



URGENT HELP | Government urged to step up as more farmers experiencing poverty

By Beatrice Puente – July 13, 2022

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Poverty incidence among farmers has reached twice as high as the national average, a researcher said on Wednesday, urging the government to pursue efforts to strengthen the agriculture sector.

Ivory Myka Galang, a supervising research specialist at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said poverty incidence—the proportion of poor individuals to the total population—among farmers was at 32% in 2018, citing figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). It's nearly double the national average of 17%.

“Kailangan talaga natin i-focus o masusing pag-aralan ang pag-develop ng agriculture sector kasi nandyan ‘yung mahihirap nating kababayan,” said Galang on Ted Failon and DJ Chacha sa Radyo 5.

According to the latest study of the PSA, agricultural workers only earn an average daily wage of P331.10.

Poverty worsened in recent years as the COVID-19 crisis dealt heavy economic blows across all sectors. In the first half of 2021, the PSA said poverty incidence went up to 23.7%.

President Bongbong Marcos Jr., who also sits as secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA), vowed to help prepare the country for the looming food crisis. He also stressed the need to fix the value chain to pave the way for a more efficient agricultural system.

Galang agreed that this would be crucial in improving the situation of farmers.

“Dapat i-ensure na mapataas natin ‘yung productivity at the farm level at i-ensure natin na may maayos na value chain. Kumbaga, may market na patutunguhan ‘yung mga ipo-produce ng farmers,” said Galang. “Tanggalin natin ang efficiencies along that chain para mapamura natin ‘yung presyo ng pagkain.”

Several groups have called on the government to support farmers who bear the brunt of ensuring the country's food security. There have been occurrences when some farmers were forced to dump their excess produce after being unable to sell them in the market because of the low prices being offered.

Marcos also promised to bring down the price of rice to P20 per kilo.

Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), meanwhile, cited the importance of stopping land conversions to maximize the gains of production and stabilize the supply of products.

“Monsoon season is about to start in a couple of months. The steadily rising cost of fertilizer and fuel persists to threaten production targets. The government must have a sound and long-term policy track to ensure the steady production and supply of our staple grains,” said KMP chairperson emeritus Paeng Mariano.

Galang also urged government agencies to work together to address the issues in agriculture instead of

letting the DA handle things alone. While importation is not essentially wrong, she noted that this should be coupled with clear plans to improve the domestic level.

“Kung business as usual tayo, hindi natin talaga maa-achieve ‘yung magandang kinabukasan. Kailangan ngayon pa lang, actually dapat kahapon pa at noong mga nakaraang taon, naisaayos na natin ‘yung ating problema,” said Galang.