



Expansion of DA's rural dev't project makes headway towards approval



Infra for Agri Value Chain. Tricycles ply the newly concreted 2.67-kilometer Pangi–Kiambing farm-to-market road (FMR) in Maitum, Sarangani Province. The P29 million-worth FMR is one of the recently completed infrastructure subprojects under the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP). The agency is proposing for the expansion of the Project to cover more requests from local government units for the construction of rural infrastructures, including FMRs, hence further supporting the country's agricultural commodity value chain.

The proposed expansion of the World Bank-assisted Philippine Rural Development Project of the Department of Agriculture (DA-PRDP), has inched towards its approval with the endorsement from the Investment Coordination Committee-Cabinet Committee (ICC-CC) of the National Economic and Development Authority.

The \$450-million (P20.9-billion) proposed expansion of the DA's flagship platform for modern, inclusive, value chain-oriented and climate-resilient agri-fisheries development will primarily address the current P19.18-billion World Bank loan proceeds shortage for the Project's rural infrastructure development portfolio.

According to DA Undersecretary and PRDP National Director Ariel

Cayanan, without assured additional resources under the agency, the DA cannot commit to funding the remaining rural infrastructures proposed for under the PRDP even with equities from the national government and local government units (LGUs).

Sustaining reforms

Besides the lack of internal funding resources from the DA, the agency pushes for the expansion of the PRDP to sustain institutional and governance reforms that the Project has introduced.

Way forward

Secretary Piñol has already sent official endorsement of the PRDP's

proposed additional financing to NEDA. He is joined by at least 45 local chief executives, 12 regional development councils and other agencies such as the Department of Public Works and Highways and Department of Agrarian Reform, among others.

The PRDP is now on the process of complying with required documents and milestones by NEDA and other concerned agencies for the proposed expansion to be finally approved on the side of the government.

The DA targets to secure the government's final endorsement by January 2017 for the negotiations with the World Bank to proceed. (Jan P. Dacumos, NPCO InfoACE Unit) ■

DA roads pave the way for peace, dev't in Sibugay town

Two farm-to-market road (FMR) subprojects under the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) in Alicia, Zamboanga Sibugay are helping the town maintain peace and order, alongside providing opportunities for farmers and fisherfolk to improve their livelihood and increase incomes.

According to Municipal Mayor Yashier Musa, the 2.64-kilometer Dawa-Dawa–Tubig Sina FMR in Barangay La Paz and 2.04-kilometer Gulayon–Sitio Tantawan FMR in Barangay Gulayon have enabled the local government unit, and the armed forces and police to periodically visit the villages covered by the FMRs, discouraging insurgents to build or maintain strongholds.

"Before, it was like a ghost town [as] rebels hide there. Now, with the new roads, the army and police can [easily] patrol the villages. It is much more peaceful now," Musa said.

Although the two FMRs have yet to be completely concreted, these have already enabled vehicles to pass through as fine grading and compaction works are now finished.

Hauling convenience, savings

"The residents are happy as vehicles can now enter their villages. They can now command better prices for their products," Musa said, adding that farmers and fishers can now sell their harvests immediately—fresh and of high quality.

He recalled that since the start of the road rehabilitation, traders started to haul products from the villages such as seaweed and crabs.

Alicia sits along the Tantanang Bay and apart from cash crops such as cassava, rice, corn and coconut, the town also boasts of abundance in sea-based products. The two FMRs, for instance, have a total influence area of 360 hectares for seaweeds, or agal-agal as locals call it.

"Before, the bay was their [only] way to the market. Sometimes, it was difficult for them because they had to brave heavy rains and strong winds at sea," the mayor said.

Sammy Asani, a fisherfolk from Sitio Tantawan said that they now have a choice besides hiring pumpboats—a costlier and riskier option—

when it comes to selling their produce, thanks to the P19 million-worth road improvement.

"We spend twice as much when hiring pumpboats since we also have to pay for the labor. With trucks now coming here to haul our harvests, our hauling cost has been practically reduced to zero," Asani said.

Farmers and fishers share the same experience in Sitio Tubig Sina where the road was actually a mere trail and the residents had no other option but to bring their produce to Mabuhay town, across the Tantanang Bay.

Development prospects

Abubakar Saman, a Mosque leader in the sitio said that the construction of the P23.6 million-worth Dawa-Dawa–Tubig Sina FMR may also pave the way for the electrification of their village.

Mayor Musa has confirmed this as he had already secured the commitment of the provincial government unit and the Zamboanga del Sur Electric Cooperative (ZAMZURECO).



Sibugay Fisherfolk. Residents of Sitio Tantawan, Alicia, Zamboanga Sibugay sail out to the Tantanang Bay an early morning to catch fish. The fishing community is a beneficiary of the ongoing rehabilitation and concreting of the two-kilometer Gulayon–Sitio Tantawan farm-to-market road (FMR) that has enabled traders to directly haul harvests from the village. The P19 million-worth FMR improvement is implemented under the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP). (Photo by Kathrino V. Resurreccion, DA-PRDP NPCO InfoACE Unit)

A proponent farmers' cooperative under the Department of Agriculture's Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) has successfully raised the commercial value of abaca provincewide, during the dry-run of its approved subproject.

The Catanduanes-based Pinoy Lingap-Damayan Multipurpose Cooperative (PLDC), which was recently awarded a P25.4-million worth of enterprise development assistance package from the PRDP, has already demonstrated its capacity to improve the livelihoods of their members as it set the selling price of abaca from P55 to P75 per kilogram in the province.

According to Antonio Jimenez Jr., PLDC's general manager, the PRDP wanted to see if the cooperative is really up for the job hence, it promptly asked the group to undergo the prescribed dry-run, wherein the proponent would have to undertake all stages and processes required of the proposed enterprise, from securing raw materials to finding new buyers.

"We really studied hard especially because at first, we had difficulty learning the right pricing of abaca fiber, including the grading of the commodity depending on the quality," Jimenez said, adding that eventually, they were able to secure new prospective buyers in Catanduanes.

What made the dry-run a more challenging stage for the group was the fact that prior to their current project under PRDP, the cooperative had no experience in dealing with abaca trading, except that many of their members happened to be abaca farmers themselves.

Jimenez also said that they conducted an in-depth study on the immediate needs and concerns of their members and they discovered that all abaca farmers need to secure food and other similar sustenance for their families before they could go and harvest abaca plants, usually lasting several days considering that plantations are usually kilometers away from their respective houses.

"Many traders themselves are also storekeepers and they would regularly loan food and other basic consumable goods to abaca farmers, with payments usually done after the harvested fibers were sold," he said.

There is nothing wrong with the arrangement according to Jimenez, except that the storekeepers would require the hapless farmers to sell their crop to them, of course, at a lower price.

Farmers' co-op boosts commercial value of abaca



The Pinoy Lingap-Damayan Multi-Purpose Cooperative, which employs 27 laborers at P300 per day, conducts a dry-run of their abaca processing and trading enterprise in Sipi, Bato, Catanduanes. With the PRDP's approval of the enterprise development subproject, the cooperative expects to provide more employment opportunities and raise the incomes of its 3,483 abaca farmer members. (Photo by Kathrino V. Resurreccion, NPCO InfoACE Unit)

Jimenez added they are now planning to run a food store for their members to solve the problem.

According to the cooperative's top official, the test run allowed them to realize their capacity to collect as much as 25 tons of abaca fiber every week, a feat difficult to achieve even by seasoned traders, hence they are now sought after by some major buyers across Luzon.

He also added that aside from the funds coming from PRDP, his group is thankful to the Project for giving them the opportunity to learn the ropes of the trade through its project prescriptions.

The PLDC is shelving P9.2 million from its own coffers as counterpart to complete the P25.4 million required funding for the project.

The components of the enterprise project include a main warehouse for the raw and semi-processed fibers, several trucks and forklift for delivery, tools and equipment, and a working capital for one month operating expenses and cash for buying raw materials. Several buyers are already waiting for the PLDC's much improved

volume capacity that will come from the release of the approved funds. (Alladin S. Diega, NPCO InfoACE Unit) ■

DA roads pave the way... (from page 2)

"[ZAMZURECO] has been penetrating areas without electricity. The only reason they were not able to do this [in Tubig Sina] was because the absence of road. Now that the road is here, we are sure that the area will soon be linked to the electric grid," Musa said.

Musa is optimistic that with the new roads, additional production areas will be opened and more entrepreneurs will invest, especially in seaweed farming.

The mayor also believes that as the government brings development and help address problems in their constituent communities, peace would be an eventual outcome.

The offshoot of the Mindanao Rural Development Program, the DA-PRDP is a six-year national government platform for developing an inclusive, value chain-oriented and climate-resilient agri-fisheries sector. (Jan P. Dacumos, DA-PRDP NPCO InfoACE Unit)

NEWS BRIEFS

LUZON A (North Luzon) Ilocos Region to receive tram- line, other infra from PRDP

The PRDP's Regional Project Advisory Board 1 (RPAB 1) has recently approved 12 stand-alone infrastructure subprojects including a tramline system, warehouses, multi-purpose drying pavements, and solar drying pavements.

Some of the approved subprojects are the construction of Namita agricultural tramline system and Garnaden solar drying pavement, both in Ilocos Norte, and the construction of warehouse and several multi-purpose drying pavements in Pangasinan.

It can be recalled that the PRDP has been asking LGUs to access sub-projects other than FMRs, as there are various infrastructure subprojects available under the PRDP. (RPCO 1 InfoACE Unit)

LUZON B (South Luzon) Value chain approach bares dairy cattle, native chicken, taro leaves potential

Discussions with stakeholders as part of value chain analysis (VCA) have unveiled the potential of dairy cattle, native chicken, taro leaves in Bicol Region.

During a recent validation of findings, agencies and industry players provided missing data and additional

inputs necessary to finalize the VCAs on these priority commodities.

For daily cattle, stakeholders cited the need to strengthen rural-based organizations and identify constraints in both smallholder and large-scale organizations. Meanwhile, DA-Bicol highlighted the ongoing purification of the Camarines strain of native chicken at the agency's Central Bicol Experiment Station.

Taro leaves' market potential was also underscored, both dried and cooked as pinangat, a popular Bicolano dish. Other government agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Science and Technology have offered assistance to boost taro production and enhance product quality. (Annielyn L. Balez, DA-PRDP RPCO V InfoACE Unit)

VISAYAS P22.8-M enterprises to benefit Samar coco, banana farmers

Two enterprise development sub-projects worth P22 million from the PRDP will soon benefit coconut and banana farmers in Samar provinces with the RPAB 8's endorsement for funding support of the proposed coco geonet processing and trading enterprise in San Jose, Northern Samar, and the banana production and trading enterprise in Pinabacdao, Samar Province.

The proposed coco geonets sub-project involves a total investment cost of P8.7 million. This amount will primarily be used for the needed infrastructure facility, machineries and equipment.

Comparatively, a bigger sum at P14.1 million is needed for the banana (cardava) enterprise subproject in Samar Province since the proponent still needs to put up its own trading center and strengthen its production base by developing an area of as much as 175 hectares. (Rodel G. Macapañas, RPCO 8 InfoACE Unit)

MINDANAO Sultan Kudarat farmers see better incomes with PRDP road projects

Farmers of four barangays in Lambayong town in Sultan Kudarat will soon reap better incomes with the construction and concreting of P58 million-worth FMRs under the PRDP.

The 1.3 kilometer E. Peralta-Asuncion FMR and the 1.2 km Lambay Sambilan-Balikakao FMR, both substantially completed subprojects, now decrease farmers' transportation cost for the delivery of agricultural products.

"Before, farmers here pay P40.00 per sack of rice, just to reach the pick-up point...but now, they only pay P10.00 per sack and vehicles already pick up their products right [from] their farms," Abdulatip Mangindra of Barangay Lagao said.

Although still under finishing stage, the two other FMR subprojects, the L. Aserto-Rodrigo FMR (1.8) and the Maskulado-Abellera FMR (1.5), also already benefit a lot of agri-stakeholders.

"I expect that we will no longer pay P25.00 per sack for the transportation of our produce," Reynaldo Eugenio, who tills two-hectare ricefield near the Maskulado-Abellera FMR, said. (Carl Ulysses L. Aguillon, RPCO 12 InfoACE Unit)



The Proposed PRDP Expansion: Sustaining Institutional and Governance Reforms

Besides covering the current World Bank loan proceeds deficit for pipelined infrastructure subprojects, the proposed expansion of the PRDP also aims to:

- sustain the momentum for implementing institutional reforms on capacity-building, design, processing and governance improvements, among others, both in the DA and nationwide across LGUs;
- maintain and leverage the unprecedented level of LGU support realized through the devolved partnership arrangements under the PRDP;
- spread benefits and introduce reforms to more LGUs across the country, thereby consolidating the DA's efforts on a national scale;
- explore with the stakeholders how the PRDP's project approach can be further strengthened and sustained, including moving from a project to a programmatic strategy through which the PRDP would be integrated into DA's regular programming and budgeting processes

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