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DOST-ITDI is working to commercialize 11 technologies with Filipino-Swiss manufacturer



(L-R: Chemicals and Energy Division (CED) OIC Engr. Apollo Victor O. Bawagan, Packaging Technology Division (PTD) OIC Ms. Floridel V. Loberiano, Food Processing Division (FPD) Chief Ms. Ma. Dolor Villaseñor, ITDI Director Dr. Annabelle V. Briones, SPRLI President and CEO Mr. Benjamin G. Tantiensu, and SPRLI Business Consultant Ms. Natalie Gerundio) Photo by: RRUdelaCruz

Three years since the COVID-19 pandemic shook the world, the economy is gradually opening up, and more face-to-face activities are happening. Industries are finding their way back to business and, hopefully, for more employment opportunities to offer.

Transitioning to the “new normal,” the Department of Science and Technology’s Secretary, Dr. Renato U. Solidum, emphasized the importance of developing technologies that will benefit the local economy. Likewise, there is a need, and he says, “for our engineers and scientists to have an entrepreneurial mindset and aim to see those innovations in the market” that can provide the solutions the industry needs. Collaborating with the industry could be one vehicle for this to materialize, and this is exactly what the ITDI is pursuing with Swisspharma Research Laboratories, Inc. (SPRLI), a Filipino-Swiss company.

Initially signing a Memorandum of Understanding or MOU with the Institute in October 2022, SPRLI and ITDI signed a Technology Licensing Agreement (TLA) and

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Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on February 8, 2023. These sealed the deal for the adoption of eleven ITDI-developed technologies namely: Isotonic Drink, Mungbean Coconut Milk Beverage, Ready-to-eat Beef-filled *Suman*, Ready-to-drink Rice Milk, High Dietary Fiber from *Calamansi* Wastes, Ready-to-drink *Tablea*, Ready-to-eat Sweet Potato, Ready-to-eat Cassava in Syrup, Ready-to-eat Chicken Egg, Ready-to-eat Smoked Fish Meal, and Ready-to-eat Chicken *Arroz Caldo*.

With most industries worldwide reeling from the effects of the pandemic, local manufacturers are also looking for some interventions and innovations that can help them 'break a leg' and keep afloat and enable them to bounce back.

Recognizing an opportunity, SPRLI President and CEO Mr. Benjamin G. Tantiansu took one great leap with DOST to help get their industry up and running again. He said that *"the pandemic hard-hit every business, but gave way too to e-commerce platforms to thrive, especially food, beverages, clothing, and protective apparels. The pharmaceutical industry might be considered one that will effortlessly cope and stay afloat in the past two years, but the reality is far from it. One should fully understand the process of making a single tablet, capsule, caplet, syrup, or suspension bottle. Raw materials suppliers stopped manufacturing, delivering, importing, or exporting. Packaging materials suppliers were in the same circumstances. Loans were left unpaid, and interest charges compounded. Cash inflow slowed down and even stopped for quite a while. There must be something good somewhere else."*

Swisspharma's engagement with DOST started in October 2021 when it adopted DOST-FNRI's (Food and Nutrition Research Institute) enhanced nutribun. *"We started looking into the food industry, but we cannot start big, so we started small – producing loaf bread, pandesal, monay, and ensaymada in a separate building. Then we collaborated with DOST-FNRI for the technology adoption of E-Nutribuns, now with 3 variants – squash, carrot, and sweet potato."*

"We know there's no turning back with this new venture, so we decided to roll over to our next collaborating partner, the DOST-ITDI. We now have, inside our MOA, 11 technology adoption for the products. We hope to add more to the list as we continue collaborating with ITDI.", Tantiansu added.

Right after the ceremonial TLA and MOA signing in February, the SPRLI availed of training from ITDI for their researchers and for putting up its processing facilities for *calamansi*, mango, and SAGIP Nutriflour. Moreover, pursuant to Republic Act No. 10055 or the Philippine Technology Transfer Act, both parties agreed to a review and evaluation of the DOST Fairness Opinion Board before the TLA's implementation for commercialization.

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Furthermore, Tantiansu believes, *“With these food ventures on hand, we want to see ourselves with reduced dependency in the pharma industry while looking forward to enhancing our food production capacity for the local communities in the coming years. As people say, history repeats itself. Although nobody wants something bad coming back, we can at least relatively say that we won’t be caught off guard again, especially so that ITDI’s food items were purposely developed to address food shortages in difficult times or emergencies.”*

SPRLI conducts contract manufacturing and R&D of pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and food supplements for the local and foreign markets and actively participates in regional and ASEAN harmonization efforts to upgrade the pharmaceutical industry, especially in the Philippines.

Embodying the DOST mantra *#OneDOST4U*, through this partnership, producing and delivering quality and research-based products to consumers is ensured while helping revitalize local manufacturing. *(MVAtienza//S&T Media Service)*

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