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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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By: Robin Millard

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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FAO to collaborate in PHL agricultural resilience program

By: Sheldeen Joy Talavera

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will help the Philippines make its agriculture and fisheries industry more resilient.

In a statement, the DA said the two sides are helping rural communities adapt to climate-related disasters.

FAO Country Representative to the Philippines Lionel Dabbadie cited the need to “invest in science (and) technology... and support innovation (of measures that can be scaled up).”

The DA and FAO are pursuing the Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change project supported by the Green Climate Fund, and another initiative known as Anticipatory Actions or Forecast-based Financing.

The resiliency initiative will be directed at 1.25 million poor farmers and five million indirect beneficiaries.

Implementation runs to 2030 in the Cagayan Valley, Bicol, Northern Mindanao, Soccsksargen, and the Cordillera regions.

“The FAO has been a long-time partner of the Department in developing the resiliency of farmers and fisherfolk through collaborative projects,” DA Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa said.

GMA NEWS

PSA: Only 4 out of 17 SDGs progressed since 2000

By: Giselle Ombay

The progress towards the attainment of the Philippines' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains to be a "big challenge," with only four out of 17 goals showing improvement since 2000, latest data by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

Based on the Current Status Index, progress was only observed in Goal 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere); Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages); Goal 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all); and Goal 14 (conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) within 13 years.

The PSA attributed this issue to the COVID-19 pandemic which hit the country in 2020.

"Progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) remains as big challenge in the Philippines as most of the country's gains in the past have been reversed by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic," the agency said in a statement.

The PSA stressed that the progress for these four goals, along with others, was still "short" compared to the target for 2022.

Only Goal 17 (strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development) among all surpassed the expected progress for 2022, but the lack of data made it insufficient to conclude the pace of progress for this specific goal.

"This pace of progress, however, was only based on one out of the 13 indicators under this goal, which may not be sufficient to conclude for the pace of progress for Goal 17," the PSA added.

There were also four other goals that "regressed" since 2000, namely: Goal 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture); Goal 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all); Goal 11 (make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable); and Goal 13 (take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts).

Considering the pace of this progress, the PSA said that only 16.7% of the 42 measurable targets are on track to achieve the numerical target of the SDG by 2023.

Meanwhile, 42.9% needs “accelerated efforts” to meet them, while the remaining 40.5% require “exponential acceleration of its pace” in order to reverse the downtrend or regressions and achieve the 2030 target.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Blue Economy, PENCAS seen to complement OTOP, MSME laws

By: Wilnard Bacelonia

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) emphasized on Tuesday the benefits that the proposed Blue Economy Act and the establishment of the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS) can bring to the economy.

During a public hearing conducted by the Senate Subcommittee on PENCAS Law and Blue Economy, DTI Undersecretary Bles Lantayona said the Blue Economy and the PENCAS can actually complement the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Act and the One Town One Product (OTOP), bill which is about to become a law.

Lantayona told the panel that the proposed measures will promote sustainable economic activities and support informed decision-making for the benefit of the communities and the environment.

"The Blue Economy approach can benefit the MSMEs in the fisheries, aquaculture tourism, and maritime sector by providing opportunities for sustainable economic activities. It can support the development and growth of the MSMEs engaged in marine-related industries such as seafood processing, boat building, eco-tourism, and sustainable fishing practices," Lantayona said, noting that PENCAS can help assess the economic value of marine resources.

Seaweed farming will also be a major beneficiary of the proposals.

"So again, we see the connection -- the livelihood of our fisherfolk who rely on seaweed farming. 'Yun lang ang magdadala ng pagkain at trabaho sa kanila. Pero kung ang plastic na nanggaling sa lupa -- sa highland, mainland, kapatagan ay itatapon sa coastlines na makakawasak, dumi, at sira sa karagatan, ano na ang maiuwing kabuhayan ng seaweed farmers (That's the only thing that will bring food and jobs for them. But if the plastic coming from the highland, mainland, plains will be thrown to the coastlines and destroy, pollute the ocean, what will happen to the livelihood of the seaweed farmers)?" Legarda said.

During her opening statement, the lawmaker emphasized that the current state of the country's ecosystems as a result of climate change, habitat loss, and pollution demands decisive action.

"The PENCAS Act introduces an innovative approach that allows us to account for the value of our natural resources and ecosystems by integrating their worth into our

national accounts. By doing so, we can make more informed decisions that balance economic growth with environmental protection, ensuring the long-term sustainability of our ecosystems," Legarda explained.

"Moreover, the Blue Economy bill seeks to bolster our efforts in achieving a vibrant and sustainable blue economy. With one of the longest coastlines in the world and an abundance of marine resources, the Philippines has the potential to become a leader in blue economy development," she added noting that this can only be realized if there will be a holistic approach in addressing the needs of the coastal communities, promotes sustainable practices, and protects the marine biodiversity.

Among others, the Blue Economy bill proposes a framework for sustainable, safe use, and development of marine wealth within maritime zones; stewardship of seas and coasts; protection and conservation of the health and resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems and habitats; preservation of maritime heritage; and enriching scientific understanding of marine and coastal ecosystems.

Cooperation among various sectors boosts PH's disaster resilience

By: Priam Nepomuceno

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) rallied for continued cooperation among the various government agencies, private sector and the public to boost the country's disaster resilience.

OCD administrator Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno made this remark in observance of this year's National Disaster Resilience Month (NDRM).

He also added that a whole-of-nation approach is important in building disaster resilience.

"NDRM 2023 is a call for us to continue working to make the Signature Filipino Smile of Resilience clearly stand for our ability to mitigate, prepare, respond, and recover from disasters. The time is now for us to scale up our strategies and work in surmounting the impacts of disaster through foresight and preparedness," Nepomuceno, who is also executive director of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), said in a statement.

With the theme: "BIDAng Pilipino: Building a stronger Filipino well-being towards disaster resilience," the agency is advocating for a collective effort to ensure the safety of communities against disaster by promoting well-being holistically.

"Our goal is to make the annual NDRM observance bring our nation closer to the goal of building safer, climate change adaptive and disaster resilient communities across these islands. Our countrymen can thus be assured that we at the OCD will continue to advocate for action and cooperation from all levels of governance, community-based organizations and the public to ensure the safety, adaptiveness and resilience of every Filipino for this generation and the next," he added.

Meanwhile, the OCD launched the Resilience Mobile Photography and 'Reel-silience' contests to encourage public participation in the observance along with its Information, Education and Communication campaign on NDRM.

Executive Order No. 29 signed on June 28, 2017 mandates the observance of NDRM "throughout the country through the conduct of activities relative to building of disaster resilience covering the four thematic areas," Regional DRRMCs, Local DRRMCs, and Barangay Committee are also tasked to implement activities and programs relative to NDRM.

The NDRRMC through the OCD leads the month-long celebration of NDRM.

The council member agencies, regional DRRMCs and OCD regional offices have also started implementing their respective programs and activities for NDRM 2023.

RAPPLER

[PAGASA: Weak El Niño begins, may get stronger in coming months](#)

By: Acor Arceo

El Niño is underway in the tropical Pacific and the Philippines is expected to feel its effects, the state weather bureau announced on Tuesday, July 4.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) upgraded its warning status from El Niño Alert to El Niño Advisory, which is issued when the weather phenomenon is already ongoing. El Niño Alert was raised last May 2.

PAGASA said in a press conference on Tuesday that this El Niño is currently weak, but it shows “signs of strengthening in the coming months.”

The weather bureau warned that El Niño “increases the likelihood of below-normal rainfall conditions.”

That means some areas in the Philippines could experience dry spells and droughts, which may affect “water resources, agriculture, energy, health, and public safety,” according to PAGASA.

El Niño’s effects on the country, particularly dry spells, may be felt more toward the fourth quarter of 2023 and the first half of 2024.

“Nandiyan na ‘yung El Niño doon sa central equatorial Pacific, mainit na talaga ‘yung karagatan natin, pero ‘yung impact nito ay hindi pa natin totally nararamdaman.... Nagbigay na tayo ng advance information para doon sa early preparation,” said PAGASA Officer-in-Charge Esperanza Cayanan on Tuesday.

(El Niño is already present in the central equatorial Pacific, the ocean is really warmer, but we’re not yet totally feeling the impact of the phenomenon. We’ve given advance information for early preparation.)

One step that the public can take now is to conserve water, added Cayanan, especially before El Niño strengthens in the fourth quarter of 2023.

Enhanced southwest monsoon

Even during El Niño, PAGASA advised the public that an enhanced southwest monsoon or habagat season is still expected, which could bring above-normal rainfall to the western part of the country. The southwest monsoon usually lasts until September.

“Pag simula pa lang ng El Niño, historically po mas marami ang ating ulan na natatanggap sa panahon ng habagat – July, August, September.... Kahit po nagre-recurve ‘yung mga bagyo [away from the country] and then kasagsagan ng habagat, ‘yun po ‘yung posibleng makapagbigay ng maraming ulan sa atin,” said Ana Liza Solis, chief of PAGASA’s Climate Monitoring and Prediction Section.

(When El Niño is still developing, historically we receive more rainfall during the southwest monsoon season – July, August, September. Even if tropical cyclones recurve away from the country at the height of the southwest monsoon season, the enhanced southwest monsoon might bring more rain.)

PAGASA sees 10 to 14 tropical cyclones entering or developing inside the Philippine Area of Responsibility from July to December. So far, there have been 3 tropical cyclones this year.

The yearly average is 20, which means the total for 2023 could be below average.

Meanwhile, the weather bureau’s rainfall forecast for July shows most parts of Luzon and the Visayas may have generally near- to above-normal rainfall, while Mindanao could see near-normal rainfall, except for Davao del Sur, which may have below-normal rainfall.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) defines El Niño as “a naturally occurring climate pattern associated with warming of the ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.”

WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas in May urged countries to prepare for El Niño, “which is often associated with increased heat, drought, or rainfall in different parts of the world.” Some countries may have severe droughts, while others could see more rain.

El Niño occurs every two to seven years. The previous El Niño occurred from the last quarter of 2018 to the third quarter of 2019, and was characterized as weak.

NGCP bares plan on renewable energy

The National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) aired support to green energy or alternative renewable sources of power. NGCP's Transmission Development Plan (TDP) considers variable renewable energy and committed renewable energy (RE) plants which will connect to the grid in the next few years.

"The annual TDP prepared by NGCP and presented to stakeholders in public consultations is aligned with the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Program 2020-2040. This targets 50% integration of renewables in the grid's installed capacity by 2040", said the company.

The State Grid Corporation of China (SGCC), NGCP's technical partner, owns world-leading grid technologies as it runs a green and sustainable power grid.

The company integrated the largest amount of renewables in the world with the installed capacity of renewables at 540 GigaWatts (GW) and utilization rate at 97.4% in 2021.

This partnership with SGCC gives NGCP an edge in ensuring that the Philippine grid is ready and capable of integrating high levels of variable renewable energy.

"With its access to SGCC's technology, NGCP is more than capable to accommodate the increasing integration of renewable energy into the grid for a more sustainable energy mix," the company added.

Integrating more RE into the grid will require more from the energy sector including significant transmission backbone expansion.

This will also require reinforcement in both policy and support infrastructure. Capital expenditure heavy projects will require regulatory approval from the Energy Regulatory Commission.

The entry of more conventional, non-variable generation and energy storage systems to support VRE installations must be planned simultaneously.

Support policies including the Philippine Grid Code must be revisited and prioritization of the development of Competitive Renewable Energy Zones to synchronize generation and transmission projects must be well coordinated, among others.

Support from other sectors outside the energy industry must also be in full force to accommodate this integration. Roads and ports must be ready to accommodate the

expected influx of materials that will be needed to build the needed transmission facilities.

“The ERC, among all agencies, will be centrally crucial to the success of all this. The DOE itself has recognized, through Undersecretaries Rowena Cristina Guevarra and Sharon Garin, that transmission projects to support their recent off-shore wind projects have not been included in NGCP’s 5th regulatory period application with the ERC,” the company stated.

“Access to funding was never a problem for NGCP. External limitations, including regulatory caps on capital expenditures, protracted permitting processes by the local government units, and difficult rights-of-way procurement, have proven to be the primary roadblocks to project completion,” NGCP stressed.

“If the ERC will allow us to spend the capital expenditures needed to support this laudable push towards green energy, we are very confident that NGCP will be able to deliver,” the company said.

“The move to RE may take time but efforts must begin now. Even first world countries take around 10 years to build transmission backbone projects. NGCP was able to complete the Hermosa-San Jose 500kV Line, including a new substation and 176.73 circuit kilometers of high voltage lines, in seven years. This includes the delay brought about the 3-year COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, and the fact that we were only allowed to recover less than 1% of the project cost. With all things considered, NGCP is sure it can deliver its committed projects to improve the grid, as long as the political will and support are there and we are given a sustainable recovery framework,” the company said.

“We hope for the government and regulator’s support in crafting policies and allowing NGCP to have enough CAPEX to fund the required projects to support RE. This move towards a greener and more sustainable grid requires a holistic approach and we hope for the synergy among all the energy players to ensure the fruition of these efforts,” added NGCP.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Climate change is a societal issue. Why is teaching it limited to memorizing science? (1)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

Anita Napoto was only six years old when Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) — one of the strongest tropical cyclones ever recorded — pummeled her hometown of Quinapondan in Eastern Samar in 2013.

At the time, Napoto had no idea what caused the monster storm that flattened her neighborhood. All she remembered was the fear she felt while staying inside her home's comfort room as the floodwater rose and moving to a relative's house where she and her family waited for the storm to pass.

Now 15, Napoto knows that climate change is fueling cyclones to become stronger. For survivors like her, Yolanda made it clear that climate change is a reality.

And yet Napoto herself says she does not recall being taught what fossil fuels and local climate change policies are. Climate change “was not actually taught, but was only mentioned” in school, said the Grade 10 student.

Filipino children like Napoto continue to be disproportionately at risk of experiencing climate disasters. But climate change still does not feature as prominently in most class discussions in public schools, with lessons on climate change confined to being taught in just a single quarter — or two to three months — in Grade 9, DepEd's Science curriculum shows.

During this limited time, the topic of the factors that cause climate change are lumped together with the topic of the global climate phenomenon.

While DepEd requires climate change to be taught in an “integrated and multidisciplinary” approach, students and teachers interviewed by Philstar.com say that there is little opportunity for science and social science teachers to collaborate on teaching climate change.

Unsatisfied with lessons on climate change, Napoto said there must be in-depth discussions on the causes of the crisis.

“In that way, students will be more knowledgeable about this issue and can make actions to end this,” she told Philstar.com.

Climate change education still stuck to basics

Three students from Fortune High School in Marikina City similarly told Philstar.com that they are “not satisfied” with their lessons on climate change, with 15-year-old Elijah Chua remarking: “We want to know deeper. Not just the factors that affect the climate.”

Chua and his two classmates said that they were taught that “stopping fossil fuels” is one of the ways to curb the climate crisis. But they were not taught which countries needed to stop the use of dirty energy.

“The countries that need to stop using fossil fuels were not mentioned in class. No specific country — but all countries,” Chua said. Glossing over details like which countries produce the most emissions risks missing discussions on responsibility, and on loss and damage, and climate reparations.

How much time is typically devoted to teaching climate change? For instance, junior high schools in CALABARZON only tackle fundamentals of climate change for two weeks in Grade 9 science classes, according to its publicly available learning modules. In comparison, lessons on volcanoes are taught for four weeks.

The DepEd earlier said that “there is a need to strengthen [the presence of climate change concepts] in the curriculum by refining learning competencies and standards and monitoring learning delivery.”

In senior high school, a special subject called Disaster Readiness and Risk Reduction is offered as part of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics strand. Climate change competencies can also be found in subjects such as earth science, and life science.

Teaching climate change across subjects

According to the K to 12 curriculum, climate change concepts are supposed to be integrated in 12 subjects: Science, Health, Araling Panlipunan, Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao, Mathematics, English, Filipino, Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan & Technology and Livelihood Economics, and Music, Arts, and PE.

However, Leonora Calicdan, a Grade 9 science teacher from Mangaldan High School in Pangasinan, said she is mostly unaware of how climate change is taught in the social sciences.

“I just do not know what competencies are in social science. But I know they are discussing this,” said Calidan, who has taught science for 25 years.

Mark Bello, Fortune High School's Grade 9 science teacher, said that teachers from different subject areas usually have different schedules and have no time to "sit down" and plan an interdisciplinary class output on climate change.

Leah Cortez, a professor at the Philippine Normal University who teaches science teachers in graduate school, said that an interdisciplinary approach is essential in teaching a topic as complex and multidimensional as climate change.

"We really have to understand community, environment, politics—those are not separate from climate change... We have to integrate this knowledge in various disciplines so they can develop a more holistic understanding," Cortez said.

Chuckie Calsado, who teaches biology subjects at the Philippine Science High School, incorporates social issues in class discussions so students can better understand the political and economic influences that impact climate change.

"So if we do not include social issues in science discussions, we will be creating scientists and scholars—kabayo na may takip sa mata na nakatingin lang sa harap. You cannot see that around you there are issues that impact you," he said.

Another problem: Bello also said that his students typically struggle with the application of climate change concepts learned in class, especially in their "daily life."

Counterproductive school programs

DepEd established its sole student-led environment organization YES-O in 2003 and now touts it as one of the ways students can apply what they have learned about climate change in class. The organization's activities include tree planting, clean-up drives, waste management, and environmental information and education.

"We make it fun. We make it happy. We do it to pass the time. We show students that we're not just all about clean-ups," said 15-year-old Jeremy Agullana, vice president of Fortune High School's YES-O club.

The problem is not all YES-O clubs are managed by science teachers with a comprehensive knowledge about climate change, Cortez said.

"Based on my students' reports, they encourage their students to join these clubs. But once they're (members), they don't use or encourage students when it comes to actual climate change and environmental concerns," the PNU professor added.

Calicdan said that the YES-O club in Mangaldan National High School focuses on waste segregation and planting activities, as well as joining interschool and interclass competitions related to these.

But well-intentioned programs on bottle recycling and class competitions based on reusing materials can be counterproductive and inadvertently encourage students to produce more waste, Cortez pointed out.

These projects are “superficial” and not sustainable in the long run, the PNU professor said.

“I scold my students (who are public school teachers) in grad school. When they tell me that they ask their students to bring bottles for recycling, I tell them: you’re encouraging students to use more bottles because you incentivize them to bring as much as they can,” Cortez said in Filipino.

“In one instance, one teacher said they asked their students to create a gown using recyclable materials. Their students used newly bought plastic spoons and forks. What’s the logic of that?” Cortez said.

With just slightly off-the-mark messaging, recycling programs can lead to the unintended consequence of getting students to compete against each other in terms of who can bring — therefore, create — the most trash, Cortez said.

‘Systemic, not individual issue’

Napoto said she is worried about how climate change will chart the course of the world and impact her future.

The Yolanda survivor said this is why she “follows advice on doing good things like using eco-bags, paper bags, not cutting trees.”

Calsado said that the challenge is still on how to shift the focus away from individual solutions to curbing waste to a more systemic approach.

“The challenge is: how do you make children understand and process by themselves, that it’s not an individual issue. It’s a systemic issue, it’s a class issue,” Calsado added.

[UN warns world to prepare for El Niño impact](#)

By: Robin Millard

The United Nations on Tuesday warned the world to prepare for the effects of El Niño, saying the weather phenomenon which triggers higher global temperatures is set to persist throughout 2023.

El Niño is a naturally occurring climate pattern typically associated with increased heat worldwide, as well as drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere.

The phenomenon occurs on average every two to seven years, and episodes typically last nine to 12 months.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization declared El Niño was already under way and said there was a 90-percent chance that it would continue during the second half of 2023.

"The onset of El Niño will greatly increase the likelihood of breaking temperature records and triggering more extreme heat in many parts of the world and in the ocean," warned WMO secretary-general Petteri Taalas.

"The declaration of an El Niño by WMO is the signal to governments around the world to mobilise preparations to limit the impacts on our health, our ecosystems and our economies," said Taalas.

"Early warnings and anticipatory action of extreme weather events associated with this major climate phenomenon are vital to save lives and livelihoods."

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which feeds into the WMO, announced on June 8 that El Niño had arrived.

"It is expected to be at least of moderate strength," the WMO said.

It noted that El Niño's warming effect on global temperatures is usually felt most strongly within a year of its onset -- in this case in 2024.

Triple-dip La Niña over

El Niño is the large-scale warming of surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.

Conditions oscillate between El Niño and its generally cooling opposite La Niña, with neutral conditions in between.

El Niño events are typically associated with increased rainfall in parts of southern South America, the southern United States, the Horn of Africa and central Asia.

It can also cause severe droughts over Australia, Indonesia, parts of southern Asia, Central America and northern South America.

The WMO says the last El Niño was in 2015-2016.

From 2020 to early 2023, the world was affected by an unusually protracted La Nina, which dragged on for three consecutive years.

It was the first so-called triple-dip La Niña of the 21st century and only the third since 1950.

La Nina's cooling effect put a temporary brake on rising global temperatures, even though the past eight-year period was the warmest on record.

Record predictions

Wilfran Moufouma Okia, the WMO's head of regional climate prediction services, said that over the next six months, "there will be 10-percent chances for El Niño to weaken".

"So we can rule out the development of La Nina this year," he told reporters.

"The effect of El Niño is usually perceived with a delay in time," he added, with an eye on global temperatures increasing further.

In May, the WMO predicted a 98-percent likelihood that at least one of the next five years -- and the five-year period as a whole -- will be warmest on record.

Currently the hottest year on record is 2016, when there was an exceptionally strong El Niño, combined with human-induced heating from greenhouse gas emissions.

The UN's World Health Organization said it was helping countries prepare for the impact of El Niño, by pre-positioning stocks.

"In many of the countries that will be most affected by El Niño, there are already ongoing crises," warned Maria Neira, the WHO's environment, climate change and health director.

The UN health agency is particularly concerned about likely increases in cholera, mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria, and infectious diseases like measles and meningitis.

Extreme heat, wildfires and greater food insecurity leading to more acute malnutrition are also a cause for concern, she said.

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