

DA Implements Food for Progress Program to Feed 81,519 Schoolchildren



Food For Progress Committee meeting led by Administrator Grace J. Cenas and Deputy Administrator Naomi K. Torreta of NDA and participated in by Former DepEd Asst. Secretary Thelma Santos (now DepEd Consultant), OIC-Director Thelma Navarrez of DepEd Health & Nutrition Center, Ms. Magdalene Cariaga of DepEd, Ms. Kim Libarios of DA-OSEC, RFM Corporation Brand Manager (Milk and Juice Division) Leah Ann Macalincag, with Mr. August Florese, Ms. Tess Amador and Mr. Marvis Marfil.

The key players in the handling and distribution of milk donated by the United States (US) under the Food for Progress Act specifically the Department of Agriculture (DA) through its implementing agency the National Dairy Authority (NDA), the Department of Education (DepEd) and the RFM Corporation, are all set to implement the Milk Feeding Program which will benefit 81,519 Grade 1 pupils covering 264 public elementary schools in four (4) regions in Luzon.

In a brief manifesto provided by the program committee, an agreement was signed on November 10, 2009 between the US Department of Agriculture and the Philippines' Department of Agriculture for the supply of agricultural commodities specifically, rice and milk powder under the Food For Progress Act. The US committed to donate 680MT of non-fat dry milk (NFDM) to the Philippine government which in turn shall be converted into UHT milk and fortified milk biscuits for school children in areas affected by the onslaught of Typhoons Ondoy (Ketsan) and Pepeng (Parama). The said grant arrived the Philippines on September 16, 2010.

The NDA was designated by the DA to lead the program. In an Invitation to Processors posted on the NDA website late last year, interested processors were invited to submit a proposal under a barter arrangement. The NDA identified and selected the RFM Corporation as government's partner-processor that will convert the NFDM into UHT milk and biscuits for distribution to affected children.

On the other hand, the DepEd shall be the NDA's co-implementer for the actual milk feeding activities in the identified schools. The actual feeding program in the schools will start on November 15, 2010 and will end by February next year. Currently on-going is the conduct of six (6) batches of Orientation Seminars where the participating teachers will be briefed on the mechanics of the program implementation.

By : Flor Reyes