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## 19 Farm Projects Piloted As Models Of Modernization-Focused Sagip Saka

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MANILA, Philippines — Nineteen farm projects will be piloted as models under multi-sectoral Sagip Saka that envisions to modernize Philippine agriculture and use this as a vehicle to economic development.

An initial P100-million fund will be allocated by public-private groups led by the Congressional Oversight Commission on Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization (COCAFAM) and the Department of Agriculture.

Spread all over the Philippines and selected for the strong presence of supportive local government units (LGUs) and private and farmers' groups, the pilot projects cover at least 12 commodities. These are rice, mango, onion, coffee, cassava, calamansi, milkfish and other fish species, sugar, corn, camote or sweet potato, peanut, rubber, and coconut.

Sen. Francis N. Pangilinan, COCAFAM chairman, said Sagip Saka will provide the needs of farmers in order to improve their income as they will be assisted by many cooperating agencies.

"We're looking at creating model farms. Since AFMA (Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act) was put together, AFMA was just more of a rhetoric. Sagip Saka is precisely a program that will address needs on farm to market roads, post harvest facilities, access to credit," he said. "It will actually make it happen. And there will always be the five pillars."

Sagip Saka is strengthening the cooperation of these five pillars-DA and other agencies (Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Agrarian Reform), business sector, LGUs, microfinancing institutions and civic organizations, and farmers' and fishers' groups.

Each of the pillars will contribute their own counterpart fund for the projects. However, Pangilinan said the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (ACEF) will also be used later to finance these once it is reopened. He said a significant portion of ACEF will be used as a grant in order to aid the least competitive farmers.

In the Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR), the Ifugao Rice Terraces will be rehabilitated with its estimated 102,663 cubic meters of damaged terrace area. The damage affects 2,000 farmers, and its repair costs at least P61 million.

Another CAR project is the buy and sell of heirloom rice in Pasnakan, Poblacion, Banaue, and Ifugao. Heirloom rice in the uplands is not only a livelihood provider for farmers with some volume exported to the United States but is a culturally valued product in Cordillera.

In Region 1, the Sagip Saka project is an input support to mango growing in Ilocos Norte through the Federation of Mango Stakeholders.

Region 3 projects are cold storage support for red and white onions in San Jose City Nueva Ecija and the establishment of a 20-hectare mango orchard for the Amungan Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Iba, Zambales.

The Region 4-A projects are the acquisition of roasting machine for Café Amadeo Development Cooperative that will produce the special Barako coffee and the establishment of cassava nurseries in San Pablo City, Laguna. The cassava will be processed for export by the Global Food Solutions.

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