

# FAO taps Searca for forest monitoring, climate finance project in Palawan

By [BUSINESSMIRROR](#)

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File photo shows El Nido, Palawan

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has commissioned the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) to develop a pioneering jurisdictional-level platform for Palawan for the management and monitoring of forest and landscape climate finance investments.

“As both carbon source and sink, forests play a key role in climate change mitigation. To achieve a significant emissions reduction, there is a need for investment in forest landscape and climate finance to support scalable approaches and programs, such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+),” Searca Director Dr. Glenn B. Gregorio said.

He explained that there is a need to demonstrate profitable business models for forest restoration that target environmental and social benefits to engage the private sector as investors, service providers or implementers beyond their corporate social responsibility advocacy.

Private investor engagement is key to the sustainability of environmental efforts.

On the other hand, Dr. Rico C. Ancog, Searca program lead for Emerging Innovation for Growth and Associate Professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), said the correct determination of the scale of crediting for emissions reduction from the forest sector is also key to achieving the objective of

REDD+, with entire jurisdictions likely to be the optimal scale because only governments have the main authority to regulate land use change.

In the case of the FAO-funded project, Ancog said the operational example of a jurisdictional-level platform being developed for Palawan is intended to “support quantitative evaluation for forest monitoring and leveraging, and landscape climate finance at the jurisdictional scale.”

He explained that the project will assess the viability of Palawan to follow a Jurisdictional Sustainability (JS) Approach and identify potential financing sources.

According to Dr. Daniel Nepstad, the president of the Earth Innovation Institute based in Berkeley, California, the JS is achieved when an entire political geography or region also coincides with the correct ecological scale of a given environmental problem and completes the transition to sustainable development.

Specifically, the Searca project will “determine if Palawan has the components to operationalize JS, the gaps of JS and climate investment and how to address them, the government’s role in the implementation of JS, and the comparative approaches versus reforestation and afforestation management and the REDD+ Approach.”

Moreover, Ancog said the jurisdictional-level platform being developed will facilitate the analysis of multi-stakeholders and the layers of the government to provide sufficient information to the private sector on how their investment will be managed and monitored to align corporate governance to that of forest conservation vis-à-vis climate change mitigation initiatives.

To raise awareness on the merits of the JS Approach, the project collaborators, together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources’ (DENR) Forest Management Bureau and DENR-Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau, jointly organized an online forum recently on Jurisdictional Sustainability Approach for Climate Change Initiatives in the Forestry and Natural Resources Sector.

During the forum, Ancog shared some initial takeaways of the project. One is the “ability to find solutions to forest management challenges that were effectively analyzed based on the correct ecological scale. In turn, such solutions for climate change mitigation must be designed not just in response to gaps in knowledge and awareness gaps, but also to impediments in governance.”

He also noted that governance innovations is needed, particularly in relation to different forms of forest resource tenure so that climate change initiatives balance environmental conservation and economic development.

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