

William D. Dar

Secretary, Department of Agriculture

It was auspicious that in December 2016, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte honored Dar and two others as The Outstanding Filipino (TOFIL) awardees for 2016, for their “exemplary achievements and selfless dedication to their profession or vocation that resulted not only to the advancement of their respective fields of endeavor, but also made significant contributions to the betterment of our countrymen and to our country at large.”

This time, Dar will continue to serve the Philippines as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

He was named by then President Joseph Estrada as DA acting secretary, from July 1998 to May 1999. Under his short 11-month watch, he started implementing the provisions of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA), and despite an unfortunate El Niño episode, the agriculture sector registered an unprecedented growth of 9.6% in 1999.

To date, he is the only Filipino who led a global agricultural research institute — the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), in India, serving for an unprecedented three five-year terms, from 2000 to 2014. He left a legacy benefitting millions of farmers in India, Africa, and other dryland countries, including the Philippines.

Son of poor farmers from Danuman West, Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, Dar has quadrupled the income and investments poured into ICRISAT, from US\$ 21 million in 2000 to US\$ 85 million in 2014. The fund went to further developing modern and sustainable crop cultivars/hybrids and technologies of its five major commodities (sorghum, pearl millet, chickpea, pigeonpea, and peanut) that are planted by tens of millions of small farmers worldwide.

ICRISAT is one the 15 research institutes under the CGIAR (Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research), a global partnership dedicated to reducing rural poverty, increasing food security, improving human health and nutrition, and ensuring sustainable management of natural resources. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Banos, Laguna, is also a member of CGIAR.

During his term, ICRISAT has partnered with the Philippines’ Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Agricultural Research, sharing modern sustainable farming technologies and cultivars of sweet sorghum, peanut,

chickpea (garbanzos) and pigeonpea (kadyos) thousands of farmers in rainfed areas of Cagayan Valley, Ilocos, Southern Luzon, and Southern Mindanao regions.

He is currently the President of InangLupa Movement Inc., (InangLupa), a movement working for an inclusive, science-based, climate-smart and competitive Philippine agriculture.

He is also the former country representative of Prasad Seeds Philippines Inc.

His extensive research and professional experience were on crop management, farming systems development, and technology sharing and upscaling.

Before leaving for India, he also served as Presidential Advisor on Food Security (1999) and Executive Director, National Agricultural and Fishery Council (1998).

Humble beginnings

He started humbly as his farmer-parents were poor. His uncle Augustin Dollente sent him to college, studying BS in Agricultural Education in 1969 and MS in Agronomy in 1976, at the then Mountain State Agricultural College (MSAC), now known as Benguet State University (BSU), in La Trinidad, Benguet.

At BSU, he started as a researcher and instructor in 1979 and rose to become professor VI and vice president for R&D support services in 1985. In between those years, he pursued a PhD in horticulture at UP Los Baños, completing it in 1980.

When the DA was reorganized in 1987, then DA Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III appointed him the first director of the Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR).

He then served as executive director of then PCARRD, from 1994 to 1998. The agency is now called the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development, based in Los Baños, Laguna.

He has received eight Doctorate degrees (Honoris Causa) in various fields by several state universities and colleges in (SUCs) in the Philippines.

In 1988, he was among the Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) of the Philippines, and received an “Outstanding Administrator Award” from the Department of Science and Technology.

In 2014, he received the “Outstanding MS Swaminathan Leadership Award” from India.

In December 5, 2014, he received a “Pamana ng Pilipino Award” from then President Benigno Aquino III, honoring outstanding overseas Filipino individuals and organizations.