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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE 2023
MARIANO MARCOS STATE UNIVERSITY (MMSU) - PHILIPPINE RICE RESEARCH
INSTITUTE (PHILRICE) RICE PADDY ART**

[Delivered at the Mariano Marcos State University Campus in Batac, Ilocos Norte | 11
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Thank you very much. *[Please take your seats.]*

Thank you very much to Governor Matt Manotoc. Ginugutom na yata ti Gobernador tayo.

Ilocos Norte – up to now I cannot get accustomed to doing this but of course protocol must be followed – so I will greet Ilocos Norte 1st District Congressman, Congressman Sandro Marcos; and of course the long-standing congressman of the 2nd District, nagpapalit-palitan lang kami ni Angel, Congressman Angelo Marcos Barba; and of course, Ilocos Norte Vice Governor, Vice Governor Cecile Marcos – Araneta-Marcos, maysa pay nga Araneta; MMSU President Dr. Shirley Agrupis; the PhilRice Director Dr. John De Leon; and of course, to complete my greetings – to greet First Lady Louise Araneta-Marcos; the Board of Regents; officials, staff, and students of Mariano Marcos State University; mga minamahal kong kababayan, *naimbag nga aldaw kadakayo amin!* *[applause]*

Since 2018, we have seen the successful collaboration of the MMSU and the PhilRice through the rice fields that you have turned into canvases.

And through this partnership, the nation has also seen the novel rice production systems and technologies that we can pursue in the years to come.

Hence, with all that you have already accomplished and with all that will take root through your work, I am greatly honored to be with you as you launch this year's installment of the MMSU-PhilRice Paddy Art.

It's particularly important, of course, it's very entertaining to see your picture drawn out on a rice field. But what it demonstrates – and it is a very kind gesture – but what it demonstrates is how much it is we already know about the cultivation of rice and other agricultural products. And the reason is that MMSU – for those who are not familiar with the history of MMSU – MMSU is a collection of agricultural colleges and high schools that was put together and made into Mariano Marcos State University.

It was the first state university that my father built. It was his life-long dream to build a good university *[applause]* for our people here in Ilocos Norte. And from those beginnings, the research that has come out of MMSU has been exemplary. Of course, added to that, we have also PhilRice, the PhilRice offices are also here in Batac.

And with that collaboration, we have seen how much improvement and how much knowledge we have gained over the many years that we have been doing. You have been doing here R&D. PhilRice has been doing their own R&D. The test that you end up doing here, here and in our Dingras station.

All of this work has come together has had a product of very good technology and very good knowledge. Ito lang ang nagiging problema at ito ang problema hindi lamang dito sa Ilocos Norte kung hindi sa buong Pilipinas, paano natin – ‘yung tinatawag na pag-scale. How do you move the new technology from the laboratory to the market? How do you learn how to produce that new product in a large scale?

So you are not talking about doing two or three hectares. You are talking about planting 200,000 hectares. And there's a necessary work to be done for us to be able to, as I say, take the new technology from the laboratory to the rice field. And that is where we now come in. And when I say “we”, I say we in terms of the Department of Agriculture. ‘Yan ang gagawin ngayon ng DA na kukunin ang pinakamagandang teknolohiya, lalo ngayon technologies become so important – the new technologies have become so important because of climate change. Ang daming nagbabago. Ang daming kailangan baguhin, kailangan pag-aralan so that we can make sure that we have a stable source of supply and that that supply is affordable to ordinary Filipinos.

So that is the process that we are trying to do. And that's the part that MMSU, PhilRice, such institutes such as yours play. That is so important now, especially with everything that we are facing. Nahirapan tayo dahil nga sa climate change. We have had to control the prices of rice because the markets are very volatile, so we are trying to stabilize it here in the Philippines.

Para lahat itong nangyayari kailangan na kailangan natin ng mga bagong teknolohiya. And that's the part that institutions like MMSU, like PhilRice, and all the other agricultural research universities, stations do all around the country, that is the part that they play.

They then should be able to give it then to the government, the new technology to the government, and the government is the one who will take it from the laboratory to the rice field. It is the government that will develop the technologies that are necessary. It is the government that will allow the farmers to process their new product. It is the government's job to bring now those new products to the market, and to make sure that whatever profits are made at the market, it will redound also to the benefit of the farmers.

Madalas natin nakaka – we always talk sometimes, especially when it comes to rice production, we always talk about production. That's true. Production is very important. Kailangan taasan natin ang production natin. In other countries, they are doing 10 tons per hectare, eight tons per hectare on average ha. Hindi ito ‘yung mga piling-piling lugar. This is on average eight to 10 tons. Tapos ang baba ng kanilang production cost.

So it's correct we have to increase our production. But we have to make sure that that increase in production redounds to the benefit of the farmer. Because it is equally important for me that the farmer makes a good living. And together hand in hand with the rest of government, with the rest of the private sector partners, we will come together and bring it to market at an affordable price. Iyan ang hangarin ng DA.

At kaya naman naalala ko dahil nga nakita ko 'yung ginawa. At tinutukso ko nga 'yung mga – I was teasing the students. I said I hope that the palay – 'yung palay na aanihin ninyo doon sa mukha ko, I hope masarap ang lasa baka lumabas diyan mapait. Kailangan niyong baguhin.

But I don't think that's going to be a problem. MMSU will figure it out, PhilRice will figure it out. Maraming, maraming salamat sa inyo. *[applause]*

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