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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE 70TH FOUNDING
ANNIVERSARY OF THE FEDERATION OF FREE FARMERS**

[Delivered at the Salvador Escudero Hall of the National Meat Inspection Service on Visayas
Avenue in Quezon City| 25 October 2023]

Thank you very much. Maraming salamat sa ating Agrarian Reform Secretary, Secretary Conrado Estrella III. Kailangan sabihin 'yung III dahil 'yung lolo niya ang nag-start ng DAR. *[Please take your seat.]*

The officials and members of the Federation of Free Farmers led by another lifetime worker in support of our farmers and our fishers, aking nakasama sa 9th Congress noong siya ay sectoral representative dahil wala pang party-list noon kaya mayroon kaming sectoral representative, si Chairman Leo Montemayor; ang ating kasamahan sa pamahalaan; our partners of course in the private sector who are playing a very important part in the development of our agricultural capabilities; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It is with great pleasure that I join you as we commemorate the 70th Founding Anniversary of the Federation of Free Farmers.

We celebrate today seven fruitful decades of your long-standing cooperation and partnership with government in sustaining development in the areas of agri-fisheries, agrarian reform, and agricultural cooperatives, amongst others.

Through your programs and initiatives, you have effectively elevated and empowered the voices of our small farmers, our fishers, and rural workers, across the nation.

This noble pursuit is the very essence of what my father, President Ferdinand Marcos Sr., strongly believed in and a belief that I have certainly inherited. This is why it is worth recalling how we championed the cause of the Federation of Free Farmers and expressed this unwavering support for this organization. It was because you shared a common goal of advancing social reform and rural development in our country that this partnership was strengthened.

Indeed, this is the kind of uplifting synergy that we in government anticipate from our private sector partners — who ardently champion social justice and actively contribute to our nation's socio-economic advancement.

So, I urge all the members of the FFF to keep the legacy of the founding members, keep it alive, stay true to the mission of uplifting all the lives of every Filipino rural worker.

In line with that collective mission, I wish to reaffirm one of the top priorities of this administration, which is the enhancement of our agricultural productivity, the guarantee of our food supply, the affordability of our food supply, and our lessening dependence on importation.

This includes pursuing policies that will support and protect the overall welfare of our farmers, our fishers, our manufacturers, and the consuming public.

This administration is steering the growth of our fisheries and farming industries with urgency.

With a substantial budget of 85.88 billion pesos for 2023, and a proposed budget of 92.4 billion pesos for 2024, I am optimistic that we can propel the modernization of our agri-fisheries sector.

Among the many endeavors that we are pursuing is the strengthening of the various associations and cooperatives so that they can provide business and investment opportunities to their beneficiaries.

This will definitely elevate the standard of living, improve the lives of the farmers and our fishers and that of their families.

Let me also mention that as of 2023, the Department of Agriculture has allocated 4.73 billion pesos as an investment for the large-scale agriculture and fishery mechanization and modernization.

You have my assurance that the government is striving to implement efficient mechanization strategies to reduce post-harvest losses and to ensure the optimal yield at an affordable cost.

Another priority is to increase the exportation of our agricultural products, which has been an essential driver in the competitiveness of our economy.

All of these plans, these programs, [and] prioritizations are now being undertaken because of your constant cooperation with the government and your genuine service towards our farmers and our local communities.

You have solidified your presence over the past seven decades, and I eagerly anticipate an even deeper collaboration, given our shared commitment.

I thus enjoin all the men and women of FFF to continuously take part in supporting and empowering our farmers and fisherfolk.

Malaki pong trabaho ang ating hinaharap dahil kailangan po nating ayusin ang buong sistema ng agrikultura na napabayaang nang matagal na, mula pa siguro noong nagsimula ang agricultural reform, noong panahon pa ng aking ama.

Ngayon ay marami ng pagbabago, nag-iba na ang mundo, nakailang ikot na ang mundo. Kaya't kailangan po tayo, tayo naman ay kailangan tingnan natin kung ano ang mga pangangailangan ng ating mga magsasaka, ng ating mangingisda upang maging mas maganda ang kanilang buhay dahil ang madalas nating marinig ay sinasabi natin kailangan nating itaas ang ating mga yield, kailangan nating itaas ang ating harvest, at ang productivity natin.

Totoo 'yan, totoo po 'yan, kailangan po nating gawin 'yan. Ngunit huwag po nating kakalimutan na dapat naman ay ang hanapbuhay ng ating mga magsasaka at ng ating mga mangingisda ay maalagaan at mapaganda dahil 'yan po ang hangarin nating lahat para sa ating mga magsasaka at sa ating mga mangingisda.

Kaya po ito po ay napakalaking trabaho. Kaya't kailangan po natin, hindi kaya ng pamahalaan na nag-iisa na gawin lahat ito, kaya't kailangan po natin ang tulong ninyo, kailangan namin ang sipag ninyo, kailangan namin ang advice ninyo dahil kayo ang nakaharap sa mga problema ng agrikultura na dinadaan natin ngayon.

Kaya po ay asahan po ninyo ang ating pamahalaan, ang inyong gobyerno ay nandito po upang gawin ang lahat upang tulungan ang ating mga magsasaka na makapag-produce ng magandang ani, na makapangisda nang sapat para sa ating mga kababayan, at maipagbili naman ito sa presyo na abot-kaya ng ating mga mamamayan.

At kasabay din diyan ay kailangan naman ay may magandang hanapbuhay ang ating mga magsasaka at ang ating mga fisherfolk.

And that's why I look forward to your endeavors that will contribute to our shared vision of "*Bagong Pilipinas*" and help us march towards achieving a food- and nutrition-secure Philippines.

Once again, happy 70th founding anniversary!

Maraming salamat sa inyong pakikiisa at serbisyo.

Mabuhay ang FFF! Mabuhay ang mga magsasaka at mangingisdang Pilipino! Maraming salamat po at magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat. [applause]

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