

## New swine-like flu virus emerges

A strange hybrid of pig, bird and human flu virus has emerged in Mexico and the United States, and in nine other countries.

The World Health Organization (WHO) in its website said the situation continues to evolve rapidly that as of 1700GMT, 30 April 2009, 11 countries have officially reported 257 cases of Influenza A (H1N1) infection.

The US has reported 109 laboratory confirmed human cases, with one death, while Mexico has reported 97 confirmed human cases, with seven deaths.

The other nine countries (in alphabetical order) with reported laboratory confirmed cases with no deaths are: Austria (1), Canada (19), Germany (3), Israel (2), Netherlands (1), New Zealand (3), Spain (13), Switzerland (1), and the United Kingdom (8).

For its part, the Philippines through the Department of Agriculture

and Bureau of Animal Industry (DA-BAI) has imposed stringent biosecurity and border control measures to prevent the entry of the A (H1N1) virus in the country.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap has assured Filipino consumers there is nothing to worry about and that it is safe to eat properly cooked pork.

The WHO said there is no risk of infection from A (H1N1) flu virus from

### DA condemns killing of top agri exec, thorough police investigation sought

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap led officials of the Department of Agriculture in condemning the killing of Undersecretary and DA Regional Executive Director Gumersindo D. Lasam, who was ambushed by unidentified men in Solana, Cagayan, April 14, 2009.

"We, in the Department of Agriculture, condemn in the strongest terms the murder of Director Lasam. He is a great loss not only to his family, but to Philippine agri-

culture and to the Department, which he has served excellently and faithfully for many, many years. He is the most senior and inarguably the best of all the REDs."

"We deeply mourn his death and hope that an immediate and thorough police investigation will soon bring the perpetrators of this heinous crime to justice," Yap said.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is giving a P1-million reward to whoever can give information that would lead to the arrest of the perpetrators.

According to initial police reports, two armed men shot Dir Lasam at around 7:15 a.m., while he was crossing the NIA Bridge.

Chief Supt. Roberto Damian, the regional director of the Philippine National Police in Region II, said the suspects immediately fled on board a motorcycle after the incident, while Lasam was rushed to



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Arthur C. Yap  
Secretary

*The Department of Agriculture through its Bureau of Animal Industry is encouraging hog raisers to vaccinate their animals against swine flu.*

consumption of well-cooked pork and pork products. Individuals are advised to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water on a regular basis and should seek medical attention if they develop any symptoms of influenza-like illness.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said it has no idea where the A (H1N1) flu virus has originated.

"Everybody is calling it swine flu, but the better term is swine-like," said Michael Shaw, CDC associate director for laboratory science. "It's like viruses we have seen in pigs—it's not something we know was in pigs. It doesn't really have any close relative."

For his part, DA-BAI Director

Davinio Catbagan said they will coordinate with the Bureau of Customs and Philippine Ports Authority along with airlines and shipping companies on tightening border controls in international airports and seaports.

BAI is also imposing stricter biosecurity measures and farm accreditation systems, said Catbagan, as well as strengthening quarantine checkpoints to prevent the transport, and ensure the proper disposal, of sick pigs, so these animals do not end up in the human food chain.

Secretary Yap has directed the DA-BAI to strengthen the monitoring of all the ports to prevent the

*(Pls turn to p10)*



Dir. Gumersindo D. Lasam

### RP eyes exports of Halal products to Kuwait, Brunei

The Philippines is now holding separate discussions with Kuwait and Brunei on possible investment opportunities in the domestic Halal sector, particularly in Mindanao, which has a comparative edge mainly because it is free of the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and the avian influenza (AI) or bird flu virus.

Agriculture Undersecretary Jesus Emmanuel Paras said the Department of Agriculture is offering foreign investors at least two big-ticket Halal investment propos-

als in Mindanao: the Halal Economic Zone in Davao City; and a Halal model poultry farm in Cagayan De Oro City. These are worth a combined P3.04 billion.

Halal refers to the kind of food permissible under Islamic Law; hence, "The proposed Halal Economic Zone, which will cost at least P2.2 billion to establish, is the centerpiece of the Halal investment portfolio being offered to overseas investors by the Arroyo gov-

*(Pls turn to p10)*

*(Pls turn to p2)*

## Editorial

### *We will miss you, Apo Gomer!*

When the life of Undersecretary and concurrent DA Region 2 Executive Director Gumersindo Durian Lasam was taken by still unknown perpetrators on that fateful morning of April 14, the Filipino farmers and fishers lost an ardent defender and supporter.

And for his wife Olive and three children and the entire Durian-Lasam clan, they did not only lose one member, but the guiding force that holds the family together. Respected and adored, Director Lasam was – and still is – the “sun” towards which everything on the solar system, that is, the Durian-Lasam clan gravitates.

He must have foreseen his appointed time to return to His Maker. In a recent and rare reunion with three of his closest colleagues at the sidelines of an event in Mindanao, he was requested by DA RFU 11 Director Roger Chio, saying: ‘*Roger, first and last request ko sa ‘yo, dalhan mo naman ako ng pomelo at durian.*’

Throughout his illustrious career that has spanned 37 years, he rose from the ranks, from a veterinarian to a senior Regional Executive Director with a rank of Undersecretary – he had consistently displayed genuine concern about the plight of the smallholders, by ensuring that their voice was heard and issues addressed.

He was known for his wit, reason, assertiveness and honesty. He spoke his mind, no matter what, to defend what he believed was right and just, proving that one can disagree without being disagreeable.

To his staff members at the DA RFU 2, he was a reasonably strict and generous father who would al-

ways go out of his way to show his appreciation for their work and cooperation.

At a necrological service for his honor in Solana, on April 20, or two days before he was finally laid to rest, good words as well as sorrowful tears streamed for the man that family herald as the “best provider” and “doting grandfather to his grandchildren,” and what colleagues, friends and provincemates consider their “mentor,” “the wind of beneath our wings” and “leader.”

For his part, Secretary Arthur Yap said: “It is said that at the end of our days we are judged by the gifts that we leave our children. So, to his children I say your father did not leave you immense wealth and possessions but if you look around you -- these are the gifts that he left you and there you are immensely rich. The respect of the community, the love, and the recognition of those he worked with.

He continued: “There are two former secretaries here and a sitting secretary, plus local officials and leaders. This is the legacy *na iniwan sa inyo ng ama ninyo.*” Former DA Secretaries Roberto Sebastian and Leonardo Montemayor also paid tribute to Director Lasam and his significant contributions to Philippine agriculture.

Our hearts still bleed for his senseless death, but we take comfort from the fact that he is now in a better place, celebrating a life well-lived.

Let us long remember him for his high sense of public duty, and hold his memories dearly by dedicating our respective work to a memory of such a brilliant and compassionate man.

### *DA condemns... (from p1)*

the St. Paul University Hospital where he was declared dead on arrival.

Before his death, Lasam played a key role in two of the DA’s major initiatives—the Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP) for Region II (Cagayan Valley), where Yap was designated by Pres. Arroyo as Cabinet steward for CLEEP, and the Department’s reform program anchored on the more effective monitoring of DA intervention programs, including those under the President’s FIELDS agenda.

Born on January 13, 1946 in Solano, Cagayan, Lasam graduated with a degree in veterinary medicine from the University of the Philippines in 1968.

He started his government career in 1972 as Cagayan’s assistant provincial veterinarian. In 1986, he

was appointed as Regional Director of the DA Department of Agriculture in Region 2.

He was appointed as Assistant Secretary for Regional Operations, from April 1994 to October 1999.

In 2000, he opted to assume his previous post as Regional Executive Director of Cagayan Valley.

Due to his leadership, Cagayan Valley was able to surpass its growth targets, particularly in the rice and corn subsectors, which contributed substantially to the expansion of Philippine agriculture in the past years.

Yap noted that under Lasam’s stewardship as head of the DA office in Cagayan Valley, the region was able to surpass its growth targets for the rice and corn sectors, which contributed substantially to the expansion of Philippine agriculture in the past years.

### **NIA cancels P1.4-B equipment bid**

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) said it has canceled the controversial bidding for the procurement of P1.4 billion heavy equipment.

NIA Administrator Carlos Salazar, in a statement, said that due to the delay in the procurement process, “it appears at this juncture that the certainty of procuring the equipment in time for the restoration of irrigation facilities during the dry season will no longer be met.”

As such, he said “NIA, as the procuring entity, has decided to exercise its right to reject any and all bids pursuant to Section 41.1 of the IRR (Implementing Rules and Regulations) of Republic Act 9184 and hereby cancels the subject bidding.”

It would be recalled that two lawmakers had sought an investigation into the P1.4-billion irrigation machinery contract of the NIA after a bidder who claimed to have offered the lowest bid was disqualified.

On the other hand, Salazar said the NIA “stands by the integrity of

the bidding process for the procurement of P1.4 billion equipment since it was done in strict adherence to the provisions of RA 9184 or The Government Procurement Reform Act (GPR) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.”

Despite media campaign to discredit the bidding, he said “it is a matter of fact that every bidder was allowed to participate in said bidding.”

“It is also a matter of fact that there is no proof as to any violation of RA 9184 and its IRR committed by the NIA Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) in the conduct of the bidding. It is also a matter of fact that the bidding procedure was done in an open and transparent manner,” he added.

Due to the delay in the procurement process, however, Salazar said NIA has decided to cancel the bidding since the certainty of procuring the equipment in time for the restoration of irrigation facilities during the dry season will no longer be met.

### **NFA intensifies palay milling**

The National Food Authority is intensifying its palay milling to decongest warehouses, accommodate new harvests from the summer crop or *palagad*, and thus build up its rice inventory.

NFA Administrator Jessup Navarro said they expect to buy as much as 3.8 million bags of palay.

The NFA has 294 owned warehouses nationwide that can store 20 million bags. During the peak

of procurement it also leases private-owned warehouses.

It has already milled about two million bags of palay equivalent to some 1.3 million bags of rice.

At the required 65 percent milling recovery, the NFA expects to produce 8.5 million bags of rice from the 13.2 million bags of palay it bought during the last year’s main harvest. (*NFA Public Affairs Department*)

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# DA crafting master plan to make agriculture a magnet for private investments



THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture plans to convert Philippine agriculture into a magnet for investments in the long term, by way of a master plan to convince the private sector that farming is a highly profitable enterprise with full government backing all the way from production to marketing of goods.

Given the realities of Government unable to meet all the financial requirements of this sector and anemic support from the banking community, Secretary Arthur Yap said that the only way for this sector to reach its full potential as a primary engine of growth is for the DA to be able to attract much heftier investments from the private sector.

He said that the DA executives and the private-sector commodity champions are crafting a master plan to entice private traders to invest in money in agriculture with the commitment that Government will provide its "equity share" in terms of infrastructure support, like irrigation maintenance and farm-to-market roads, postharvest facilities, technology transfer and training and, even, assistance in finding local and overseas markets for their produce.

"Philippine agriculture and fisheries cannot reach its full potentials if the government will rely on non-government cash infusion only from businessmen with a passion for farming," Yap said. "The only way this sector can spawn an environment conducive to private investments is to put up an unprecedented level of government support that will persuade a lot of businessmen to invest in this sector for the simple reason that it is a highly profitable one."

Yap has been holding strategy

meetings on this master plan with senior DA officials, members of the Secretary's Technical Advisory Group (STAG) and with agribusiness leaders considered champions in specific commodities.

In a recent meeting at the Century Park Hotel in Manila, the DA chief designated Undersecretary Segfredo Serrano as the overseer of this plan, which will consist of short, medium- and long-term measures to create a local environment far more conducive to private investments.

During the meeting, the government experts and industry leaders agreed that agriculture has a comparative advantage under the deepening global financial meltdown because worldwide demand for food commodities.

This master plan will include the streamlining of the DA's policies and programs to generate private sector interest in the farm and fisheries sector by familiarizing them with the comprehensive array of assistance that the government is ready to provide them in the production, postharvest and marketing aspects of agribusiness. Among the proposals broached were:

- The reactivation of the commodity boards to make them institutional arms of the Department

- The identification of commodity champions to spearhead investment strategies in specific commodities, like mango, banana and other high value crops

- The creation of commodity clusters that will address concerns raised by the private sector and do away with investment bottlenecks that discourage private traders from

ploughing their money into agribusiness.

Yap noted that although agriculture accounts for a fifth of the country's Gross Domestic Product, private investments in this critical sector remain minimal compared to other industries. The sector accounts for 16% to 17% of GDP and employs 11.9 million Filipinos or a third of the national labor force, but agriculture and fisheries receives a measly 4% and 0.3%, respectively, of bank loans, lamented Yap in citing the latest Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) data.

Thus, this is the reason why the DA is pushing, among other farm-friendly legislative measures, the swift approval of amendments to the Agri-Agra Law, which will remove

those provisions that have allowed commercial banks to buy government securities instead of setting aside a mandated portion of their loanable funds for agrarian reform and farm and fisheries development. In 2007, the total credit requirement of the agriculture sector for palay, corn, coconut, sugarcane and fisheries was estimated at P200 billion, but banks were only able to finance P48 billion, or 24% of this requirement. But, because of the availability of alternative forms of compliance to the Agri-Agra Law, such as investments in government bonds and development loans for education, hospitals and socialized housing, loanable funds are being redirected to these financial instruments.

## SACY orders audit of post-harvest facilities in step with fund disbursement reform

SECRETARY Yap recently ordered an internal audit of all post-harvest facilities put up by the various DA offices and attached-agencies in keeping with the sweeping reform program that the agency is implementing this year to ensure better monitoring of its intervention programs and more judicious disbursement of funds to local government units (LGUs), nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs).

These post-harvest facilities comprise flatbed dryers, tramlines, cold chain facilities, fish ports, shredders, slaughter houses, and "bagsakan" or trading posts, and are all meant to pare post-production losses that cut into the profits of farmers and other stakeholders and spell the more efficient and cheaper delivery of goods from farms to markets.

Yap assigned A/Sec. Salvador Salacup to head the internal audit team that will start assessing and validating these post-harvest projects following the Lenten break.

"The DA is conducting this internal audit of its post-harvest facilities to spell greater transparency," Yap said, "and in

keeping with the reform measures that we have put in place for a better monitoring of our intervention programs meant to boost farm production and a more judicious downloading of public funds to farmer-beneficiaries via our program partners like LGUs, NGOs and POs."

He added that this DA reform program is the "linchpin of government efforts to correct systemic lapses" that has earlier affected the implementation of its food security and sufficiency initiatives. Likewise, that such reforms are topped by the creation of national and regional monitoring teams to conduct "periodic field validation and rapid appraisal" of the Department's intervention measures under its banner program Ginintuang Masaganang Ani, and the adoption of rigid guidelines on the release of funds to NGOs and POs as well as to LGUs.

Moreover, for better coordination with the Commission on Audit, the new guidelines issued by Yap last year already contained provisions of COA Circular No. 2007-001 on fund releases to NGOs and POs, and of COA Circular No. 94-013 on similar releases to LGUs.

# 508 farmers train, 718 more benefit from organic agri'l program nationwide

A TOTAL of 508 farmers have so far been trained in the production of non-chemical based fertilizers while another 718 benefited from the establishment of techno-demo organic farms under joint initiatives between the DA and NGOs to promote organic agriculture and other related environment-friendly farming practices.

In a report to Sec. Yap, BSWM director Silvino Tejada said that under the first phase of the DA's Organic FIELDS Support Project, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), a national organization of small farmers headed by former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor, has teamed up with the Bureau of Soils and Water Management in implementing the Development and Promotion of Organic Rice Production Program. This project, which has an initial funding support of P1 million from the BSWM, has two components:

(1) the training of farmer-technicians on organic fertilizer and botanical preparation; (2) the establishment of techno-demo organic farms.



*Palay Check Technique*

## 21 provinces in organic rice program

Tejada reported at a recent DA

ManCom meeting that 88 farmer-technicians from the 21 provinces covered by the project took part in a cluster training program each conducted separately in Luzon,

Further, that a total of 79 organic rice techno-demo farms with a consolidated area of 107 hectares, or an average of 1.4 hectares per farm, owned by 578 farmers in the 21 provinces were established. Most of the techno-demo farms opened during the November 2008 to January 2009 planting season.

## Mindanao farmers train in organic rice

Tejada added that in a separate project, the DA teamed up with the Centro Saka, Inc. headed by Romeo Royandoyan, in conducting training programs on organic rice farming technologies; establishment of organic rice techno-demo farms; and setting up of a composting facility for the production of organic fertilizer. A total of eleven training sessions on organic rice production were conducted and participated in by 420 farmers from 11 provinces in Mindanao.

He disclosed also that a total of 120 hectares of techno-demo farms owned by 140 farmer-beneficiaries had been established during the 2008 dry cropping season. Of these areas, 20 hectares are upland palay farms located in Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan.

The composting facility, on the other hand, set up under the project is located in Tago, Surigao del Sur and operated by the Surigao del Sur Federation of Agricultural Co-

*(Pls turn to p5)*

## PCA now mass-producing 2 new parasitoids against Brontispa

THE PHILIPPINE Coconut Authority has discovered new parasitoid insects which could prove to be of great importance in the country's continuing battle against *Brontispa longissima*. The *Brontispa*, a major insect pest, has previously attacked more than 1.6 million coconut trees nationwide according to PCA Administrator Oscar G. Garin.

"Our research center in Davao City has identified two indigenous small insects that parasitize *Brontispa* by laying their eggs in the larva or pupa of the pest," Garin highlighted in a recently concluded *Brontispa* in-house evaluation and action planning held in Quezon City.

The PCA-Davao Research Center had previously conducted a field release evaluation where a total of 1,948 parasitoid adults were released in *Brontispa*-infested barangays in Region XI and also in parallel laboratory tests.

"The parasitoids collected in the field inflicted about 30%-50% parasitism on the pest's (host) larva or pupa," Garin noted, adding that laboratory results showed that around seven to 47 adult parasitoids emerged from one larva/pupa 18 to 26 days from injection for parasitization.

"With the earwigs, we now have

three indigenous species for biological control of this foreign (*Brontispa*) pest," Garin added as he underscored the need to adopt a long-term integrated pest management system.

He, however, said that the use of chemical insecticides, through trunk injection or spraying, should only be done in severe cases and at first treatment, with the long term

and sustainable approach to be comprised of biological control, use of entomopathogen fungi, good farming practices and strict quarantine controls.

In addition, he said, "Our research centers are now mass rearing these parasitoids for immediate use in areas that may suffer recurrence of *Brontispa* infestation." *(COCONUT MEDIA SERVICE)*

## BAR intensifies support to agribiotech research

Recognizing the benefits of biotechnology application in agriculture, the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) in partnership with the National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (BIOETCH) and selected state universities and colleges (SUCs), intensify its biotechnology R&D program giving specific attention to traditional and modern biotechnology.

The biotechnology program focuses on integrated processing to increase the value and competitiveness of traditional crops intended for local and world markets. This includes the production of natural ingredients with the application of traditional and modern technology and the creation of clusters of natural ingredients industries. With the Philippines being rich in biodiversity, it can exploit and create new products and medicine for

the growing global market.

In a recent pronouncement of BAR Director Nicomedes P. Eleazar, he noted how biotechnology application in agriculture is seen as an answer to issues in agricultural productivity and food security.

With such an initiative, BAR hopes to develop and promote the adoption of new production and postharvest technologies to increase productivity and profitability of selected agricultural commodities while minimizing the environmental impact of farming and fishery practices to effectively manage biodiversity, and help develop science-based policies.

The idea is to fast track agricultural productivity that positively and directly increases farmers' incomes, provides access to nutritious and safer food, and helps

achieve a healthy environment.

Based at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), BIOTECH has been promoting agricultural biotechnology that improves the productivity of the industry in turning out products that cost less and are safer for family consumption while at the same time, contributes to a healthy environment.

According to Dr. Ida F. Dalamacio of BIOTECH, speculative fear of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and biotechnology has prevented people from understanding the real potentials and benefits of biotechnology application in agriculture. Dalamacio also clarified that there is more to agribiotechnology than the GMOs and expounded on how biotechnology can be applied in agriculture.

*(Pls turn to p5)*

## BAR supports dev't of technologies to turn mango waste products into profitable use

RESEARCHERS from the University of the Philippines Los Baños is conducting a year-long study to fast track the development of technologies for the production of high-value food and non-food products from the wastes or by-products of the mango processing industries.

The DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) is providing the financial support for the conduct of the study.

The project of five studies focusing on mango seeds and mango peel will be conducted to develop technologies for: 1) enzymatic extraction of essential oils; 2) bioethanol production; 3) extraction of phenolic antioxidant (mangiferin); 4) development of health drinks; and 5) sensory,



chemical, microbiological, and stability testing of biotechnology-produced food and non-food products.

According to Researcher Arsenia Sapin, the production of high value products from wastes and by-products can result to exportable commodities, provide additional source of income to producers, generate employment, and create investment opportunities for the country.

A dollar-earner crop, mango ranks third among the country's exportable fruits; however, the mango processing industry has been experiencing problems, among which are the rising cost of processing due to labor cost, high cost of the fruit, and the disposal of process-

ing wastes.

The mango seeds and peel constitute 50 percent of the fruit, but the potential markets for mango wastes include the cosmetic and personal health care product industries. Products can be of practical use such as for food, feed, and as a renewable energy source.

The one-year project was pro-



Photos courtesy of Rita dela Cruz

posed by a group of researchers from the UPLB-National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (BIOTECH) and the Food Science Cluster, UPLB namely Arsenia B. Sapin, Teresita J. Ramirez, Susan A. Sedano, Mary Ann T. Tavanlar, and Wilson.T. Tan.

## SACY orders audit of P2-B NIA loan for irrigation facilities rehab

SECRETARY Yap has ordered recently an internal audit of the P2-billion loan that the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) had secured from the National Development Corp. (NDC) that was used to jumpstart the restoration and rehab of irrigation facilities servicing a total of 53,000 hectares of land in 2008. This is in line with fresh

DA efforts to ensure a more effective monitoring of its intervention programs and the more judicious disbursement of its funds.

In his directive, Yap ordered the Field Operations Service and the Regional Agricultural Engineering Groups of the DA's Regional Field Units to carry out the internal audit.

"The audit should include the financial accomplishments of the projects implemented by NIA using this P2-billion loan from the NDC," Yap said. "The audit team will also check if these projects are already ongoing and if they are being implemented on schedule."

Yap said that the NDC has been tapped last year to help NIA attain its target of restoring irrigation systems covering 33,000 hectares and rehabilitating another 20,000 hectares of existing irrigated areas. The repair of irrigation systems will add one or two more cropping seasons per year in underutilized farm lands. This April, the Arroyo administration is due to implement the restore/rehab of irrigation facilities covering a total of 148,000 hectares.

## 508 farmers... (from p1) operatives (SUFAC).

Tejada said that these collaborations initiated by the DA with NGOs have so far yielded a total of 508 farmers and farmers-technicians undergoing training in 14 sessions in 32 provinces across the country.

### 6 Pilot OFSP in Luzon

Last year, the DA and BWSM forged a memorandum of agreement with the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM), La Liga Policy Institute (LLPI) and Alaminos City Mayor Hernani Braganza on the launching of the OFSP in an initial six cities and municipalities in Luzon.

Under that MOA, the DA and BWSM will provide financial and

technical support to OFSP to carry out the program's first phase in for the benefit of at least 600 farmers combined who will get hands-on training over a four-month period (November 2008-March 2009) on the methods involved in the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) production, Organic Fertilizer Production and Nature Fertilizer.

PRRM, LLPI and Braganza, on the other hand, have committed under the MOA to oversee the implementation of Phase 1 of the OFSP in the six pilot sites during the dry cropping season, and take charge of the education and information component of this project through trainings, seminars and consultative meetings on organic fertilizer and organic fertilizer manufacturing,

and the production of TV and radio plugs and other promotional materials. These pilot sites are Alaminos City, Tabaco City in Albay, Science City of Muñoz in Nueva Ecija, Naujan in Mindoro Oriental, and Dinalupihan and Samal in Bataan.

One-hectare palay fields, either owned by an LGU or by farmer initiators, will be developed into learning farms in each of the pilot areas where at least 100 farmer-participants per site will be given "hands-on exposure and experiential learning" on organic fertilizer techniques such as conventional composting and vermi-composting, conversion of rice husk and hull into organic fertilizer, distance planting and SRI methodology, integrated pest management (IPM) and zero-tillage fertilizer. //

## BAR intensifies... (from p1)



"Biotechnology is the application of any technique that uses living organisms, or a part of it, to make or modify a product, to improve plants or animals or to develop substances for specific functions.

If applied to agriculture, it simply means the use living organisms or part of it, to improve the productivity of crops, livestock and the fisheries," she explained.

Dalamacio identified specific biotechnology applications that are now reaping benefits for the agriculture sector. These are: 1) microbial fertilizers/biofertilizers and microbial pesticides; 2) tissue-culture

in crops, medicinal and ornamental plants, 3) tissue-culture in crops, medicinal and ornamental plants, 4) animal vaccines, and 5) diagnostic kits of pathogens and toxins.

She concluded that if these agribiotechnology products are continuously promoted, are made available, supported, and applied as complement to other local agritechnologies in the country, achieving food security and total productivity in agriculture can be surely achieved. (Rita T. dela Cruz, DA-BAR)

Throughout his lifetime, Dir. Lasam has endeared himself to tens of thousands of individuals — family members, DA family officials and staff, local government officials, colleagues in the private sector, veterinary profession and socio-civic groups, schoolmates, neighbors, and most especially farmers and ruralfolk in Cagayan and other parts of the country.

Below are some excerpts of the tribute to man, who is fondly called 'Gomer' by colleagues and friends, and 'Apo Gomer' or 'Lakay Gomer' by his countless 'students.'

**Sec. Arthur C. Yap:**

"He is a great loss to the Department and Philippine agriculture, which he has served excellently and faithfully for many, many years. He is the most senior and, inarguably, the best of all the regional executive directors.

"Marami sa kasama niya sa trabaho benefited much from his tutelage.

"Who among us has not been in the receiving end of his temper, Secretary included. Our shouting matches were legendary, but Gomer never took it personally because talagang galing sa kanyang puso. He is passionate, dahil gusto n'yang makatulong.

"The people who masterminded and carried out the attack did not take somebody away from his family, they took somebody away from Philippine agriculture.

"We were all recipients of his generosity. He offered his personal possessions and gifts.

"It is said that we are judged by the gifts that we leave our children. So, to his children, I say your father did not leave you immense wealth and possessions, but he left you with the immense the respect of the community, the love, and the recognition of those he worked with. You will judge him well by these gifts that he has left you.

"According to the book of Ecclesiastes: '... there is a time to be born and a time to die. A time to be sad and a time to be happy.'

"It will be a great injustice to him if we will continue to mourn. Let's do him honor. We must celebrate his life.

"Gomer now belongs to the immortals. We will continue to hold him dearly and his memories dearly. And we will do it by



*Dir. Lasam was conferred with dozens of prestigious national awards throughout his sterling 37-year stint in government, among them are the 'Champion Advocate for Gawad Saka,' which he received from President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in July 2007, (with Sec. Arthur C. Yap) ...*

dedicating our work to a memory of such a man.

"I will continue to ask for Gomer's help. He is now in a more powerful place than he was before. And I know he can deliver a lot of help from where he is.

"In prayer he will continue to be with us. When you are in heaven **Apo**, doing your extension work, be a little more patient with those who know less than you. I can see him talking to the saints, and he is giving them advice on how to grow better rice and corn.

"May the choir of angels welcome you to heaven. May you rest in peace and eternal light. God's mercy shine upon you."

**Former DA Sec. Roberto S. Sebastian:**

"During our time before we get together for the DA Management Committee meetings, I would ask Undersecretary Manny Lantin to prepare 20 questions, 5 each on grains and crops, livestock, fisheries and current events.

"Those with agriculture background did well in the grains question. Those with vet med background did very well on the livestock, and those with the fishery background performed

# Dir. Gumersindo Durio



*... the '1993 Civil Service Commission Lingkod Bayan Award' conferred by former President Fidel V. Ramos, in 1993 (with wife Olive, and former President Joseph E. Estrada who was then the Vice President) ...*

well in fishery questions. One did very well in all sectors, that was Gomer.

**Former DA Sec. Leonardo Q. Montemayor:**

"When I asked Gomer if he could join us in the central office, because I thought his talents are well beyond Region 2, his answer then was very forthright: 'I want to stay in Region 2. I want to take care of my wife, Olive.'

"Gomer has balanced well the needs of his family, and the welfare of farmers and ruralfolk in region 2. That's a very hard act to follow.

"The best way to honor him is to continue the work that he has started. His standards of decency, honesty and reliability, ability to work with people in a very diplomatic, but very effective way.

Let's follow his example the best way we can—to make sense out of his life.

"In Matthew, in the New Testament, we are told that if you want to be admitted to the kingdom, one of the best admission tickets is to feed the hungry.

"In his life and through his work,

Gomer has literally fed hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of hungry Filipinos. Thus, I'm sure Gomer is up there now."

**Ms. Belinda Gonzales, DA Undersecretary for Administration and Finance:**

"The sudden demise of Dir. Lasam, a man known for his outstanding accomplishments, untainted service and unselfish dedication in the performance of his duties as a public servant, particularly in the field of agriculture, and as a recipient of the prestigious **Lingkod Bayan Award**, is worthy to be given due honor, recognition and respect by all of us in the DA family."

**Dr. Paz Monez (Regional Technical Director, DA-RFU1):**

"In 2003, we adopted his NCL cluster survey of several commodities like rice, corn livestock, tilapia, and mango.

"His frequent pieces of advice to us: 'There is always room for improvement, particularly in developing one's potentials; and 'You can do better than that!'

"Itinituro niya kahit ang pagtayo during presentation, pati yong position mo, kung paano mo gagawin ang presentation, pati mga combination ng colors, pati

# an Lasam (January 13, 1946-April 14, 2009)



*... and the 'Most Outstanding DA Regional Director' from former President Corazon C. Aquino in May 1992 (with former Agriculture Sec. Senen C. Bacani).*



*... and the 'Most Outstanding DA Regional Director' from former President Corazon C. Aquino in May 1992 (with former Agriculture Sec. Senen C. Bacani).*

ang laman ng slides ayaw niya ng crowded. Lahat yan pinapakialaman niya.

"When I became an RTD, sabi niya: 'Paz, alam kong maprinsipyo ka, pero may time na mai-compromise mo ang prinsipyo mo. Pero kung talagang alanganin ka, just call me and I can give some advice."

"Ang pagkaestrikto niya nasa lugar. Kinatatakutan siya. Pero kaming mga planning officer, crush namin siya. Kasi napaka-intelehente, maganda magdala ng damit. Inspiration siya ng mga gustong matuto. He always challenges us, saying: Hanggang diyan lang ba ang kaya n'yo?"

**Ms. Josephine Castillo**, a municipal agriculture officer in Batanes, on behalf of all municipal agriculturists of Region 2:

"Si Dir. Lasam ang aming 'wind beneath our wings.' Hindi kami makakalipad kung wala siya.

"During training, be it on planning or program and project implementation, he was always around to see that we were going on the right track, particularly in preparing for presentations, kahit abutin ng umaga. He is always active and quick to give his comments. When he stops questioning, we feel felt it's

already an excellent report that meets his standard.

"When we were devolved to the LGUs, we felt like children given for adoption. We felt cheated and disappointed. But he said: 'Akala n'yo, kayo lang ang nasasaktan? Masakit din sa akin na ipamigay kayo, pagkatapos kong magpuhunan ng malaki sa inyo ipamimigay ko lang kayo! So, masakit din ang loob ko. I promise, I'll find a way to get you in the DA family again.'

"His frequent advice to us was: 'Make use of everything you learn so that you will be an asset to the LGUs.'

"He revived the municipal agricultural meetings to maintain

direct communication with us. Like a good father, he wanted to know kung may problema at kung paano makatulong."

"He is so generous. Pag mayroon siyang harvest sa farm niya, ipapadala niya sa amin, para sa breeding station, sa provincial at lahat na mga devolved DA family. May tilapia, mangga, at rice. Ang last na pinadala niya, salted eggs.

"So, ngayong wala na siya, wala nang magpapadala sa amin."

### **Ms. Kaye Olivas**

(Planning Chief, DA-RFU 2):

"Hindi siya nawawalan ng mga innovations. Kahit gaano kahirap ang pinagagawa niya sa amin, hindi namin siya mahindian, dahil very fatherly, loving, and generous siya. Kung

meron kang ginawa para sa kanya, susuklian at susuklian niya 'yon, in kind or pagkain or kahit na anong klaseng incentive.

"He has ably taught us to excel in whatever we do. Ang region 2 ay laging nasa taas, ang pinakamagaling lagi sa presentation.

"Mayroon siyang sariling strategy on how to do things in his own way. He introduced the farmer-led extension that was eventually adopted by in the entire region. Kulang na kulang ang mga agricultural technologist, at a ratio of 1 is to 500. So nag-train sila ng maraming farmer-leaders to act as extensionist to other farmers. So

silang nagso-showcase ng mga new technologies na pwedeng gayahin ng ating mga farmers.

Ngayon, marami na kaming mga FLE o Farmer Leader Extensionist for rice, corn, HVCC and livestock. "It is one of his many legacies."

**Ms. Ligaya Lasam** (Dir. Lasam's eldest daughter):

"He made sure that he never missed important events in our lives. He's always there for every commencement exercise however big or small our part in the program. The best provider, he was a loving and caring father, who placed family above all else. He encouraged us to explore our potentials and supported us in all our interests.

"He always thought of our welfare, our convenience, our well-being. "After his grandchildren were born, his world revolved around them. Everything he did was for them. Parati siyang may pasalubong sa mga bata. He organizes family outings for enjoyment of his grandchildren. He was every inch the doting grandfather.

"To his DA Region 2 family, thank you for your patience, loyalty, and selfless dedication. You provided him the confidence to aim high. With you beside him, he has accomplished great things. Your unwavering loyalty, trust and support made him shine brightly. So bright that the DA Central Office took notice. Seldom in this part of the country do we see one of us reach the corridors of national authority. Thank you for believing in my father, for recognizing his ideas, for working with him to serve our country. Letting him work with you was for him the greatest honor, for it was a recognition of his intellect and capability to change things for the better. It gave meaning to his life and pride to our family.

"Magsasaka ho ang Lolo at housewife po ang Lola ko. My grandparents died too early to see what my father has done for himself.

"It is his family pride that made him very protective of his name. He was very cautious not to tarnish it. Letting down the Durian-Lasam clan was for him an unbearable thought.

"If my father was able to soar in this lifetime it was because you were all the wind beneath his wings."



*With wife Olive in their vintage convertible.*

# Egg-cellent venture

By Adora D. Rodriguez

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

This age-old dilemma has resulted to countless debates for centuries, as it continues to baffle scientists, academicians, and even your community “tambays”.

It is indeed mind-boggling and may even cause people to scratch their heads, but for Martin Ozaeta — a simple Batangueño, who hails from Lumil, San Jose — it is not important which came first, as long as it is economically rewarding.

For almost 20 years, Martin Ozaeta of GEMSUN Marketing has considered chicken eggs as his family’s bread and butter. Thanks to his in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. Rolando Virtusio, who first ventured into the poultry business, Martin learned the intricacies of poultry and egg

business up-close and very personal.

Now managing his own business, 42-year old Martin sees to it that he attends personally to the needs of the farm. These include taking good care of the chicken, with the help of a consultant. Through the years he has learned and experienced a number of factors that pose health risks to the chicken, leading to infertility or even death.

Martin, who took up Commerce in college, believes that all business is not without hindrances. He remembers facing difficult times in running his farm in the beginning. Among them, he states, is maintaining a steady cash flow.

“Hindi naman basta-bastang negosyo ito,” he quips, adding that



Martin Ozaeta (right) with Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap.

this is primarily caused by the tottering supply and demand.

“Kung December, pag malapit na ang Pasko, yan in-demand ang itlog, pag bakasyon yun ang lean,” he added.

As far as cash or capital is concerned, he has a number of lending institutions and government programs, including those of the Department of Agriculture to thank for.

“Malaki ang naitulong ng Department of Agriculture sa amin lalong-lalu na si Secretary Yap. Ito’y dahil nung kinailangan naming mag-expand, naka-avail kami sa ACEF ng loan,” he said.

The ACEF or Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund is a special purpose fund created by Republic Act No. 8178 or the Agricultural Tariffication Act

plans, policies and reforms for various information campaign activities on the programs of DA nationwide. The PIOs likewise agreed to establish a more strengthened network and linkages.

Aside from Sec. Yap, assistant secretary Salvador Salacup and GMA-Rice Director Frisco Malabanan graced the event. On behalf of Sec. Yap, Salacup pitched in as the keynote speaker during the opening ceremonies, while Malabanan discussed the updates on the GMA-Rice program.

The DA family PIOs were also briefed by representatives of other GMA and FIELDS banner programs, foreign-assisted projects, and other DA-OSEC services on information technology, agribusiness and Barangay Bagsakan, and Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program, among other major DA initiatives.

of 1996. It financially supports farmers and fisherfolk, cooperatives and agribusiness entrepreneurs so they can expand their operations and viably compete in the domestic and global markets.

Martin has also partnered with the DA via the marketing assistance program *Bagsakan Center*, thru which he is assured of a ready market for his produce in Marikina and Quezon City.

Martin’s project has indeed come a very long way.

GEMSUN today has redesigned its building to an AV-type to adapt to the changing environment and climate. An automatic drinking apparatus is also being utilized for easier management. Modern equipment such as generators, egg-grading machines, and sprayers are being used as well to ensure the safe and high quality production of eggs.

And through the years, Martin’s company has acquired a fleet of transport vehicles: seven closed vans, two refrigerated vans, two trucks for live hogs, and an L-300 van.

Today, the poultry farm continues to provide financial stability to the Ozaeta family, as well as to some 55 farm laborers.

Currently, it produces close to 58,000 eggs daily, delivered to several supermarkets in South Luzon and Metro Manila.

It has also diversified into a livestock farm managed by Martin’s wife, Pilamar. The farm thus gives sustained livelihood and incomes to Lumil residents through its *Paiwi* or grow-out program.

Now, the town of San Jose is recognized as the “egg basket of Luzon,” thanks to the efforts of poultry raisers and egg dealers like Martin. (DA Info Service)

## Be pro-active, SACY urges DA PIOs

“Don’t wait for things to happen.”

This was the gist of Secretary Arthur C. Yap’s message when he addressed the more than 100 participants of the 1st Consultative Meeting of Department of Agriculture family Public Information Officers (PIOs), held at the Bureau of Soils and Water Management in Quezon City, on April 22-24, 2009.

In particular, he pressed for a more pro-active communication force of regional information officers and their counterparts in all DA bureaus, attached agencies, foreign-assisted projects, and focal persons of FIELDS and GMA commodity programs.

“We have a lot of good stories to tell our people,” he said, emphasizing that good news and success stories about the DA’s program beneficiaries and clientele should be disseminated regularly to the public.

“We have to show the good side

of agriculture,” he added, pointing out the crucial part information plays in the development and promotion of agricultural programs and activities.

During the concluding session of the three-day meeting, the first-ever under the watch of Sec. Yap, the participants presented a resolution to Sec. Yap that included such lingering concern as the full implementation of Section 42, Chapter 5 of RA 8435 or the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act, which states the creation of the Agriculture and Fisheries Information Service (AFIS) at the national level and Agriculture and Fisheries Information Division (AFID) at the regional level. Since 1998, when AFMA was enacted, said provision has not been formally supported by a plantilla position and budget.

The meeting, spearheaded by the DA-AFIS, also served as an avenue for the collaboration of media



Sec. Yap with DA Family info officers

## From the Regions

Selected news and developments on agriculture, fisheries, agribusiness and related sectors, as reported by the DA-Regional Field Units, and those published in national and provincial publications.

### 9,917 beneficiaries in Cagayan Valley benefit from CLEEP

PRESIDENT Arroyo's Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP) for Cagayan Valley has so far helped 9,917 beneficiaries with agriculture-related jobs and loans.

Sec. Yap said that among these beneficiaries, 4,467 and 4,517 were hired under DA's programs of Farm-to-Market Road Projects and Repair of Irrigation Systems, respectively.

On one hand, 27 green-collared

jobs were created under its Coconut Replanting Program to ensure the sustainability of its Bio-Diesel Feedstock Program in consonance with the Renewable Energy Law.

Yap, who was designated by the President as the Cabinet steward for the CLEEP in Cagayan Valley and also in Bohol, said that on top of the jobs generated by the DA under this program, various Cabinet departments also came up with their respective employment

### DA-GK reinforce "Bayan-Anihan"

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and Gawad Kalinga (GK) continue to strengthen the Bayan-Anihan Project.

DA and GK began the monitoring of vegetable gardens after the simultaneous planting ceremony that benchmarked and signalled the start of the first batch of 115 Bayan-Anihan sites to rise all over Luzon. The locations are situated in selected provinces from Regions I to V. Some of the provinces included are Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), Bicol Region and the MIMAROPA (Mindoro Oriental and Occidental, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) provinces.

plants and herbs to the 98 sites included in the project on June 2009.

The schedules of planting are divided into two phases. Phase 1 took place last March which included the first 115 GK sites in Luzon. The second phase will take place in Mindanao on July 2009 with few pilot areas in Visayas.

The Bayan-Anihan Project is a collaborative work between the DA and GK to address the hunger issues in the Philippines while engaging the GK communities, local government, private sector, state colleges and universities and individuals. GK, a private-sector led movement whose vision is a slum-free and squatter-free Philippines, is best known for the houses it has



Sec. Yap with GK advocates

At the same time, an overall evaluation was conducted to discuss the implementation of activities to be carried out by the project. It was also a venue to point out challenges that the movement encountered and identify the possible solutions to counter the adversities met.

The DA will start providing selected fruit seedlings, medicinal

built for the country's poorest of the poor.

The project aims to establish food security among the food-deficient families in the country and build at least 2,500 farms for the next three years to feed at least 500,000 people for life. The project plans to put up 500 farms for the CY 2009 and 1,000 farms each for CY 2010 and 2011 respectively.

projects for the beneficiaries in these areas.

CLEEP is part of the P330-billion Economic Resiliency Program that President Arroyo is implementing this year to stimulate the domestic economy and help Filipinos ride out the deepening U.S.-induced global recession.

Meanwhile, the Department of

Agrarian Reform, Yap said, has a credit assistance program for agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) designed to provide them with additional funding for farm production.

A total of 1,543 ARBs in Cagayan Valley will be benefited under this credit program, of which 1,056 are from Cagayan; 371 from Isabela; and 116 from Quirino.//

### Summer palay harvests to reach record volume of 7.3Mmt-SACY

**LLANERA, N.E., April 15-**The DA expects this year's summer crop harvests to possibly reach as high as 7.3 million metric tons as a result of its intensified efforts to sustain the growth of the palay sector through, among other initiatives, the expansion of production areas planted to certified and hybrid seeds and the repair or rehabilitation of irrigation systems nationwide.

"For the first semester of 2009, the DA foresees palay harvests to reach a record volume of 7.2 million metric tons to 7.3 Mmt, which is higher than last year's output of 7.1 Mmt during the same planting season," Sec. Yap said during the rice harvest festival held here. "In fact, the government plans to procure one million tons of palay this year from local producers to help raise farmers' incomes and significantly reduce our dependence on imports."

The latest figures from the Department's Management Information Division (DA-MID) show that the area planted to hybrid rice reached 126,814 hectares during

the current dry cropping season (September 16, 2008 – March 15, 2009). Based on field reports, hybrid rice varieties have recorded a yield advantage of 33% more than those of inbred certified seeds.

The GMA Rice Program currently grants subsidy for the purchase of hybrid rice seeds, conducts technical briefings with the help of the Department's regional field units, and establishes techno-demo areas in collaboration with the LGUs and the private sector.

Yap, accompanied by agriculture officials and local chief executives, led the inauguration of the Vaca Dam project and the conduct of rice harvest festival/caravan. He also inspected the farm-to-market road projects and postharvest facilities in several palay-producing towns of Nueva Ecija, including a multipurpose cooperative serving as a credit conduit of their members.

Following the approval last year of a massive domestic palay procurement strategy, the NFA is planning to buy 18 million cavans of palay this summer harvest season.//

### HVCC conducts training in Romblon

Thirty extension workers in southern Luzon recently underwent a Training of Trainers (TOT) on farm entrepreneurship and specialized farm management on vegetable production, post harvest and marketing, in Brgy. Rizal, Odiangan Romblon.

The group was headed by Ms. Corazon Sinnung, HVCC DA-RFU 4-B regional coordinator. The training aims to create awareness on the importance of organic vegetable farming, and generate additional income for farmers.

The training dealt on:

1. Farm management that included basic project proposal writing and record keeping.

2. Organic vegetable practices and methods such as setting up of organic farm, specialized cultural management practices such as setting-up of intensive land/soil preparation, seed sowing and seed-

ling management technology, rapid composting methodologies, efficient water management, and organic approach of pests and diseases management.

3. Fundamentals and basic components of commercial and organic vegetable production.

4. Highlights of practices and techniques in post harvest handling.

5. Effective farm marketing strategies.

Dir. Antonio Gerundio, Regional Executive Director Region IV-B, stressed the importance of converting farmers from being production oriented to marketing oriented for it is envisioned to contribute in agricultural progress and global competitiveness.

Similar TOTs will be conducted in MIMAROPA (Region IV-B), such as in Occidental Mindoro, and in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro. (Vida Lianne B. Pugay, DA-RFU 4-B)

## New ... (from p1)

entry of any hogs/pork from Mexico and the US, augment existing quarantine checkpoints to further prevent movement of sick pigs, lift the restriction in the use of swine flu vaccine, and encourage hog farmers to regularly vaccinate their pigs.

Catbagan said while swine flu cases were reported in the Philippines in June 2007 at the height of the Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) outbreak, "there is no ongoing swine flu outbreak today" in the country.

The A (H1N1) flu outbreak in Mexico and the US are purely human cases," said Catbagan. "They (infected persons) were never exposed to pigs/swine farms. There are no reported outbreaks of SI in pig/swine farms in Mexico and the US today that coincide with the current human outbreak."

Catbagan said the Philippines is not importing live pigs or pork products from Mexico and is importing some pork from the US.

Meanwhile, officials of the WHO, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Office Internationale des Epizooties (OIE) or World Animal Health Organization have commended Sec-

retary Yap and Health Secretary Francisco Duque for their respective offices' quick or "appropriate action" in containing the latest resurfacing of the Ebola Reston virus (ERV) in the Philippines.

After spearheading the depopulation of 6,000 hogs in a Bulacan farm to prevent the spread of ERV, the DA-BAI placed under surveillance thousands of backyard swine farms in an initial 566 barangays across Luzon as part of long-term measures to rid the country of this infection.

This anti-ERV surveillance work and testing involves some 30,000 pigs in backyard piggeries in Central Luzon, the Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon) area, and the province of Pangasinan.

BAI will initially cover Central Luzon, this part of Southern Luzon (or Region IV-A) and Pangasinan because the combined swine inventory in these areas—about three million pigs—comprise the bulk of the country's hog population.

Catbagan said that BAI's plan to cover more areas nationwide would depend on whether the

## Surveillance of hog farm handlers on vs. A(H1N1) flu virus

Agriculture Secretary Yap has directed the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) to step up its surveillance work by closely monitoring the health conditions of animal handlers and other people in close contact with swine farms to detect the possible presence of A (H1N1) flu virus.

He issued the directive after attending the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) last week of April at Camp Aguinaldo.

He said the A (H1N1) flu virus is not an animal health issue, but a human health problem. Hence, the DA will play a supporting role to the Department of Health (DOH), which is in charge of crafting and implementing a national preparedness and response program against any possible human disease outbreak in the country.

Yap said that the BAI will have to report promptly to the DOH of any illness exhibited by animal handlers and other people.

He had also directed the National Meat Inspection Service (DA-NMIS) to likewise step up its monitoring to prevent the entry of sick pigs or "double dead" meat in the human food chain.

Likewise, he said that keeping tabs of people in close contact with hogs is just a precautionary measure, given that the real swine flu is an ordinary illness that affects swine and from which most hogs recover after a few days of illness.

Earlier, Yap had a meeting at the DA with hog industry leaders, namely, Renato Eleria, Eliseo Yu and Arceo Alfonso from the National Federation of Hog Farmers' Inc. (NFHFI); Dr. Leo Obviar, president of Philippine Swine Producers Association (PSPA), and Dr. Wilfredo Resoso, president of the Philippine College of Swine Practitioners (PCSP).

These groups represent, among others, Foremost Farms, Robina, Monterrey, Holiday Hills, and RS Farm.

Meanwhile, Dr. Davinio Catbagan, BAI director, said that the Philippines does not import any pork product from Mexico, but imports about 50,000 metric tons from the U.S. and Canada.

The 50,000-ton pork import will now be sourced domestically, most likely from Mindanao, and from about 10 countries that are free of the A (H1N1) flu virus.

## FACTS:

- *The H1N1 virus was originally referred to as "swine flu" because laboratory testing showed that many of the gene in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses. Scientists call this a "quadruple reassortant" virus.*
- *Cases of human infection with this H1N1 influenza virus were first confirmed in the U.S in Southern California and near Guadalupe County, Texas.*
- *It's thought that novel influenza A (H1N1) flu spreads in the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread; mainly through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with the virus. (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)*

Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States could send more laboratory kits to Manila. Only CDC produces the kits needed for such ERV tests, he added.

He said that Yap had asked the US government to ensure the supply of these test kits for the sampling of the 30,000 pigs covered by the surveillance work.

## RP eyes ... (from p1)

ernment," Paras said in a recent forum.

To be located in Davao City, the Zone is expected to generate 24,000 new jobs for Muslim Filipinos, and boost the Philippines' export earnings by at least \$200 million per year, he added.

Moreover, Paras said Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap had gone on a three-day official visit to Brunei to forge mutual areas of cooperation in the farm and fisheries sector, particularly in the rice subsector, as well as explore potential areas of agribusiness investments in the Philippines that include rice, corn, high-value commercial crops, poultry, marine and Halal subsectors.

Yap's three-day trip is a follow-up to the visit of Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah to the Philippines last January, and his subsequent visit to Brunei on March 3-4 2009.

During the January visit, Sultan Bolkiah and President Arroyo affirmed their commitment to further deepen and expand the friendly relations between their two countries as well as work closer in addressing regional and global challenges.

The two leaders had also cited the potentials for stronger trade and investment relations between the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam and the role of the private sector in enhancing economic cooperation between the two countries.

Meeting with Yap during his April 25-27 visit was his counterpart, His Excellency Pehin Dato Yahya, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources.

Yap had also joined His Majesty

Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah on 27 April at the Launching Ceremony of Paddy Planting Towards Achieving Self-Sufficiency in Rice Production in Brunei, for which the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) is maintaining a techno-demonstration plot.

Wrapping Yap's visit is a proposed memorandum of understanding on agricultural cooperation between the DA and Brunei's Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources.

The accord aims to develop and strengthen ties between the two countries in the areas of plant science, crops technology, vegetable and fruit preservation, biotechnology, postharvest technology, livestock, organic agriculture, irrigation and water resources, and the Halal industry.

Last February, the DA dispatched to Brunei a five-man team from the PhilRice to assess the potential for rice self-sufficiency in response to the Sultan's request for Philippine technical assistance.

## SACY... (from p11)

terns and farmers being discouraged to plant more after using prohibitively priced fertilizers and other inputs with the intention of cashing in on the high cost of commodities, only to be met with collapsing markets last year.

Finally, he noted that in 2008, the price volatility hiked the import bills of the world's poorest nations by at least 40% and drove the number of malnourished people from 800 million to a billion today.

# Global food and energy crisis by 2030



Programme predicts widespread water shortages across Africa, Europe and Asia by 2025.

The amount of fresh water available per head of the population is expected to decline sharply in that time.

Improving agricultural productivity globally was one way to tackle the problem.

At present, 30-40% of all crops are lost due to pest and disease before they are harvested.

There should be more disease-resistant and pest-resistant plants, better practices and better harvesting procedures.

Genetically-modified food could also be part of the solution. Plants should then be resistant to drought and salinity - a mixture of genetic modification and conventional plant breeding. ([www.allaboutfeed.net](http://www.allaboutfeed.net))

The growing world population will cause a "perfect storm" of food, energy and water shortages by 2030 because the demand for resources will create a crisis with dire consequences.

Demand for food and energy will jump 50% by 2030 and for fresh water by 30%, as the population tops 8.3 billion.

Climate change will exacerbate matters in unpredictable ways.

The United Nations Environment



## ICRISAT sounds warning on food front

The International Crops Research Institute for Sem-Arid Tropics (Icrisat) has cautioned the developing countries that the reduction in food prices globally is just a lull and that they need to get ready with plans to address the food concerns as climate change impacts set in.

The availability of cereals in the global market was just three to five percent of the total production and the vulnerable countries should realise that this three to five per cent availability was thin.

Climate change could result in increase of drylands by 11 percent in the next 50 years.

Even as the likely impact of climate change is beginning to hit the cropping patterns, Icrisat has announced that it is ready with climate-change-ready crops.

They have developed a pigeonpea and chickpea varieties with 80-90-100 day and 70-80-90 day crop duration that can withstand increasing temperatures.

The agriculture sector would have to face high temperatures, less water (more water in some

areas) and more droughts in dryland areas than before. The seeds the institute is developing would have extra heat tolerance, helping the ability of dryland farmers to fight global warming.

For one, pearl millet varieties and hybrids are able to flower at temperatures of 45 degrees Celcius. Similarly, improved sorghum lines are capable of growing in temperatures of 42 degrees Celcius.

The institute had adopted an Operational Research Plan called 'Adaptations to climate change in the semi-arid tropics'.

ICRISAT, which took up a watershed development programme in Kothapally (Rangareddy district) with other partners, has decided to upscale the programme to 350 areas in the country.

They are going to replicate the Kothapally model in China, Vietnam, Thailand and the Phillipines.

The farmers in those areas were able to increase productivity and incomes by three times. (ICRISAT)

## Food security still a problem as hunger rises

BANGKOK - According to the United Nations, a fall in grain prices has led to the impression that food security is no longer a concern, but the number of people without enough to eat is still rising in a world facing recession.

The level of prices is still 19 percent above the average of 2006 which means that prices are still high prices.

In addition, recent FAO studies showed that even though prices had fallen in international markets, retail prices in most developing countries had not. And the crisis was worsened by financial and economic crisis.

The FAO estimates that over one billion people in the world will go hungry this year because of the combined effects of the global economic crisis and high food prices.

The number of chronically hungry people has been rising steadily — by 75 million in 2007 and an estimated 40 million in 2008. By the end of 2008, 963

million people were undernourished, almost two-thirds of them in the Asia-Pacific region.

According to FAO, the first and foremost important element is the need to invest in agricultural production (to combat hunger), and this would require

\$30 billion a year.

That sum, enough to help around 500 million small farmers, would have been considered

high in the past, but Western governments had poured into schemes to stimulate their economies.

Between 2006 and 2008, the FAO says, fertilizer prices rose 170 percent and seeds and animal feed by at least 70 percent, putting them out of the reach of small farmers.

Donors needed to ensure agricultural funding went back to the levels of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when 17 percent of overseas development aid went to agriculture, facilitating a "green revolution" in Asia and Latin America. ([www.irri.org](http://www.irri.org))



# Climate change should prompt Asia to push for a “Green Revolution”

EXPERT studies showing Asia, including the Philippines, as among the regions most susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change should serve as a strong impetus for its leaders to band together in convincing rich economies to fulfill their pledge of bankrolling research and development (R&D) efforts that will lead to a new Green Revolution, Philippines Secretary Arthur C. Yap said recently.

Citing a study by the Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA), Yap said that six states in Asia are vulnerable to climate change, but it is only the Philippines where the range of vulnerability was placed throughout the entire nation.

Another study by the Australian Weather and Climate Research and Greenpeace Southeast Asia, shows that low-lying areas including Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, India and the Philippines face catastrophic flooding as polar ice caps may melt far faster under the pressure of global warming.

According to scientific experts, new predictions suggest that the higher sea levels could pose a far bigger threat than previously thought with the melting of Greenland, Antarctica and the world's smaller glacier and ice caps. Greenpeace, on the other hand, has predicted that a one-meter rise in sea level in the Philippines, for example, is projected to affect 64 out of its 81 provinces. Higher sea levels would cover at least 703 of 1,610 towns and inundate almost 700 million square meters of land in the country.

Such alarming findings, Yap noted, have been validated by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) Secretary-General Romulo Virola, who had warned that climate change will become a major threat to a country's development.

Virola had pointed out that statistics showed that most of the provinces that are vulnerable to very strong typhoons which are accompanied by landslides and floods are also home to some of the poorest Filipinos.

On the other hand, the EEPSEA study showed that in Vietnam, only

the Mekong River Delta region was found to be vulnerable. Thailand's Bangkok region was also found out to be at risk, as well as the eastern and western portions of Indonesia, over the adverse effects of climate change. The most vulnerable was Indonesia because of climate-related factors and the high density of its populated areas, the study showed.

Yap said that such studies should prompt leaders in Southeast Asia to mount a joint effort in persuading affluent economies and global corporate giants to make good on their earlier commitment to set aside \$100 billion for R&D by the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR) to sustain food production through a new Green Revolution.

Yap also said that industrialized economies and big corporations should fulfill this commitment soon to save close to a billion people from death and famine at a time of a worsening global recession.

Just recently, in Madrid, Spain, Yap renewed his pitch for a new Green Revolution before the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Food Security for All held in that capital city. He noted the irony of rich economies allocating close to a trillion dollars overnight to help save Wall Street, while the world keeps waiting for the pledges of well-off nations to set aside funds for the use of CGIAR to sustain food production through this new Green Revolution.

As the world is faced with the problem of increasing food yields amid dwindling resources and the adverse effects of climate change, Yap had said that the solution lies in forming a grand coalition against hunger and poverty, which will tap science and extension services for ways to sustain food production and feed the world's poorest of the poor.

The Madrid meeting was a follow up to the 2008 High Level Conference on World Food Security organized by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome last year.

He also said that the world's finance wizards should open up more financial facilities and services for access by Governments and en-

trepreneurs, not only to address the productive capacity of small landholders who comprise 75% of the world's poor but also to address ventures that will unlock the value chain amidst a global recession.

Yap had first aired his call for a second Green Revolution through research and development efforts of the CGIAR before the international workshop panel “Feeding the Asian Tiger: Challenges and Implications for the World Markets” at the 10th German World Bank Forum held in Frankfurt, Germany last year.

He said that the developed countries and big industrial corporations, which have contributed the most to global warming and other woes that have triggered the global food crisis, should take the lead in bankrolling the R&D programs of major international agricultural research institutions such as the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center.

During the Madrid conference, Yap also renewed his call for the

establishment of a global food reserve to ensure the stable supply and prices of food staples such as rice and other cereals in the world market in anticipation of future production shortfalls.

He said that setting up a food reserve remains an urgent concern, considering that even though prices have retreated and food production are at their highest levels, other developments point to another possible round of consumer panic and even sharper price spikes in the not too distant future.

For instance, he cited that despite reports of high food production levels, harvests increased only marginally, with global stocks-to-use ratios at 30-year lows. Moreover, he said that if the yields of China, India, Brazil, and some other countries are removed from the list of food producers, production may have actually retreated in others.

Likewise, other factors should also be considered, such as climatic shifts, Yap cited, which have altered cropping and harvesting pat-

*(Pls turn to p10)*

## *SACY visits Brunei*

Secretary Arthur C. Yap had gone on a three-day official visit to Brunei Darussalam to further cement mutual areas of cooperation in the farm and fisheries sector, particularly in the rice subsector, as well as explore potential areas of agribusiness investments in the Philippines by this oil-rich Southeast Asian neighbor.

The possible investment areas that Yap and other agriculture executives proposed to Brunei officials and business leaders were in the palay and corn, high-value commercial crops, poultry, marine and Halal subsectors.

Yap's April 25-27 trip served as a follow-up to the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, to the Philippines last January and the DA chief's subsequent visit to Brunei on March 3-4 2009.

During the January visit of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam to the Philippines, he and President Arroyo affirmed their commitment to further deepen and expand the friendly relations between their two countries as well as work closer in addressing regional and global challenges.

The two leaders had also cited the potentials for stronger trade and investment relations between

the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam and the role of the private sector in enhancing economic cooperation between the two countries.

Yap had also joined His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah on 27 April at the Launching Ceremony of Paddy Planting Towards Achieving Self-Sufficiency in Rice Production in Brunei, for which the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) is maintaining a technodemonstration plot.

Wrapping Yap's visit is a proposed memorandum of understanding on agricultural cooperation between the DA and Brunei's Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources.

The accord aims to develop and strengthen ties between the two countries in the areas of plant science, crops technology, vegetable and fruit preservation, biotechnology, postharvest technology, livestock, organic agriculture, irrigation and water resources, and the Halal industry.

Last February, the DA dispatched to Brunei a five-man team from the PhilRice to assess the Islamic state's potential for rice self-sufficiency in response to the Sultan's request for Philippine technical assistance to help achieve Brunei's food security goals.