



## **Agri, human capital dev't key to more resilient economy: NEDA**

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**MANILA** – Reforms that enable structural transformation and strengthen human capital development are the foundations of a more resilient economy in a post-pandemic world, the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) said.

In his keynote speech during the opening program of the 7th Annual Public Policy Conference (APPC) hosted by the Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS) Tuesday, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Kendrick Chua underscored the significance of the agriculture sector in the country's development story.

“Focusing on the theme, ‘Reset and rebuild for a better Philippines in the post-pandemic world,’ this year's Development Policy Research Month challenges us to plan for a more resilient economy. To achieve this, we need to focus on our agriculture sector, which is the foundation of any country's structural transformation,” Chua said.

The NEDA chief said the Duterte administration has enacted several reforms and invested trillions in social services and infrastructure to enable proper structural transformation and strengthen the human capital development of the country.

For instance, the Rice Tariffication Law lowers rice prices for all Filipino consumers, especially the poor, and enhances the productivity of rice farmers through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund.

“After the Rice Tariffication Law, rice ceased to be one of the top contributors to inflation and has been negative for most of the past 28 consecutive months since May of 2019. This allows the people, especially the poor, to more adequately meet their daily food and dietary needs, especially amid the pandemic. At the same time, rice production increased to 3.5 million metric tons in the third quarter of 2020, representing a 15 percent growth compared to the same period in 2019,” he said.

Chua also highlighted the importance of accelerating the implementation of the Philippine Identification System or the national ID program to enhance the government's ability to deliver various social services.

He said the national ID will enable Filipinos, especially the poor, to open bank accounts where they can directly receive cash transfers.

As of Sept. 10, over 42 million Filipinos have registered for step 1 or the demographic data collection.

Moreover, despite the quarantines, almost 30 million have taken the second step to provide their biometrics in the registration centers.

“The impact of the Covid-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) pandemic is challenging, but the Philippines has a solid foundation to recover at the right time. Reforms such as Rice Tariffication Law and the National ID are helping us restore our development trajectory and enabling the people, especially the poor, to access affordable food and better social services,” he said.

Signed into law by President Rodrigo R. Duterte in August 2018, Republic Act 11055, or the Philippine Identification System Act, aims to establish a single national ID for all Filipinos and resident aliens.

The national ID will be a valid proof of identity that shall be a means of simplifying public and private transactions, enrollment in schools, and the opening of bank accounts.

It will also boost efficiency, especially in dealing with government services where people will only need to present one ID during transactions.

Meanwhile, the Annual Public Policy Conference (APPC) public webinar series is the main and culminating activity of the Development Policy Research Month (DPRM) headed by the PIDS.