

HIGHLIGHTS OF AGRO-INDUSTRIAL CLUSTER ANALYSES

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Mr. Ed Lim: First of all I believe the setting of the year 2020 as the target is too far away. So I believe first of all, perhaps a target of 2010 for the achievement of self-sufficiency in agriculture particularly in rice and corn, fisheries etc. the agro-industrial clustering is a major strategy to achieve the goals set out by this conference. However, the concept of clustering has to be tied directly to the market chain. For example, if you are talking of rice, we must relate this to the rice millers and the wholesalers. We have to cluster them as one chain. For corn, we have to cluster them to the livestock raisers and feed millers. I am talking about yellow corn. And for coconut we have to tie that to the copra processing plants and the processors of various crops that are going to be raised under the coconut trees. This could be as wide ranging as livestock raisers or exporters, processors or food processors, mango, calamansi, dalandan whatever as well as food, crops, vegetables. And for fisheries we have to cluster them with the market, the fish culture, the fish cage raisers, ranching especially the market where do we market this.

Now the government's role should be devoted to providing incentives because it is really the business sector, the private sector that will move this project quickly. The incentives have to come in terms of actual realistic financing. As now, Landbank, Quedancor etc give a maximum of P16,000 per hectare for rice growing. How can you plant rice for P16,000? It's impossible. For corn, can you grow corn for P12,000? So you need a realistic amount that will cover also the livelihood of the farmers during the time of the gestation of these products.

Government should do planning and zoning. We have 3 million hectares of rice today but if we double our production of rice, we'll probably have an excess of 2 million hectares of rice. The same thing with corn, 3 million hectares at 1.8 tons per hectare, but we can do 6 tons easily. For copra of coconut, we have 3 million hectares but if we doubled coconut production we'll have more than enough for our oil mills. And now you have an excess of 4 or 5 million hectares which you have to plant on. What do we plant there, how do we process, export or market this? I think this is a very crucial point for this conference to consider. Thank you.

