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Crop losses due to floods in Leyte now amount to P11.3M

TACLOBAN CITY -- Rice farms in Leyte suffered losses amounting to P11.3 million due to flooding in the last week of December but the Department of Agriculture (DA) regional office assured that the 2011 production target will still be met.

Antonio G. Gerundio, DA regional executive director for Eastern Visayas, said a total of 4,630 hectares of rice fields were flooded and 11,518 metric tons of palay were lost.

Of the affected farms, 2,736 hectares were severely damaged and only 1,894 hectares have the chance to recover. About 3,000 farmers were affected.

Mr. Gerundio, however, said the damaged crops were still in vegetative stage and there is enough seed stock to replace them. The department is sticking to its 2011 production target of about one million metric tons. In 2010, the region harvested 964,000 metric tons of rice.

"The effect is only minimal and it won't have significant impact on production targets considering that we immediately replaced seedlings that were washed away. Out of 11,000 seed stocks, only 2,000 bags were used for replacement for areas damaged by the recent flooding," Mr. Gerundio said.

The incessant rains in late December flooded the farms in the towns of Palo, Tanauan, Burauen, Carigara, Capoocan, Dagami, Dulag, Jaro, Julita, La Paz, Macarthur, Mayorga, Tabontabon, Matag-ob, and Javier, all in Leyte.

Damaged rice farms were also recorded in the towns Silago, Sogod, and Saint Bernard in Southern Leyte. The region has around 155,000 hectares of land devoted to rice.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gerundio said they were stepping up their information drive to increase awareness among farmers of the effects of climate change.

For the next cropping season, which normally starts in May, the farm department will encourage farmers to plant early. -- **Sarwell Q. Meniano**

Recent calamities expected to affect MDGs

PALO, LEYTE -- An official of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) here said the calamities that recently hit the country will impact on government efforts to attain Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially in poor regions like Eastern Visayas.

Buenaventura C. Go-Soco, Jr., NEDA Eastern Visayas regional director, said calamities cut crop production and thus, worsen poverty.

"These can also affect literacy because schoolbuildings and other infrastructure facilities are damaged. Health is also affected because of water supply problem," Mr. Go-Soco said.

"Farmers should be resilient by cultivating alternative crops other than rice which is more prone to flooding," he added.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) reported that the recent flooding has caused damage estimated at P24 million in roads and bridges in the towns of Dulag, Dagami, Burauen, Mayorga, and Pastrana in Leyte.

"Repairing damages is competing for the same kind of budget that they have and it is hard for the government to rehabilitate all damages," Mr. Go-Soco added.

In a November 2011 report released by the National Statistical Coordination Board, Region 8 showed low probability in attaining MDGs on poverty reduction, universal primary education, and combating diseases.

The report showed that 41.4% of the region's population is living below the poverty threshold. The target is to reduce this to 22.6% by 2015.

Net enrollment in primary education was reported at 87% last year, lower than the 91% enrollment in 2000. The target is 100% enrollment in 2015. -- **Sarwell Q. Meniano**

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