

ANI ALLOTS UP TO P200M FOR FARM EXPANSION; PLANS FRESH MILK PRODUCTION

AgriNurture Inc. (ANI) is allocating between P100M and P200M over a three-year period for its farm expansion program. ANI President Antonio L. Tiu said his company is starting rice production in an initial 2,000 has. somewhere in Central Luzon. Tiu said ANI plans to expand rice and corn production from Northern and Central Luzon to Mindanao, ramping up the hectarage over a three-year period to 10,000 ha.

ANI is also exploring the possibility of ventures into fresh-milk production considering that the Philippines imports almost all of its dairy requirement with an estimated annual imports of US\$1B.

Tiu said its planned fresh milk brand would initially serve as its corporate social responsibility (CSR). "The Philippines is 99% dependent on dairy import. We're providing much support to the dairy sector by buying their milk despite its not being profitable. This will be market linkage because without a market, there is no business", he said.

This venture may be more of just a study, but Tiu really sees something bigger in dairy even for small business entrants. ANI will occasionally shut off coconut juice processing from its Camarines Sur juice plant to give way to toll packing of milk. Its market for this is its own affiliates the Big Chill, Inc.(BCI), that markets Seattle-based Tully's Coffee, which it brought to the country just recently.

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