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2025 is Caraga's Regional Year of Priority for the
Promotion of Transformation of
Key Production Sectors



Industrialize and Innovate
***F**ishery, **A**gri-**F**orestry, **M**ining, and **E**cotourism*

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DA-BFAR Caraga breaks ground for PHP26.4-M multispecies hatchery in Bislig City

By Andy T. Ordoña, BFAR Caraga

A major boost to Caraga's aquaculture industry is underway as the Department of Agriculture - Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) Caraga and the local government unit (LGU) of Bislig City officially held its groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of a PHP26.4-million multispecies marine hatchery on February 14, 2025, in Barangay Caguyao.

The facility is expected to enhance fish production, reduce dependence on imported fry, and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for fisherfolk and nearby communities in Surigao del Sur.

Reducing reliance on imported fry
Chief Aquaculturist Rizalinda L. Abing underscored the hatchery's crucial role in addressing the country's reliance on imported milkfish (bangus) fry.

The Philippines imports around 1.5 billion pieces of bangus fry from Indonesia [annually]. Once fully operational, this project will contribute to the "Bangus Fry Sufficiency Program", which aims to reduce imports by 85%," Abing said.

Designed to produce 25 million bangus fry annually, the hatchery will also cultivate high-value species such as pompano, shrimp, and crabs. Given Bislig's reputation for quality crabs, the facility is expected to strengthen the City's aquaculture sector.

For the first two years, DA-BFAR will fund and oversee the facility's operations, train personnel in hatchery management, and implement phase-in schemes to maximize its benefits for local



DA-BFAR Caraga Regional Director Omnia B. Olama (eighth from left) and City Mayor Florencio C. Garay (sixth from left) led the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the PHP26.4 million multispecies marine hatchery on February 14, 2025, in Barangay Caguyao in Bislig City. (Photo courtesy: DA-BFAR Caraga)

fisherfolk.

A long-awaited development

DA-BFAR Caraga Regional Director Omnia B. Olama expressed gratitude for the LGU's collaboration, which played a vital role in bringing the project to fruition.

"We are delighted that this project is finally becoming a reality. This would not have been possible without the LGU's support," RD Olama said.

RD Olama also emphasized the importance of training local personnel during the BFAR-led management phase to ensure a smooth transition once the facility is turned over to the city government.

"We want to ensure that when we hand over this hatchery, it won't turn into a 'white elephant.' It must continue serving its purpose for our fishing communities," the regional director added.

Commitment to sustainability
Bislig City Mayor Florencio C.

Garay reaffirmed the LGU's commitment to the success of the project, acknowledging the importance of the hatchery to the local fishing sector.

"We will ensure that this project does not go to waste. This is an important initiative for our people, especially our fisherfolk. We will do our part in supporting and sustaining this hatchery," Garay remarked.

Mayor Garay also expressed gratitude to DA-BFAR for their investment and assured that the city government has also provided counterpart funding to support the facility's development.

Funded under the Legislated Hatchery Program of DA-BFAR, the facility is set for completion by 2026. Once operational, it will empower local fisherfolk, boost aquaculture productivity, and contribute to food security in the Region.

Caraga proposes PhP423.7B budget for FY 2026 to boost regional development

By Marx Rev A. Buenavidez, NEDA Caraga



RDC officials, members, and Congressional representatives pose for a photo during the Joint Caraga RDC Full Council – Advisory Committee Meeting.

The Caraga Regional Development Council (RDC) and its Advisory Committee (AdCom) endorsed a PHP423.74 billion budget proposal for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026, covering 36 regional line agencies (RLAs), four state universities and colleges (SUCs), and the Philippine Science High School – Caraga Region Campus, during its Joint Meeting on March 20, 2025 at the LMX Convention Center, Bancasi, Butuan City.

Higher by 37.3 percent than the FY 2025 total

proposed budget of PHP308.54 billion, the proposal will fund 1,925 development PPAs of the agency regional offices (AROs) and SUCs, prioritizing social services including education, housing, and health as well as infrastructure, governance, and support to fishery, agri-forestry, mining, and ecotourism (FAME), which are the Region's priority sectors.

The Infrastructure Sector has the largest share at 59.1 percent, amounting to PHP250.60 billion. This is

followed by the Social Sector at 37.6 percent or PHP159.30 billion. The Economic Sector accounts for 2.9 percent or PhP12.31 billion, while the Development Administration Sector's total proposed budget amounts to PHP1.53 billion or 0.4 percent.

Among the agencies, the Department of Public Works and Highways has the largest proposed budget at PHP238.34 billion, accounting for 56.25 percent of the Region's total budget proposal. Among its key projects are the construction



Caraga RDC Chairperson and Dinagat Islands Governor Nilo P. Demerey Jr. (second from right) presides the Joint Caraga RDC Full Council – Advisory Committee (AdCom) Meeting with Caraga RDC Co-Chairperson and PSR for Development Administration Sector Dr. Victor Emmanuel A. Ozarraga (third from right), RDC-EDC Co-Chairperson and PSR for Logistics Sector Cristina Hemady R. Arcillas (leftmost), RDC-IDC Co-Chairperson and PSR for Ecotourism Sector Robert Douglas O. Andaya (second from left), PSR for Indigenous Peoples Samuel B. Behing (third from left), Cabadbaran City Mayor and RDC-SDC Chairperson Judy Chin-Amante (fourth from left), and Caraga RDC Vice Chairperson and NEDA Caraga Regional Director Gemima A. Olam (rightmost).

of flood mitigation structures along the Agusan River, Lake Mainit, Tubay River, and Surigao River.

Meanwhile, the Department of Education followed with a proposed budget amounting to PHP121.49 billion or 28.7 percent of the total proposed budget of the Region, intended to fund the Basic Education Inputs Program, Support to Schools, and Learners Program and Inclusive Education Program.

The RDC Sectoral Committees reviewed and deliberated the budget proposals to ensure the alignment and consistency of PAPs to the development directions and outcomes espoused in the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, the *AmBisyon Natin* 2040, the President’s 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda, the Caraga Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Cath-Up Plan, and the Caraga Regional

Development Plan (RDP) 2023-2028.

Under the National Budget Memorandum No. 153, Series of 2024, entitled “*National Budget Call for FY 2026*,” the national government shall prioritize strategic needs and promote equitable regional growth, ensuring that funds are allocated to the poorest and lagging local

government units (LGUs).

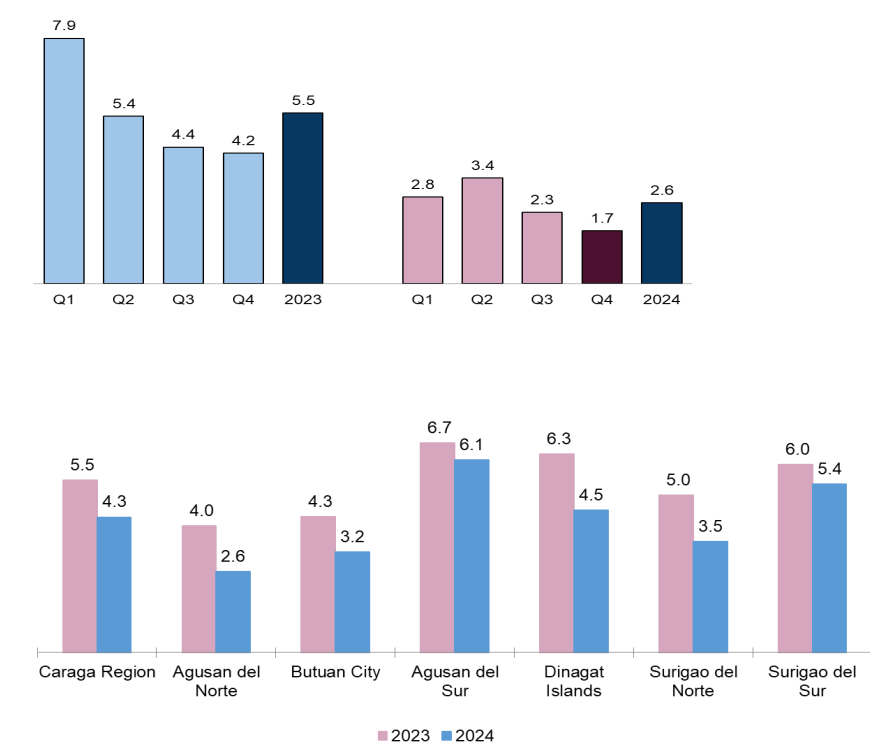
The proposals will be endorsed to concerned agency central offices and the Department of Budget and Management for consideration in the FY 2026 National Expenditure Program.

Agency	Tier 1 (in PHP)	Tier 2 (in PHP)	TOTAL (in PHP)
CHED	290,136,000.00	239,583,000.00	529,719,000.00
CPD	24,190,000.00	296,105,108.60	320,295,108.60
DepEd	24,896,841,000.00	96,593,281,000.00	121,490,122,000.00
DHSUD	40,445,000.00	127,626,000.00	168,071,000.00
DOH	2,437,171,000.00	5,354,847,200.00	7,791,818,200.00
DMW	53,577,000.00	0.00	53,577,000.00
DSWD	8,207,239,568.84	2,826,293,934.26	11,033,533,503.10
NHA	0.00	408,178,000.00	408,178,000.00
NCIP	86,224,520.00	38,500,000.00	124,724,520.00
TESDA	300,109,000.00	111,400,000.00	411,509,000.00
ASSCAT	347,293,000.00	1,643,800,000.00	1,991,093,000.00
CSU	1,051,336,000.00	4,903,500,000.00	5,954,836,119.32
NEMSU	927,990,000.00	4,384,000,000.00	5,312,385,449.00
SNSU	736,575,000.00	0.00	736,575,000.00
PSHS	125,719,000.00	199,200,000.00	324,919,000.00
TOTAL	39,524,846,088.84	199,200,000.00	40,724,046,088.84

Social Development Committee Co-Chairperson Dr. Pazfegurita M. Ojeda presents the Social Sector’s FY 2026 proposed budget.

Q4 and Full Year 2024 REGIONAL ECONOMIC SITUATIONER

Inflation Rate



Commodity Group	Inflation Rate					
	Q4 2023	Q4 2024		2023	2024	
All Items	4.2	1.7	▼	5.5	2.5	▼
Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages	7.3	2.4	▼	7.5	4.9	▼
Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco	8.3	4.4	▼	10.1	4.6	▼
Clothing and Footwear	4.5	1.8	▼	4.1	2.6	▼
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas, and Other Fuels	-0.8	1.6	▲	5.9	-1.6	▼
Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance	3.7	1.4	▼	3.4	2.0	▼
Health	1.4	1.5	▲	1.7	1.5	▼
Transport	-0.5	-1.6	▼	-1.4	-0.9	▲
Information and Communication	1.0	1.3	▲	0.7	1.5	▲
Recreation, Sport and Culture	5.8	3.7	▼	5.4	4.4	▼
Education Services	1.7	1.9	▲	2.6	2.0	▼
Restaurants and Accommodation Services	3.1	0.9	▼	5.6	1.7	▼
Financial Services	0.0	-0.3	▼	0.0	-0.3	▼
Personal Care, and Miscellaneous Goods and Services	5.9	3.0	▼	5.2	3.8	▼

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024

Full report available at: <https://nro13.neda.gov.ph>

Labor and Employment 2024



1,902,800 ▲

Total Population 15 Years Old and Over (2024)
1,881,700 (2023)

68.1% ▼

Labor Force Participation Rate (2024)
70.4% (2023)



1,294,800 ▼

Labor Force (2024)
1,325,100 (Q4 2023)

96.1% ▲

Employment Rate (2024)
95.9% (2023)



1,244,500 ▼

Employed Persons (2024)
1,270,300 (2023)

15.9% ▼

Underemployment Rate (2024)
19.6% (2023)

198,300 ▼

Underemployed Persons (2024)
248,700 (2023)



3.9% ▼

Unemployment Rate (2024)
4.1% (2023)

50,300 ▼

Unemployed Persons (2024)
54,800 (2023)

CARAGA REGIONAL PROJECT MONITORING COMMITTEE

Q4 2024 Field Monitoring Report

Status of Projects Monitored	Number of Projects Visited	Total Project Cost PHP Million
Status of projects monitored	19	2,367.7
Ongoing	13	1,823.2
Completed	6	544.5
By Area		
Agusan del Norte	8	874.7
Ongoing	4	619.7
Completed	4	254.9
Agusan del Sur	5	470.1
Ongoing	4	325.4
Completed	1	144.7
Surigao del Norte	2	250.8
Ongoing	2	250.8
Completed	0	-
Butuan City	4	771.9
Ongoing	3	627.2
Completed	1	144.7
By Agency		
DPWH Caraga	19	2,367.7
Ongoing	13	1,823.2
Completed	6	544.5



DA-BFAR Caraga holds public consultation on IRR for legislated hatcheries projects

By Andy T. Ordoña, BFAR Caraga



Local stakeholders, including fisherfolk and local officials from Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur participated in the public consultation on the Implementing Rules and Regulations on the Establishment of Legislated Hatcheries conducted by the Department of Agriculture - Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources on March 11, 2025. (Photo courtesy: DA-BFAR Caraga)

The Department of Agriculture - Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) Caraga recently conducted a series of public consultation for the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Establishment of Legislated Hatcheries. These were held from March 11 to 13, 2024, in the municipalities of Lingig and Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur and Nasipit, Agusan del Norte.

Local stakeholders, including fisherfolk representatives, key officials from the local government units (LGUs), and other concerned sectors convened to discuss and share their recommendations to ensure that the implementation of the legislated hatcheries aligns with the needs and conditions of the

coastal communities.

During the discussions, Leamyr Cadapan, senior aquaculturist and legislated hatcheries project coordinator of DA-BFAR Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Division, presented key provisions of the IRR. She emphasized the significance of hatchery development in boosting fish production, enhancing livelihood opportunities, and promoting sustainable fisheries management. Stakeholders also raised their concerns and suggestions, particularly on the phase-in schemes and support mechanisms needed to ensure seamless operation and maintenance of the legislated hatcheries.

Regional Director Omnia B. Olama said that the series of

consultations aims to develop effective and well-supported legislated hatcheries that will contribute to the sustainability and resilience of the region's aquaculture sector.

Further engagements and refinements on the IRR are expected as the DA-BFAR Caraga continues its mission to strengthen the fisheries industry through science-based and community-driven initiatives.

DA-PRDP, BFAR Caraga join forces to develop cost-effective aquafeeds for fish farming

By Andy T. Ordoña, BFAR Caraga

In a bid to enhance the sustainability of the aquaculture industry, the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) Caraga, in collaboration with the DA-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) Caraga, launched the "Production of Bangus and Tilapia (Fry to Grow-out) Using Locally Formulated Feeds" Convergence Project on Wednesday, February 12, 2025.

The initiative, which falls under PRDP's Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization and Industrialization Plan (AFMIP), aims to assess the efficiency of locally formulated feeds compared to commercial alternatives. The study will evaluate key metrics such as feed conversion ratio (FCR), return on investment (ROI), and overall fish quality from fry to grow-out stages to determine its viability for widespread use.

Addressing the high cost of feeds

Local government officials and fisheries experts highlighted the pressing challenge of high feed costs, which account for approximately 80 percent of total aquaculture production expenses.

Municipal Agriculturist Pedrito Nalam of LGU Tubay emphasized that while fish farming offers promising returns, high mortality rates and soaring feed expenses often lead to financial setbacks for farmers.

"One of the biggest challenges in aquaculture is the cost of feeds. Farmers invest in raising fish, but when it's time to harvest, most of the profit is lost to feed expenses. Finding sustainable and affordable alternatives is crucial for the industry's growth," Nalam explained.

Soybean as a key feed ingredient

The project explores locally available feed ingredients, particularly soybean meal, as a sustainable alternative to costly commercial feeds. Project



Officials from the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) Caraga and DA-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) Caraga at the launch of the Production of Bangus and Tilapia (Fry to Grow-out) Using Locally-formulated Feeds in Tubay, Agusan del Norte. (Photo courtesy: DA-BFAR Caraga)

leader Gemma A. Asufre from DA Caraga noted that Caraga is uniquely positioned for this initiative, being the only region in the Philippines with local soybean production.

"Our region produces two varieties of soybeans—Manchuria (yellow) and Tudela (black)—which have crude protein levels comparable to those from Argentina. With proper processing, protein content can reach up to 47.0 percent, making them suitable for aquafeeds," Asufre shared. She also revealed DA's plan to expand soybean cultivation to 30,000 hectares, ensuring a stable local supply for feed production.

Scientific approach for sustainable aquaculture

Senior Aquaculturist Ian Batitang, who represented Regional Director Omnia B. Olama, stressed the importance of thorough research before scaling up the initiative.

"One trial is not enough. We need at least three trials to validate our findings and determine the

effectiveness of locally formulated feeds. This research-driven approach will guide future large-scale production," Batitang stated.

Meanwhile, PRDP-PSO Mindanao I-PLAN component head Elden Karl Requilme underscored the European Union's (EU) funding for fisheries projects, which could further support innovations in the sector. He highlighted the three primary cost concerns in aquaculture — funding, fish, and feeds — and emphasized the need for strong collaboration among PRDP, LGUs, municipal agriculture offices, and BFAR.

With continued research and strategic partnerships, the development of cost-effective, locally produced aquafeeds could significantly lower production costs, improve profitability for fish farmers, and drive economic growth in Caraga's aquaculture sector.

DOST launches solar speed drying machine for Surigao del Norte farmers

By Susil D. Ragas, PIA Caraga with report from DOST-Surigao del Norte



DOST-Surigao del Norte Provincial Director Mariel P. Makinano delivered an in-depth orientation on the Portasol technology to farmers in the Municipality of Alegria. (Photo courtesy: PIA/DOST Caraga)

In a significant step toward agricultural modernization in the town of Alegria, Surigao del Norte, the Department of Science and Technology-Surigao del Norte (DOST-SDN) recently turned over 20 units of multi-purpose grain solar speed drying trays or Portasol technology.

At least 134 local farmer organizations received the drying machine that exemplified the government's ongoing commitment to empowering rural farmers.

Portasol, a revolutionary invention by Francisco "Popoy" Pagayon, President of the Filipino Inventors Society Producers Cooperative, offers a smarter, more efficient grain drying solution.

Funded by DOST, this technology is designed to significantly improve the drying process for rice, corn, mung beans, and even fish.

The innovation is poised to transform post-harvest management, reducing losses and enhancing product quality.

Unlike traditional sun drying methods that expose produce to pests, contaminants, and unpredictable weather, Portasol uses stackable aluminum thermal trays capable of holding up to 150 kilograms of grain per cycle.

The trays' multi-tiered, breathable structure enhances ventilation, preventing fungal growth, mildew, and spoilage. This advanced drying system offers a sustainable, space-saving, and highly effective solution for post-harvest grain management.

During the ceremonial turnover, Mariel P. Makinano, Provincial Director of DOST-Surigao del Norte, conducted an in-depth orientation on the Portasol technology.

She highlighted its role in advancing sustainable farming practices and urged farmers to embrace innovation for improved productivity and crop quality. She also presented a services package of DOST-supported programs and technologies.

"The Portasol technology represents more than just a new tool — it's a transformative step toward sustainable agriculture and competitive farming. We are optimistic that this innovation will empower Alegria's farmers to reduce losses, enhance quality, and thrive in a dynamic agricultural landscape." Makinano said.

The farmer organizations in Alegria, representing the backbone of the agricultural community, were enthusiastic in exploring the benefits of Portasol for their farming practices. Their active participation in the ceremony demonstrated a collective readiness to harness modern technology for greater efficiency and profitability.

The successful turnover of Portasol in Alegria is a milestone in local agricultural development. It symbolizes DOST's enduring mission to drive rural progress through research-based innovation.

Portasol stands as a testament to the transformative power of Filipino ingenuity and government-supported technology, delivering tangible solutions and uplifting farming communities, and fueling inclusive economic growth.

DTI highlights 2024 key projects that benefited Caraga farmers

By Jennifer P. Gaitano, PIA Caraga

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) highlighted its key projects in 2024 that have contributed to improving the lives of farmers in the Caraga Region by providing them sustainable livelihood.

During the recent Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas episode hosted by the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Caraga, Regional Director Gay Tidalgo informed that DTI's major programs include the: 1) Export and Investment Development Programs; 2) Industry Development Programs; 3) Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Programs; 4) Consumer Protection Programs; and 5) Consumer Education and Advocacy Programs.

"Under Industry Development Programs, the key projects that we have implemented include the Shared Service Facility (SSF), Rural Agro-enterprise Partnership for Inclusive Development and Growth (RAPID Growth) Project, Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan, and Roads Leveraging Linkages of Industry and Trade (ROLL IT) Program," she said.

"As part of the RAPID Growth Project, we were able to assist 4,277 smallholder farmers and 110 MSMEs; supported 125 farmer organizations through enterprise strengthening and capacity-building initiatives; conducted 23 capacity-building activities on production, processing, and organizational development; implemented six Matching Grant Agreements benefiting farmer organizations with PHP6.55 million in funding," added Tidalgo.

Tidalgo also shared that DTI facilitated farm rehabilitation covering 117.8 hectares and the establishment of 262 hectares of new plantations. *"We have completed the profiling of 1,931 farmer-beneficiaries and supported trade promotion for 48 MSMEs/farmers," she said.*



Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Caraga Regional Director (RD) Gay Tidalgo sat with Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Caraga RD Venus Garcia for an interview during the Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas. (Photo courtesy: PIA Caraga)

In the implementation of the SSF in the region, she elaborated that DTI Caraga approved 13 SSF projects for Fiscal Year 2024 amounting to PHP169.475 million, to support the farmer-MSMEs. SSF monitoring and physical inventory were also conducted in Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte and Agusan del Norte.

"DTI facilitated SSF deliberations and approvals for project funding, ownership transfers, and usufruct extensions. We also turned over successful SSF projects to eligible cooperators during the Presidential Assistance to Farmers, Fisherfolk, and their Families (PAFFF)," she said.

She further revealed that the ROLL IT Program, designed to prioritize infrastructure development in the country, has completed various projects in the region. *"In 2024, together with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Caraga received funding for 31 projects, with a total length of 11.29 lane kilometers,*

amounting to PHP701.165 million. In 2025, DTI together with DPWH has approved funding for 31 projects with a total length of 7.79 lane kilometer, amounting to PHP566.535 million," underscoring Tidalgo.

Meanwhile, DTI's completed projects included the NRJ BCIR-Mayor Democrito D. Plaza II Ave. Road in support of proposed Butuan City IT Park and Public Utility Transport Terminal, Butuan City, Agusan del Norte; and Hubang Barangay Road connecting KAAGAPMUCO (Kaagap Development Multi-purpose Cooperative) Processing Plant and National Highway, supporting the Coconut Industry Cluster in San Francisco, Agusan del Sur.

‘*Lamas sa Kinabuhi*’ strengthens garlic production in Dinagat Islands

By ARD Renelle L. Escudro, PIA Caraga



Local farmers in a technology demonstration farm in San Jose, Province of Dinagat Islands till the soil to grow garlic under the “*Lamas sa Kinabuhi*” Program. (Photo courtesy: Office of the Provincial Agriculturist - Dinagat Islands)

To boost garlic production, the Province of Dinagat Islands established a technology demonstration farm in Barangay Cuarinta, San Jose, under the “*Lamas sa Kinabuhi*” Program.

“*Lamas*” in Visayas and most of Mindanao means spice or spices.

Provincial Agriculturist Rico Galinato said, “*Through technology demonstration on garlic production under the ‘Lamas sa Kinabuhi’ Program spearheaded by the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPAg), we aim to expand the knowledge and skills of our local farmers on how to effectively grow garlic in our area.*”

He added that the initiative will serve as an additional income source for farmers, reducing garlic importation from mainland Surigao and other regions. “*If we have our own supply and can sustain it, it will strengthen our local agriculture,*” he said

Galinato also shared that the technology demonstration farm will showcase new farming technology, ensuring garlic production thrives in

the province despite climate change.

OPAg also highlighted that other agricultural products, such as pepper and various crops and vegetables, are available at the farm for farmers, learners, and stakeholders to learn about.

Senior high school learners from Don Ruben Edera Ecleo Sr. Memorial National High School participated in a 10-day immersion at the technology demonstration farm, where they witnessed and learned new garlic production methods, including land preparation and organic fertilizer concoction.

The “*Lamas sa Kinabuhi*” Program is another initiative of the provincial government to support food security and enhance farmers’ livelihoods through diversification. The technology demonstration farm provides a tangible opportunity for key players in the province’s agriculture sector to develop their farming skills.



The San Jose, PDI technology demonstration farm under the “*Lamas sa Kinabuhi*” Program also grow other spices, crops, and vegetables. (Photo courtesy: Office of the Provincial Agriculturist - Dinagat Islands)

Better farming with hybrid rice: The story of Renie Palco

By Nora L. Molde, PIA Caraga



Local hybrid rice farmer Mr. Renie Palco stood in the middle of his rice field in the Municipality of RTR in Agusan del Norte. (Photo courtesy: PIA Caraga)

“I thanked the government for its full support of the hybrid rice, resulting in better production and income to farmers like me.”

Renie Palco, a hybrid rice farmer, said as he narrated the improvement of his life these recent years when he ventured to farming hybrid rice to the team from the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Caraga.

Palco, 55, and the public information officer of the Balangbalang Farmers Association in RTR, Agusan del Norte has been tilling his four-hectare land with hybrid rice.

“With hybrid rice, I harvest more than 100 sacks per cropping season compared to at most 70 sacks of planting n-

breed rice,” he said, while also sharing the different technical training and assistance from the government on the proper planting technique of hybrid rice that enhanced his farming efficiency.

With higher yield from his hybrid rice farm, Palco was able to establish a welding shop specializing in farming equipment. This venture not only diversified his earnings as it also provided the much-needed services to fellow farmers in his community. The financial stability brought by his increased rice production also allowed him to send his children to school, securing a better future for his family.

He attributed his success to the support of the Department of Agriculture (DA) through the free provisions of hybrid rice seedlings and fertilizers, including the technical assistance and cash assistance which significantly boosted his farm’s productivity and income.

DA Caraga Regional Executive Director Arlan M. Mangelen said that every year, the agency has a budget allocation intended for the provision of interventions to eligible farmers and farmers’ groups to help increase their production that contributed to the development of the agriculture industry not just in the region, but in the country. For this year, Dir. Mangelen said that DA Caraga has an approved budget allocation of PhP2.5 billion that will allow the agency to strategize and effectively implement programs to steer agriculture in the region towards development and nation-building.

Also, Jodel A. Tabada, officer-in-charge of the DA Caraga’s Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Division, shared that the region’s rice sector has shown a remarkable improvement. The total rice production increased from 543,431 metric tons in 2023 to 574,093 metric tons in 2024, bringing the rice sufficiency level in the region to an impressive 99.14 percent.

The figures are testament of the government’s ongoing commitment to supporting farmers and strengthening food security. With continued assistance, more farmers like Palco can turn their agricultural success into entrepreneurial ventures, ultimately contributing to the overall economic growth in the Caraga Region.

Transportation Secretary inspects Jubang Cruise Port in Siargao

By Susil D. Ragas, PIA Caraga with report from PPA-PMO Surigao



The Jubang Cruise Port in Dapa, Siargao Islands, Surigao Del Norte. (Photo courtesy: MAC Builders Corporation)

Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary Vince Dizon visited and inspected the new Jubang Cruise Port in Dapa, Siargao, Surigao del Norte on March 23, 2025.

The Jubang Cruise Port, with a total cost of PHP620.637 million, is the first dedicated terminal for cruise ships in the Philippines. It was established in response to the growing tourism sector nationwide, particularly in Siargao Islands which continues to be visited by foreign tourists and travelers.

Dizon said, *“If all goes well, the cruise port will open within this year. Once operational, it will welcome large passenger cruise ships from different countries, ushering in a new wave of international tourism to*

Siargao Island.”

According to the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) Surigao, the Jubang Cruise Port will boost cruise tourism and attract high-spending tourists in Siargao Islands, which is world-renowned for its surfing adventures, pristine beaches, and other natural attractions.

As part of their visit, Dizon along with key officials of DOTr, also inspected the Sayak Airport in the Municipality of Del Carmen in Siargao Island to assess necessary improvements and development projects aimed at improving services for air passengers.

This engagement by the DOTr reflects the government’s broader initiative to strengthen tourism infrastructure in the country’s major destinations, particularly Siargao Islands, expand the country’s capacity to receive international cruise ships, and boost tourism.



Department of Transportation Secretary Vince Dizon (third from left), along with personnel from the Philippine Port Authority-Port Management Office (PPA-PMO) Surigao inspects the Jubang Cruise Port in Dapa, Siargao Islands in the Province of Surigao del Norte. (Photo courtesy: PIA Caraga)

Tourism establishments in Agusan del Sur gear up for CY 2026 Palarong Pambansa

By Jennifer P. Gaitano, PIA Caraga



While preparing the athletes and delegates for the 2026 Palarong Pambansa, the Department of Tourism (DOT) Caraga and the Provincial Government of Agusan del Sur are also working to ensure tourism-related establishments in the province can meet the demands of tourists and guests during the national sports event.

DOT Caraga Director Ivonnie Dumadag said during a recent Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas by the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Caraga at Balanghai Hotel and Convention Center, Butuan City, that Bayugan City and provincial government officials recently visited DOT Secretary Christina Garcia-Frasco in Manila to coordinate and discuss the

preparations for hosting the 2026 Palarong Pambansa.

“We at DOT Caraga have identified the necessary training and capability-building programs for our tourism enterprises and workers in the Palaro areas to ensure that they can accommodate the expected guests, tourists, and delegates from other regions,” she said.

DOT Caraga Assistant Regional Director Tiara Julia M. Santos said the local government units requested training on the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence for tourism frontliners, child-safe tourism, and tourist transportation drivers.

“Aside from that, the LGUs requested training on homestays because admittedly we don’t have

that many accommodation establishments in the province. We only have nine DOT-accredited establishments in Agusan del Sur, and limited accommodations in Bayugan City,” Santos said.

She added that training on Homestay Pilipinas is also included. *“That way, DOT will tap houses that are ready to cater to tourists, in addition to classrooms designated for athletes,” she said.*

DOT also anticipates a spillover, with some tourists and attendees for the 2026 Palarong Pambansa choosing to stay in Butuan City, Agusan del Norte.

“We are most willing to assist them with trainings and other technical assistance,” Santos said.

DA provides custom-built trucks to boost Caraga hog industry

By Nora L. Molde, PIA Caraga



Representatives of nine farmers cooperatives and associations receive customized hauling trucks from the Department of Agriculture's Livestock Program. (Photo courtesy: PIA Caraga/DA Caraga)

In a significant step toward strengthening Caraga's hog industry, the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the Caraga Region has turned over nine customized hauling trucks to nine farmers' cooperatives and associations (FCAs) under the Livestock Program in Taguibo, Butuan City.

Each cooperative received a hauling truck valued at PHP2.9 million, forming part of a PHP27 million initiative under the Program, to provide hog raisers with modern, efficient, and safer transport for their livestock. This support aims to reduce transport costs, minimize animal stress and losses, and ultimately boosts profits while enhancing the livelihoods of local farmers.

Josefina Makiling, Chairperson of the Buenas Agong-ong Active Farmers Association, Inc. of Buenavista, Agusan del Norte, expressed gratitude for the new hauling truck, emphasizing its impact on their cooperative.

"This is a game-changer for us. Before, we struggled with costly and unreliable transport for our hogs which affected our earnings. Now, with this modern truck, we can ensure safe and efficient delivery, reducing losses and increasing our income," Makiling said.

She highlighted how the truck will improve the profitability of their hog production and also create opportunities for expansion that will benefit all members of their cooperative. *"With this support from*

DA Caraga, we can now focus on growing our business, reaching more markets and ensuring a stable income for our farmers," she added.

The nine FCAs that received the hauling trucks include the Buenas Agong-ong Active Farmers Association, Inc. in Buenavista, Agusan del Norte; Kahugpungan sa Katawhan sa Subait Multi-Purpose Cooperative (KKS-MPC) in Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte; Farmers Alternative Self-Reliance MPC (FASRMCO) in Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur; San Francisco Farmers Producers Cooperative in San Francisco, Agusan del Sur; Kangyat Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Talacogon, Agusan del Sur; Brgy. Wangke Hog Raisers Association in Claver, Surigao del Norte; Tandag City Livestock and Poultry Agriculture Cooperative in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur; Magroyong Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative in San Miguel, Surigao del Sur; and Tigao Farmers Development Cooperative in Cortes, Surigao del Sur.

These progressive cooperatives have been part of the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (INSPIRE) Project since 2022. Their commitment to expanding hog production and ensuring food security has been instrumental in Caraga's agricultural growth.

During the turnover ceremony, DA Caraga Regional Executive Director Arlan M. Mangelen emphasized the importance of supporting local hog farmers to ensure a stable meat supply and a stronger agricultural economy in the region.

"The hauling trucks are expected to reduce logistical bottlenecks, increase efficiency and create more economic opportunities for Caraga's hog raisers," Mangelen said.

With this tangible assistance, DA Caraga reaffirmed its commitment to empowering livestock farmers, equipping them with modern resources to enhance industry productivity and resilience.