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By: Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

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THE MANILA TIMES

'Alleviate effects of climate change'

By: Kristina Maralit

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By: Niña Myka Pauline Arceo

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Quezon farmers struggle for climate resilient coconut industry

By: Siegfred Aldous Lacerna

Joselito Batanes, a native of Quezon province, has depended on coconut farming for more than 30 years now.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

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By: Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

In a groundbreaking move, a bill aiming to establish a legal framework for climate loss and damage accountability, the first of its kind globally, was filed in the House of Representatives.

House Bill 9609, or the proposed Climate Accountability (CLIMA) Act, was filed on Wednesday by Bohol Rep. Edgar Chatto, Negros Oriental Rep. Jocelyn Sy Limkaichong, Albay Rep. Fernando Cabredo, Leyte Rep. Anna Victoria Veloso-Tuazon, Tarlac Rep. Christian Tell Yap, and Bukidnon Rep. Jose Manuel Alba, a week ahead of the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai.

Greenpeace Philippines, in a statement, said this is a historic proposed law, as this is the first one globally that opens up the possibility for corporate climate accountability to be recognized by a state and that provides measures to call for reparations mechanisms.

The development was announced on Thursday at the roundtable discussion “Climate Change Reparations: A Climate Justice Imperative” at the Bayleaf Hotel in Manila, co-organized by Greenpeace Philippines, the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC), the Climate Action and Human Rights Institute (CAHRI), and the Committee on Climate Change of the House of Representatives.

The bill intends to institute policies and systems to address climate change, protect communities from climate change-induced losses, damages, and human rights harm, and provide mechanisms for accountability and reparations from those responsible for worsening the climate crisis—including corporate interests such as the fossil fuel industry.

Felisa Castro, president of Kusog han Kababayen-an han Salcedo Federation (Kakasa) and a resident of Salcedo, Eastern Samar, expressed gratitude for the proposed law. She stated, “This is the right step to take because we need to demand payment from those who are responsible for what is happening to us today.”

Jochelle Magracia, chair of the Young Bataeños for Environmental Advocacy Network (Young BEAN), emphasized the importance of such legislation for communities vulnerable to the impacts of dirty industries and the worsening climate crisis. “It is important that we ensure policies like this are enacted because they will play a big part in achieving our dream of a safe and clean future.”

For his part, Rep. Chatto highlighted the urgency of the legal framework, stating, “Corporations have known the impact of their business on the environment for decades, yet they continue to engage in defensive tactics and greenwashing to deflect responsibility for the climate crisis.”

If passed, the CLIMA Act will provide the framework for limiting fossil fuel expansion and aligning businesses with the Paris Agreement. It will also facilitate the payment of climate reparations to impacted communities through the establishment of a loss and damage fund.

Organizations such as Greenpeace Philippines and the LRC lauded the filing of this bill, which they believe is an urgent need, especially as climate impacts continue to increase in severity.

Jefferson Chua, a Greenpeace campaigner, said, “We are calling on President Marcos Jr. to throw the full support of this administration into making climate accountability a state policy.”

“This is a welcome development, but this is just the start. We must ensure that policies such as this are passed swiftly through Congress and not watered down by corporate interests,” said Greenpeace campaigner Jefferson Chua.

Atty. Ryan Roset of the LRC described the legislation as “pioneering pending legislation” that shifts the burden of the climate crisis to the entities causing it. The CLIMA bill sets more stringent due diligence standards on business behavior and institutionalizes corporate accountability, transparency mechanisms, and a loss and damage facility for affected communities.

BUSINESS WORLD

Multilateral lenders optimistic on Philippine growth despite headwinds

By: Keisha B. Ta-asan

MULTILATERAL LENDERS expect the Philippines to be one of the fastest-growing economies in the region amid the looming global slowdown, but emphasized the need to boost labor productivity, infrastructure competitiveness, and climate resilience to ensure growth remains robust.

At the BusinessWorld Forecast 2024 economic forum on Wednesday, World Bank Country Director for Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand Ndiame Diop said he is optimistic about the country's growth prospects despite global headwinds.

"The Philippines have all (the) structural drivers that are very favorable and that's why we're quite optimistic about this. But given the state of the global economy, even 5.6% is a really decent growth rate. And I think if the global economy improves going forward, the ceiling grows even higher," he said.

In October, the World Bank cut its gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for the Philippines to 5.6% from the 6% projection given in June. It also trimmed its growth forecast for the Philippines to 5.8% for 2024 from 5.9% previously. These are below the government's 6-7% target for this year and 6.5-8% in 2024.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Country Director for the Philippines Pavit Ramachandran said Philippine economic growth is at the "top of the leaderboard" in Southeast Asia.

In the third quarter, the Philippines' 5.9% gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the third quarter was ahead of Vietnam (5.3%), Indonesia (4.9%), and Malaysia (3.3%).

However, the ADB trimmed its Philippine growth outlook to 5.7% this year from the 6% projection it gave in April. For 2024, the ADB expects the Philippines to be the fastest-growing economy in Southeast Asia with a 6.2% growth projection.

"The economy has largely remained resilient, notwithstanding global uncertainties, geopolitical tensions, economic headwinds, interest rates, inflation," Mr. Ramachandran said.

“And a lot of (growth) is still very much anchored on domestic demand, household consumption and fixed investment both public and private investment in construction, remaining one of the biggest growth drivers,” he added.

However, the Philippines still needs to improve infrastructure competitiveness, enhance productivity and investments, nurture its demographic dividend, and intensify climate action.

Infrastructure development is also a hindrance to the Philippines’ competitiveness, ADB’s Mr. Ramachandran said.

“The Philippines still has some ways to go in terms of infrastructure provision, access, delivery and quality,” he said.

Citing a 2019 report, he said the Philippines ranked 96th out of 141 countries in terms of infrastructure competitiveness. The country lags in quality of road infrastructure and efficiency of rail networks.

Meanwhile, World Bank’s Mr. Diop said that climate change will impact the Philippines’ economic output “quite significantly.”

“The range of the outcomes is wide because of the uncertainty, but we do know that without adaptation measures and intervention measures, climate change would actually impact the process of generating possibilities, growth in the Philippines,” he added.

Meanwhile, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Representative to the Philippines Ragnar Gudmundsson said domestic demand can be bolstered if inflationary pressures subside.

He said decisive monetary tightening by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), a lower-than-expected minimum wage hike for Metro Manila earlier in July, and nonmonetary measures helped mitigate some of the recent inflationary pressures.

The BSP has raised borrowing costs by 450 basis points from May 2022 to October 2023, bringing the key rate to a 16-year high of 6.5%.

“Inflation is projected to gradually approach the BSP’s (2-4%) target in early 2024, even though frequent supply shocks cloud the disinflation trajectory,” he said.

The IMF expects inflation to rise to about 6% this year before declining to 3.5% in 2024.

It also sees Philippine GDP growth to hit 5.3% in 2023, before accelerating to 6% in 2024.

PROPERTY RECOVERY

Jon Canto, managing partner of McKinsey & Company's Philippine office, said the real estate sector has rebounded since the pandemic but slower than overall GDP growth.

"Philippine real estate has shown resiliency in the past few years. Growth is expected to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2024 driven by sustained demand across sector," he said in a presentation at the BusinessWorld Forecast 2024 economic forum.

Megaworld Corp. Executive Vice-President for Sales and Marketing Noli D. Hernandez said the Philippine real estate sector has been doing very well despite rising inflation.

"In Megaworld, for example, we have seen a sustained and substantial growth in our residential segment. This is mainly because of the fast completion of projects, which was caused by an accelerated pace of construction activities on all fronts," he said.

Federal Land President William Thomas F. Mirasol said he is optimistic the positive economic momentum will carry through 2024.

"The challenge now is how can Philippine real estate be an engine for growth for everyone. Our shared vision of all of us here can be made more fruitful, how all together we can build better and create a dynamic industry for every Filipino to benefit from," he added.

Meanwhile, BusinessWorld Publishing Corp. Chief Executive Officer Miguel G. Belmonte said there is a need to build resilient supply chains that are "agile, flexible, and capable of adapting to changing circumstances."

"We must always steel ourselves against disruption and be able to adapt and innovate when the situation calls for it. Embracing agility will enable us to weather storms, seize emerging trends, and thrive in turbulent times," he added.

Mr. Belmonte also emphasized the importance of harnessing data and technology to plan ahead.

"Embracing data-driven decision making is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity. Even though we must look inward to improve our operations, we cannot forget to look onward.

Globalization has connected businesses across borders like never before, especially with the impetus rise of the global digital economy,” he said.

ECO BUSINESS

[Global warming on course for 2.9°C, UN report warns](#)

By: Catherine Early

Countries must make far greater efforts to implement their climate strategies this decade to stand a chance of keeping global temperature rise within 1.5°C of the pre-industrial average.

Continued delays will only increase the world's reliance on uncertain carbon dioxide removal technologies (CDR), according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

In its latest annual assessment of progress on global climate action, the Emissions Gap Report 2013, UNEP pointed to progress since the Paris Agreement. When it was adopted in 2015, greenhouse gas emissions were projected to rise 16 per cent by 2030. Today, that increase is projected to be 3 per cent.

But from now emissions must fall 28 per cent by 2030 to keep temperature rise to 2°C, or 42 per cent to stay within 1.5°C, and countries are failing to match this need with action, UNEP found.

Current climate policies will result in a rise of 3C this century. The increase will be limited to 2.9°C if countries fully implement their national climate plans (known as Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs).

This could be kept to 2.5°C if plans by developing countries, which are currently conditional on obtaining financial support, are carried out – since that would result in a 9 per cent fall in emissions.

In UNEP's most optimistic scenario, where all conditional NDCs and net zero pledges are met, limiting temperature rise to 2°C could be achieved, UNEP says. This scenario is considered to give at best a 14 per cent chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C.

Now, 97 countries have pledged to meet net zero emissions, up from 88 last year. Pledges cover 81 per cent of the world's greenhouse gases (GHGs). However, the authors do not consider these pledges to be credible, pointing out that none of the G20 countries are reducing emissions at a pace consistent with their net-zero targets.

National net zero plans have several flaws, according to Anne Olhoff, chief scientific editor of the report. Many are not legally binding, or fail to have clear implementation

plans, and there is a lack of targets between now and the dates when governments claim to be aiming for net zero, she says.

“But most importantly, emissions are still going up in countries that have put forward zero emission pledges. There are many ways to net zero, but at some point you need to peak and reduce. And the longer you wait until you peak, the more difficult it’s likely to be to actually get to net zero,” she says.

Under the Paris Agreement, ambition in the NDCs is designed to be ramped up over time. At COP28, which begins in Dubai at the end of November, countries will debate how to build new ambition under the first Global Stocktake. This will inform the next round of NDCs that countries should submit in 2025, which will have targets for 2035.

Countries should focus on implementing existing policies this decade, rather than pledging higher targets for 2030, says Olhoff.

“Whether or not the ambition of the 2030 targets is raised or not is less important than achieving those targets. If countries find that they can also strengthen ambition for 2030, that’s an added benefit,” she says.

The more action taken this decade, the more ambitious countries can be in their new targets for 2035, and the easier it will be to achieve those targets, she points out.

The report states that high-income and high-emitting countries among the G20 should take the most ambitious and rapid action, and provide financial and technical support to developing nations.

However, it adds that low- and middle-income countries already account for more than two-thirds of global greenhouse gas emissions. Development needs in these countries need to be met with economic growth that produces low emissions, such as by reducing energy demand and prioritising clean energy, it says.

“This is an extremely large and diverse group of countries, and the opportunities for low-emissions growth depend a lot on national circumstances,” Ohloff says. Proposed reforms to international finance through multilateral development banks should improve access to finance and the ability of developing countries to attract investment. Borrowing often costs a lot more in these countries than in developed ones, she says.

But some countries who suffer from corruption need to “get their own house in order” and improve governance to avoid this, she adds.

The role of carbon removal

The report points out that the world will also need to use carbon dioxide removal (CDR), which the authors see as having a role on three timescales.

It can already contribute to lowering net emissions, today.

In the medium term, it can contribute to tackling residual emissions from so-called hard-to-abate sectors, such as aviation and heavy industry.

And in the longer term, CDR could potentially be deployed at a large enough scale to bring about a decline in the global mean temperature. They stress that its use should be in addition to rapid decarbonisation of industry, transport, heat and power systems.

CDR refers to the direct removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere and its durable storage in geological, terrestrial or ocean reservoirs, or in products. It is different to carbon capture and storage (CCS), which captures CO₂ from emissions at their sources, such as a power station, and transfers it into permanent storage. While some CCS methods share features with CDR, they can never result in CO₂ removal from the atmosphere.

Some CDR is already being deployed, mainly through reforestation, afforestation and forest management. However, this is very small scale, with removals estimated at 2 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO₂e) annually. Research and development into more novel technologies is increasing, with methods including sequestering carbon in soil; enhanced weathering, which speeds up the natural weathering of rocks to store CO₂; and direct air capture and storage (DACCS), where CO₂ is extracted from the atmosphere.

There are multiple risks associated with scaling up CDR. These include competition with land for food, protection of tenure and rights, as well as public perception. In addition, the technical, economic and political requirements for large-scale deployment may not materialise in time, UNEP says. Some methods are very expensive, particularly DACCS, which UNEP estimates at US\$800 per tonne of CO₂ removed.

Governments have tended not to specify the extent to which they plan to use CDR to achieve their emission-reduction targets, nor the residual emissions they plan to allow annually when achieving net-zero CO₂ and greenhouse gas emission targets, UNEP found. Estimates of the implied levels of land-based removals in long-term strategies and net-zero pledges are 2.1-2.9 GtCO₂ of removals per year by 2050, though this is based on an incomplete sample of 53 countries, the report notes.

Politicians need to coordinate the development of CDR, the report states. Dr Oliver Geden, lead author of the chapter on CDR, explains that governments need to clarify its role in national and global climate policy, and develop standards for MRV that can eventually be included in national GHG inventories under the UN climate change process.

“At COP28, the [Global Stocktake] decision could clarify the role of CDR in global climate policy and demand the inclusion of CDR as a separate item in NDCs for 2035, which are due by 2025,” he says.

GMA NEWS

[Bill establishing legal framework for climate accountability filed in Senate](#)

By: Hana Bordey

A bill seeking to establish a legal framework for climate loss and damage accountability has been filed in the House of Representatives.

House Bill 9609 or the Climate Accountability (CLIMA) Act was filed a week before the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai.

The proposed measure seeks to institute policies and systems to address climate change, protect communities from climate change-induced losses, damages, and human rights harms, and provide mechanisms for accountability and reparations from those responsible for worsening the climate crisis, including corporate interests such as the fossil fuel industry.

Once passed into law, it will provide the framework for limiting fossil fuel expansion and aligning their businesses with the Paris Agreement.

It will also help facilitate the payment of climate reparations to impacted communities through the establishment of a loss and damage fund.

The passage of the measure was lauded by environmental groups such as Greenpeace Philippines and Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC) considering that it is a first measure that opens up the possibility for corporate climate accountability to be recognized by a state, and that provides measures to call for reparations mechanisms.

The said organizations deemed this as a priority measure as they noted that climate impacts continue to increase in severity.

“This is a welcome development but this is just the start. We must ensure that policies such as this are passed swiftly through Congress and not be watered down by corporate interests,” said Greenpeace campaigner Jefferson Chua.

“We are calling on President Marcos Jr. to throw the full support of this administration into making climate accountability a state policy. Beyond this act, however, we are urging the Philippine government to pursue all means available and necessary to hold polluters accountable, and make them pay for their outsized role in the climate crisis,” he added.

For lawyer Ryan Roset of LRC, the bill is “long overdue and a step toward the right direction.”

“This pioneering pending legislation shifts the burden of the climate crisis to the very entities that cause it, by legislating more stringent due diligence standards on business behavior, and establishing corporate accountability and transparency mechanisms,” Roset said.

“In addition, the CLIMA bill institutionalizes a loss and damage facility to allow communities to access funds for the harms of climate change on human societies and the environment,” he added.

MANILA STANDARD

[DA unwraps exhibit on resilience of PH farmers, fishers against climate change](#)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has launched an exhibit showcasing the resilience of Filipino farmers and fishermen against the harsh effects of climate change.

Newly appointed Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and Kat Pimentel, wife of Senator Aquilino Pimentel III, led the opening of the exhibit dubbed “AMIA Isang Dekada Stories of Resilience.”

The event is part of the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA), a DA project highlighting the strength and determination of Filipino farmers and fisherfolk in the face of climate change.

Mrs. Pimentel underscored the importance of the AMIA program in the context of climate change.

She praised the AMIA program for its efforts in training communities, particularly those dependent on agriculture and fisheries, to become resilient to the adverse effects of climate change.

She also highlighted a special provision in the proposed 2024 DA budget aimed at enhancing the resilience of agriculture communities through disaster-resilient infrastructure projects and the development of climate-adaptive seeds.

Pimentel said climate change has brought environmental challenges that directly impact the country’s agriculture, forestry, and fishing sectors.

She pointed out that the contribution of these sectors to the Philippines’ gross domestic product (GDP) had been fluctuating partly attributed to the challenges posed by climate change.

Pimentel commended the DA for spearheading the AMIA program, which currently covers 181 villages across the country, with 20 of them in partnership with the Rice Watch Action Center.

“These model communities serve as sources of best practices and centers of innovation for other communities to learn from,” she said.

“In these AMIA villages, we find the stories of resilience, of Filipinos who do not give up, who instead fight to maintain their livelihood and the environment,” Pimentel said.

“AMIA is not just a program; it is the realization of a dream for a more sustainable and prosperous future for all of us,” she added.

“Our farmers and fisherfolk are the unsung heroes of our society. They provide us food and help our economy grow,” Pimentel said.

However, they are also the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, she noted.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[DOF ready to support LGUs' climate finance mobilization](#)

By: Anna Leah Gonzales

The Department of Finance (DOF) said it is prepared to provide local government units (LGUs) with quicker access to climate financing through proper resource mobilization and private sector participation.

“The DOF stands ready to assist LGUs in the realization of their climate projects, thus advancing the Philippines’ climate agenda as envisioned in the President’s 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda of establishing livable and sustainable communities,” Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno said in a statement on Thursday.

With the theme “Bayanihan Para sa Klima: Bagong Bansang Matatag,” the Climate Change Commission (CCC) is hosting the 16th Global Warming and Climate Change Consciousness Week (CCC Week) from Nov. 19 to 25, 2023.

As part of the CCC Week, Finance Undersecretary Maria Luwalhati Dorotan Tiuseco attended the Stakeholders Forum for Accelerated Climate Action and Transformation for Local Communities (ACT LOCAL) on behalf of Diokno on Nov. 21 at the Crown Plaza Hotel.

Tiuseco said the DOF has been directing more strategic resources for better adaptive capacity at the local level, investing in resilient communities and local governments, and mobilizing resources for social protection.

She added the DOF, as Chair of the People’s Survival Fund (PSF) Board, swiftly approved 11 climate adaptation projects and six projects for Project Development Grant with a combined amount of PHP889.6 million.

This increased the PSF’s utilization rate to 89 percent, leaving 11 percent of the initial allocation of PHP1 billion.

The PSF was established under Republic Act 10174 in 2012 to finance adaptation programs and projects of LGUs and accredited local and community organizations.

With the implementation of the Mandanas-Garcia ruling, the DOF, through the Bureau of Local Government Finance, also assured the public that it is prepared to capacitate LGUs in efficiently utilizing the increased revenue stream to fund climate-related projects and programs.

Aside from these initiatives, the DOF is also set to attend the 2023 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP28) scheduled from Nov. 30 to Dec. 12, 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

At the COP28, the DOF said it will push for a transparent, accessible, predictable and efficient mobilization of climate finance, which includes a blended approach of grants, investments and subsidies over and above official development assistance.

THE MANILA TIMES

'Alleviate effects of climate change'

By: Kristina Maralit

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Wednesday called on Filipinos to get involved in addressing climate change and mitigating its effects.

In a video message on the opening of the 16th Annual Global Warming and Climate Change Consciousness Week, Marcos said that citizens and the government play crucial roles in the preservation of the environment.

"We all have a role to play in this mission. So we must work together, take a stance in support of our planet. Let us be involved in creating solutions to mitigate the effects of global warming and climate change," he said.

"The impact of global warming and climate change is becoming more evident in our present time," he added.

"Rising temperatures, extreme weather events and a decline in biodiversity are stark reminders of the need to quickly respond to this immediate environmental concern. I enjoin the Climate Change Commission to effectively communicate this year's theme of unity and cooperation for a more resilient and adaptable nation," he said.

The issue of climate change and its global effects was among the Chief Executive's main talking points during his recent participation in the 30th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco, California.

He will again tackle the issue, along with other world leaders, when he attends the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Expo City, Dubai, from November 29 to December 1.

DoF commits to provide LGUs with climate financing

By: Niña Myka Pauline Arceo

The Department of Finance (DoF) is committed to ensuring local government units (LGUs) faster access to climate finance by mobilizing resources and involving the private sector.

"The DoF stands ready to assist LGUs in the realization of their climate projects, thus advancing the Philippines' climate agenda as envisioned in the President's 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda of establishing livable and sustainable communities," Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno said.

Representing the Finance chief during Climate Change Commission (CCC) Week, Finance Undersecretary Maria Luwalhati Dorotan Tiuseco emphasized that safeguarding individuals and communities is a central focus of the government's development agenda.

Tiuseco said the Finance department is allocating strategic resources to enhance adaptive capacity at the local level. This includes investments in resilient communities and local governments, as well as mobilizing resources for social protection.

As chairman of the People's Survival Fund (PSF) Board, she highlighted that the DoF achieved a historic milestone by promptly approving 11 climate adaptation projects and six Project Development Grant (PDG) projects, totaling P889.6 million.

This raised the utilization rate of the PSF to 89 percent, with only 11 percent of the initial P1 billion allocation remaining.

The PSF, created by Republic Act 10174 in 2012, funds adaptation programs of LGUs and accredited local organizations.

Historically, according to the DoF, the PSF Board faced challenges due to a lack of project preparation capacity and cumbersome procedures, slowing down project approvals.

Since assuming the role of PSF Secretariat in 2017, Tiuseco said that the DoF has taken steps to speed up fund utilization and simplify the project proposal process.

Furthermore, the CCC now collaborates directly with LGUs for capacity-building, providing one-on-one consultations to assist project proponents in the preparation and paperwork for PSF grants.

In response to the Mandanas-Garcia ruling, the DoF, through the Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF), said it is ready to help LGUs efficiently use their increased revenue for climate-related projects.

It added that it has actively developed fiscal policies like the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act, the Strategic Investment Priority Plan, and the Sustainable Finance Roadmap, creating a conducive environment for private sector involvement in green investments.

The DoF has announced its preparation for the 2023 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from Nov. 30 to Dec. 12, 2023.

For COP28, the DoF plans to advocate for transparent, accessible, predictable and efficient mobilization of climate finance.

This involves a blended approach of grants, investments and subsidies in addition to official development assistance.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Quezon farmers struggle for climate resilient coconut industry

By: Siegfred Aldous Lacerna

Joselito Batanes, a native of Quezon province, has depended on coconut farming for more than 30 years now.

Batanes tries to make ends meet by maintaining the coconut trees in someone else's farm located 2.4 kilometers away from the center of Macalelon town with the hopes of harvesting its products at the end of the year.

Quezon province is among the top producers of coconut in the Philippines, accounting for 10% of total supply nationwide. Over 2,151 stakeholders consisting of smallholder farmers, dealers of copra, and traders in the province directly depend on the coconut industry, according to the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research Agriculture.

However, for Batanes, working with coconuts is now more challenging due to the frequent strong storms.

"Whenever we are affected by a typhoon, the time we need to recover usually spans from one to two years," Batanes said, adding that the best thing they can do is to hope that bad does not come to worse.

"I simply wish that the loss we incurred is not that big," he said.

This phenomenon is not peculiar to Batanes' area.

According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Association (PAGASA), an average of 20 tropical cyclones visit the country, and eight or nine make landfall.

Last year, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said that the northern portion of Quezon was the hardest hit among all the provinces battered by Super Typhoon Karding (Noru). Quezon's provincial agriculture office saw P186.5 million in damage to agriculture, and P25.8 million of this belonged to 27,640 hectares of coconut trees, affecting 9,213 coconut farmers.

But Batanes' problem does not solely revolve around intensified typhoons as they are also continuously threatened by the dry spell brought about by the El Niño phenomenon.

"It's also hard when we're experiencing drought because we get less harvest from coconut trees," Batanes said.

In 2019, a report by the same office stated that the El Niño damaged 183 hectares of coconut in Quezon. Last July 2023, PAGASA declared its onset, which could last until the first quarter of 2024.

Dry seasons and typhoons are natural occurrences in the country due to its geographical position. However, climate change exacerbates the effects of El Niño, and it can trigger the generation of stronger typhoons, according to the National Integrated Climate Change Database and Information Exchange System.

Agriculture, as one of the country's major industries, bears the brunt of the consequences of the climate crisis.

Marred by issues

According to Rafael Sarocam, president of the Federation of Coconut Farmers and Farm Workers Association for Progress, the extreme drought, typhoons, and unexpected weather patterns have proven detrimental to the industry.

"The changes in weather patterns are very different right now. For example, El Niño occurs during the season of coconut harvest, causing the volume of yield to lessen," Sarocam said, adding that there are cases when heavy rainfall occurs when coconut farmers expect a dry season.

The recurring pests, poor working conditions, and lack of funding for coconut farmers further worsen this. On top of it, he also lamented the Philippine Coconut Authority's (PCA) lack of focus on a climate-resilient coconut industry.

"The focus of PCA right now is geared towards giving out scholarships and health plans to coconut farmers," Sarocam said. He pointed out that even though PCA spearheaded programs such as planting and replanting under Participatory Coconut Planting Projects, the type that they plant are hybrid coconut trees whose roots do not grow deep in the soil, making it vulnerable to typhoons.

Philstar.com reached out to PCA but the agency did not respond.

Batanes said that when his coconut crops are affected by typhoons or drought, he just lets things be because there is not much that he can do about it.

"Unlike people, you cannot evacuate or shield coconut trees," Batanes said, adding that during the aftermath of natural calamities, what is left to do is to assess the damage and hope for a better yield in the next harvest season.

Glimmer of hope?

Orly Marcellana, the Regional Coordinator of Tanggol Magsasaka Timog Katagalugan, said that now more than ever, coconut farmers need support in the form of financial assistance, national industrialization, development of raw products from coconuts, and agrarian reform to adapt to the effects of the climate crisis.

"Because of climate change, there is no dry season or rainy season because every other month, the climate pattern changes," Marcellana said. Thus, according to Marcellana, the government should develop the coconut industry by planting more sustainable coconut trees and giving out much-needed assistance to recover during calamities.

Recently, the provincial government of Quezon and the United Nations Development Program inked a partnership called Strengthening Institutions and Empowering Localities against Disasters and Climate Change (SHIELD) Program to "accelerate resilience-building" at the grassroots level towards climate crisis.

According to Governor Helen Tan, the program, funded by the Australian government, aims to mitigate the impacts of natural hazards on the livelihood of farmers through innovative solutions like agricultural intensification and developing enterprise risk management for the coconut industry. However, the province has yet to feel any results from the partnership as the program is still in its infancy.

Even though Batanes is already face-to-face with the drastic effects of the climate crisis, for him, the issue remains complex.

"I'm just a small farmer, so I don't know how to make coconut trees stronger when there is drought or typhoon, so I leave it to the government to find better solutions for us," he said, adding that their immediate need, for now, is more funding through grants.

Until then, Batanes' hope for a better coconut industry remains.

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