

GO FOR FOOD REQUIRING LESS RESOURCES TO GROW, DA URGES CONSUMERS

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The government will try to wean Filipinos on consuming food commodities that require large areas to grow as the country's resources are seen not be able to cope with the country's rapid population growth.

A new advocacy under the Duterte administration is set to determine the food requirements of Filipinos in the next 50 years through a National Food Consumption Quantification survey under the Department of Agriculture.

This will complement a study to be done by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that will measure the country's food consumption in relation to its food production.

Latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed the country's population in 2015 was already 100,981,437, or a growth rate of 1.7 percent.

Aside from assessing the country's food requirements, according to Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, the study

will also determine what food Filipinos prefer to eat, how much of these food do Filipinos consume, where and how can the country produce these food, how much of these food do we need to produce in the next 50 years, and up to what point can the country's land and aquatic resources can suffice the needs of the population.

It will also find alternatives or new measures on how the sector can produce more food using less land and water, and how it can encourage Filipinos to veer away from consuming

food that require more resources to grow.

"People have to understand that the 30-million hectare land area and the width of the seas within the country's EEZ (exclusive economic zone), including the 25-million hectare continental shelf east of Luzon called the Philippine Rise, is finite," said Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol on his Facebook page where he often posts major policies and programs of the agency.

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"There will be a point in the life of this nation when the land and the seas will no longer be

able to produce enough food for Filipinos," he added.

In a press conference earlier this week, the secretary revealed that based on the computation of the DA, Philippine Rice Research Institute, and International Rice Research Institute, the country was now 96 percent rice self-sufficient.

He added that the country's paddy output of 19.3 million metric tons (MT) last year was equivalent to about 13.1 million MT of milled rice at an average milling capacity rate of 65 percent. This is higher than the country's annual estimated rice requirement of about 11.2 million MT.

Nonetheless, Piñol pointed out that even as the Duterte administration's target to reach rice self-sufficiency by 2020 would be achieved, it might take only about five to 10 years before the country would revert to producing less than the population requires.

"We may achieve rice self-sufficiency by 2020 but it will be temporary and fleeting as I expect population to overtake the capacity of the country to produce food the traditional way," he said. INQ