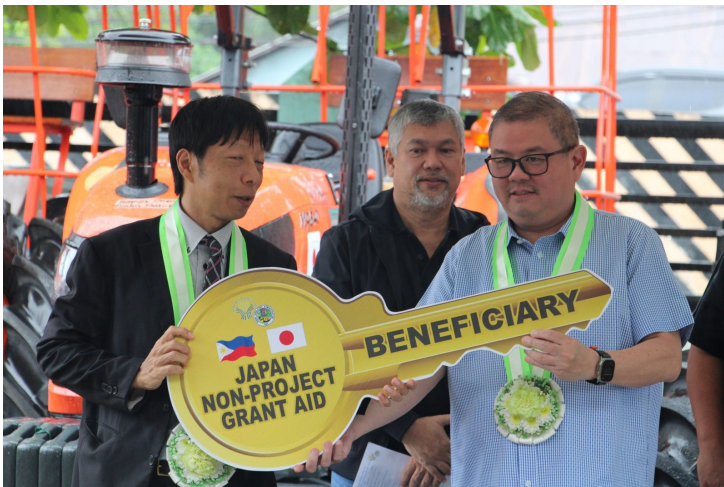


Philippines DA, SRA receive 800 M yen worth of farm equipment from Japan for small sugarcane farmers

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The Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines, Kazuhiko Koshikawa turned over the grant to Agriculture Secretary Francisco "Sec Kiko" Tiu Laurel, SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona, and representatives of beneficiaries from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

"We thank Government of Japan and for the 80 units of tractors, 48 units of sugarcane planters, 48 units of flail mowers, and 5 units of power harrow—all extended under the Japan Non-Project Aid Program," Sec. Laurel said this during the turnover ceremony at the SRA Compound in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental.

The Department has played a significant role in the evaluation, approval, and monitoring of the progress of the project entitled Farm Mechanization Program for Small Sugarcane Landholders.

"Mechanization reduces hard labor, relieves labor shortages, and improves the productivity and timeliness of agricultural operations," the agriculture chief said.

Laurel also commended the SRA for steering the sugarcane industry toward increasing its production through small sugarcane farmers.

In his public pronouncements, the new agriculture chief said he would consult with stakeholders, including the huge DA bureaucracy, in order to accomplish President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.'s marching orders to bring down the prices of food items like rice, sugar, meat, chicken, fish, and vegetables by increasing food production.

Laurel noted that his experience moving up the corporate ladder allowed him to witness for himself the problems of the agriculture sector and the need for national and local authorities to work together to address the problems of Filipino farmers.

"I have been on a journey of administrative responsibility. I went to see first-hand conditions throughout the agriculture sector, to see how effectively national and local authorities are taking care of the Filipino farmers' pressing problems and how they work together to support national food security," he said.

Laurel thanked the Japanese embassy official involved in actualizing the grant and said modernizing Philippine agriculture is key to meeting the President's and the public's expectations of more affordable and accessible food items.