

Agri curriculum needs updating, focus on supply chain and other aspects of the industry



While there is an apparent decline in the enrollment of agriculture students in the program, a former chancellor of the University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB) says there is still more to be done to support the country's needs of skilled graduates to steer the country's food security.

Dr. Luis Rey Velasco acknowledged there is really a need to update the curriculum to expand the opportunities for young farmers so that they can also focus on the supply chain and other aspects of the agriculture industry.

According to Dr. Velasco, as it stands, the focus of the curriculum is more

on production. Take the case of the State University, he noted, which produces capable graduates in terms of increasing production. Yet he quickly pointed out that the decline in enrollment may have to be the disconnect between the apparent opportunities that graduates can explore because of the perception that agriculture has limited room for growth.

“Well, kung titingnan mo yung structure ng curriculum natin sa BSA (Bachelor of Science in Agriculture) whatever major, most of them are technical courses for production. May ilan on farm management, may ilan in extension so heavy pa rin sa production, technical production,” he said.

“I think what we need to do is to create and have different programs kung saan interesado yung estudyante pumasok sa supply chain,” he said.

Velasco said that if you look at the current problems in the agriculture sector, there is ample production but connecting these products to the market is another story. So, if students are equipped with the knowledge to address these gaps, there could be more interest in exploring opportunities to earn from the sector.

“Halimbawa kung aking interes ay integration, iba ang expertise requirement mo dyan, kailangan may technical ka of course so kailangan marunong ka sa negotiation, kailangan marunong ka sa financing, dapat marunong ka sa logistics, networking. Ibang skills yan eh, And surprisingly, if you look at the, number of students doing particular degree programs throughout the Philippines, ang pinakamataas ay BS in Business Administration. Ang laki. Pero bakit ganun, they are not going into business?” he said.

“For the average normal Filipino coming from a middle low-income group yung BS program natin for agriculture, we have to reorient it for them to be able to take and have an active role in participating, in the different opportunities in the supply chain of agriculture,” he explained.

Velasco said that he remains hopeful that with adjustments in the curriculum, more students will be attracted to careers in the agriculture sector.

“We have to start them young, and this is where degree programs must be crafted na nakatutok talaga sila dyan,” he said. “If you do education yung ma-collate dun dapat dedicated sa iba-ibang critical aspect ng supply chain.”

Velasco cited that production, integration, business, financing, and value-adding have to be integrated into agriculture courses. “They have to also understand that this is something that must be not only for employment but for investments,” he said.

“Kasi karamihan ng ating mga bata ang kanilang mental set is employment . It’s good that they go get employed for a certain number of years but eventually they must get out of it and do their own thing and this is what is happening,” he said.

“May mga ilang UPLB graduates na ganun ang ginawa maski na sa ibang universities. Nag-employee sila naintindihan nila ang sistema, yung environment, they developed their network and then they go out on their own. So, how do we fast track this, dapat andun sa curriculum yun,” he concluded.