

Headline: Neda: PH agriculture losses growing due to climate change

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The country's chief economist on Friday urged concrete steps to address climate change, noting the phenomenon poses risks to the agriculture sector's productivity and the country's food security.

During the launch of the book "The Future of Philippine Agriculture Under a Changing Climate: Policies, Investments and Scenarios," Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia highlighted the "vital role" of agriculture in inclusive growth. He said the sector accounted for 31.5 percent of the labor force and also the primary source of raw materials for manufacturing and services.

"However, environmental hazards aggravated by climate change continue to pose significant risks to agricultural output and growth. In fact, as cited in the book, yearly losses between 2000 and 2016 include production losses and damage to farm equipment, and irrigation and road facilities of P17.37 billion. This is equivalent to about 1.8 percent of the sector's yearly average gross value-added (GVA)," said Pernia, who heads the state planning agency National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

"Climate change is only about to get worse with recent rapid increases in temperature. If we do nothing, this will impede our target of increasing agricultural productivity and ensuring food security," the Neda chief added.

Citing the warning of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming, Pernia also urged action against climate-related risks such as sea level rise, as well as food and water supplies, security, and health issues, which were expected to become worse once average global temperatures increase to 2 degrees Celsius.

Pernia said the Climate Change Strategy recently crafted by Neda would help assist policymaking efforts.

"The Neda Climate Change Strategy is a four-part initiative that will be implemented from 2018 to 2021 to catalyze behavioral change among Neda employees. With this Strategy, we aim to reduce the agency's energy and water consumption, and per capita greenhouse gas emissions, while maximizing productivity of our agency," Pernia added.

"While this may be considered small in scale, we believe that influencing behavior at the individual level leads to more long-term positive impacts. Micro efforts lead to macro effects. Typically, in principle, it is easier to implicitly shame individuals who don't toe the line than countries can do. We hope to encourage other government agencies and stakeholders to do the same," he said.

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