known as the New Agrarian Emancipation Act. Ito ay ang pag-condone ng lahat ng mga utang, amortization fees na babayaran ng ating mga magsasaka. At napakalaking bagay nito; it is nicknamed by the way, as The Happy Law. Napakalaking bagay nito sapagkat this is going to free our farmers, our agrarian reform beneficiaries from the—sa kanilang mga utang at magkakaroon sila ng surplus income at dahil diyan ay puwede silang—they can now, because they have surplus income, they can now engage in a more modernized and mechanized farming.

Mayroon silang magagastos na additional na puhunan. At iyong New Agrarian Emancipation Act or the Happy Law, sinasabi nga ng mga senador, ito ay produkto ng pagtutulung-tulong ng maraming sektor ng ating Republika: Nandiyan ang mga senador, nandiyan ang mga congressman na tumulong sa atin, ang miyembro ng mga gabinete, ang ating Pangulo at siyempre ang Department of Agrarian Reform, maraming contribution ang nagawa ng ating mga kasamahan sa DAR dahil diyan at siyempre ang ating mga kababayan. This is the product of a united front at ito ay ayon sa batas, dito sa Happy Law, ayon sa provision ng New Agrarian Emancipation Act, ito ay magti-take effect 15 days after publication in an official gazette. Ito ay na-publish sa official gazette noong July 9, 2023, and 15 days thereafter, which means that July 24, this will take effect.

Now, of course, do not be confused: Effectivity and implementation are two different things. Ang implementation nito, it says also, it is provided for in the law that 60-days upon effectivity of this law, the triumvirate of the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council, the Landbank of the Philippines and the Department of Agrarian Reform should come up with an implementing rules, a set of implementing rules and regulations. And in fact, the President wanted us to hit the ground running and therefore, even before the effectivity of this law we are already starting to form the body that will formulate the IRR. Kaya, hopefully we finished it with the Lord's blessings, we will finish it, I think on the birthday of the President; we will try to finish it on that date.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: That will be a great gift. Thank you, Secretary Estrella. Let's move on to the Department of Science and Technology Secretary Solidum Jr.

Science and Technology also had a lengthy mention in yesterday's SONA, being a driver for the competitiveness of our workforce and the various industries. How is DOST supporting the country's agenda for food security?

DOST SEC. SOLIDUM: Thank you very much, this might also take a long answer to cover the coverage of DOST in agricultural production and the industry – from production to consumption. First, we have to start with planning on what to plan, what kind of species or hybrid? Or on the animals, how do we actually improve the breeds of our animals so that we can increase production? We also need to look into how we can actually improve the harvest by looking at one, the fertilizer both in the soil and foliage fertilizer. For example, we have developed bio-fertilizer, the foliage fertilizer using carrageenan, where you can increase the production of rice for example from 15 to 30%.

We also need to look at bio—pest management. We have the smart application to reinvigorate the agriculture industry, essentially it's a crop management platform that can look into how we can manage the production of rice and corn for example, and also project its potential harvest. We also need to look into the livestock industry by promoting our native pigs, native ducks, and also many others, like goats. We also need to support the aqua industry.

Post-harvest: Harvest and post-harvest processes need to be improved as we lose a lot of our agricultural commodities on harvest alone. But if we can mechanize it together with the other departments, then we can reduce it. But beyond that, to transport the agricultural commodities to different areas in the Philippines, we need to develop smart packaging and green packaging, so we have laboratories to do that to package these things well. And now we have the new simulation packaging laboratory where we can simulate if this packaging will withstand the ruggedness of our road until the DPWH will give us paved roads all over the country.

Now, on the post-harvest value chain addition, we need to look into helping our farmers and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises get more value out of their agricultural products. So we use science, technology and innovation to help our MSMEs to earn more by improving their product and improving their productivity.

Now, of course, when we do all of these, the bottom line is: Are we also looking into not only production but also consumption? So we must look into sustainable production and consumption where the other wastes of the agricultural products that we produce would also be used for other purposes where our farmers can get something out of it.

Now, in the end, we can have enough food supply but we have to make it nutritious. So we have the Food and Nutrition and Research Institute that would provide us guidance. Sometimes the problem is not only production but overconsumption. The bottom line is: For our body to be healthy, we need to eat right – the amount and the nutrition.

So to summarize everything, sa siyensiya at teknolohiya, ang pagsasaka ay aarangkada. Sa siyensiya at teknolohiya, ang mga pagkain ay masagana at masustansiya; at ang mga magsasaka at negosyante, kapag ginamit ang siyensiya at teknolohiya, tiyak kikita sila.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Galing. Okay, thank you, Secretary Solidum.

Let's move on to NEDA. Secretary Balisacan, what other projects should the government improve on in order to achieve a Bagong Pilipinas that is secured when it comes to food production? What are the challenges that slow us down and how can we combat this?

NEDA SEC. BALISACAN: Thank you, Daphne. That's a very good question – a difficult one. I think the food production can be best assured if farmers are making money. So the first question to ask is: Are our farmers making enough, to protect themselves in terms of what they need for themselves, for their families? Are they getting enough same profit? The usual metrics kasi is output per hectare 'no, tinitingnan palagi ng mga ahensiya natin. Pero ang mas importante rito ay titingnan iyong profit per hectare or profit per labor or profit per family that the farmers make. Kasi kung ganoon ang metric, siguradong ma-incentivize iyong farmers to produce more.

At iyan ang sentro doon sa Philippine Development Plan 2023 to 2028, it focuses on achieving food security by addressing the issue of profitability at the farm level. And you look at prices of outputs; you look at the prices of inputs; and you look at the productivity of the farm. And so importante lahat iyong mga sinabi ng mga ka-panelist ko rito in terms of affecting the productivity, affecting prices. Like for example sa land tenure, it has been proven and shown in the literature that when you own the land, you get a higher productivity from the use of your land partly because you can use also that land as an instrument for accessing credit, and so the financial market will improve with ... improve security of farm tenure.

Iyong post-harvest facilities, post-harvest and logistics na sinasabi ng DOST palagi is, iyon 'yun, it also increases the earnings of farmers because that will reduce spoilage and reduces transaction cost sa merkado, therefore mas mataas iyong presyo na maiiwanan doon sa farmers.

The concentration naman ng Department of Agriculture lalo na doon sa pag-build ng irrigation systems, halimbawa 'no, that allow farmers to plant twice, three times a year, that surely increases productivity. Ang medyo kulang tayo rito, over the years is iyong suporta sa R&D – research and development. Kasi kinakailangan din natin mag-produce ng new varieties, new technologies, new processes that are appropriate at the farm level. One thing that's unique about agriculture is the appropriateness of the technology depends so much on the context. Iyong puwede sa Ilocos ay maaaring hindi puwede sa Mindanao, halimbawa. Iyong malalaking mga farms sa Mindanao, maliliit sa Ilocos. Similarly, iyong weather conditions, pest conditions are very different.

So iyong sinasabi palagi, mag-import na lang tayo ng bagong varieties, say, from China, do you think this will make sense here? Hindi, dahil iba-iba iyong kundisyon natin! So kinakailangan nating mag-invest ng R&D. And in the history of nations, you will find that countries that invest in R&D, especially for agriculture will find their economic transformation much faster. Kasi kung productivity in agriculture is growing fast, the rest of the economy will grow fast; food insecurity will not happen and elevated prices will be moderated.

Iyon ang naging problema natin sa atin dahil sa in the past 'no, dahil palaging elevated iyong prices every time na may problema sa agriculture 'no, inflation picks up. And when inflation is running wild, it destroys the entire economy. While increases in prices might benefit farmers, in the longer term, because high inflation will destroy the economy, even farmers will not in the end benefit from high prices.

So iyong trabaho ng NEDA is to look at these issues in balance 'no. Make sure that the prices that we are seeing there are beneficial for farmers but at the same time, they are also not anti-consumers, that they will not impoverish the rest of the population and that they will not lead to

lack of competitiveness of our manufacturing 'no because agriculture is, I would say, an important input for our manufacturing.

To cut it short, we need a very strong agriculture to propel the rest of the economy to get the socio-economic transformation that the President has mentioned in his SONA. To get food security, you need a very robust strongly growing agriculture because that will, in a way, also allow the rest of the economy, particularly the manufacturing, to grow faster. This is the ... medyo puzzle sa iba na kung malakas iyong agrikultura, mas dadami iyong trabaho sa non-agriculture, sa services, sa manufacturing, at aalis iyong mga laborers sa agriculture. That in effect is: While the importance of agriculture and the economy is reduced by a good performing agriculture, it is in fact contributing to economic transformation. Iyon ang I think makikita natin na message doon ni Presidente na transformation ng agriculture because you need that to ensure that the rest of the economy will move forward.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Secretary Balisacan. Talagang napakaimportante kay President Marcos itong agriculture natin, so ibalik natin kay Usec. Sombilla. Nanawagan ang Pangulo para sa revision ng Fisheries Code at ng Cooperative Code. What are the important amendments that must be done?

DA USEC. SOMBILLA: Thank you again, Daphne.

Doon sa Fisheries Code, I think it's really high time that we really have to revisit it kasi it's already five years or more, and I think some of the provisions there are no longer applicable to the current conditions; it's changing environment 'no.

There are several provisions there, I don't know if these are all going to be the ones that are going to be—kasi pinag-aaralan pa lang namin ngayon iyong Fisheries Code and the provisions that are going to be, you know, that need to be amended 'no.

DA USEC. SOMBILLA: [CONT] ...One, is to include the chapter that will provide the fishery management to be more ecosystem-based. Ito'y kailangang-kailangan natin because of the changing environment, iyong climate change and all of these things; sustainability of all the resources, we really need to take care of those already. So we need to, you know, emphasize the need for ecosystem-based management in terms also of the fishery 'no.

Second would be a redefinition of the municipal fishing 'no, within the municipal waters. Ngayon yata, even the three-ton and above municipal fishing vessels are allowed. I think we need to, you know, to limit them or totally... you know, eliminate them kasi I think they will be destroying the municipal waters in that regard. Wala sa Fishery Code iyong pre-border controls which are very necessary to ensure food safety of the imported fish that gets into our country 'no. So there's a need to, you know, establish offices that would really do this particular function so that we are ensured that imported fish are really, you know, safe to get into our country.

The users of municipal waters, I think we need to put already or identify or put in place criteria on how the municipal waters, the users of—kumbaga, iyong kanilang... the parameters that will and will not allow, you know, municipal fishers to go into the—continue fishing in municipal waters. Some of the criteria that we have been, you know, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources are thinking, ano iyong status ng stocks doon sa municipal waters. We need to, you know, be ensured that you know... talagang we have so much stocks, fish stocks, you know, for them to be able also na ma-maximize iyong kanilang fishing activities.

Iyong catch limit, hanggang saan sila. Kasi kung minsan, kahit na maliliit na isda sige lang 'no so dapat mayroon tayong catch limit. And the other one is the fishing days, so nakikita ninyo siguro mayroon tayong mga close seasons na fishing dahil nga sa kung minsan talagang nao-overfish ang ating mga waters and, you know, kahit na maliliit ay nakukuha which is not really very good.

The other provisions would be on the licensing, of course, of commercial fishing vessels. I think there's a need to provided iyong allowable time for commercial fishing vessels to you know, secure or renew their licenses. Iyong certificate of necessity to import, I think we really need to review that and review it very carefully kasi sometimes it's so limiting na kahit na kailangang-kailangan na natin iyong isda, hindi tayo makaka-import unless you know, there is really a very good procedure by which we could really certify that there's a necessity to import. And I think the very, very information that we need here would be a real time supply and demand of the fishery which I think our data information are still not, you know, on a real time basis.

And of course the last one would be the National Fishing and Aquatic Resources Management Council which I think, you know, the current membership is not really you know, equitable. Parang kulang sa aquaculture, kulang sa processing sector and I think we really need to balance this, you know, for a more holistic decisions and how to develop the fishing sector.

Doon naman sa kooperatiba, the Cooperative Code, the President has always wanted the Department of Agriculture to course through iyong interventions niya sa cooperatives 'no. I think that should be the way to go, you know, to take advantage of economies of scale, to take advantage of logistics cost and all these things 'no, reduce transport cost and everything. Kaya lang many of our cooperatives are not really, you know, that prepared to be able to execute or implement the interventions that the Department of Agriculture needs.

So, what is being decided on or being proposed is to include an agricultural cooperative board within the CDA – that will really take care of what the agriculture sector needs. And I think there are other provisions there that need to be also emphasized to really strengthen the CDA. Maraming mga kooperatiba na na-establish but then hindi talaga sila nasu-sustain. I think they really need to be strengthened in terms of how they should run really the cooperatives. Kasi minsan, there are just really a few cooperatives that are really very successful so I think iyon ang kailangan. Kaya iyon ang panawagan ni President na talagang dapat palakasin natin ang ating kooperatiba because I think that's the way by which we could really help the agriculture sector to really, you know, ramp up.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Thank you, Usec. Sombilla, for sharing all the plans for the amendments to the Fisheries and Cooperatives Code.

Let's move on to the DTI again. Usec. Castelo, the President has always emphasized the strengthening of the agricultural value chain. What are the programs of the DTI that help in this mission?

DTI USEC. CASTELO: Okay. Thank you, of course, Daphne for the question. I just remembered looking back when the President in December 2022 called on the DTI to assist the Department of Agriculture in monitoring prices of onions at that time, we already—by the instruction of Secretary Pascual, activated several bureaus to act and provide assistance to the Department of Agriculture. So then, it gave way to the market linkage that we're doing up to now... we are currently doing—linking farmers and farmers' cooperatives directly to the large business establishments, large agro-business entrepreneurs like SM, Puregold, Robinsons so that they can get their supply directly from the farmers, minimizing the cost to the consumers.

It's also going to be easier for the farmers to transport because the large entrepreneurs will be the one to cover costs or do the job for them. And this is just one, but the Secretary has a long-term plan actually—well, not very long term because he has a three-year proposed action agenda that has been presented to the economic development group and please allow me to read his intention to for this.

He intends to adopt a supply chain control-tower approach to manage our country's food logistics challenges. The food supply chain involves multiple stages from the farm gate to storage, distribution and retail, implementing a control-tower approach in the food sector could provide real time visibility into food availability, pricing, demand and potential disruptions. Of course, this could help in managing food security issues, reducing food waste and curbing cartelization among other benefits. Of course, Secretary Pascual also considers that it would require significant investment in technology and infrastructure, data integration from multiple sources, coordination among numerous stakeholders and regulatory compliance.

So, we have the six-point action agenda; I will not delve into detail but I'll just mention the action agenda one by one. We would like to revolutionize the Philippines' food distribution system from farm to port. This would mean upgrading existing food terminals and then we can explore additional food hubs and of course pilot the concept of agro-industrial business corridors in any of the areas in Baguio, Bataan, Clark, Cavite et cetera.

And then, second is we can reduce transport and logistics cost. We would like to think that this might create a little bit of controversy. We want a moratorium on pass-through fees, a moratorium on the imposition of additional port fees and other charges, zero tolerance on grey costs and legislation to regulate high international shipping charges. Controversial, but once it's done it's going to provide us the results that we want.

Number three is increasing investments in logistics infrastructure such as transportation and storage. Of course budgetary support would be necessary for logistics infrastructure; the Department of Public Ways and Highways and the DTI are already working on it. We want a cold chain integrative distribution system; that is the full implementation of the system that is provided by the Philippine Cold Chain Industry Roadmap.

And the on the fourth we want to address other supply chain gaps such as logistics and distribution, post-harvest management, market linkages, market information and market access to finance.

And the fifth is to heighten enforcement measures against hoarding, smuggling, overstaying of food imports and monitoring of warehouses or cold storage facilities. We have already started discussing monitoring of cold storage facilities with the Department of Agriculture and of course, we also want to revitalize the sub-task group on economic intelligence which we have done in the past and which has actually generated a lot of results. If this is institutionalized maybe through an executive order or through whatever order of the President, this task group could produce a lot of results and probably help even a bit in preventing smuggling.

And then the sixth is using ICT to improve logistics performance from streamlining and automation of government permits and licenses to the integration of systems within the logistics ecosystem.

So you see, these are the six action point agendas that we want to implement and we hope that after the proposal that was made to the economic development group would be approved

because there will be several asks, we will need several legislations maybe through an executive order or through legislation by Congress in order to be able to do this.

Our deliverables: If this is approved and legislated by 2026 we would have achieved number one, reduced logistics cost; second, interoperable transport and logistics-related systems – we will have at least one food hub in any of the high growth areas in Metro Manila or Region III or Region IV-A established; we would have at least one food terminal upgraded into a merkado or a [unclear] type; and then key food logistics infrastructures identified, funded and built – this would include the roll it, the let's eat or let's go. And then private sector investments in cold storage warehouses technology will be present. Warehouse registry developed which we have been wanting to do also and looking for it actually and we would have streamlined government processes and available online.

We have certain asks, the first of course is the approval of this food logistics action agenda and then the issuance of presidential directives creating an inter-agency committee on food logistics and of course institutionalization of the economic intelligence subtask group and the of course the consideration of proposed issuances by Congress.

So, these are some of the things that we have been planning to do and once approved in the next three years, you have heard already the deliverables that we know we would have achieved if this is approved. Thank you.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Usec. Castelo. Now, let's move on the DILG again, Usec. Pasaraba. Urban planting began to make its way back during the pandemic and it is one of the projects being implemented now by the DILG – Halina't Magtanim ng Prutas at Gulay sa Barangay project (HAPAG). Very close to me because I'm an urban farmer and a weekend farmer. Tell us about the success of this program and the other plans of the DILG in support of food security.

DILG USEC. PASARABA: Yeah, Ms. Daphne, I remember I said a while back that we have like more than 42,000 barangays nationwide. Can you imagine if these barangays really have collective efforts in raising food security awareness, production, marketing, et cetera? This will be like they are backbones for food security. Other than that you know the Halina't Magtanim ng Prutas at Gulay is a call for our barangays to really reinforce and solidify their fundamental role for a community-based gardening. And food security has to start right at the doorstep, Ms. Daphne. And there is no better way to really achieve food security but to increase consciousness, leadership and as well as commitment of our barangay officials down to the household level.

It is in this respect that after the issuance of course of that MC reinforcing, strengthening barangay institutions we had more than 19,000 barangays signed up and committed really to make idle lands more productive by using the youth sector, women's sector for household gardening as well as community-based gardening so that food security really means to be achieved.

You know, I would like to introduce DILG not only on the police force; not only LGU but we are more on the governance reforms. It is in this respect that for food security as one of the important and primordial goals of the present, of this leadership, DILG's [unclear] support to really strengthen local institutions one of which of course is the rationalization of our permits, rationalization of fees for our UBRA brothers and sisters, for our vendors, for our fish associations as well as other players of our food logistical support system.

You know the LGUs have local autonomy but we want them to be like more or less supportive of the local economy as well as the recovery programs of course of the government. Similarly, we

have the PNP, the BFP and BJMP law enforcers we can tap; the good Secretary instructed them to be more of policing okay in terms against suspect hoarder and of course those enterprises that have commodity prices unconscionable or really you know unreasonable.

And DILG, as part of its governance reforms would like also to incentivize innovations of local government units. That's why we have the SGLG incentive fund, the local government support fund as well as other assistance to our local government units putting primacy on food security projects or initiatives. This will form part of our policy development effort to really bring to the consciousness to this leadership particularly our local chief executives to really put you know other priority list food security initiatives for food production supply marketing access and infra support as well.

Finally, we would like to report that our local government units have indeed demonstrated excellent if not good practices, best practices in the light of food security. One of which is the Municipality of Piddig, Ilocos Norte wherein it's like a comprehensive, a more integrative approach to farming system, topping all sectors to produce quality, more quantity as well as increased income for our farmers.

We've also one barangay in the Province of Rizal that really had shown commitment and leadership in terms of propagating food security at the household level.

'QC Grow' is also a good example of urban planting or gardening and of course, 'Row Project' of Isabela is one that is really very sustainable. That's all about it.

OSEÑA-PAEZ: Wow! Thank you very much, Usec. Pasaraba, especially for the case studies that you have mentioned, very nice stories. Thank you.

Department of Agrarian Reform Secretary: The President aims to boost local agricultural production, how is the DAR helping realize this goal?

DAR SEC. ESTRELLA III: Yes, the very early step that we have taken is that we have provided so much farm-to-market roads and specially bridges so that our agrarian reform beneficiaries can have access to their farms. And we too have aggressively and have accelerated distribution of titles to our farmers. So, that means that there are additional lands now that are being used by our farmers and this translates to more food being produced by our farmers. In the future, what we are doing now is that we are laying down the groundwork so that we can further boost food security here in our country, and we are about to embark on what we call, the black and white revolution.

Iyong black and white revolution, iyan ay ang kalabaw, kulay itim at ang kaniyang gatas na kulay puti, kaya black and white revolution. Because when we hired data scientist how we could increase the income of the farmers and how we can contribute in food production, ang nakalagay doon ay kailangang bigyan natin ng livestock ang ating mga agrarian reform beneficiaries. So, iyan ang gagawin namin and we will also engage and we will also encourage our agrarian reform beneficiaries na magkaroon sila ng mga tinatawag na plant once and eat forever, to engage in plant once and eat forever.

Katulad halimbawa ng malunggay, kanina lang ka-meeting ko iyong mga nag-spearhead ng malunggay at iyong—we will engage in propagation and distribution of this plant, Malunggay. Mayroon kang iyong fruit, mayroon kang iyong leaves – and by the way, iyong malunggay pala, nagkaroon ng famine somewhere in Africa and those who were able to survive were those who

had malunggay plants; And then bamboo. Sa China maraming nagtatanim dati ng palay, nag-switch sila sa bamboo. Mas malaki ang kita nila sa bamboo, may lumber sila at mayroon pa silang bamboo shoots; Tapos iyong tinatawag na bago. Sa Malaysia, ang tawag diyan ay milenjo, iyong mga iyan; Iyong katuday. Sa aming mga Ilokano kilala iyan dahil sila Usec. Leo Sebastian, iyan sila Administrator Guillen, iyong mga katulad naming Ilokano kabisado namin iyan. Sila Secretary, ating Secretary ng DPWH, si Manny Bonoan at ganoon din ang ating NEDA, kilala nila iyong mga gulay na iyan na minsan lang itatanim, ngunit pitas ka nang pitas, kain ka nang kain, iyong mga iyan na ano—and the... There are other things and we are introducing to our agrarian reform beneficiaries new technology.

Katulad halimbawa, itong tinatawag na Rimas o sa Ingles ay Breadfruit na siyang staple food ng mga Polynesian. Sa Polynesia, alam ninyo ay napakababa ang incidence ng diabetes, sapagkat hindi sila kumakain masyado ng kanin. Ang kanilang staple food ay itong tinatawag na Breadfruit or Rimas. Pero mahirap i-propagate ito, and the way to do it is using tissue culture laboratories, at namigay na ang agrarian reform sa mga agrarian reform beneficiaries ng tissue culture laboratories upang mag-propagate kami ng mga pananim na minsanan lang ang tanim ngunit habambuhay ka nang namimitas at habambuhay ka pinapakain.

Kaya iyan ang mga ginagawa namin ngayon and we hope to develop ang work hand-in-hand also with the Department of Science and Technology. At iyan nga ang pinagmamaritesan naming dalawa kanina ni Secretary, na iyong menu nila ng bagong teknolohiya, at iyan ay i-introduce namin sa ating mga magsasaka. Katulad halimbawa, bakit hindi natin gamitin sa ating mga feeding program 'no, iyong malunggay, very nutritious iyan?

At gamitin din natin—mag-umpisa rin tayong mag-alaga ng rabbit! Alam ninyo um-attend ako ng rabbit convention about 5 year ago, magmula noon ako rin ay nag-alaga ng rabbit at ngayon ako'y namimigay ng rabbit. Noong una marami ang nagsasabi—Alam ninyo kasi ang rabbit napakabilis dumami ng rabbit, mayroon akong alaga doon sa probinsiya ang dami-dami ngayon. At pinapatikim ko sa ating mga kababayan, nagugustuhan naman nila.

Ito lang ang nakukuha kong komento, ang sinasabi ng iba, ang hirap kainin niyan, sabi nila ang cute-cute. Sabi ko naman sa kanila eh nanood kayo ng 'Babe', iyong biik hindi ba? Nanonod kayo ng mga Disney characters, mayroong manok. Oh iyong 'Babe' sinasabi ninyo, ang cute-cute noong baboy eh kain naman kayo nang kain ng lechon, hindi ba? Pero iyong rabbit, si Bugs bunny, hindi naman talaga cute eh, hindi ba? Pagkatapos kain tayo ng kain ng manok, kapag kinakatay iyong manok, ang ingay-ingay, hindi ba? Iyong rabbit kapag kinatay mo ay wala naman kibo, hindi ba? Sinong nakakaawang katayin ngayon, iyong manok o iyong rabbit, hindi ba? Kaya, we should open our minds and we start it with the next generation of Filipinos.

Bakit sa France, bakit sa Amerika kumakain sila ng rabbit at isa ito sa mga inaalagaan ng mga magsasaka. Ang liit-liit na lugar lang ang kailangan. Eh samantalang kung mayroon kang—hindi ko sinasabing huwag tayong mag-alaga ng manok o kahit ano pa. Ngunit, kasi kapag nag-alaga tayo ng rabbit, ang liit ng lugar ang kailangan at maliit lang ang capital at walang sakit. Kapag nag-alaga ka naman ng manok, kung nakawala iyan sa iyong bakuran—mabilis nga dumami ngunit kapag dinaanan ng peste, patay silang lahat o pag-dinaanang ng kapit bahay mo na mahilig din sa manok, patay din silang lahat.

So iyan, mga bagay na iyan ay ini-introduce natin sa ating mga agrarian reform beneficiaries. Unti-unti nakikinig naman sila, unti-unti natin na binubuksan ang kanilang mata sa mga puwedeng kainin na dati-rati ay hindi naman natin binibigyan ng pansin. So iyan—ito ang mga ginagawa natin, ng [Department of] Agrarian Reform ngayon.

OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you Secretary Estrella. I don't know if I will look at a rabbit the same way again. I'll always remember you na. Okay, let's move on.

DAR SEC. ESTRELLA III: I will let you taste it.

OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay.

DAR SEC. ESTRELLA III: I will cook it myself and I will let you taste it.

OSEÑA-PAEZ: Let's move on to DOST again, this is our final question, I believe. It was said that 2 satellites have been launched into space, what kind of information can this provide and how is this beneficial to food production?

DOST SEC. SOLIDUM: Aside from the 2 recently launched micro satellites and the existing operational satellite that we have, we also use other satellites where we download data for various purposes, of course DOST is known for developing technologies to be applied but we also conduct research and development on how these technologies especially space application technologies can be done—can be used for food security. So for example, we can use satellite images to characterize water and soil characteristic. Soil health is a big problem now, especially soil erosion. So, we should actually do inventory of all those areas, and we need to prevent soil erosion and we can monitor this using satellite.

Second, we need water for the growth of plants. So, if we can combine remote sensing or space images together with ground based data, then we can look at when to irrigate because we sense the soil moisture and PAGASA can actually do a climate forecast that is provided to our agricultural community. We can monitor the agricultural production, when there's a disaster we can immediately have a reconnaissance of which areas were damage.

So, we can actually use remote sensing images and by the way, we can also use remote sensing images to monitor the farm-to-market road and the bridges that the 2 secretaries mentioned. So, mayroon din po kaming imo-monitor kung ang progress po ay puwede po nating gamitin para iyong progress ay madaling masundan. Hindi po espionage iyon, kung hindi monitoring. Thank you very much.

OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you very much Secretary Solidum. This has been a very interesting discussion. I wish we could go on. Thank you.

Maraming salamat sa ating mga panelist. At ang ating food security cluster ay siyang namamahala sa pagpapatupad ng mga direktiba ni President Marcos Jr. pagdating sa pagkain para ang bawat Pilipino ay magkaroon ng sapat, masustansiya at abot-kayang pagkain sa kanilang mga mesa. Iyan ang bagong Pilipinas!

Join us again tomorrow for the second day of our 2023 Post-SONA discussions. We will have with us the following clusters – poverty reduction at 12:00, environmental protection and disaster management at 2 PM, and good governance peace and security at 4 PM.

This has been Daphne Oseña-Paez. Thank you so much for joining us this afternoon in the 2023 Post-SONA Discussions.

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