

# Agriculture grows 1.15% in 2013

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Source : < <http://www.mb.com.ph/agriculture-grows-1-15-in-2013/> >

Notwithstanding the series of natural catastrophes that hit the country in 2013 and damaged agricultural production, the Philippine agriculture managed a respectable 1.15 percent growth although at slower pace compared to 2.92 percent growth in 2012.

The Bureau of the Agricultural Statistics (BAS) reported that palay, poultry and a host of other subsectors posted healthy growth rates thus propelling over growth.

BAS reported that in terms of value, the agriculture industry grew by 3.5%, to P1.5 trillion at current prices.

“Considering a very challenging year, this growth is significant,” Agriculture Secretary Proceso J. Alcala said.

“It also reminds us how weather-dependent agriculture is, and therefore the need to promote and support diversification and value-adding in food processing is stronger than ever before.” According to BAS, poultry growers produced 4.2% more in 2013 than the previous year, largely due to the uptick in the production of chicken buoyed by the increased demand for roasted chicken in key urban centers nationwide. Chicken output expanded by 5.01%, from 1.47 million tons, to 1.55 million tons.

Livestock raisers likewise improved their output last year, as production increased by 1.75% led by dairy (5.47%), followed by hog (1.95%) and cattle (1.76%). Collectively, livestock and poultry subsectors accounted for 31% of the total agricultural production, with a combined gross value of P407.4 billion at current prices.

Palay farmers also came up with another record-breaking harvest, at 18.44 million tons, which is 2.26% higher than last year’s output of 18.03 million tons. The report mainly attributed the growth to the expansion in area harvested and improvement in yield through the use of quality seeds in Central Luzon, Caraga, SOCCSKSARGEN, Bicol Region and ARMM. Lower incidence of pests and diseases also contributed to the increase in gross output, the BAS report said. Last year’s palay production was 8.08% bigger than in 2011, at 16.68 million tons.

Overall, the crops subsector to which palay belongs expanded by a modest 0.09% and accounted for more than half (51.04%) of the total agricultural output.

Fish capture and aquaculture farmers also had bigger output in 2013, allowing the fisheries industry to negate its weak output in the previous year. The combined harvests of commercial, municipal and aquaculture farmers increased by 1.23%, from P138.0 billion to P139.7 billion constant prices, boosted by roundscad production which grew by 17.03%, followed by milkfish (3.7%), tilapia (3.18%) and tiger prawn (2.59%). In terms of value at current prices, fisheries expanded by 2.78%, from P232.6 to P239.08 billion. Fisheries, with a gross value of P239.1 billion at current prices, shared nearly one-fifth (17.96%), to the total output.

In all, these expansions effectively cushioned the impact of the reduced harvests of other commodities as a result of typhoons that hit the country, among other factors.

Corn farmers saw their output slightly decline by 0.40%, to 7.37 million tons, from 7.4 million tons in 2012, due to damages inflicted by typhoon Gorio on corn farms in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in the second quarter, and typhoon Yolanda that hit Visayas before the year-end.

Lower output was noted among growers of coconut, sugarcane, banana, coffee, abaca, peanut and calamansi.

Harvest of seaweed farmers also contracted as Typhoons “Wilma,” “Yolanda” and “Zorayda” destroyed several farms in Palawan, while incidence of ice-ice” disease persisted in Palawan, Bohol, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Norte and Tawi-tawi.

BAS said seaweed production in 2013 only reached 1.55 million tons, representing an 11-percent decrease from 2012 output of 1.75 million tons.

On the average, farmers earned higher from their hardwork last year as farmgate prices went up by 2.3% during the period, bolstered by higher demand for certain farm and fishery products. Livestock recorded the highest farmgate price gain (at 6.94%), followed by crops (2.04%), fisheries (1.53%) and poultry (0.10%).

The year 2013 has been marked by destructive typhoons that affected key food production areas around the country, the strongest being Typhoon Yolanda (international name Haiyan) that slammed Eastern and Western Visayas. These areas are major producers of high value crops such as coconut, rice and abaca. In October, Typhoon Santi (Nari) slammed Northern and Central Luzon in October, destroying tons of palay and other crops in its path.

Other devastating storms that hit the country last year were Labuyo, Odette and Vinta. (Mc Bien Garcia/DA-OSEC).