

Manila pushes for expanded agriculture and fisheries collaboration with Japan

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The Philippines is set to strengthen its longstanding agricultural partnership with Japan as both nations move to deepen collaboration in food security, sustainable agriculture, fisheries, and advanced farming technologies ahead of President Ferdinand R Marcos Jr.'s scheduled state visit to Japan later this month.

The renewed push for bilateral cooperation was highlighted during a courtesy meeting between Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Kazuya Endo and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., where senior officials from both sides discussed strategic initiatives aimed at broadening agricultural and technological engagement between the two countries.

In a statement issued by the Department of Agriculture (DA), Secretary Tiu Laurel described the engagement as a reflection of the enduring strength and continuity of Philippines-Japan relations, particularly in areas critical to agricultural transformation and sustainable development.

He noted that the evolving partnership presents an opportunity for both countries to align priorities and accelerate initiatives that will directly benefit Filipino farmers and fisherfolk while advancing shared goals in innovation and food security.

Among the key developments discussed was the proposed amendment to the existing Philippines-Japan Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on agriculture, which seeks to formally expand bilateral cooperation to include the fisheries sector.

The inclusion of fisheries is expected to support the Philippines's broader food security agenda while creating new opportunities for technical cooperation, investment, and capacity building.

Once amended, the agreement will also pave the way for the establishment of a Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries, envisioned as an institutional mechanism to ensure sustained collaboration, long-term programme implementation, and deeper policy coordination between the two nations.

The Philippines is also seeking to advance deeper technological cooperation with Japan to modernise domestic agricultural systems and improve farm productivity through innovation-led solutions.

Discussions covered areas such as smart agriculture, precision farming technologies, and digital agricultural systems aimed at enhancing efficiency, sustainability, and climate resilience within the country's agricultural sector.

Trade and market access issues also featured prominently during the meeting.

The Department of Agriculture reiterated the Philippines's request for the reduction of tariffs on fresh bananas exported to Japan, a long-standing priority for the local banana industry.

Both parties additionally explored opportunities for expanded bilateral agricultural trade, including new market access arrangements for Philippine pomelos in Japan and Japanese grapes in the Philippines.

Preparations for the upcoming second Joint Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries meeting, scheduled to be hosted by Japan in early July, were likewise reviewed during the discussions.

The Philippines also conveyed its intention to participate in the Green X EXPO 2027, underscoring its broader commitment to sustainable agriculture, green innovation, and international cooperation.

The renewed engagement signals a growing convergence between the Philippines and Japan in advancing resilient, technology-driven, and future-ready agricultural systems capable of addressing evolving regional and global food security challenges.