



Republic of the Philippines  
**DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE**

Roxas Boulevard Corner Pablo Ocampo, Sr. Street  
Manila 1004

## **MESSAGE**

I congratulate the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines (RBAP) on its celebration of the Rural Banking Consciousness Week.

Rural banks are at the forefront of driving financial inclusion in rural and agricultural communities. Over the years, the rural banking industry has widened access to formal credit for these previously unbanked populations.

It is crucial that we continue opening the doors to essential financial services in these communities to empower the country's farmers, fisherfolk, and small enterprises – sectors that have long been underserved by the financial sector.

The digitalization of the financial sector, especially in rural banking, will pave the way for greater financial inclusion among our people. This is critical in mobilizing capital in rural areas. Hence, I challenge the members of RBAP to fully harness the power of digital technologies in their operations to better serve their core constituency.

Alongside these efforts, the Marcos administration remains committed to strengthening rural banks by making them more financially resilient and attuned to the needs of the sector.

With the recent enactment of the Agriculture, Fisheries, and Rural Development Financing Enhancement Act, financial institutions – including rural banks – are now in a better position to support the productivity and competitiveness of rural communities.

Let us continue working together to build a robust rural banking sector that will bring forth a more inclusive and broad-based economic growth.



☺ ☺ ☺  
**BENJAMIN E. DIOKNO**  
Secretary of Finance

**AUG 15 2022**