

DA promotes production of native rice for Cordillera

Saturday, 20 December 2008

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According to DA-CAR Director Cesar Rodriguez, through the initiatives of DA Secretary Arthur Yap, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo already approved an initial seed subsidy fund of P1 M for farmers in the rice terraces in Cordillera, as they are now looking for a seed that is acceptable and adaptable to the region and of quality that is also acceptable to the foreign market.

He also revealed that he had a talked to Mountain Province Gov Maximo Dalog on the idea of naming the native rice from Mountain Province and Benguet as "Igorot rice", Rodriguez added.

With the onset of the dry season, which started November and will last until April, Rodriguez announced that they will be giving certified rice seed subsidy to rice farmers in the lowland areas in Cordillera - of 40kg bag per hectare that is worth P1,200.00 per bag. For farmers who wish to plant Hybrid rice, they will also be providing a subsidy of P1,500.00 per hectare of rice farmland.

Rodriguez explained that they want better or more rice production this dry season, so as the surplus in production can offset whatever effect the rainy or typhoon season would bring to the rice production next season. He assured though that there is enough supply of rice this season, due to better productions in the last harvest period. This he said is also the reason for the lower price of commercial rice.

Rodriguez announced that they will be actively working more towards organic production in Cordillera for 2009, as he cited that they already started putting-up "bio-ends" or biological fertilizer enducers, in Kalinga and Abra, as it enhances the use of Nitrogen present in the atmosphere, which is beneficial to rice and corn crops.

DA also promotes the use of organic fertilizers, saying he is advocating that veggies from Cordilleras are safe to eat and fertilizers are only used when needed. DA will be having capacity building programs for LGUs and farmers cooperative, to promote the idea for farmers/LGUs to produce their own organic fertilizers, "as the government can't give all of their needs as we are only banking on the resources we have, it should be a partnership", he added.

In relation to this, Rodriguez explained that it has been his policy that we use our own resources, so that not only users of organic fertilizers will benefit, but Cordillerans, through their cooperatives and LGUs, will I also derive income from producing organic fertilizers. (PIA)