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Rice-ducks farming to address food security

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

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By Bong D. Fabe

CEBU CITY – The Integrated Rice-Ducks Technology will address food security issues in Asian countries, especially the Philippines, during the global economic recession.

Dr. Takao Furuno, the technology's foremost exponent, stressed that the Integrated Rice-Ducks farming system is cost-efficient and also friendly to public and environment health because farmers do not rely on synthetic chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers to ensure a good harvest.

Panagbenga 2009 blog

Speaking before delegates from different Asian countries during the 6th International Rice-Ducks Conference at the College of Architecture and Fine Arts (CAFA) building at the University of San Carlos, Furuno said the system frees farmers from relying on chemical commercial synthetic fertilizers and pesticides to produce a high farm yield.

"Ducks control the growth of weeds in rice fields. Aside from this, ducks also serve as effective pesticides as they eat the pests, especially golden snails that attack the rice plants," he said.

Secretary Arthur Yap of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said he fully supports the technology Furuno developed and its implementation here in the Philippines in line with the President's food security program.

According to a statement read before the delegates by DA-Central Visayas Regional Technical Director Eduardo S. Alama, Yap revealed that the DA is now "hastening the development of the Philippine plan on rice-duck farming in partnership with local government units, the academe and farmer organizations."

Yap believes that the new farming system will be highly beneficial for farmers as it is superior to the traditional system of rice production in terms of economic benefits and environmental impact.

Various studies and research done by scientists and farmers all over Asia showed the rice yield increased significantly by 50 percent while duck herding before transplanting rice is effective in eliminating golden snails.

Holding on to the new system's success in other countries like Japan, the DA hopes that it would also be successful in the Philippines, which experienced a rice crisis in the past year.

It added that the new system would be more efficient if the country would also boost the duck industry, which has declined over the past years.

According to the DA, since its development, efforts to spread the integrated rice-duck technology to other rice-producing nations have been done to bolster food security and sufficiency.

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The Aigamo (Japanese for ducks) or rice-duck farming is a welcome innovation in these hard times. Not only is it ecological and environmental friendly, the use of the technology will lessen the cost of production for our farmers because they will not spend as much money buying expensive pesticides," said Undersecretary for Support Services Evelyn Bistoyong of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

Bistoyong said aside from freeing the farmers and their families from the clutches of multinational manufacturers of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, the technology also promotes family involvement.

"Aigamo provides additional income due to its integrated farming technique. The ducks and (small-scale) fishery component shall provide additional income. It will also involve more family members in the enterprise, thus provides employment," she said.

According to Dr. Antonio Barroga of the Central Luzon State University (CLSU) in the Science City of Munoz, "rice-duck farming system allows farmers to produce organic rice with zero inorganic fertilizer, insecticide and herbicide application."

Because of this, the integrated rice-ducks technology "can address the environmental issue and has been proven to be socio-economically feasible."

The integrated rice-ducks technology was first implemented in the Philippines in at least 55 hectares of rice fields in Sinayawan, Valencia City in Bukidnon province in 1996 through the efforts of Mr. Apollo Pacamalan, who learned the technology from Dr. Furono himself.

From Valencia, the technology has steadily gained acceptance from all over the country, especially in Mindanao where there are now close to a hundred hectares in the provinces of Bukidnon, Agusan del Sur, Misamis Oriental, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte using the technology.

Mayor Irene Hitgano of Trento in the province of Agusan del Sur implemented the technology only last June 2008 using her own rice fields as trial production farms. But in less than 6 months, the project became so successful that no less than Agusan del Sur Governor Valentina Plaza supported the project and adopted it province-wide.

Last December, the Agusan del Sur Provincial Government launched the integrated rice-ducks farming technology, allocating funds to support farmers who want to implement the project.

According to Mayor Hitgano, implementing the integrated rice-ducks technology in her municipality yielded the following benefits: increase in yield = increase in income; weed control; effective insect pest control; farmers can use spare time for other productive non-farm activities; health - no exposure to pesticides and schistosomiasis; low production costs; organic rice production; unburden LGU's coffers or even my pockets; complement the ongoing organic rice farming technology; increase in real property tax because of the increased productivity; change of mind-set as a local chief executive; from physical development to local agriculture development.

Hitgano also realized that "investing in agriculture can be a strategy to a politician's 'winability' during election."

It also "empowered women as they are mobilized as partners in technology development and promotion."




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