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Secretary Yap inaugurates first bio-ethanol plant in the country

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ORMOC CITY -- Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap led the inauguration of the first bio-ethanol manufacturing plant in the Philippines located at Leyte Agri Corp. (LAC) compound last Oct. 17. The secretary was visibly surprised to have learned that the first such facility is located in Ormoc as everyone thought the plant being built in San Carlos, Negros Occidental will hold the distinction.

Yap inaugurated the distillation column that produces bio-ethanol which would help lessen the country's dependence on imported fuel. Built at a cost of P50 million by Indian investors, the distillery has a capacity to produce 30,000 liters of bio-ethanol a day or 900,000 liters a month.

LAC officially produced bio-ethanol fuel last July 15. All eyes are on San Carlos, Yap said in his message. But San Carlos is still four months away. Eto, bumibili na ang Petron dito (sa Ormoc). We have to recognize that this is really the first (bio-ethanol project in the country). The plant in LAC is just one of 21 bio-ethanol facilities being built around the country in compliance with the Bio-fuels Act of 2008 which requires oil companies to blend bio-fuels to their products. This blending starts at 5% this year. Another 5% will be added every year thereafter until such time it reaches 85%.

But to meet the initial 5% blend requirement, some 200 million liters of bio-fuel is needed which is being imported, according to Marris Agbon, president of Philippine Agribusiness Development and Commercial Corp. which consolidates tracts of lands for ethanol production. LAC buys 35,000 metric tons of molasses annually from Hideco Sugar Milling Co. in neighboring Kananga town to produce bio-ethanol. The finished product is then transported to Petron's oil depot in Pandacan, Manila on board iso trucks where it is blended with regular fuel.

Yap doesn't see any competition between bio-fuel production and food security considering that sugar is not a food security crop. We can live without sugar but we can't live without rice, he cited the difference. He also said that 400 million hectares are devoted to food production while crops that will be used for bio-fuels like sugarcane, jathropa, cassava, etc. will be planted in the uplands.

Established in 2001, LAC is a subsidiary of Tao Corp., a company that is engaged in molasses and alcohol trading. It has an annual capacity of eight million liters of food grade alcohol. It also has an LCO2 recovery plant that produces liquid carbon dioxide for the domestic industrial market. Its clients are Ginebra San Miguel Inc., Air Liquide Phils., International Pharmaceuticals Inc., Ptron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Corp. and TWAA Flying V. **from WEST LEYTE WEEKLY EXPRESS**

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VISION

The Vision of Ormoc City is to be an Agro-Commercial and Industrial Center of Visayas, Globally Competitive and Sustainably managing its resources by the year 2014. The City is the "Gateway to Economic Opportunities"

MISSION

Optimization of the economic growth potential at Ormoc City conducive to a sustainable environment; Implementation of a CLUP that will serve as a basis for the city in considering its investment plans and decisions; identification of investment opportunity and formulation of phased program of action.



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