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DAVAO AGRI FAIR – President Duterte and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol check out the products as Ayala Corporation CEO Jaime Zobel de Ayala looks on at the TienDA Farmers and Fisherfolks Outlets at the Abreeza Mall in Davao City Saturday. The TienDA is a joint effort of the Agriculture Department and Ayala Malls. (Allan Jay Jacalan/DA-AFID)

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Back-channel trading bad for banana exporters

By **YAS D. OCAMPO**

DAVAO CITY – President Rodrigo Roa Duterte said the Philippine government will raise concern about the dubious practice of some countries of engaging in backchannel negotiations that have sabotaged formal agreements between Filipino banana exporters and their traditional clients.

Speaking to reporters at the Abreeza Ayala Mall Saturday, Duterte said the government will raise this during the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina early next month.

"Back trading is unfair," Duterte said. "It's better to bring this to a world forum because it's not allowed."

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Pinol told President Duterte that he would raise the item in Argentina in December.

Duterte added that the government would also look at installing a banana council to look into the plight of the sector.

"We're not the only one affected by that," Duterte said of the import-export issues faced by the sector.

Duterte added that the Russian market that would be tapped by Filipino exporters would "open a small window to Eastern Europe."

The President was the guest of honor at the launching of TienDA Farmers and Fisherfolk Outlets, a partnership between the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Ayala Malls (Accendo Commercial Corporation) at the Asian Food Market site of the mall.

According to Duterte, the Ayala Corporation stepped forward to provide a site in its malls as a "bagsakan (trading post)" for produce and fresh products.

The Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO), for its part, said that the outlet program was "an initial step by the Department of Agriculture in implementing President Duterte's commitment in making food available and affordable for the Filipinos."

The idea is for a public-private partnership between corporations like those of the Ayalas for farmers and producers of products such as fruits, rice, and vegetables that buyers could easily access at more competitive prices.

"The less people dipping their fingers in the movement of merchandises, mas mabuti (the better)," President Duterte said of the concept.

Duterte said he was thankful for the support of the Ayalas in the endeavor.

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PHL to raise concerns of banana exporters at WTO meet in Argentina

By Manuel T. Cayon
@awimailbox
Mindanao Bureau Chief

ANTIG: "Without government intervention, in two to three years, we can kiss the banana industry good-bye."

DAVAO CITY—President Duterte said the government would raise before the World Trade Organization (WTO) its concerns over the subsidies extended by Latin American governments to their banana producers, which have allowed them to export bananas at a lower cost.

While he vowed to also look into the request of major Filipino exporters to negotiate lower tariffs for bananas and to set up a council, he said the main concern "is really on back trade." The President noted that Latin American governments shoulder the shipping cost of their banana exporters so they could cut the price of their product.

This practice allows exporters of bananas and other food products to negotiate marketing contracts with traditional Philippine export markets, Japan and South Korea, according to an earlier interview with Stephen A. Antig, executive director of the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA).

Duterte conferred with Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol during a news briefing after he witnessed the launching here of the TienDA Farmers and Fisherfolks Outlet Exhibitors, called the "TienDA sa Ayala Malls," last Saturday night. The President described the subsidy extended by Latin American governments to their banana exporters as "back trade" and said this was an "unfair trading practice."

Piñol said the Philippines would attend the next WTO meeting, which would kick off on December 10 in Argentina, and raise the matter before the multileral trade body. Banana exporters from Latin American countries have appeared as a serious rival of Filipino banana producers in Japan, South Korea and China in the last two to three years. PBGEA members also found that their Latin American counterparts were able to negotiate and win

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Banana exporters. . .

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marketing contracts for cheap bananas, despite their distance from the Philippines's Asian neighbors.

Antig said they found out that their respective governments have subsidized their shipping cost, a "major price fixer" in the market. He said David DeLorenzo, chairman of the board of the Dole Asia Holdings, has confirmed the drop in the world ranking of Philippine banana exports to sixth spot, from second spot in 2014.

But Antig warned that it would be an "uphill climb" to retake the country's previous rank sans government intervention. He noted that the government did not give much attention to the banana industry because they are established and can fend for themselves.

"Yes, we are big but we are facing stiffer competition now. It's not a competition by companies of respective countries, but it's now a competition between countries," he said. "Without government intervention, in two to three years, we can kiss the banana industry good-bye. We are losing our major markets to Ecuador and other exporting countries," Antig added.

He said Philippine production remains expensive due to the infestation of pests, such as the Black Sigatoka and the dreaded Fusarium wilt.

Worse, he added, issues like climate change and the peace and order situation, as well as problems finding areas for expansion, "have made it harder for us to compete with Ecuador exporters who can ship their produce to Asia practically for free."

Duterte and Piñol, however, have assured Filipino banana exporters that they are already looking into other domestic issues, including the set up of a banana council.

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Piñol wants NFA to procure other farm goods

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas @jearcalas

THE chief of the Department of Agriculture (DA) is requesting President Duterte to issue an executive order (EO) that would restore the powers of the National Food Authority (NFA) to stabilize the price and supply of nongrain commodities.

In an SMS to the BusinessMirror, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said the NFA "should function as a real food agency" by including other agricultural products, such as fruits and fish, in its marketing and distribution activities.

"As your Secretary of Agriculture, I am recommending that the NFA be given a bigger role to perform in ensuring stable food supply in the market while, at the same time, allowing farmers and fishermen access to the market," Piñol said in his Facebook post dated November 19.

"The NFA should no longer be just a rice-importing agency, especially since we expect to produce enough rice by the year 2020. The NFA should be the consolidator of products from each region to be repositioned in other parts of the country where these commodities are needed," he added.

Piñol said the NFA should establish Regional Food Terminals (RFTs) where Filipino farmers could sell their produce at a "fair price." The RFTs, in turn, shall sell the farm produce to urban areas, such as Metro Manila.

"If there is abundance of fish in Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi, let the NFA set up a Regional Food Terminal in Zamboanga City, which would consolidate the produce to be brought to Cebu or Metro Manila," he added. "If there is an abundance of vegetables in Baguio, let NFA consolidate these products to be brought to other parts of the country where the commodity in needed."

The NGA supported the paddy-production program of the government, referred to as the "Masagana'99 Program," which was geared toward rice self-sufficiency. It engaged in massive paddy procurement at government-support prices.

PD 1770, which was issued in January 1981, reconstituted the NGA into what is now the NFA. This decree widened the agency's social responsibilities and commodity coverage to include, in addition to grains, other food items like raw or fresh fruits and vegetables and fish and marine, manufactured, processed or packaged food products, and these were collectively referred to as nongrains commodities.

PD 1770 was also the basis of the Kadiwa chain of stores or government retail stores, which sold low-priced basic food and household items, which were established within the National Capital Region and in all the provinces of the country.

EO 1028, which was issued on May 31, 1985, provided for the deregulation of NFA's nongrains marketing activities. This resulted in the termination of NFA's nongrains trading activities and the return of feed grains and wheat importation to the private sector, as well as the lifting of price controls/ceilings on rice and corn. As such, at the end of 1986, all the Kadiwa Stores had been devolved to the private sector and/or closed.

Malaya
Business Insight

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Duterte mulls more powers for NFA

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte on Saturday night said he would look into proposals to strengthen the National Food Authority (NFA) and give it a bigger role on ensuring food security.

The President, in a media interview in Davao City, said he plans to talk to NFA Administrator Jason Aquino about the proposal of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol to expand the role of the agency, which is currently limited to rice importation.

"NFA is not under the control of the — we will think about that. But I would like to talk to Jason, because he's the one in control of that entity…You must be heard. And his thoughts about an integrated food authority for all," he said.

Duterte acknowledged the proposal of Piñol recognizing that the Department of Agriculture is well aware of the current situation especially since it is involved on food production.

He also said he intends to improve on the food chain and supply in the country which would be the focus of his third year in office.

Piñol, during the launching of TienDA Farmers and Fisherfolks Outlets in Abreeza Mall in Davao, said the NFA should be given a bigger role to perform in ensuring stable food supply in the market while at the same time allowing farmers and fisher folks access to the market.

"The NFA should no longer be just a rice importing agency, especially so since we expect to produce enough supply by the year 2020. The NFA should be the consolidator of products from each region to be repositioned in other parts of the country where these commodities are needed," he said.

Piñol said being the consolidator of products, it would mean that the NFA would need to set up or use its current Regional Food Terminals around the country and consolidate supply of products there for distribution to other parts of the country where it is needed or there is less supply.

He said one example is if there is abundance of fish in Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi, the supply can be brought to the Regional Food Terminal which would then ensure that it reaches Cebu or Metro Manila, or if there is an abundance of vegetables in Baguio, the NFA can consolidate it and ensure that it is brought to other parts of the country where it is needed.

"Our farmers and fisher folks could produce so much but the fruits of their labor could hardly reach the market because of the problem of logistics. The NFA is the proper agency of government to handle the repositioning of food stocks to stabilize supply while at the same time helping our food producers gain access to the market," Piñol said.

The President and Piñol attended the launching of TienDA Farmers and Fisherfolks Outlets, a partnership project between the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Ayala Malls, at the Asian Food Market in Abreeza Mall Davao on Saturday.

The President, meanwhile, disagreed with a proposal for government to subsidize the banana industry after the Philippines slid to number six from number two in the world rankings of banana exporters.

Duterte acknowledged the increase of bananas from Ecuador in the Asian market, saying it affected not just the Philippines but other countries as well.

But instead of a subsidy, he said government is exploring other potential markets for Philippine bananas like Russia and some parts of Europe.

This developed as Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) officer-in-charge Catalino Cuy called on all local chief executives to support the celebration of this year's National Rice Awareness Month (NRAM) by promoting "RICEponsibility" in their communities.

Spearheaded annually by the DA, the celebration of NRAM every November is pursuant to Presidential Proclamation No. 524 series of 2004.

The theme for this year's celebration of NRAM is "Ready? SET rice! RICEponsible Filipinos save rice, eat healthy, and try brown rice," which focuses on the consumption of an appropriate quantity of rice and of healthy forms of rice especially brown rice and rice mixes.

In a directive, Cuy urged governors and city and municipal mayors to participate in the #RICEponsiblePlateChallenge and encourage local food establishments to serve brown rice and rice mixes this November.

He likewise enjoined them to include the recitation of the "Panatang Makapalay" in their flag raising ceremony as well as to display tarpaulins bearing this year's theme. – *With Raymond Africa*

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#nationataglance

LOURDES O. PILAR

FRESHLY HARVESTED sugarcane in Negros Occidental.

WESTERN VISAYAS: BACOLOD CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

Sugar planters ask DA to investigate 'undocumented entry' of HFCS

SUGAR PLANTERS are blaming the reported unabated smuggling of high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) into the country as the cause in the drop in prices of sugar. The importation and use of HFCS, instead of locally produced sugar, by beverage companies in the country, has taken its toll to the sugar industry, they said. Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) data showed that domestic sugar prices have dropped to an average of P1,224 per liquid-kilogram (lkg). Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol, who spoke at the 11th National Shrimp Congress in Bacolod City last week, said he will look into it. "As long as there is an official complaint about it," Mr. Piñol said, adding that he will ask the SRA to handle it. Bacolod is part of Negros island, where 60% of the sugar domestic production comes from. The Sugar Alliance of the Philippines (SAP) already requested SRA chief Hermenigildo R. Serafica to investigate the smuggling of HFCS into the country. At the same time, Manuel Lamata, president of the United Sugar Producers' Federation of the Philippines, also urged the SRA to implement Sugar Order No. 3 (SO3), which regulates HFCS entry, especially now that the sugar industry is in full milling operation. Under SO3, no imported HFCS shipment can be released from the Bureau of Customs without SRA clearance, he noted. Mr. Lamata said the SAP also asked SRA to help arrange a meeting between his group and the president of the Land Bank of the Philippines to request the latter to provide the industry's Quedan Financing to support the small and marginal farmers for the next three months so they can offset their expenses, while they wait for higher prices. Mr. Piñol said the low price of sugar is a global problem. "But the only thing we are addressing right now would be the increase of productivity to recover the price," he said. "We are also looking into other activities related to the sugar industry, where farmers could be involved with, for other sources of income," he added. — ***The Freeman***

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'Perfect food supply chain by year 3'

By Bill Casas

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte graced the launching of TienDA Farmers and Fisherfolks Outlets, a partnership project between the Department of Agriculture and Ayala Malls, at the Asian Food Market in Abreeza Mall Davao on Saturday.

He also committed to perfect the food supply chain in the country by the third year of his administration.

The President lauded the DA and the Ayala Corp., operator of the Ayala malls, for initiating a partnership that would help farmers and fisherfolk freed from middlemen or cartels and provide market access to sell products at fair price.

This also results in cheaper food products for consumers, the President said.

"For after all, it's the Department of Agriculture who's responsible if we go hungry or we have full stomach," Duterte said, adding that Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol is responsible for the sustainability of the food supply.

"So the food chain in the Philippines must be at least perfected by [or] on the third year of my administration," he said.

"I hope that the TienDA Farmers and Fisherfolk Outlet will open doors of greater opportunities for our kabayans towards a better and brighter future," Duterte said in his speech.

Duterte said that while the local agriculture industry still thrives amid the entry of similar imported products, he encouraged the Filipinos to patronize local products to help keep the industry afloat.

"Well, at the expense of the 'disers' [merchandisers] the middle men, that's not how it is because we are trying to come up with our decision to, I said, provide the people affordable and always, their food for all," Duterte said.

He also said that the imports and exports have to be balanced with the trade all over the world.

"We have to compete, that is why production is the secret. So *ang* production *mo, pareho sa kanila* then they have to choose," he said.

"The thing there is to maintain the supply *para pareho mura.* Then *kung ikaw Pilipino, kung pareho 'yung ano mo, 'di sa Pilipino ka na bumili. Makatulong ka pa,*" he added.

Duterte also thanked the Ayalas for their social and corporate conscience to help the Filipino people.

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PRESIDENT Duterte (center) presides over a rope ceremony to signify the start of the partnership between the Department of Agriculture and Ayala Malls at the Abreeza Mall in Davao City. The partnership allows the TienDA Farmers and Fisherfolks to set up their outlets in malls under the Ayala Corp. Also in photo are Ayala Corp. CEO Jaime Zobel de Ayala and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol. (Presidential photo)

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W. Visayas gets DA aid

ROXAS CITY – The Department of Agriculture (DA) has at least ₱164.5-million worth of new agricultural and fisheries projects in Western Visayas region.

DA-6 Regional Director Remelyn Recoter said this was the result of the visit of Secretary Manny Piñol last week both in Panay and Negros Islands.

The biggest chunk is the ₱75.1-million worth of farm machineries and equipment distributed to various farmers' groups of the region.

There's also the ₱50-million loan for farmers in Antique and Iloilo province. The farmers also get assistance from Philippine Crop Insurance Corp.

A ₱20-million credit was also given to farmers and fisherfolks in rebel-infested areas of Negros Occidental province. The money was turned over to conduit partner Negros Cooperative Bank.

Piñol also gave ₱18.7 million worth certified seeds, hybrid seeds and fertilizer.

BFAR, an attached agency of DA, also distributed patrol boats worth ₱700,000 to coastal areas of Iloilo province. **(Tara Yap)**

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DAGDAG NA TUNGKULIN SA NFA

HINILING ni Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na mag-isyu ng isang executive order (EO) na magbabalik sa market intervention ng National Food Authority (NFA) sa non-grain commodities.

Sa isang text message sa BusinessMirror, sinabi ni Piñol na ang NFA ay dapat gumanap bilang isang tunay na food agency sa pamamagitan ng pangangasiwa sa iba pang agricultural commodities tulad ng prutas at fisheries.

Ginawa ng agriculture chief ang kahilingan makaraang imungkahi kay Duterte ang isang solusyon kamakailan na makatutulong upang magkaroon ng mas magandang market access ang mga Filipino farmer.

"As your Secretary of Agriculture, I am recommending that the National Food Authority (NFA) be given a bigger role to perform in ensuring stable food supply in the market while at the same time allowing farmers and fisher folks access to the market," wika ni Piñol sa kanyang Facebook post noong Nobyembre 19.

"The NFA should no longer be just a rice importing agency, especially so since we expect to produce enough supply by the year 2020. The NFA should be the consolidator of products from each region to be repositioned in other parts of the country where these commodities are needed," dagdag ni Piñol.

Paliwanag pa ng kalihim, dapat magtayo ang NFA ng isang Regional Food Terminal (RFT) kung saan maaaring ibenta ng mga Filipino farmer ang kanilang mga produkto sa patas na presyo. Ang RFT naman ang magbebenta ng mga produkto na kanilang binili sa urban areas tulad ng Metro Manila.

"If there is abundance of fish in Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi, let NFA set up a Regional Food Terminal in Zamboanga City which would consolidate the produce to be brought to Cebu or Metro Manila," aniya.

"If there is an abundance of vegetables in Baguio, let NFA consolidate these products to be brought to other parts of the country where the commodity in needed."

JASPER ARCALAS

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Local execs told: Promote brown rice

Interior and Local Government officer-in-charge Catalino Cuy is calling on all local chief executives to support the celebration of this year's National Rice Awareness Month (NRAM).

In a directive, Cuy urged governors and mayors to participate in the #RICEponsiblePlateChallenge by encouraging food establishments in their areas to serve brown rice and rice mixes this November.

"Local government officials have a crucial role in the campaign to inform every Filipino of how they can help the country achieve rice self-sufficiency," said Cuy.

He said the theme for this year's celebration of NRAM is "Ready? SET rice! RICEponsible Filipinos save rice, eat healthy, and try brown rice." It focuses on the consumption of appropriate quantity of rice and of healthy forms of rice, especially brown rice and rice mixes.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) spearheads annually the celebration of NRAM every November by virtue of Presidential Proclamation 524.

According to the DA-Philippine Rice Research Institute, a person can be "RICEponsible" by not wasting even a single grain, eating the brown variety, mixing it with other staples, and by thanking farmers literally or valuing the fruits of their labor.

The DA said compared with white rice, brown rice (unpolished rice) is nutritionally superior because the bran layer contains higher amounts of protein, dietary fiber, B vitamins, Vitamin E, minerals and antioxidants.

Brown rice makes one feel full faster, the DA added: instead of a cup of white rice half or three-fourths of a cup of brown rice is enough.

Eating a rice-corn mix may help lower the risks of diabetes because corn has lower glycemic index compared to white rice, DA said.

It can help consumers because it delays or slows down the feeling of hunger or tiredness, DA said. Corn slows the release of energy, DA added.

– Cecille Suerte Felipe

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Phl, UAE to strengthen agri ties

The Philippines is looking to strengthen agricultural ties with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to boost high-value exports to the country and other Middle Eastern states.

Agriculture Undersecretary for Special Concerns Ranibai Dilangalen, who recently hosted the first halal food festival in Abu Dhabi, said the UAE government has expressed interest to invest more in the local farm sector.

"We are already fast tracking our memorandum of understanding between the DA (Department of Agriculture) and the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment which is the counterpart of the DA," Dilangalen told **The STAR.**

"The MOU will call for the exchange of experts, skills, and technology between the two countries not only in terms of halal, but also in the entirety of agriculture and fisheries and they are interested to invest in our aquaculture especially in tuna and grouper and also vegetables and fruits," she said.

While no trade value has been finalized yet, Dilangalen said UAE is looking at leasing properties in the Philippines to capitalize and produce crops and high-value products that would be sent back to UAE.

Around 85 to 90 percent of UAE's fruits and vegetables are imported from various sources. A small portion of the Philippines' mangoes and bananas goes to the Middle Eastern country.

"We are hoping that the signing and approval of the MOU would happen in Davao during the first quarter of 2018. This will increase our technical and technological knowledge and other possible collaboration of projects and programs on agriculture as a whole," Dilangalen said.

In particular, the DA is focusing on tapping the huge and lucrative halal market in the Middle East to expand food exports and revitalize agri-fishery and agribusiness enterprises.

The DA is now applying for accreditation with the Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology for the export of halal products, as well as improving ties with the International Halal Accreditation Forum.

"The advantage is that if we are going to export halal products in those member-countries, it would entail less requirements and less process," Dilangalen said.

"But it really depends on us. The problem is on our production. They have demands not just in UAE, but also for other parts of the Middle East, very high demand but we cannot supply," she added.

With this, the DA has approved that the halal program be part of the department's banner programs with an initial P44 million budget next year. — **Louise Maureen Simeon**

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CALABARZON

DOST eyes breakthrough in rice production

By **MARTIN A. SADONGDONG**

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) is evaluating the potential of the carrageenan plant growth promoter (CPGP), a technological breakthrough seen to boost production and increase pest-resistance of crops, particularly in ricefields of Region 4A or Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon).

Through the DOST-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD), the "Field Verification Testing on Carrageenan Growth Promoter for Enhanced Growth and Induced Pest and Disease Resistance in Rice" project was launched in Alabang, Muntinlupa recently in partnership with DOST-Calabarzon, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), where the CPGP was developed.

Jocelyn E. Eusebio, director of DOST-PCAARRD's crop research division, explained that the CPGP uses carrageenan extracted from seaweeds and degraded through irradiation.

Eusebio said they are now studying the efficacy of the carrageenan plant growth promoter as induced pest and disease resistance and its usefulness on rice growth and yield through multi-location field trials in Calabarzon.

Various yield tests in other areas resulted to an increase in rice production by 15 to 40 percent, which could be a big boost to farmers. The CPGP could also strengthen the rice plant against natural disasters, help the crop grow longer panicles, stronger, and healthier compared with crops applied with commercial fertilizers.

Eusebio said the DOST and DA would be the leading agencies in securing the implementation of the project, including the identification of rice areas, farmer cooperators and the conduct of farmers' trainings.

Carrageenan project leader Gil Magsino said that the project in Calabarzon was the first to be launched, adding that the primary beneficiaries of the project were the farmers in the region.

He also stated that they are considering to implement the project in seven other regions including Region 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, and 11.

"We are very excited over this project and we are planning a lot for the farmers in Calabarzon. We believe that every technology will have impact to our lives. Kung maganda po talaga ang Carrageenan, hindi lang Region 4 ang makikinabang. Malaki ang maitutulong nito sa upland and irrigated land sa farmers ng Calabarzon," said DOST-Calabarzon regional director Arnel de Mesa, who expressed high hopes onn increased boost of the agricultural productivity in the region.

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₱17-M farm aid for Samar town

TACLOBAN CITY – The Department of Agriculture's Regional Field Office for Eastern Visayas has given more than ₱17 million in agricultural assistance to four farmers organizations in Sta. Rita, Samar, as part of the Yolanda rehabilitation program.

Francisco C. Rosaroso, RFO Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Information Section chief, told Manila Bulletin the ₱17,456,432 worth of aid was funded by the Yolanda Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program (YRRP).

Rosaroso said the four associations, which have a total membership of 182 farmers, were provided with farm machinery and equipment; seeds and fertilizers, and farm animals. (Restituto A. Cayubit)

The Manila Times

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Tobacco farmers undergo livelihood training

MORE than 1,000 tobacco farmers and their dependents from northern Luzon are undergoing livelihood training courses to obtain an alternative source of income.

The National Tobacco Administration (NTA), through its livelihood assistance program, preselected a total of 1,100 trainees expected to complete the courses, which started in batches this month until June next year.

The trainees are members of farmers' cooperatives from different tobacco-growing municipalities in Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Abra, La Union, Pangasinan, Cagayan and Isabela.

"We implement livelihood activities to augment farmers' income so they can support the basic needs of their families," NTA Administrator Robert Seares said.

The four training courses, spearheaded by the NTA Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), are *sari-sari store* or rolling store management; agro-mechanics; noodle, bread and pastry production; and food processing.

FTSD Manager Imelda Riñen said that after the training, the participants could avail themselves of the NTA livelihood assistance package to help them start their own businesses.

NTA has invited resource persons from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, as well as state universities and colleges in the province where the training is held.

NTA-FTSD, in coordination with the Candon City branch office in Ilocos Sur, started the first training course – *sari-sari* store or rolling store management on November 8 and 9 for 47 trainees from different municipalities in Ilocos Sur's second district. Tapped as resource person was Lorma Castro, accredited TESDA trainer from Tagudin, Ilocos Sur.

Other provincial branches will host trainings on rolling store management in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan on November 23 and 24; Rosales, Pangasinan on November 27 and 28; while the branches in La Union, Abra and Vigan City will conduct trainings on separate schedules in December.

The livelihood assistance program is in line with the agency's thrust through its Farmers Organizational Development Program to provide continuous education to the tobacco farmers and their dependents through training support and livelihood assistance.

FTSD also conducted livelihood training on food business, agribusiness, crafts, as well as health and wellness on 1,234 members of farmers' cooperatives, particularly the tobacco farming families, in 2014. **NEIL A. ALCOBER**

The Manila Times

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BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY
Good Agricultural Practices
GAP

Ano ang PhilGAP?

Ang **Philippine Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)** ay isang kasanayan ng pagtatanim na nagreresulta sa ligtas at mataas na kalidad na produktong agrikultura.

Sa GAP, nakakatiyak na ligtas ang mga pagkaing kinokonsumo ng mga namimili.

Sa GAP, maiiwasan ang panganib na dulot ng mikrobyo, hindi tamang pag-gamit ng pestisidyo at iba't-ibang uri ng kontaminasyon.

Sa GAP, sinisiguro ang kalusugan, kaligtasan at kapakanan ng mga magsasaka, pati na ang ligtas na komunidad.

Itinuturo sa GAP ang tamang paggamit ng iba't- ibang uri ng kemikal sa pag-sasaka at ang pangangalaga sa maayos at ligtas na kapaligiran.

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Email: philgap.bpi@gmail.com

MANILA BULLETIN
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POLI-VIEWS

'Bachelor of Science in Dairy Industry'

By **FRANCIS N. TOLENTINO**

IT was my greatest honor to welcome New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern last November 12 who flew to the Philippines to attend the 2017 ASEAN Summit. I caught a glimpse of that wonderful smile on her face as she gazed upon the young Filipinos who cheered for her as she arrived at the Clark International Airport in Pampanga. Having been very recently sworn into office last October 26, 2017, Prime Minister Ardern's visit to the Philippines was one of her first journeys as prime minister.

New Zealand is truly a very progressive country. According to the World Economic Database of the International Monetary Fund (2016), New Zealand ranks 53rd in the world's economies in terms of nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, despite the increasing trend in New Zealand's international trade and large-scale manufacturing industry, funding and development in the agriculture sector is not left behind. In fact, New Zealand is the ninth (9th) largest milk producing country in the world, having produced 21.53 million tons of milk in 2016. The New Zealand Institute of Economic Research published in December, 2010, revealed that dairy farming in New Zealand had contributed 2.8% to its Gross Domestic Product and 10.4 billion in export earnings. We need not underscore the nutritional value of milk, especially for young children. As a rich source of calcium, milk can greatly help in the growth and strengthening of human bones, thus increasing height and enabling improved vitamin and mineral absorption.

The Philippines as a developing country can learn much from New Zealand, particularly in the agriculture sector. It is high time perhaps that our own Department of Agriculture devote considerable attention and resources to livestock production and dairy farming, especially when several land areas throughout the country remain unutilized. These areas may be converted to pastures for raising cattle, especially when the quality of the soil in such areas may not be suitable for the growth of crops. In addition to this, Filipino livestock producers and dairy farmers may be given ample assistance in terms of training, necessary equipment, and perhaps also seed capital in order to jumpstart and sustain their livelihood.Similarly, encouraging farmers to engage in livestock production and dairy farming can help create job opportunities for our fellow Filipinos in the countryside.

I further propose that a Bachelor of Science in Dairy Industry degree be added to the list of degrees that young Filipinos may pursue in college. This will ensure that dairy farming in the country will be promoted and sustained in the future. Given appropriate attention, agriculture in general and dairy farming in particular can greatly contribute in boosting the Philippine economy.

Tempo

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Poli-views

Francis N. Tolentino

Bachelor of Science in Dairy Industry

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Himok ng DILG sa resto owners

BROWN RICE ISILBI SA MGA KOSTUMER

NANAWAGAN si Department of Interior and Local Government Officer-In-Charge Catalino Cuy sa lahat ng local chief executives na suportahan ang selebrasyon ngayong taon ng National Rice Awareness Month (NRAM) para sa pagpapakilala "RICEponsability sa mga komunidad.

"Local government officials have a crucial role in the campaign to inform every Filipino of how they can help the country achieve rice self-suffiency," ani Cuy.

Ang tema ng selebrasyon ngayong taon ay "Ready? SET rice! RICEponsible Filipinos save rice, eat healthy, and try brown rice."

Ang selebrasyon ng NRAM ay pinangunahan ng Department of Agriculture na ginagawa tuwing buwan ng Disyembre batay sa Presidential Proclamation No. 524 series of 2004.

Sa direktiba, hinikayat ni Cuy ang lahat ng governors at city at municipal mayors na makiisa sa #RICEponsiblePlateChallenge at hikayatin ang local food establishments na magsilbi o maghain ng brown rice at hinalong bigas ngayong Nobyembre.

Binanggit din niya na isama sa recitation ng Panatang Makapalay sa kanilang flag raising ceremony at ilagay sa kanilang mga tarpaulin na naka-display ang nasabing kampanya.

Layunin nitong mabigyang-pansin ang mas maayos na kalusugan ng mamamayang Pilipino at magkaroon ng sapat na suplay ng bigas sa bansa. **JOEL O. AMONGO**

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VILLAR SIPAG AWARDEE: NORTHERN MINDANAO FEDERATION OF DAIRY COOPERATIVES (NMFDC)

ANG Northern Mindanao Federation of Dairy Cooperatives (NMFDC) ay itinayo ng Philippine Dairy Corporation, na tinatawag ngayong National Dairy Authority (NDA). Pinagsama-sama nito ang pitong pangunahing kooperatiba.

Ang tagumpay at nakamit ng NMFDC ay umakit ng maraming kooperatiba. Kaya ngayon, ito ay binubuo ng 12 primary cooperatives - Dalwangan Multipurpose Dairy Cooperative, Manolo Fortich Dairy Cooperative, Kisolon Multi-Purpose Dairy Cooperative, Maluko Multi-Purpose Dairy Cooperative, Opol Dairy Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Maunla Multi-Purpose Diary Cooperative, Allied Neighbors Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Talaba-Cogon-Kalaybalay-Bolisong Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Claveria Livestock Raiser Cooperative, Villanueva Diary Multi-Purpose Cooperative, at Cagayan-Opol-El Salvador Multi-Purpose Cooperative.

Noong 1992, pinagkalooban ng NDA ang NMFDC ng P12-million milk processing facility na nagpalakas sa produksiyon ng gatas. Ang planta ay may kakayahang magproseso ng hanggang 500 litro ng raw milk kada oras.

Noong 2011, binigyan ng Department of Science and Technology (DOST), sa ilalim ng Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP) nito, ang kooperatiba ng mga makina tulad ng separator at chiller. Dahil sa mga bagong makina ay nakapagprodyus ang NMFDC ng mga bagong produkto gaya ng keso at cream. Bukod dito, tumaas din ang raw milk production sa 46,000,000 mula sa 42,000,000.

Ang Highland Fresh Dairy products ng NMFDC tulad ng 100% cow's milk, Gouda Cheese, butter, lactoflan, at iba pang flavored milk products ay pumasa sa mahigpit na standard testing. Ginagamit ang mga ito ng iba't ibang local at international establishments. Halimbawa, ang Gouda Cheese ay binili ng Dutch flag carrier KLM at nakakuha ng pagtanggap mula sa world-class hotels.

Bukod dito, ang Highland Fresh dairy products ay ipinamahagi rin sa malnourished children sa pamamagitan ng milk-feeding programs nito na naglalayong masugpo ang malnutrition. Naisakatuparan ng NMFDC ang vision nito na maging 'globally competitive dairy producer' na nagkakaloob ng kabuhayan sa dairy stakeholders.

Ang NMFDC ay tumanggap din ng maraming parangal at pagkilala. Ang search para sa Top Outstanding Farmer of the Philippines (TOFARM) ay nagbigay ng Special Citation sa kooperatiba bilang exemplary model sa 'Agriculture Cooperative Category' at sa sektor ng agrikultura sa pangkalahatan.

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OPINION

Agriculture 3.0: Farms go digital

SUITS THE C-SUITE
JOSE RAOUL J. BALISALISA

In the course of an ocular inspection for a client, an alternative to a physical visit was proposed — to view video footage of the plantation captured by drones. The client explained that they have a dedicated team that conducts aerial view captures through drones on a weekly basis per location/plantation. This allows them to gather and store data more frequently and accurately, with the option to create a detailed archive of video footage.

Given the pace at which technological disruption is sweeping all industries, it should come as no surprise that export-producing agricultural companies' data collection processes have evolved from literally manual inspections and hand-written notes to automatic data capture via equipment, software, remote sensors and aerial drones, among others. Some also have weather stations located strategically within the plantation to capture relevant weather data (e.g., rainfall, sunlight, wind speed, photosynthetic radiation, etc.). GPS is installed in aerial spray planes to achieve accuracy and complete coverage during spraying. Weighing machines are not only used for fruits received at packing houses, but also to record the source fields/farms. The value of the resulting combined data is then used to provide farmers with insights to help them make informed decisions for optimal production.

These new technological systems demonstrate that the agriculture industry is no exception to the trend in big data and analytics.

However, it is also true that for many other farmers in our country, these developments are just "stories" because they have yet to see them in action in their own farms.

The question therefore is, are we ready for Agriculture 3.0?

An article by Ernst & Young, "Digital agriculture: Helping to feed a growing world," states that digital agriculture is widely recognized as the third great revolution of modern agriculture (Agriculture 3.0 or Ag 3.0). The article stated that the introduction and implementation of mechanization (1900 to 1930) and genetic modification (1990 to 2005) are referred to as Ag 1.0 and Ag 2.0, respectively. Both revolutions drove efficiency, yield and profitability to levels that were previously unattainable. Today, these levels are considered conventional in developed countries around the world.

A similar paradigm shift can be expected with Ag 3.0, which is anticipated to be the most transformative and disruptive, not just at the farm, but also all throughout the entire agricultural value chain.

Research has shown that data-driven agriculture has had a large impact on the industry. In this light, we can expect data creation, analysis and decision making to increase even more at the field level, while also affecting farming operations such as through targeted field solutions, data-driven agronomic advice and smarter inputs. New software is also being developed to help emerging countries adopt modern farming practices. As technology supports automation and economies of scale, farms are also anticipated to undergo more consolidation. Companies who reap more profits from data-driven efficiency are likely to then invest in better farming technology in a beneficial cycle.

While Ag 1.0 and Ag 2.0 significantly revolutionized agriculture, digital agriculture is expected to fundamentally transform every aspect of the agribusiness value chain. It will affect not only producer buying behavior and seed and equipment product design, it could also enable dynamic pricing at the consumer retail level, with resulting implications across various business functions, including business strategy, product design, customer preferences and even the company's organizational structure.

However, as technological advancements reach parity in the industry, companies will need to look further into digital strategy in order to compete. This has the potential to challenge traditional company roles, intercompany relationships, incentive systems and even whole business models. As with most disruptors today, digital in agriculture is increasing competition between traditional and non-traditional competitors. Given this, visionary agribusinesses are now working to strengthen their positions in Ag 3.0, some by investing in internal data activities such as standardization, storage, software and analytics, while others are looking at outsourcing strategies or licensing software from external vendors. Yet others are taking a wait-and-see approach.

As recent trends have shown us, disruption will follow in the wake of increasing digital adoption, further highlighting the need for agribusinesses to already take steps to evolve themselves in order to stand out from competitors and deliver more value-added services and products.

Despite the compelling benefits of digital agriculture, the industry still has to hurdle significant challenges, such as the potential difficulty of using software, data usage concerns, disparate and proprietary data formats, and unclear returns on investment. Additionally, it is difficult to demonstrate immediate, tangible results. Having different stakeholder groups will also make data gathering and standardization more challenging. This is further compounded in emerging countries where weak digital network infrastructure and limited capital make adoption prohibitive. The gap between modern, advanced farming and subsistence farming is growing at an alarming rate. All of these factors raise important questions for the industry.

With the world's increasing population, rapidly depleting natural resources, and growing environmental and regulatory pressures, precision planting needs to become the new normal in order to achieve an optimum volume of production per hectare. As the industry moves forward, farmers who are not yet in the digital space should consider giving digital strategies serious thought. In spite of the very real barriers to digital adoption, today's farmers need to take steps to empower themselves in order to gain more knowledge of how to use their time and resources more efficiently.

Digital agriculture is a game changer, and agribusinesses that are leveling up their digital strategies have demonstrated effective best practices. These include allocating annual budgets for investing for infrastructure modernization, new technologies and new techniques to interpret and analyze data. They are also collaborating with government, academe, and stakeholders from the private sector to acquire relevant training and experience for their people. Given the rapid and sweeping digital changes already happening in the agricultural sphere, players need to act now to protect their position in the food value chain.

This article is for general information only and is not a substitute for professional advice where the facts and circumstances warrant. The views and opinion expressed above are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SGV & Co.

JOSE RAOUL J. BALISALISA
is a Partner of SGV & Co.

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#NATION AT A GLANCE

THE DEPARTMENT of Science and Technology is among the government agencies assisting the cooperative in Tuburan for its coffee product packaging.

CENTRAL VISAYAS: TUBURAN, CEBU

Coffee-growing Tuburan town positions to be agri-tourism destination

THE DEPARTMENT of Tourism-Central Visayas (DoT-7) will highlight the coffee farms in Tuburan in the northeastern part of Cebu province as part of its farm tourism campaign. DoT-7 Regional Director Joshur Judd Lanete II said the Tuburan coffee farm will serve as a pilot project. In an earlier interview, Tuburan Mayor Democrito "Aljun" M. Diamante said that aside from preparations for the construction of cottages at the farm and improving accommodation facilities in town, his office is also coordinating with the DoT and Department of Public Works and Highways to fix the road going to the coffee farm. Managed by Kafamco (Kabankalan Agro Forestry Farmers Association Multipurpose Cooperative), the farm aims to give livelihood to over a thousand farmers and maximize the eco-tourism potential of Tuburan. The farm has a capacity to produce 4.3 million kilos of beans a year. — ***The Freeman***

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Calamansi is hot in Seoul, but can local suppliers deliver?

By Cathy Rose A. Garcia *Associate Editor*

SEOUL — Calamansi is the latest food fad in South Korea, as health-conscious Korean women believe the Philippine lime is a good source of Vitamin C, and perfect for detox.

Calamansi juice and tea drinks, as well as calamansi-flavored cookies and even Peppero biscuit sticks, are being sold online and in supermarkets.

"I've tried calamansi, and I believe it helps to lose weight," said Park Ja-young, an office worker, who first learned about its health benefits on Instagram.

Emmanuel W. Ang, Philippine Trade & Investment Center (PTIC) commercial counselor for South Korea, said he was surprised by the sudden interest in calamansi among Korean buyers this year.

"Calamansi is a very hot item right now. I regularly bring buying missions from Korea to the Philippines, and when Philippine companies come here, I match them with buyers, so I know what the Korean market is looking for and right now, it's calamansi," he told *BusinessWorld* at the Philippine embassy on Oct. 19.

Mr. Ang noted a Korean food company they invited to the Philippines had developed a calamansi juice drink in Tetra packs, which are now being sold online and in stores.

"The Korean market for food and beverage is a very competitive one. There are so many products in the market, so companies are trying to differentiate to give new products to market. Calamansi has gotten to that stage where it's very different from other lemon products. Probably before when they put calamansi as a flavor, some Koreans would not know what it was. I think we have come to the point where there are a lot of Korean tourists coming to the Philippines, they're familiar with calamansi," he said.

But while the interest in calamansi is strong, the question is whether Philippine companies, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), can address the demand.

"The capacity to supply (the market) is the biggest problem. Generally, it's not a problem of finding a buyer. It's a problem of finding a supplier who can give the appropriate volume, quality, consistency, and supply that they need," Mr. Ang said.

For instance, he recalled a Philippine exporter showcased coconut products at one of the trade fairs in Seoul. While they received many inquiries, the Philippine exporter was unable to fullfill the orders from Korean companies since these were at volumes that they could not supply, or did not meet the packaging standards.

"That's the problem — capacity — not just volume, but proper packaging, proper certifications that they need. Some exporters still don't get that. When we supply to a market, we don't ask the market to adapt to our product. We ask the market what do they need, and we change our product to meet the need," Mr. Ang said.

APRIL ESTORES

Calamansi-flavored Peppero rides on the "calamansi craze" in South Korea.

The PTIC, which is under the Department of Tourism, regularly invite SMEs to Seoul to participate in trade fairs, and also bring Korean buyers to the Philippines.

"The Korean companies are looking for products they can source (from the Philippines). I've explained to them that we have the natural resources, but we have a problem with the processing part... But the Koreans, because they want to buy from us as well, they sent experts to talk about what they need from Philippine exporters. They talk about how a Korean company sources products, what are the certifications, documents they require," Mr. Ang said.

Trade between Korea and the Philippines stood at around $7.75 billion in 2016. The Philippines exported around $2.5 billion worth of mostly semiconductors and electronics, fresh fruit such as bananas, pineapples and mangoes, and copper and other minerals to South Korea.

INTEREST REMAINS

Despite reports of some Korean manufacturing firms leaving the Philippines for Vietnam, Mr. Ang said Koreans are very keen on investing in the Philippines.

"We're seeing investments in many industries, much more than before," he said.

He noted Korean companies have previously invested in semiconductor and electronics manufacturing, shipbuilding, agri-business and food processing in

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the Philippines because of efficiency of production.

"They see manufacturing (costs in Korea) is higher compared to Philippines. Maybe they have problems with labor unrest here, so they see opportunities in leveraging quality and efficiency," Mr. Ang said.

Korean firms involved in engineering and construction, as well as renewable energy, have also expressed interest in the Philippines to take advantage of the growing economy, particularly the government's massive infrastructure program.

"They see Philippines is rolling out more of these big-ticket projects. And they want to be a part of that," Mr. Ang said.

Korean companies, ranging from banks to consumer goods, are also entering the Philippines to take advantage of the growing middle-class market.

"We have a big population and we are slowly becoming more and more affluent. They see the economic growth we have had for the last six or seven years continuing and they want to take advantage of that," Mr. Ang said.

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Asean summit done—and now?

Henry J. Schumacher

EUROPE BEAT

THE Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit and the bilateral talks with cooperating nations, from Japan to Australia, from the European Union (EU) to China, from South Korea to New Zealand, from the United States to India, have shown that the economic possibilities of the Asean economic community (AEC) are enormous, given its total GDP valued at $2.5 trillion and its economy growing at an average of 5 percent to 8 percent.

Given the Asean Vision 2025, it is now up to the 10 nations to implement the AEC fast and address the remaining issues, such as the opening the markets, creating Asean-wide regulations, the free flow of labor, etc. One area with problems is the agriculture sector, which will face very stiff competition once the quantitative restrictions, such as quotas, particularly on rice and tariffs on other products, such as sugar, are removed or lowered in compliance with the AEC. The Philippine government may have to look at shielding the farm sector for a short time while improving its efficiency and diversifying the crops.

This sounds easy, but will be difficult to achieve given the unfortunate fact that initiatives in agriculture in this country are slow in coming; there is plenty of talk but little improvement. There is no doubt that the government and the private sector have to come together to jointly address the issues that have been highlighted so many times over a long period. Private-sector participation should not be limited to farmer organizations; in my view, a big business that is making tons of money in other industries should effectively get involved in agriculture, with special emphasis on agri-food supply and value chains. All the conglomerates are talking about "inclusive growth" but are not really contributing to the much-needed change. If Thailand and Vietnam can do it—exporting rice, fish, coffee and other commodities/finished products, Philippine business should be able to copy and implement it.

Reading about the results of the bilateral meetings between the Asean leaders and with the leaders of cooperating countries, cooperation in the field of agriculture is almost always mentioned, being it technical support or opening the markets for specific agricultural commodities. The EU, Canada and the US have signaled strong interest in free-trade agreements, which will also be specific in terms of agricultural products, from commodities to finished food products.

Let me reiterate again that the poverty in the Philippines will not disappear without addressing agriculture. Support services to farmers and fishermen, such as financing, incentives, technology, irrigation, postharvest facilities, farm-to-market roads, improved logistics and integration in the supply chain to fully develop the potential of the agricultural industry to develop rural areas and the countryside, have to be delivered. As a consequence, some 20 million rural Filipinos can be lifted out of poverty. And the children of farmers will stop moving from rural areas to urban centers or become Overseas Filipino workers. Isn't this what the 10-point socioeconomic agenda of the Duterte administration has in mind? Fighting poverty in agriculture? If this is part of the agenda of the administration, then it makes good sense to revisit the 10-point socioeconomic agenda of the Duterte administration: How high is agriculture on their agenda? Only 11 of the administration's 75 flagship projects are for the agriculture sector. Given the encouragement the Philippines got from the Asean summit and the bilateral discussions, it makes sense to keep the momentum going and address the issues to finally integrate the agricultural sector into the AEC.

Comments are welcome; contact me via e-mail: Schumacher@mcasia.org.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BOARD TALK

Business Features Editor
Tina Arceo-Dumlao

'Rice revolution' sparked in Leyte

Part 1 of 2

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By Tina Arceo-Dumlao
@tinaarceodumlao

It has been four years since Supertyphoon "Yolanda" barreled through central Philippines and left a wide swath of destruction from which many are still struggling to recover.

But in Alangalang, a second class municipality in Leyte about 30 kilometers south of Tacloban City, a "rice revolution" is taking place, one that promises to make the rice farmers here and in surrounding towns earn even more than they did before "Yolanda" brought them to their knees.

Trailblazing couple Patrick Renucci and Rachel Renucci-Tan want to spark a "rice revolution" in Leyte. (Top) New tractors are available to farmers who want to adopt more modern farming techniques.

Business model

Leading the charge is the husband-and-wife team of French-Italian Patrick Francois Renucci and Filipino-Chinese Rachel Renucci-Tan, the founders of Chen Yi Agventures, whose business model promises to be "the national flagship for innovation in rice production."

By filling a gap in the market—developing the most technologically advanced post-harvest facilities—Chen Yi promises to be a major producer that integrates seed growing, planting, farm management, harvesting and rice production in the Visayas and Mindanao.

The couple first set foot in the town in 2015, driven by their desire to contribute to the rebuilding of the province hit hard by "Yolanda."

And already, the literal and figurative seeds that they planted have sprouted, encouraging the couple, who have been married for 10 years, to carry on their life's work.

To think that practically everyone they knew and loved thought they were crazy for even thinking about going back to the Philippines to start a business, even more so when they said they were going to unknown Alangalang.

Compelling reasons

Their well-meaning loved ones certainly had compelling reasons to believe that they were not thinking straight.

For one, the power couple gave up lucrative careers, a comfortable life and all that came with it, such as an enviable apartment in the City of Lights with its fine dining and haute couture.

In their former life, Renucci was at the helm of one of France's largest printing companies. Renucci-Tan, on the other hand, was founder and CEO of Tan-EU EU Capital, a real estate investment management company based in Hong Kong and London.

At its peak, Tan-EU Capital was managing over a billion US dollars, including a special situations real estate fund in partnership with a leading real estate developer in China as well as a distressed Chinese real estate fund that Tan-EU restructured to provide an exit for its investors.

Defying convention, they cashed in most of their chips and then reinvested heavily in Leyte.

And as they look at the 20-foot silos rising from the patch of land in the municipality, and the increase in the incomes of the farmers who early on bought into their grand vision of Leyte at least reclaiming its rank as the fifth leading rice producer in the country, they know for sure that they've made the right decision.

Tests of courage

Not to say that their faith in their vision had not been tested, at some points so severe that they were left fretting over whether they had made a gigantic—and extravagant—mistake.

Renucci-Tan tells SundayBiz in an interview that for one thing, they were rejected by as many as 21 banks when they presented their idea of investing in a state-of-the-art post-harvest processing facility in Leyte with the farmers with small parcels of land as the production partners.

"Nobody believed in our project," shares Tan, "We waited for three years for it to get started."

When they arrived in 2015, bringing with them their expertise in spotting and capitalizing on opportunities, they started by first understanding the state of rice production in the area.

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Part 3 of 3

'RICE REVOLUTION' SPARKED IN LEYTE

FROM B2-4

"We made a survey of over 4,000 farmers to see what exactly was the problem, why were they earning so little. We did not know anything because we are not from here. Out of that survey, we came to understand the main problems—lack of capital, lack of labor and the low yield. Nobody is making enough money, which is not the case when you see the farms in Europe," says Renucci.

Pain points

From that research, they determined the pain points and proceeded to find solutions, in the name of the farmers who were burdened by earning as low as P19,000 a year.

This is due to a combination of factors such as the lack of seeds, high labor cost due to antiquated production methods, lack of post-harvest facilities that led to the decline in the quality of their produce.

Their solution—their recipe for a social revolution—is the Renucci partnership program, under which the farmers can get a sure market for their produce and access to the proper seeds and technology.

"Revolution," says Renucci-Tan, "is about a structural change, a major disruption. We want to do that in rice."

The perennial problem hounding rice farmers, Tan says, was that they did not produce enough and they were buried in debt. This because they lacked access or knowledge about proper farming techniques, the value of mechanization, and access to affordable funds that they need to grow rice.

But from the start they saw the potential of Alangalang, indeed the whole of Leyte, as it was the country's fifth largest and second largest rice producing area in the Visayas before "Yolanda" struck, and this despite the very low level of farm mechanization, meaning that the farmers still relied mainly on human and animal labor to grow their crop.

Renucci says that because of that potential, he believes that through more modern techniques, such as using the right kind of seeds, proper spacing of the plants and maintenance to prevent infestation, farmers stand to easily double their yield while reducing their cost. The result? An exponential increase in their income.

The proof is already there for skeptics to check.

Pilot area

From the pilot area of 50 hectares in Alangalang and neighboring towns such as Sta. Fe, the partner-farmers who dedicated themselves to learning the Renucci way of growing rice have seen an increase in their output, from just 50 to 80 bags of rice per hectare to as much as 200 bags.

There was no magic involved, says Renucci, just the introduction of more modern methods and materials.

"We are just helping farmers see what farming can really be," says Renucci.

Premium rice

What's more, the farmers get to produce affordable premium rice—half the cost of imported Japanese rice—that the market will appreciate.

"We want to give Filipinos the top quality rice that they can deserve. And we can produce beautiful rice from Leyte through technology," says Renucci-Tan.

The "rice revolution" of Chen Yi means fully mechanized planting and harvesting of rice to increase the yield, quality of palay and therefore the income of farmers. Production cost is lowered and therefore the price to consumers of high quality premium rice.

"Chen Yi wants the ordinary Filipino to enjoy locally produced premium rice of the same quality as Thai Jasmine, Basmati, Japanese rice. Rice that Filipinos deserve; rice that can be produced in Leyte and not imported," Renucci-Tan says in a statement.

The couple wants to enable the farmers of Leyte to be as competitive as their counterparts in Thailand and Vietnam while deploying advanced rice processing technology to produce affordable ultrapremium rice.

"We own the first "Yolanda"-proof and earthquake resistant rice processing center of this size in the Philippines and we are the first to use technology to merge and level disparate land parcels in order to create vast tracts of rice land found in Thailand, the United States and Europe. These large consolidated rice parcels can optimize irrigation, facilitate water management and ultimately reduce the cost of palay production", Renucci says in a statement.

Partnership program

Then through the Renucci Partnership program, Chen Yi organizes the farmers by providing low interest loans in kind: Organic fertilizers, pesticides, and one kind of high yielding inbred seed. Chen Yi also extends high-tech planting and harvesting equipment to all farmer members of the program, thereby increasing the quantity and the quality of their palay.

"Chen Yi is targeting no less than 3,500 farmers for Phase I alone and aiming to increase their profits by 8-10x while being a highly profitable private enterprise that delivers affordable ultra-premium rice to the consumers," Renucci-Tan says.

Recently, the company was able to secure the support of the Land Bank of the Philippines.

With it, the couple hopes that the "rice revolution," where farmers are given the tools and opportunities they need to dramatically improve their yield and income, will be replicated across the country.

"Someday soon, the Philippines will be self-sufficient and could even export rice," they say. INQ

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Phl sugar output production to reach 2.4 MMT next year

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The local production of sugar is seen to reach 2.4 million metric tons (MT) next year, still slightly lower than this year's expected output, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said.

According to a report of the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, production may reach 2.38 million MT next year, five percent lower than the projected 2.5 million MT output this year.

The latest projection, however, is higher than the 2.3 million MT output released in May.

The projection remains consistent with Sugar Regulatory Administration's sugar production estimate for the crop year ending 2018 of 2.38 million MT and withdrawals at 2.17 million MT.

The USDA attributed the increase in production to the favorable weather in the country.

The forecast of the USDA is based on the US marketing year which starts in December. Philippine crop year for sugar, meanwhile, starts in September.

Likewise, local consumption is expected to increase to 2.25 million MT from 2.2 million MT this year amid higher demand coming from the food and beverage industries.

The USDA said the Philippines would likely hike raw sugar exports to up to 250,000 MT from the agency's initial forecast of 150,000 MT.

About 80 percent of sugar production has been allotted for the domestic market, while 10 percent has been classified for the US market and another 10 percent for the world market.

According to the USDA, global production next year is forecast to rise to a record 185 million MT from the 180 million MT this year.

This is attributed to the record production in Brazil, expected recoveries in output in India and Thailand due to favorable weather, the end of production quotas in the European Union, and area expansion in China.

The jump in production supports record exports and consumption at 62 million MT and 174 million MT, respectively.

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12 caught illegally ferrying rice sacks

DAVAO CITY—A dozen men, including the captain of a motorboat carrying 5,000 sacks of rice, were apprehended by the Naval Forces of Eastern Mindanao in a joint counter-action operation conducted off Arena Point, Davao Oriental on Saturday night.

Ensign Aileens Jansor, spokesperson of the Philippine Navy in Eastern Mindanao, said NFEM personnel led by Captain Hadun Hamil apprehended the 12 boat crew aboard *M/L Sunlight* off the waters of Davao Oriental after they failed to present documents for their goods.

The joint forces of Naval Task Group 71 along with *BRP Magat Salamat* (Patrol Ship/PS20) and *BRP Heracleo Allano* (Patrol Craft 376) of Joint Task Force Haribon and two teams of Naval Special Operations Unit 7 confiscated the sacks of rice.

Janson said the crew could not present authentic National Food Authority shipping permits or transport documents. **PNA**

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Navy foils attempt to smuggle 5,000 sacks of rice in Davao

DAVAO CITY – The Philippine Navy apprehended a crew of 12 men on board a motorboat that had 5,000 sacks of rice with no proper documents.

The crewmen are now being held for questioning after navy surface assets boarded vessel M/L Sunlight 10:50 p.m. Friday night, and found 5,000 50-kilogram sacks.

The apprehension was conducted in a joint counter action operation along the waters of Davao Oriental.

Initial reports said that the BRP Magat Salamat and BRP Heracleo Allano of Joint Task Froce Haribon and two teams of Naval Special Operation Unit 7 patrol boats spotted the M/L Sunlight off Arena Port in Davao Oriental.

The Navy team ordered the crew members to proceed to the forward section of the ship.

At 11:15 p.m., the Navy teams boarded the ship and sought for permits and other documents from the crew.

Sunlight Captain Hadun Hamil, showed the Navy crews its documents, but nothing for the 5,000 sacks of Angelica high premium or super long grain white rice.

"Initial inspection revealed no authentic NFA shipping permits or transport documents," the Navy said.

The vessel was escorted to the Capt. Feranil Pier of the Naval Station Felix Apolinario in Panacan, Davao City. (Yas D. Ocampo)

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

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Rid Laguna Lake of water hyacinth, LLDA urged

By Alvin Murcia

The Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) was urged to act swiftly in clearing the Laguna Lake of water hyacinth that has excessively proliferated the last few days.

The proliferation of the water hyacinth has prevented the entry of salt water into the 90,000-hectare brackish lake and also threatened to flood the Napindan Hydraulic Control Structure (NHCS) in Taguig City.

The local government of Cardona in Rizal province has already declared a state of calamity in its 14 barangays because of the presence of the said water plant in the area.

The declaration of a state of calamity was prompted by the request of barangay chairmen and the recommendation of Cardona Municipal Disaster risk Reduction Management Office (MDRRMO).

The affected barangays in Cardona are Balibago, Tuna, Lambac, Boor, Malangam, Calubacan, Suba, Navotas, Ticulio, Nagsulo, Sampad, Looc, Dalig, Patunhay and Calahan.

According to MDRRMO chief Erwin Dionisio, the presence of the water hyacinth has affected the mobility and transportation of motor *bancas* in the area.

The transport of basic services such as rice and other food products are affected because these are coming from the mainland going to the barangay particularly the island of Talim.

Cardona Mayor Bernardo San Juan has directed the Municipal Social Welfare and Development to implement a five day cash for work program and food for work to clean up and put up water lily breaker to the *banca*'s route.

The said plant was brought by northeast monsoon that affected the waterways of thousands of fisherfolks that are getting their livelihood by fishing in the said lake.

Fisherfolk group Pamalakaya, on the other hand, said saltwater that came from Manila Bay via Pasig River is essential to Laguna de Bay because it serves as nutrients to maintain the lake's ecological balance and brackish water by nature is a combination of fresh and saltwater.

Fernando Hicacp, chairman of the fishermen group, said in a statement over the weekend that since the construction of the Napindan, various pests thrive in the lake, including water hyacinths, snake turtle, knife fish and janitor fish.

The presence of the said pests has affected the livelihood of the small fishermen because it prevented the growing of small fish, while the water hyacinths obstruct the movement of fishing boats.

The group urged the LLDA to mobilize rehabilitation funds to support the affected fisherfolk in Laguna de Bay plagued by the water hyacinths.

It also reiterated its call to permanently open the Napindan structure and let Manila Bay and Laguna Lake waters mingle to rehabilitate the degrading lake and bring back its natural abundance.

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Lack of saltwater in Laguna Lake equals hyacinth boom

THE fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas or Pamalakaya on Sunday blamed the excessive proliferation of water hyacinth in Laguna de Bay to the Napindan Hydraulic Control Structure in Taguig City that prevents the entry of saltwater into the 90,000-hectare brackish lake.

Towns of Binangonan and Cardona in the province of Rizal are now heavily surrounded by water hyacinths due to the "amihan" or northeast monsoon, affecting the waterways of thousands of fisherfolk who strive to sail out of the lake to do fishing activities.

Pamalakaya said saltwater that comes from Manila Bay via the Pasig River is essential to Laguna de Bay because it serves as nutrients to maintain the lake's ecological balance, and brackish water by nature is a combination of fresh and saltwater.

"Since the construction of the Napindan, various pests thrive in the lake, including water hyacinths, snake turtle, knife fish, and janitor fish. All these affect the livelihood of small fisherfolk because predator species such as knife fish and snake turtle prey on small fish preventing them to grow; while the water hyacinths obstruct the movement of fishing boats," Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya chairperson, said in a statement. **Bill Casas**

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Third quarter banana output up 3.4%

THE country's July-September banana production improved this year, as it rose 3.45 percent to almost 2.40 million metric tons in 2017 from 2.30 million metric tons last year, according to the latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

"There were reports of additional bearing hills for the cavendish variety from expanded areas of plantation farms in Soccsksargen and Northern Mindanao," PSA said.

The statistics agency said the rise in production was propped up by increases in area and number of bearing hills in the Davao region, due to the conversion of palay areas of plantation farms in Soccsksargen and Northern Mindanao.

"Bigger bunches were harvested in Soccsksargen due to sufficient rainfall," PSA added.

The increase this year marked a turnaround for Philippine banana production.

PILIPINO MIRROR
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AGRIKULTURA MAY IMPACT PA RIN SA MILLENNIALS

BAGAMAN panahon ng mga gadget at electronic device sa paaralan at sa mga tanggapan bunsod ng pagsulong ng teknolohiya, may mga kabataan pa ring nais kumuha ng agriculture course dahil nahihilig sa agrikultura.

Batay sa mga pagtatatanong sa mga kumuha ng kursong Agrikultura, nakikita kasi nila ang oportunidad na kumita sa produksiyon at pangangasiwa sa tulong ng mga farming school.

Isa na rito ang 23-anyos na si Caroline Da Silva, na tubong Maynila.

Nagtapos ng kursong marketing si Da Silva ngunit lumipat sa linya ng agrikultura matapos mag-intern sa isang sakahan.

Hindi nagdalawang-isip si Da Silva na matutuhan ang farming, production, at agriculture management para kumita.

Impluwensiya naman ng magulang ang nagtulak sa 20-anyos na si Nathaniel Montiel para mahilig sa pagtatanim.

Organic agriculture ang kurso ni Montiel at balak niyang gamitin ang natututuhan sa munting lupa ng kaniyang pamilya.

Kung magtutungo sa Nueva Ecija Univesity of Science and Technology, sa Cabanatuan City, may mga estudyante roon na laking Maynila at ninais na maging farmer.

Hindi rin pahuhuli ang UP-Los Baños dahil naroon ang maraming kabataan na lumaki sa gadgets pero mas nais ang agrikultura.

EUNICE CALMA

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FRUIT OUTPUT LUMAKAS SA 3RD QTR

LUMAGO ang produksiyon ng prutas sa bansa sa third quarter, partikular ang saging at pinya, ng hanggang 3 percent makaraang palawakin ng mga magsasaka ang kanilang ekta-ektaryang taniman, ayon sa Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Sa quarterly report nito na may titulong "Performance of Philippine Agriculture", sinabi ng PSA na ang banana production mula Hulyo hanggang Setyembre ay umabot sa 2.383 million metric tons (MMT), mas mataas ng 3.43 percent sa 2.304 MMT na naitala sa kaparehong panahon noong nakaraang taon.

Ayon sa PSA, ang paglago ay dahil sa pinalawak na hectarage ng banana plantations sa Mindanao.

"There were reports of additional bearing hills for cavendish variety from the expanded areas of plantation farms in SOCCSKSARGEN and Northern Mindanao," nakasaad sa report ng PSA na inilathala noong nakaraang taon.

"In Davao Region, there were increases in area and number of bearing hills as a result of conversion of palay areas to cavendish banana farms," dagdag ng PSA.

Sa datos ng PSA, ang pineapple output sa three-month period ay umabot sa 683,760 MT mula sa 673,470 MT na naitala sa kahalintulad na panahon noong nakalipas na taon.

"The increase in area harvested brought about by the expansion in corporate farms in SOCCSKSARGEN and Northern Mindanao pushed up production of pineapple by 1.53 percent."

Gayunman, naitala ang pagbaba sa mango at calamansi production sa July-to-September period.

Ang mango output sa third quarter ay bumaba ng 5.35 percent sa 55,440 MT, mula sa 58,600 MT noong nakaraang taon.

Samantala, ang calamansi production sa nabanggit na panahon ay nagtala ng 2.36 percent pagbaba sa 56,020 MT mula sa 56,790 MT noong nakaraang taon.

"There was a reduction in the number of bearing trees harvested in MIMAROPA and this was among the negative effects of Typhoon 'Nina' last year," ayon pa sa PSA.

JASPER ARCALAS

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PROBE SA P11-M PUSLIT NA BIGAS

INIIMBESTIGAHAN na ng National Food Authority (NFA) at Bureau of Customs (BOC) ang P11 milyong halaga ng smuggled na bigas na nasabat ng mga tauhan ng Philippine Navy sa Davao del Norte kamakalawa ng gabi.

Sa ulat ni Navy Information Officer Captain Leud Lincuna, umaabot sa 5,000 sako ng puslit na bigas ang nakumpiska ng kanilang mga tauhan .

Ayon kay Capt. Jose Ma Ambrosio Espeleta, deputy commander ng Naval Forces-Eastern Mindanao, Miyerkoles pa lamang ay may natanggap na silang tip na ibibiyahe ang bigas mula Zamboanga City patungo sa isang pribadong pantalan sa Maco, Compostella Valley.

Aniya, nasabat ng Task Force Seahawk ang lantsang M/L Sunlight na ginamit sa pagpupuslit ng kontrabando, may 5 nautical miles silangan ng Island Garden City ng Samal, Davao del Norte.

"Wala silang dala na documents so we have to take them in dito sa Panacan (sa Davao City)," ani Espeleta.

Inamin naman ni Ahndun Amil, kapitan ng Sunlight, na ihahatid sana nila ang kargamento sa isang Johak Sahid.

Nabunyag pa na ito ang pangalawang beses na nagdeliver sila ng bigas sa Maco matapos silang magdala roon ng 7,000 sako ng bigas nitong Oktubre.

VERLIN RUIZ

Balita

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5,000 sako ng smuggled rice, naharang

DAVAO CITY - Hinarang ng Philippine Navy ang 12 kataong sakay sa motorboat, na may kargang 5,000 sako ng bigas na walang kaukulang dokumento.

Kinuwestiyon ang mga tripulante makaraang inspeksyunin ng Navy ang bangkang M/L Sunlight dakong 10:50 ng gabi nitong Biyernes sa Davao Oriental.

Sabado ng madaling araw nang inspeksiyunin ng mga awtoridad ang bangka at natagpuan doon ang aabot sa 5,000 sako ng 50-kilo na sako ng bigas na lulan sa bangka.

Ayon sa inisyal an ulat, namataan ng BRP Magat Salamat at ng BRP Heracleo Allano ng Joint Task Froce Haribon at dalawang grupo ng Naval Special Operation Unit 7 patrol boat ang M/L Sunlight na papaalis sa Arena Port sa Davao Oriental.

Bandang 11:15 ng gabi, sumakay ang grupo ng Navy sa bangka at hinanap ang mga permit at dokumento mula sa mga crew.

Nagpakita ang kapitan ng Sunlight, si Mr. Hadun Hamil sa Navy, ng dokumento nito, ngunit aabot sa 5,000 sako ng Angelica high-premium rice ang walang dokumento.

Dumaong ang bangka sa Capt Feranil Pier ng Naval Station Felix Apolinario sa Panacan, Davao City bandang 6:15 ng umaga.

Yas D. Ocampo

Remate
ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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P11M smuggled rice nasabat

NASABAT ng mga tauhan ng Philippine Navy ang tinatayang P11 milyong halaga ng smuggled rice sa karagatang sakop ng Davao del Norte kamakalawa ng gabi.

Ang hinihinalang puslit na bigas ay kinabibilangan ng nasa 5,000 sako na tumitimbang ng 250,000 kilos.

Base sa report ng Naval Forces Eastern Mindanao, nagsasagawa umano sila ng Joint Counter Action bandang alas-10:50 ng Sabado ng gabi nang mamataan ang isang motor banca na M/L Sunlight na may dalang mga kontrabando, may limang notiko-milya sa silangan ng Island Garden City of Samal. Napag-alaman na ibibiyahe ang bigas mula Zamboanga City patungo sa isang pribadong pantalan sa Maco, Compostella Valley.

Ayon kay Capt. Jose Ma Ambrosio Espeleta, deputy commander ng Naval Forces-Eastern Mindanao, wala umanong maipakitang mga dokumento ang crew ng M/L Sunlight patungkol sa pagdadala ng naturang mga kontrabando.

Nabatid naman sa kapitan ng nasabat na sea vessel na si Ahndun Amil, idedeliber sana nila ang nasabing kargamento sa isang Johak Sahid.

Ibinunyag din ni Amil na ito na ang pangalawang beses na nagdeliber sila ng bigas sa Maco. Patuloy ang imbestigasyon ng National Food Authority (NFA) at Bureau of Customs kung saang bansa nagmula ang smuggled contraband. **JG**

Malaya
Business Insight

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Corn up; soy, wheat climb

CHICAGO- US corn futures rose about 2 percent on Friday on fund-driven short-covering and talk of increased export demand, while soybeans hit a one-week high as worries about stressful crop weather in Argentina lifted soymeal futures, analysts said.

Wheat followed the firm trend, which extended broadly across the commodities sector. The 19-market Thomson Reuters CoreCommodity Index was up more than 1 percent.

Chicago Board of Trade December corn settled up 6-1/2 cents at $3.43 per bushel. January soybeans ended up 18-1/2 cents at $9.90-1/2 a bushel while December soymeal rose $7.70 to $318.20 per short ton, after reaching $318.90, its highest since Nov. 9.

CBOT December wheat rose 5-3/4 cents at $4.27-1/4 a bushel.

Corn climbed ahead of the weekly Commitments of Traders (COT) report from the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission, which traders expected to show large speculators holding a near record-large short position.

"Concerns about a build-up in shorts in today's COT report for corn and wheat ... prompted today's CBOT short-covering rally," said Jerry Gidel, analyst with the Price Futures Group.

Additional support stemmed from talk of a firming cash basis at US Pacific Northwest export terminals, which sparked chatter about possible corn export sales to China.

"You've got record corn shorts, and you've got a trigger here with some business that you weren't anticipating," said Roy Huckabay with Linn & Associates.

Soybeans advanced on worries about crop weather in Argentina, the world's top exporter of soymeal, especially given forecasts for the La Nina weather phenomenon to develop in the coming months, during the South American growing season.

La Nina is associated with below-average rains in the Argentina's crop areas.

"People are nervous that we are going to come in here with a hot and dry Argentina forecast," said Terry Roggensack, analyst with the Hightower Report.

Wheat futures firmed along with corn and soy, drawing additional support from a softer dollar, which tends to make US grains more attractive on the global market.

However, rallies were capped by ample global wheat supplies, including Russia's record-large harvest. Egypt's main state wheat buyer on Thursday bought 240,000 tons of Russian wheat at an international tender.

European Union common wheat exports are running 23 percent below last season's pace, official data showed on Thursday. – ***Reuters***

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Florida fruit growers sour over NAFTA

By **JULIETTE MICHEL**

NEW YORK (AFP) – With the fifth round of talks to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) underway, Florida fruit and vegetable growers are pressing for changes.

They complain that subsidies in Mexico have flooded the US market with cheap competition under the landmark 1994 trade pact and want it amended – unlike some corn growers and ranchers, who have benefited from the deal and prefer it to remain as it is.

All sides are trying to make their voices heard as negotiators from the United States, Canada and Mexico gather in Mexico City to continue the US-initiated effort to revamp the deal.

Under NAFTA, exports to Canada and Mexico of food produced in the United States have jumped to $39 billion this year from $8.7 billion in 1992. Imports of Mexican and Canadian agricultural products also have surged to $44.5 billion last year from $6.5 billion in 1992.

The lowering of tariff barriers made it easier for US corn producers to sell their crop to new markets. "Our exports of corn have grown tremendously. We worked hard to build domestic and export markets," said Mark Recker, president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association, who favors remaining in the trade agreement.

"If we pull out of NAFTA, tariffs suddenly go up, and then we can't compete," he warns. "Mexico is already looking to South America or other sources for their corn."

But blueberries and broccoli in Georgia, watermelons in Texas, grapes and asparagus in California, and strawberries, peppers, tomatoes, squash and eggplants in Florida have all seen production fall.

"Since NAFTA's passage in the 1990s, there has been a steady decline in both the acreage and production value in regions around the United States," said Lisa Lochridge of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association.

And "The pace of that decline has increased significantly over the past five to 10 years as the Mexican government has provided subsidies for its farmers to grow produce for the US marketplace," she said.

Fruit and vegetable growers are pushing for a clause in the trade deal that makes it easier to launch a lawsuit against subsidies or dumping in another country.

But Paul Mastronardi, president of produce company Sunset Grown, warns that those concerns do not represent the majority of farmers and the strategy is problematic.

"If we start to choose small subsections of each industry for different rules and standards, then we are exposed to retaliation from the NAFTA partners."

Hope Pjesky, who raises cattle in Oklahoma, said at a time when agricultural commodity prices are particularly low, US farmers cannot afford to lose customers.

For example, while beef tongue does not appeal to many American cooks, it is widely used in Mexico, and that can add "between $250 and $300 in value to each calf at the end of his life," she said.

BusinessWorld
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Raw sugar extends rally to highest in 5 1/2 months

NEW YORK/LONDON — Raw sugar futures on ICE extended gains to reach the highest in five and a half months on Friday, as funds covered their short positions and the breach of technical resistance attracted further chart-based buying.

Coffee and cocoa prices dropped, bucking the trend in larger markets as the 19-commodity Thomson Reuters Core-Commodity Index rose for the first time in seven sessions.

March raw sugar settled up 0.11 cent, or 0.70%, at 15.37 cents per pound (/lb), after reaching the highest since May 26 at 15.46 cents. The spot contract closed the week up 2.70%.

Dealers said the market continued to be supported by funds scaling back short positions, though the pace of the advance was slowed by producer selling.

"Investor buy backs of their hefty short position are supporting the market," Commonwealth Bank of Australia analyst Tobin Gorey said in a market note.

Thursday's rise above the 15.20-cent resistance level attracted further technical buying and prices had the potential to rise further on bullish charts, dealers said.

"Another strong close above 15.20 will suggest a test of 15.50 and perhaps 15.82 next week," said Tom Kujawa, co-head of the softs department at Sucden Financial.

The market shrugged off the International Sugar Organization's forecast of a five-million ton global sugar surplus in 2017-18.

March white sugar settled down 10 cents, or 0.03%, at $393.80 per ton.

March arabica coffee settled down 2.90 cent, or 2.20%, at $1.2725 per lb. It closed the week down 2.80%, the poorest weekly performance since late September.

Total arabica futures open interest fell for the eighth straight session on Thursday to 211,242 lots, ICE data showed. Pressure came from selling of the December contract ahead of its first notice day on Tuesday, traders said.

January robusta coffee settled down $21, or 1.10%, at $1,824 per ton. March New York cocoa settled down $9, or 0.40%, at $2,131 per ton. The second position closed the week down 3.70%, its poorest weekly performance in three months. March London cocoa settled down 11 pounds, or 0.70%, at 1,607 pounds per ton.

— ***Reuters***