



Agriculture, Mindanao, Poverty and the National Statistics Month!

Once again, the Philippine Statistical System (PSS), spearheaded by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) is celebrating the National Statistics Month (NSM). The theme for the 16th celebration of the NSM is “Modernizing Agriculture and Fishery Through Quality Statistics“ or “*Makabuluhang Estadistika – Gabay sa Pagpapalawak ng Makabagong Agrikultura at Pangingisda*”. The opening ceremonies, which were hosted by the Department of Agriculture thru its Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) were held last Monday at the Bureau of Soils and Water Management Convention Hall, Quezon City.

In his keynote address, Agriculture Sec. Domingo F. Panganiban reiterated the DA goals of developing at least two million hectares of agribusiness lands and aquamarine areas in order to contribute two million jobs by 2010 and making food plentiful at affordable prices. Toward this end, he stressed that BAS, headed by OIC-Assistant Secretary Romeo S. Recide, was bent on continuously improving the Philippine Agricultural Statistical System. In the same forum, Mr. Raul Suarez de Miguel, of the OECD and Coordinator of the METAGORA (Measuring Human Rights, Democracy and Governance) project being implemented in the Philippines by the Commission on Human Rights in collaboration with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, NSCB, NSO and SRTC, congratulated the Philippine statistical community for its strong and active commitment towards the generation of relevant indicators for evidence-based decision making and monitoring. He challenged the PSS to continue improving its work on integrating statistics with national goals and policies.

Several activities are lined up for the nation-wide month-long celebration and everybody is enjoined to participate. The calendar of activities is posted on the NSCB website at <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/nsm>

Closing ceremonies of the NSM celebration will be hosted by the BSP and will coincide with the 10th BSP-DepEd Oratorical Contest on October 28 at the BSP. This year, the interesting and enlightening oratorical contest among our high school students will be nationwide, the second time it will be held so.

We are proud that the BAS produces a lot of agricultural statistics, much more than what other countries at the same level of economic development as the Philippines do. Do you know about these statistics? Have you been using them?

For example, many of us rave over the *Guimaras* mangoes. But according to the BAS publication, *Fruit Crops Top Producing Provinces 2004*, **Pangasinan** is by far the main

¹ Secretary General of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) and Chairman of the Statistical Research and Training Center (SRTC). He holds a Ph. D. in Statistics from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, USA and has taught mathematics and statistics at the University of the Philippines. He is also a past president of the Philippine Statistical Association.

source of our world-famous mangoes with close to 40% share of total volume of production . The next biggest producer is **Batangas** with less than 6% share. **Guimaras**, which produces mainly carabao mangoes, ranks only 21st with a share of 1.2 %, because the other provinces also grow the other varieties. Incidentally, we are very happy for the **Guimarasnons** because they have a Governor, Dr. Joaquin Carlos Rahman A. Nava, who is a very progressive thinker and values statistics highly in running the province. He is determined to compile the Provincial Product Account of Guimaras! And **Zambales**, which is also known for its excellent mangoes ranks only 24th with a 1.1 % share. To our friends in the DA, NEDA and other concerned agencies, please let us have more of those delicious mangoes from **Guimaras** and **Zambales** to go with our **suman**?

And while almost 70% of our mangoes come from **Luzon**, for the other fruit crops, do you know that we are very dependent on our farmers from Mindanao, who produce 76% of our bananas, 87% of our pineapple, 99% of our **durian**, 90% of our **lanzones**, more than 99% of our **mangosteen**, 54 % of our papayas, 51% of our **langka**, 52% of our **pomelo** and 99% of our **marang**? I bet many of us do not even know what **marang** looks like! Can someone please do something so that these luscious fruits from Mindanao can be transported more cheaply and so we can afford them here in Manila? By doing so, since about 36% of our poor are in Mindanao and about 55% of our farmers in Mindanao are poor, won't this be the way to reduce poverty? And our MTPDP talks about making food more cheaply available, remember?

Coffee drinkers, of course, associate good coffee with **kapeng barako** grown by our brave **Batanguenos**! But again, except for Cavite (Amadeo, Cavite has been dubbed the coffee capital of the Philippines!) which ranks 4th, the rest of the top five producers of coffee are all in Mindanao: Sultan Kudarat, Compostela Valley, Davao City and Davao del Sur. Batangas ranks only 13th. We used to earn millions of dollars from export of coffee; now, coffee exports is smaller than a dot in our foreign trade statistics! Time to really do something about preserving the **barako** and this is not the job of my friends from the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women!

Maybe the twentysomethings around us do not know it but **abaca**, of which **lubid** is made, is also called **manila** hemp! **Lubid** is what your **Lola** may have used to make **pikot** your **Lolo**! But **abaca** is used for many other things like bags and decors. According to BAS, the top four producers of abaca are Catanduanes, Leyte, Southern Leyte and Davao Oriental . Except for Southern Leyte, they belong to our poorer provinces and we surely can contribute to their poverty alleviation efforts if we buy and use **abaca**-made products.

And if you still think **kalamansi** is what vitamin C is all about, you are probably not twentysomething and are one of those not familiar with the lingo of text messages via the cell phone! According to our DOST, 34 medium-sized kalamansi or 5 medium-sized tomatoes can give us the needed vitamin C for the day, which ranges from 50-60 mgs unless one is pregnant or a lactating mother who requires a higher dose. But one **kamote** gives 29.5 mgs of vitamin C! The top five producing provinces of **kamote** are Leyte, Bohol, Albay, Camarines Sur and Quezon. In 2000, out of 82 provinces and key cities, these provinces were the 39th, 11th, 30th, 29th and 45th poorest provinces, respectively. Let us therefore help our **kababayan** from these five provinces fight poverty. Time for all members of civil society, if we are genuinely concerned about helping our poor **kababayan**, to commit to buy and eat **kamote** three times a day! We'll get a good dose of vitamin C, good for our health and never mind the repercussion later. Good exercise for the, excuse me, assholes!

What about *balinghoy*! For me, *bibingkang balinghoy* and *sumang balinghoy* rank with *buko pie* among the best! Better than apple pie! Our top producers of *balinghoy* or cassava, are Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, Camarines Sur and Tawi-Tawi; four of them in Mindanao.

And for our major crops? For palay, four of our top five producers are in Luzon: Nueva Ecija, Isabela, Iloilo, Pangasinan and Cagayan. But for corn, six of the top seven producers are in Mindanao: Isabela, Bukidnon, South Cotabato, Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte. For coconut, three of the top five producers are likewise in Mindanao: Quezon, Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur, Leyte and Lanao del Norte! For sugarcane, the top producers are Negros Occidental, Bukidnon, Negros Oriental, Batangas and Iloilo.

So there they are...some of the agricultural statistics published by our Bureau of Agricultural Statistics...very rich in information! If we only used them wisely!

Many of our poor are in Mindanao; agriculture thrives in Mindanao. Let us all then give serious support to agriculture – we help our brothers and sisters in Mindanao and we help reduce poverty.

Incidentally, last month I attended the Fourteenth Session of the Statistical Advisory Committee of Experts (renamed International Advisory Group on Agricultural Statistics) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome. During the meeting, the FAO Statistics Division headed by Hasluk Kasnakoglu made a very informative and impressive presentation on its FAOSTAT and CountrySTAT, online FAO multilingual databases that serve as powerful tools for the dissemination of agricultural statistics. The FAO website at www.fao.org houses these very useful databases (the CountrySTAT is still at its pilot stage and I was given an advance copy of its Philippine version) and I highly recommend them to users of agricultural and rural statistics.

Happy National Statistics Month!

Reactions and views are welcome thru email to the author at ra.virola@nscb.gov.ph.

Reference URL: http://www.nscb.gov.ph/headlines/StatsSpeak/101005_rav_agriNSM.asp

For your inquiries and information needs, visit or call the:

NATIONAL STATISTICAL INFORMATION CENTER
G/F Midland Buendia Building., 403 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue
Makati City, Philippines

Tel. Nos. : (632) 895-2767, 890-9405
Fax : (632) 890-8456
E-mail : info@nscb.gov.ph