

## Philippines seeks more foreign project funding to fill investment gaps in agriculture sector

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Philippines Department of Agriculture is actively seeking additional funding from international development partners to address critical challenges in the agricultural sector and fill large gaps in farm infrastructure due to the lack of significant investments in the past three decades.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said the DA recognized that the government has limited resources to undertake major projects such as seaports, roads and bridges, and irrigation that are needed to modernize agriculture and improve the income of farmers and fishermen. The DA chief also pointed to efforts to expand the cold chain storage network to address issues of overproduction and post-harvest losses, particularly in high-value crops.

“Your department is working at finding other funding sources from official development partners to implement necessary and relevant interventions needed to address critical sectoral and institutional challenges and investment gaps,” the DA chief said.

Sec. Tiu Laurel said development of “Build Better More” farm-to-market roads and bridges has been proposed to the French Government to improve the infrastructure linking farm production sites, fisheries, coastal landing points, and post-harvest facilities to markets and major highways.

The DA chief said the project will also facilitate trade to ensure smooth and efficient movement of agricultural products to reduce trade barriers and develop a more effective value chain for food and agricultural commodities to ensure they reach their destinations more efficiently. Program is expected to address significant infrastructure gaps that currently hinder the efficient distribution of agricultural goods.

Sec. Tiu Laurel said the DA is also proposing a project under the World Bank's Program for Results, or P4R, provide incremental funding to accelerate DA's initiatives and enhance the impact of its programs, and emphasize achieving sustainable outcomes and building institutional capacity.

Sec. Tiu Laurel also underscored the DA's collaboration with the National Irrigation Administration, which has been recently transferred to the Office of the President to fast-track irrigation projects, in pushing forward with the Philippine Solar-Powered Irrigation Project that will initially install 8,000 units across the country to provide farms with rapid access to irrigation, boost harvest and increase farm yields.

"In addition, we will be building food terminals along with cold storage facilities that will also be strategically established regionally. These facilities are very crucial to address the food logistical cold chain issues," Sec. Tiu Laurel said.