

DENR orders audit of IFMA holders

By Jed Macapagal
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Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu has ordered the creation of audit teams to look into the compliance of all industrial forest management agreement (IFMA) holders in 29 provinces across the country.

Under the order, Cimatu designated Jonas Leones, environment undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs, as head of the seven-member Performance Evaluation Committee (PEC) tasked to provide instructions and directions on the conduct of the audit of all existing IFMA contracts nationwide.

An IFMA is a production sharing deal between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and a qualified applicant, which grants the latter the exclusive right to develop, utilize and manage a specified area of forestland and forest resources for a period of 25 years that may be renewed for another 25.

“The PEC will lead in the planning of the assessment activities and harmonize the conduct of the assessment in the different regions to ensure that the integrity of forests in providing goods and services are maintained,” Cimatusaid.

The audit will cover technical, legal, environmental, economic and impact on agricultural areas.

Cimatu also ordered the creation of 14 performance evaluation teams (PET): six in Luzon, three in Visayas and five in Mindanao. PEC will consolidate and analyze the findings and recommendations of PETs including penalties and sanctions.

According to the DENR, the PETs will scrutinize the 25-year comprehensive development and management plan (CDMP) approved for each IFMA holder.

CDMP details the stages of forest management that an IFMA holder should implement as it establishes tree plantations while protecting and enhancing the remaining forest cover within the concession area.

Based on Forest Management Bureau records, the country has an existing 102 IFMAs with a combined area of 727,982 hectares. Of these, however, only 89 IFMAs will be covered by the review of the DENR, as 13 are located within the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

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