

## **DENR inks deal with Pampanga groups to boost reforestation of Mt. Arayat**

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Aiming to boost the reforestation efforts of Mount Arayat, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Thursday sealed an agreement with local organizations in Pampanga.

The partnership was confirmed in a statement of DENR Central Luzon where it announced that it has signed a memorandum of agreement with Pampanga third district Rep. Aurelio Gonzales Jr. and organizations, including the Kapampangan Development Foundation, Inc. (KDFI), and the Samahan ng Magsasaka ng Ayala sa Mataas na Lupa Inc. (SMAMLI), along with the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Based on the agreement, KDFI will use two sites of the national greening program in the Magalang and Arayat parts of Mt. Arayat protected landscape covering 70 hectares of land.

These sites will then be used for agroforestry, planting of fruit trees, indigenous forest trees, and bamboo with the DENR and DA providing technical assistance.

The national greening program was an initiative launched in 2011 under the administration of then president Benigno Aquino III focusing on reforestation.

Originally, the program was only until 2016. However, it was later extended until 2028 by the virtue of Executive Order No. 193 signed by Aquino in 2015.

On the other hand, the DENR said that the KDFI aims to foster livelihood projects for the 45 SMAMLI farmers and their families.

Meanwhile, SMAMLI members will be taking part in facilitating the development of the site, planting, maintenance, and its protection.

Earlier this April, former president Rodrigo Duterte signed Republic Act 11684 declaring Mt. Arayat as a protected landscape.