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Energy from food waste project gets Japan funding

By: [Doris Dumlao-Abadilla](#) - Reporter / [@philbizwatcher](#)

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The joint waste-to-energy venture of Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC) and Dole Philippines in South Cotabato has blazed the trail for Philippine biogas projects to qualify for a maximum grant from Japan under a program to subsidize low-carbon technologies, systems and infrastructure.

The project of METPower Venture Partners Holdings Inc. aims to process organic fruit waste and harness biogas to produce a 5.7-megawatt equivalent of clean renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by about 50,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year.

MPIC said the project was the first biogas project from the country to be recognized as a Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM) Model Project of the Ministry of the Environment of Japan. It would get a maximum subsidy of 50 percent of the qualified capital cost.

The first tranche of the JCM subsidy has already been received, with further cash distributions expected from Japan in 2021.

“The Dole Biogas Project is a perfect example of a collaborative venture that benefits all stakeholders—Dole, METPower, the governments of Japan and the Philippines, and ultimately, the environment. With this JCM Model Project recognition, we have further validation of the considerable environmental benefit our biogas plants bring in curbing the greenhouse effect and capturing methane emissions for alternative fuel use,” METPower chief executive Karim Garcia said in a press statement.

This grant comes at an opportune time as it strengthens the commitment of this venture to retain every single employee and sustain operations during this challenging period due to the pandemic.

This capital is seen to further facilitate METPower's pursuit and development of environmentally beneficial and sustainable projects in the near future, according to MPIC.

METPower expects to be on a steep growth trajectory with two biogas plants under construction and new development projects such as carbon dioxide recovery and organic fertilizer distribution currently under development.

While COVID-19 has affected the construction and commissioning of projects, commercial operations of its biogas plants would commence by the first half of 2021, it said.

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