

Duterte to sign PHL coffee road map next week—official

*By Roderick Abad
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In File Photo: A coffee farmer in Tagaytay uses a wooden mortar to grind the coffee harvest that he will use.

AFTER a series of consultations with industry stakeholders, the long-awaited Philippine Coffee Industry Roadmap 2017-2022 will finally be signed on March 7 at the Malacañan Palace, an official of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said on Thursday.

DTI-Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) Regional Director Myrna P. Pablo said no less than President Duterte will witness the signing by the secretaries of the DTI and the Department of Agriculture, together with industry stakeholders.

“Thank God, after three years, it will be signed for immediate implementation. The road map is a product of tears, sweat and everything that we always disagree [with and] to agree in the end,” she told the BusinessMirror on the sidelines of the news briefing for the ongoing Philippine Restaurant, Cafe and Bar Expo (Philresca) at the World Trade Center in Pasay City.

“For me, it should be the milestone of the private sector, not the government, since it is just an enabler to create an environment of good investment for the coffee sector,” Pablo added.

The road map takes into account the industry’s current condition. It seeks to bridge the various gaps in the supply chain to make the local coffee industry more competitive.

“We are bringing in together everybody in the chain that should be able to get a fair share of profit of what they did relative to the coffee industry,” Pablo noted.

While demand for coffee in the Philippines has been growing, she said its annual production has been declining consistently.

Based on data from the International Coffee Organization, coffee consumption in the country increased by 8.8 percent from 2014 to 2015.

“If you notice, the so-called Second Wave Coffee, wherein various coffee chains like Starbucks, and other brands have mushroomed almost everywhere. So we see that there is really a strong demand for coffee. Even kids are into coffee drinking because there are now concoctions prepared especially for them by the baristas,” she said.

However, domestic production has been declining by 3.5 percent annually over the past 10 years, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Currently, government data showed that an average of 37,000 metric tons (MT) of coffee are harvested annually from 117,454 hectares.

Among the factors that have contributed to the decline in national coffee production are the lack of productive trees, and poor farming methods.

Pablo noted that in Vietnam, a hectare of land is usually planted with around 2,000 to 3,000 coffee trees, unlike in the Philippines, where only 300 coffee seedlings are being planted per hectare.

Under the road map, the government is targeting to increase coffee production to 214,626 MT by 2022. One of the strategies being eyed by the government to achieve this is the creation of the Philippine Coffee Council, a private sector-led body with government support up to the provincial level.

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