

Rats destroy nearly P30-M crops in three Cotabato towns

BY WILLIAMOR MAGBANUA, GMA NEWS, JANUARY 16, 2016, COTABATO, ASIA

KIDAPAWAN CITY - Nearly P30 million worth of crops have been damaged due to due to rat infestation in at least three towns in Cotabato.

Roel Villanueva, of the Information Division of the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist said rats have damaged P13.5 million worth of crops in Kabacan town, P12.8 million in Aleosan and P3.2 million in Tulunan.

Villanueva said at least 21 villages in the three towns are currently infested by rodents.

He said that in Aleosan town, at least 87 hectares of rice crops and 40.6 hectares of corn fields had been lost due to rat infestation, which started since the last quarter of December last year.

Close to a hundred hectares of cornfield, meanwhile, have been infested by roddents in the villages of Banaya, Bituan and Maybula in Tulunan town.

Villanueva said the figure may still increase as they have yet to assess the infestation's damage in the whole province.

He said the provincial agricultural office is distributing rodenticide or zinc phosphide to farmers to help them combat the pests.

Villanueva added that they have been constantly reminding farmers to keep the surroundings of their farmlands clean.

'Rat campaign'

To prevent a spillover of the rat infestation, M'lang town Mayor Joselito Piñol revived Executive Order No. 1, ordering a synchronized clean-up drive in all villages every last Friday of the month.

Under the order, the local government will also implement a reward system to fight rat infestation.

A resident will be rewarded with a kilo of rice for every 10 tails of rodents.

“Let us cooperate to eliminate these pests. Please get out from your respective offices and school and let us all join in the rat campaign,” Piñol said. —**ALG, GMA News**