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### DA implements 5 measures to make farming more profitable, globally competitive

Tacloban City (March 5) -- The Arroyo Administration has put a premium on five imperative measures to make farming more profitable, globally competitive, and at the same time strengthening the resiliency of Philippine agriculture and fisheries sectors amid the threats of climate change and increasing global trade liberalization.

In a press statement, Agriculture Secretary Bernie Fondevilla said these measures aim to make the farming and fisheries sectors more profitable for small farmers, fisherfolk and agribusiness entrepreneurs alike, thus, not only raising rural income but also drive investments on the supply side as well.

Secretary identified the five imperative measures as: (1) continuous investments in infrastructure as well as in equipment that heighten productivity; (2) implementation of a post-harvest program that provides dryers chillers and ports to minimize post-production losses for farmers and fisherfolk; (3) strengthening of guarantee funds to extend loans and insurance for food production to farmers and fishers; (4) assistance for the dissemination and availability of information and training for new and sustainable technologies and practices; and (5) institution of policy reforms to promote sustainable agriculture are the measures carried out by the DA to keep Philippine agriculture resilient.

"The primary aim of government policies and programs in the agriculture sector is to make farm and fisheries producers profitable and competitive," Secretary Fondevilla said in his speech before economists and members of the business community during the Yearend Philippine Economic Briefing held recently at the Dusit Thani Hotel in Makati City.

At current prices, Philippine agriculture grossed P1.2 trillion in 2009, representing a 2.18% increase from the 2008 level, the agriculture secretary said.

"Profitability and competitiveness drive investments on the supply side and enables welfare enhancement, inclusive of food security, of producers through livelihood security," Secretary Fondevilla, who was DA undersecretary and Secretary Arthur Yap 's chief of staff prior to his new Cabinet posting, said.

The Agriculture Secretary noted that the challenges constantly facing Philippine agriculture come from the biophysical environment, which has been exacerbated by climate change; and the economic environment, as shown by recent food and input price spikes in the face of the headlong march by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to further trade liberalization.

The areas of interventions that the Department has put in place to meet these challenges are spelled out, he said, in President Arroyo's agriculture development agenda dubbed as FIELDS, which stands for Fertilizers, Irrigation and other infrastructure, Extension, Loans, Dryers and Seeds.

"FIELDS is grounded on a steadfast commitment to food security, competitive and free trade, sustainable agriculture, and profitable farm and fishery endeavor," Secretary Fondevilla said.

He pointed out that despite the challenges facing Philippine agriculture, the increasingly pronounced rebound of the world economy from the most recent financial crisis presents opportunities for the sector in terms of investments and international and domestic demand growth.

"The Philippines' population and the steady growth of the middle class in the region is a strong base for agriculture and food products which can provide a steady source of growth both domestically as well as for export market," Secretary Fondevilla said.

These areas of opportunities include food production, distribution and other logistics support activities, which also include green technology in agriculture. Green technology, Secretary Fondevilla explained, covers organic foods and the production of sustainable and renewable feedstocks for fuel and energy.

Fondevilla pointed out that the Philippines is now the preferred investment destination in Asia based on rising private investments in agriculture mainly for biofuel feedstock.

The Biofuels Act in the country and the rising awareness for the need to shift to clean fuel sources has provided the necessary stimulus for the development of the biofuel feedstock industry, he said.

Companies such as BENLINC, PNOC-AFC (Zambales, Bukidnon, General Santos, Bohol, and Cebu), Bioenergy Farms, Eco Global Bio Oil, CURCAS Energy Australia, Highlands Dev't Corp, DK Biofuels, KIBIO, GMC, Abundant Biofuels Corp, Herminio Teves Group, GFI, Cavite Biofuel Production Inc., FUELS Inc., Roxol Bioenergy, Basic Energy, First Pampanga Biofuels Corp., Alsons Power, Isabela Alcogas Corp., Southern Bukidnon Bioenergy are investing in biofuels in the Philippines while 17 global bioenergy investors are also here in the country.

Other investment prospects in the country's farm and fisheries sector include poultry and livestock production where the Philippines enjoys a distinct advantage because of its avian-flu free status and its reputation as relatively free of the foot-and-mouth disease.

Investors can also explore the area of seed production, Fondevilla noted. Beidahuang China, for instance, has signed an agreement to invest in seed production in the country. (PIA) [\[top\]](#)



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