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Details Category: Agri-Commodities 08 Apr 2014
Written by Alladin S. Diega / Correspondent



BANAUE, Ifugao—The government is expecting to export more organic rice to the United States and Canada this year, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"We hope to be able to export around 60 metric tons [MT] of organic rice, particularly from the Cordilleras for 2014, according to Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR) DA Director Marilyn Sta. Catalina.

Last year the Philippines exported to the US some 27.6 MT, bought from 272 farmers from the three provinces of CAR.

The shipment included mina-angan a variety specifically native to the municipality of Banaue and hungduan from Ifugao, and 5 tons of ulikan from Pasil and Lubuagan in Kalinga.

The different varieties were consolidated by Rice Terraces Farmers Cooperative, in cooperation with the non-governmental organization (NGO) Rice Inc. Eighth Wonder Inc., a US-based NGO that assists in marketing products from the Cordillera's rice terraces, and will receive the shipment in California.

According to Sta. Catalina, the export of organic and heirloom rice to US and Canada will help sustain the status of rice terraces as a world heritage treasure, by preserving it and encouraging farmers to continue their traditional farming activities.

"Last month the Ifugao provincial agriculturist reported that the rehabilitation of the Banaue Rice Terraces is 90-percent done," Sta. Catalina said, adding that she is expecting the restoration is complete at this time.

The DA spearheaded the Banawe rice terraces restoration project, which started in March 2012, and shouldered the P24.3 million of the total project cost of P26.5 million, to increase the production of traditional or heirloom rice varieties for both domestic and export markets.

The project was an effort to restore damaged terrace walls and irrigation canals, particularly in Barangay Batad, Banawe, Ifugao.

Portions of the Batad rice terraces were damaged by typhoons Pedring and Quiel in 2011.

The rehabilitation included the establishment of a regional heirloom rice-processing center (RPC) in Lamut, Ifugao, and satellite village RPCs in different areas, which will be equipped in the future with micro mills, pedal threshers, and appropriate mechanical and solar dryers, including the construction of tramlines.

For 2015 the DA has allocated some P1.4 billion for organic farming, out of the P134.5 billion total proposed budget of the department for 2015.

In Photo: A UNESCO heritage and believed to be constructed in 2000 B.C., farmers of the Ifugao Rice Terraces hope to export their organically grown rice for this year. Alladin S. Diega

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