

## Experts call for ‘qualified,’ ‘motivated’ officials at DA

By Vincent Mariel P. Galang - August 12, 2019

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AGRICULTURE EXPERTS said the sector needs “qualified” and “motivated” officials to carry out productivity enhancements that will help the sector generate surpluses that will at least keep up with population growth.

“Ang masasabi ko lang (What I can say is, the new Agriculture Secretary) has to look at ‘yung mga taong nasa posisyon (the officials in place)... achieving his targets requires qualified people,” Rolando T. Dy, executive director of Center for Food and Agribusiness of University of Asia and the Pacific, told BusinessWorld in a phone interview.

Acting Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said that he intends to grow the sector by as much as 4% within three years.

“We have to grow beyond that population growth rate. Let’s start with 2%. After one year, go to 3% [and] by the end of the third year, 4%,” he told reporters in a briefing last week. He also warned underperforming officials that if they do not measure up to the demands of their position, he will remove them.

Mr. Dy noted that there is a need for motivated people in order to achieve Mr. Dar’s targets.

“May mga appointees diyan (There are appointees), sorry to say, hindi (are not) qualified....kasi nasa implementation tayo eh (because implementation is key)... Alam ni Secretary Dar ‘yan na (Secretary Dar knows that) in order to achieve his targets, he needs very good and motivated people,” he explained.

Mr. Dar replaced former Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol last week, days before the government announced the second quarter agriculture output data.

On Thursday, second quarter agricultural output fell 1.27% year-on-year in the second quarter, the biggest drop in three years.

Philippine Institute for Development Studies Research Fellow Roehlano M. Briones said the sector must change how it does business.

“Mr. Dar has set a very good target and it will take time in order to bring that about.... but what we really should be after are structural changes in the way business is being done in our agriculture sector and that where I have high hopes under this new secretary,” he said in a separate interview.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) Chairman Rosendo O. So said that the group will be meeting with Mr. Dar on Wednesday in order to discuss its request to reorganize the DA. He said that the organization does not have confidence in current officials’ ability to help the farm sector.

“We all can see our agriculture output result is down. We need a new team to (achieve) better agricultural production,” he said in a text message.