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US farmers angry at trade wars
DA wants to overhaul rice packaging

A policy that will completely change the way rice is being sold in the Philippines is now in the offing. This means that soon rice can no longer be bought in sacks but in specific per kilo packages.

For the sake of food safety and traceability, Agriculture Emmanuel Pinol said he is now pushing for an overhaul in rice packaging system in the Philippines—which will do away with the traditional way of selling different variety of rice by having them exposed in open containers with their price tags on it. This has always been the practice in every wet market in the country.

This move will be formalized by a policy that the Department of Agriculture (DA) is going to draft.

"This will not be implemented right away. But we will go towards this direction in the context of food safety and traceability," Pinol said.

In ensuring food safety, Pinol said the current system now, which allows everyone to easily touch the rice, is not hygienic, while his per kilo packaging proposal will help consumers identify where their rice was produced, who produced it, and when it was milled.

As for the additional cost this will entail consumers, Pinol shrugged this off, saying it will only add about ₱1 in the overall retail cost of rice.

If ever, this proposal by Pinol will complement the move of Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-PCAARRD) to develop green packaging technology using eco-friendly materials for rice and other commodities.

The project is intended to design an environment-friendly process protocol in developing packaging materials for specialty rice and other food commodities.

On Wednesday, Pinol said the government is already at the tailend of its computations on how much suggested Retail Price (SRP) to impose on basic food commodities like rice, fish, and vegetables.

It forms part of the government's effort to address the rising prices of basic crops, which is being blamed to the Tax Reform Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law—the first tax reform to be implemented in the Philippines in many years.
The Department of Agriculture (DA) plans to launch a satellite imagery, aerial sensing program for the sugarcane industry in a bid to provide more accurate production projections.

"The SRA (Sugar Regulatory Administration) board approved my proposal and agreed to source funds for the start of a satellite imaging and aerial sensing program which would provide accurate data on projected production," Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said.

"With accurate production projection, market speculation and manipulation will be stopped thus protecting both the farmers and the consumers," he added.

Piñol said the program is similar to the rice industry’s PRISM or Philippine Rice Information System program, which uses an EAS Sentinel 1A Satellite.

EAS Sentinel 1A passes over rice production areas of the Philippines and other countries every 10 days. It provides data on standing crops used for production projection, making the rice industry accurately project the production even before the harvest.

PRISM is a coordinated effort among DA, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), Department of Science and Technology and other government agencies.

It came about following reports that the country’s sugar production would decline to 160,000 to 200,000 metric tons this year.

The SRA board approved the importation of 100,000 MT of refined sugar for the use of bottlers and processors, 50,000 MT of refined sugar for confectionery makers and 50,000 MT of brown sugar to address the rising prices of the commodity in the market.

This prompted me to decide that the sugar industry and other agricultural crop sectors should make use of modern technology for accurate crop projection, including detection of plant diseases," Piñol said.

Piñol said the program would also cover other crops such as banana, coconut, cacao, coffee, and mango.

"The technology is available and there is no reason why agriculture should not employ it," the agriculture chief added.
Gov’t eyes packaging of rice sold in markets

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is considering packaging rice sold in the market to ensure food safety and protection of consumers.

"In the context of ensuring food safety we are even looking at implementing in the future a system where rice should not be opened in open boxes in stalls. It is not hygienic," Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said in an interview.

Piñol said the packed rice would be sold on a per kilogram basis ranging from one to five 5 kgs.

"By packaging rice, we will also be able to trace the miller of the rice in case food safety issues arise," Piñol said.

The packaging of rice will also protect consumers from sellers who do not weigh their commodities accurately.

"We will do this by phase, but we will implement this even without the NFA (National Food Authority). Under the food safety law, the DA can already do this," Piñol said.

Piñol said the implementa-

The SRP for regular milled rice should be lower than P40 [P38 to P39], well-milled P40 to P42," Piñol said.

He added the SRP for fish, particularly tilapia, bangus and galunggong, will also be announced next week.

Under the anti profiteering law, violators face a fine of P1,000 to as much as P1 million for each violation committed.

— Catherine Talavera
DA distributes composting facilities

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan: The Department of Agriculture in Cagayan Valley (Region 2) distributed small-scale composting and greenhouse facilities to 10 eligible proponents in the region under the department’s organic agriculture program.

Lorenzo Carangian, DA-Region 2 executive director, said the facilities from the DA will help beneficiaries in the development of their activities in organic agriculture production.

According to Robert Olanares, DA regional technical director for operations and extension, the new facilities will be used for vermicomposting, seedling production and organic vegetable production.

The equipment includes shredder machine, compost rotary, seeder machine, vermitea brewer as well as materials for the establishment of greenhouse facility.

The beneficiaries of small-scale composting facilities were Baggao National Agricultural School (Main) of Baggao town, the LGU of Allacapan, Ballesteros National High School (all in Cagayan province); Alfredo Albano High School in Cabagan town, Alicia National High School in Alicia town; the LGU of Echague (all in Isabela); LGU of Aritao, the barangay LGU of Inabanan in Dupax del Norte town (Nueva Vizcaya); Quirino State University, Diffun Campus; in Diffun, Quirino and Jbayan National High School in Batanes.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO
Help the sugar industry rebuild its global stature

The decision of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) as announced on Monday to allow the importation of 160,000 to 200,000 metric tons of sugar in the coming weeks is wholly necessary to stabilize the country’s supply and prices under the present circumstances. From here onward, however, the sugar industry and policymakers must ensure it is the last time such a decision has to be made.

Sugar is a relatively bright spot in Philippine agriculture. The country is capable of producing sugar in abundance, so much so, in fact, that a considerable portion of each year’s production is earmarked for export. Even with the various handicaps the sector faces, there is realistically no reason short of a significant natural disaster that destroys a large portion of the crop that local market demand cannot regularly be met by robust supply at appropriately competitive prices.

The handicaps are not insignificant, though, and do require effort to overcome. Sugar is one of the most heavily regulated trade commodities under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, which makes what should be the reasonably straightforward process of moving sugar from producers to consumers complicated and difficult to manage.

Like other agricultural sectors, the sugar sector has also been handicapped by decades of insufficient and inefficient development support, and has less than adequate levels of mechanization and production infrastructure – farm-to-market roads, mills, and storage facilities – to realize its full potential.

Sugar production has also been affected to some extent by land reform, which breaks up sugar farms into unprofitable small parcels. More than most other commercial crops, sugar requires larger scale to be economical, so while land reform has been a benefit to some sugar farmers who have some other options, it has in general been a disadvantage to individual farmers and the sector as a whole.

The biggest problem faced by the sugar sector, however, is rampant speculation and price manipulation on the part of merchants in the middle of the supply chain. These opportunistic traders use the day-to-day difficulties faced by the industry—the unavoidable fact that sugar has essentially only one growing season, the artificial supply constraint of export earmarks, and lately, higher taxes under the TRAIN law—as excuses to impose almost criminally high prices on sugar, at the expense of both consumers and producers.

The difference between domestic and world sugar prices as a result of this unchecked market piracy is staggering. Currently, the wholesale price of Philippine sugar is about P2,070 per 50-kilogram bag, or about P41.40 per kilo. The indicative world price of sugar, by contrast, is currently about $0.1235 per pound, or $0.2717 per kilo – approximately P14.40 at current exchange rates, about one-third the price of Philippine sugar.

The decision to import sugar to stabilize the market is the correct one, because the situation has reached a point where there are no other prudent options. Government and policy-makers, as well as industry stakeholders, must share equal parts of the blame for letting the situation reach this point. Through a combination of turning a blind eye to corrupt practices, inadequate planning, short-term thinking, and perhaps even a bit of a bias against the sugar sector as a poor man’s industry, a sector that has all the fundamental attributes it needs to be a healthy economic ecosystem has been allowed to become almost completely dysfunctional.

As it seeks to maintain growth and improve the sustainability of the economy, the country must make the most of its natural advantages, and its sugar sector is one of these. It is high time that effective policy and improved industry performance be applied to maximize and restore the sector’s former global stature, rather than allow it to deteriorate further into a national embarrassment.
How much longer do we have to wait?

WHY NOT?

DR. EML Q. JAVIER

There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why... I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?

- Robert Kennedy

Vitamin A deficiency (VAD) continues to be a major public health concern worldwide. It is estimated that 250,000-300,000 vitamin A-deficient children become blind every year, with half of them dying within a year after getting blind.

Here at home, not only are we not making progress, the problem is getting worse. VAD incidence among children increased from 15.2% in 2008 to 20.4% in 2013. According to the UNICEF study on the Economic Burden of Malnutrition in the Philippines (2016), there are 1,840 childhood deaths per year due to VAD.

Clearly our current programs to eliminate VAD by promoting production and consumption of vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables, distribution of vitamin A capsule supplements and mandatory vitamin A fortification of vegetable cooking oil are not enough.

Another complementary way to increase vitamin A intake is by biofortification of foods vulnerable populations regularly consume. This is accomplished by enriching the beta carotene (pro-vitamin A) content of foods by conventional plant breeding and/or by use of modern transgenic methods (GMOs).

We eat a lot of rice but the rice en-dosperm is devoid of beta carotene. Unfortunately, there are no landraces nor related rice species which carry the genes for beta carotene in the grains. The recourse is to transfer the beta carotene genes from other species which do not normally interbreed with rice. After years of effort, scientists have succeeded in transferring such genes, first from the golden daffodil, and then later, from yellow corn.

Scientists at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) have incorporated these beta carotene genes from yellow corn into our popular varieties (baptized as Golden Rice). And now Golden Rice is ready for formal assessment for food and feed safety, for bio-efficacy, and finally for field testing in farmers’ fields. Applications are now pending since last year with the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In the meantime, Golden Rice has passed the assessments of three other national regulatory agencies for food and feed safety, namely by the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), Health Canada, and the US Food and Drug Administration (US-FDA).

Following are the exact quotes from the assessments of Golden Rice by these national regulatory bodies:

FSANZ: “No potential public health and safety concerns have been identified in the assessment of GR2E (technical code for Golden Rice). On the basis of the data provided in the present Application, and other available information, food derived from GR2E is considered to be safe for human consumption as food derived from conventional rice varieties.”

Health Canada: “Changes made in this rice variety did not pose a greater risk to human health than rice varieties currently available in the Canadian market... Further, GR2E would have no impact on allergies, and that there were no differences in the nutritional value of GR2E compared to other traditional rice varieties available for consumption except for increased levels of provitamin A.”

US-FDA: Concur with the assessment of IRRI and declared that: “Based on the safety and nutritional assessment IRRI has conducted, it is our understanding that IRRI concludes that human and animal food from GR2E rice is not materially different in composition, safety, or other relevant parameters from rice derived food currently on the market except for the intended beta carotene change in GR2E rice... We have no further questions concerning human or animal food derived from GR2E rice at this time.”

Needless to say, these competent national regulatory agencies of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, are as concerned with the safety of their citizens as all other national bodies. They conduct their assessments based on concepts and principles developed over more than two decades by international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organizations (FAO) of the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). What further assurances do we need?

We raised a furor over the alleged wrongful deaths from the mis-application of the Sanofi Dengvaxia vaccine against dengue (in the order of perhaps, less than a hundred). Should not we be even more concerned with the 1,840 needless deaths every year of poor Filipino children from vitamin A deficiency? How much longer do we have to wait until Golden Rice is made available as an economic, sustainable option to eliminate vitamin A deficiency?

UP singing ambassadors — proudly Filipino

Last Wednesday, I had the fortune
of attending one of the four farewell concerts "The Reason We Sing" of the UP Singing Ambassadors (UPSA) at the Ayala Museum together with former UP Regent Nelia Teodoro Gonzalez.

I was so moved by their musicality, harmony, choreography, and over-all stage presence so much so that when I was singled out in the crowd and asked to extemporaneously say a few words, all I could say was "You make us proud."

Indeed a collection of music-minded students from different colleges in UP Diliman, first organized by conductor Ed Lumbra Manguit as a freshman choir at the Kalayaan Residence Hall, UPSA has gone a long way and conquered the world, figuratively.

Since then, UPSA has toured Europe and parts of the world many times; competed in 21 international choral competitions, and in the process garnered five grand prizes and 23 first prizes, bringing honor and fame to the country and to the University of the Philippines.

Among their Grand prizes were 1) 4th International Choir Festival, Sopot, Poland (May 2008); 2) Festival Choral International de Neuchatel, Neuchatel, Switzerland (August 2008); 3) 3rd International Choir Competition of Sacred Music, Prague, Czech Republic (July 2005), and 4) 4th Concorso Polifonico "Guido d’Arezzo." Arezzo, Italy (2001).

Locally, UPSA has excelled well. UPSA received the "Ani ng Dangal" award by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) "for achieving the highest levels of artistic excellence and bringing honor to the country." in 2009 and 2012. UPSA was also adjudged Best Chorale Group at the annual ALIW AWARDS in 2002, 2010 and 2011, and had been elevated to the AlIW Hall of Fame.

UPSA’s amiable conductor, Dr. Ed Lumbra Manguit, honored with the distinction of being the first Asian conductor to win the Grand Prize of the prestigious Concorso Polifonico choral competition in Arezzo, Italy, in 2001. He likewise was awarded the Conductor’s Award (Dirigentenpreis) at the second JOHANNES BRAHMS International Choir Competition in Germany in 2001. And the Special Prize for Excellent Conducting Performance at the BELA BARTOK International Choral Competition in Debrecen, Hungary in 2012.

You have to hear and see them to believe, and be proud of them as Filipinos.

UPSA has two remaining concerts before they leave for their coming European tour to Berlin, Germany; Torrevieja, Spain; Florence, Italy and Arezzo, Italy. You can watch them at the UP Bahay ng Alumni in UP Diliman campus this Sunday, June 17 at 5 p.m. And on June 18 at the UP Film center at 6:30 p.m. Ticket prices range from P980 to P1,000. Students get 50% discount; seniors, the usual 20%.

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Dr. Emil Q. Javier is a Member of the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) and also Chair of the Coalition for Agriculture Modernization in the Philippines (CAMP).

For any feedback, email ejavier@yahoo.com.
JICA vows continued support for Phl disaster resiliency initiatives

By CZERIZA VALENCA

The Japanese government, through its official development assistance (ODA) arm, has vowed to continue supporting Philippine efforts to strengthen its disaster-resiliency program.

In a statement, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) said it has turned over the rehabilitated municipal hall of Marabut in Samar among the projects funded by the 4.6 billion yen—around P2.23 billion—comprehensive grant for areas damaged by Super Typhoon Yolanda in 2013. The rehabilitated municipal hall of Lawaan, Samar inaugurated early this year was also funded using the grant support.

The newly-rehabilitated municipal halls were designed to serve as evacuation centers in the event of disasters.

In Marabut, the municipal hall was the second building rehabilitated under the JICA grant aid following the rural health unit turned over in 2017.

JICA chief representative Yoshio Wada said the municipal halls were rebuilt based on Japanese standards that emphasize quality and safety “using the concept of Build Back Better.”

“The Philippines’ and Japan’s long standing friendship has proven that our partnership remains firm whether in good times and in times of disasters. Japan shall never forget that the Philippines were one of the countries who offered help when the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami struck our country in 2011,” said Wada.

Citing data from the 2016 World Risk Index of the United Nations, JICA said Philippines and Japan are among the top disaster-prone countries in the world. Their geographical position on the Pacific Ring of Fire makes both countries particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. Apart from Yolanda assistance, Japan has been sharing its expertise in disaster risk reduction with the Philippines since the 1960s through hard and soft infrastructures including capacity building of the country’s frontline disaster agencies.

The JICA assistance for Yolanda rehabilitation and recovery also includes rebuilding of schools, rural health unit and providing equipment for DPWH, Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (D.Z. Romualdez Airport), National Maritime Polytechnic (NMP), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), and local electric cooperatives.

A technical assistance has also been provided to various regional and local government units such as production of hazard maps and quick impact projects.
Phl, Cambodia agree on agri collaboration

The Philippines will collaborate with Cambodia for various developments in the agriculture sector.

The Department of Agriculture and Cambodia’s Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries recently held its first meeting for the Joint Technical Working Group in Agriculture and Agribusiness Cooperation.

“The joint bilateral meeting highlighted the progress of cooperation activities of both sides and has set the pace and priorities of future collaboration,” the DA said.

Representing the Philippines was Agriculture Undersecretary for Operations and Agri-fishery Mechanization Ariel Cayanan while Cambodia was represented by Undersecretary of State San Vanty.

Based on the agreement, the Philippines will help in the conduct of trainings on quality assurance system of fish and fishery products, pesticide residue analysis in agri-food products and agri-food product quality and safety management system.

The Philippines also expressed its interest to export meat and meat products to Cambodia.

Meanwhile, Cambodia is considering the possibility of renewing the memorandum of agreement on rice trade and the proposal on black pepper germplasm exchange.

Cambodia is urging the Philippines to invest in its agriculture sector and enjoy investment incentives.

Both countries agreed to come up with the results ahead of the second meeting, which is set to be hosted by the Philippines in the third quarter of 2019.

— Louise Maureen Simeon
Abaca farming turns Catanduanes into a ‘Happy Island’

By CHIT ALDAVE-TRIBIANA

The tourism tag “Happy Island” suits the province of Catanduanes to a T. It is blessed with unspoiled beaches, rolling terrain, and many idyllic spots that continue to attract foreign and domestic visitors.

Latest tourism figures from Catanduanes showed an increase of 11.31 percent last year, driven by visitors seeking new travel experiences.

Catanduanes also takes pride in being the country’s top producer of abaca.

The Bicol region contributes about 40 percent of the roughly $130.3 million annual abaca exports to major global markets. At least 90 percent of the regional share comes from the rich soils of the Happy Island.

Abaca has been traditionally turned into twine, cordage, textiles, and handicrafts. Its more modern applications now include manufacturing various items such as automotive parts, paper and currency notes, and many fashion and lifestyle products.

The quest for organic and eco-friendly raw materials has further contributed to the preference for abaca over synthetic materials.

The Department of Science and Technology, through its Industrial Technology Development Institute (ITDI), recently developed a technology that combines abaca and resin to form a composite that is lightweight, cheap, and corrosion-resistant.

ITDI used this technology to form the roof and sidecar of a motorized tricycle to demonstrate the unique qualities of the composite.

The global demand and prospects are obviously huge but the challenges faced by abaca industry players in meeting this demand are equally daunting. There has to be massive expansion and rehabilitation of abaca farms throughout the country.

Apart from this, the aging population of abaca farmers needs to be addressed by encouraging the younger generations and convincing them that farming can be profitable.

Economic losses have been reported due to low productivity and deteriorating fiber quality resulting from viralborne plant diseases. Thus, new methods are being sought to improve not only the yield but also the quality of the fiber.

During the recently held Abaca Festival, Catanduanes Gov. Joseph Cua assured the farmers of government support in propping up abaca planting while reminding them of the need to improve the quality of their produce.

Noting the keen interest in farming among millennials, he said initiatives are being taken to make farming easier, requiring less brawn activity, but with the potential for workers to make decent income.

During the gathering, 107 farmers from the 11 municipalities of the province were awarded cash incentives to help rebuild abaca farms that were devastated by Typhoon Nina in 2016.

Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA) executive director Kennedy Costales cited the latest initiatives to double or even triple the country’s abaca output.

Costales reiterated PhilFIDA’s vision to mechanize abaca production in Catanduanes and the rest of the country. In the next few years, abaca farmers in the province will be organized into cooperatives which will be run by professional management teams.

This is the core of the abaca tuxy buying special project (ATBSP), a new trading system meant to eliminate the traditional “all-in” buying scheme where unorganized farmers sell their produce in an individual and fragmented manner.

The farmers are at the losing end of this arrangement, as the grades and standards of abaca are applied only at the level of the grading and baling establishments (GBE), who get the premium for high-quality fibers. They are thus constrained from improving the yield and quality of their
products.

ATBSP aims to improve the marketing arrangement by clustering farmers into cooperatives with 50 to 100 members each. The project takes half the burden off the farmers by simplifying abaca processing. From the traditional 12 step program, it is now down to six. This will allow farmers to focus on the quality of the fiber.

Farmers will be trained on all aspects of production, including warehousing and fiber trading, grading and classification of fibers that meet market standards.

“This shifts their mindsets from being mere farmers to being entrepreneurs,” Costales said.

The cooperatives will handle the rest including stripping the fibers using spindle-stripping machines, drying, classifying, bundling, and selling the fibers in bulk directly to GBEs and local processors.

Compared to hand-stripped abaca fibers, which are coarse and priced at P55 per kilo, fiber produced mechanically are of higher quality and can be bought at P110 per kilo on average.

Earlier this year, Cavite Rep. Cesar Mauricio filed House Bill No. 7369, declaring the province as the abaca capital of the Philippines. The bill seeks to promote and support the abaca industry in the province, while safeguarding it from destruction caused by plant diseases and calamitous events.

The proposed measure also seeks the creation of an Abaca Research and Development Center.
HE INTRODUCED Poultry Wire Cages in the Philippines

(Memoirs of an Agri Journalist)

Not many people may realize it but wire cages for chicken layers are a very important contribution to the improvement of commercial poultry production in the Philippines. And the fellow responsible for that is a Caviteño by the name of Jose P. Abellar. He is a familiar face during the annual Agrilink trade show in October where he showcases his poultry equipment.

Poultry wire cages are just one of his contributions to the local poultry business. The cages are one cubic foot where two layers are confined. It is where they eat and lay their eggs. They are not let loose during their egg-laying lives which could be more than one year from the start of laying when they are just over eight weeks old.

Before Abellar introduced the idea in 1968, poultry raisers grew their birds in colonies or in cages made of wood or bamboo. The trouble with bamboo or wooden cages is that they are not easy to clean. Manure and feed particles would stick to them. And there are crevices where external parasites like ticks and lice could hide. Eggs of intestinal worms stick to the wooden cages and the birds would pick them up. In short, it is difficult to maintain proper sanitation.

The sanitation problems are minimized with the use of wire cages. This is because ticks and lice don't have any place to hide in wire cages. The eggs of intestinal worms don't stick on the wire so that chickens don't get the parasite. There is also better ventilation so the birds don't suffer from heat stroke. The inside of the house is brighter when wire cages are used so there is no need for lighting during daytime. One other important advantage is that the eggs are cleaner and there's less breakage.

Abellar said he got the idea of wire cages for poultry during his stint in Taiwan from 1965 to 1967. He was a technical man at the Cobb's poultry project in that country and also served as a manager of a feedmill there.

When he came back to the Philippines, he joined a marketing firm that sold veterinary products but that was only for one year. He decided to be on his own and pursued the idea of introducing wire cages for layers.

Like any other technology that was being introduced for the first time, there was always some resistance from the users. The main objection then was the higher cost. But of course, Abellar was patient enough to explain the advantages of wire cages. Aside from the sanitation aspect, wire cages are long lasting and economical in the long run. They can be used continuously for 10 years or more without need for repairs.

It did not take very long for the big poultry raisers to recognize the advantages of using wire cages for layers. Many of the country's big poultry raisers became his loyal customers.

Abellar is neither an agriculture graduate nor a veterinarian. But he may know more about the ins and outs of the poultry industry than some agriculturists and veterinarians. He actually started out to become a medical doctor. He was already a third year medical student at the FEU when he had to quit schooling because his father had died and had no means to continue his studies.

There were still only few veterinary graduates in the 1960s, and because of his medical background, he was hired by Mabuhay Feeds where he eventually rose to become the company's veterinary products manager.

After two years with Mabuhay Feeds, he was recommended to the job in Taiwan where he eventually picked up the idea of wire cages for layers. He had come up with models for large poultry farms as well as small backyard raisers.
DOMINGO said farmers practicing organic farming in the province are now gaining success and promotion with the exposure of their products and model farms through the monthly conduct of Farmers Market Day in various municipalities supported by the local government units and other trade fairs organized by the Department of Trade and Industry and the provincial government.

In May 2012, the Japanese government donated P21.3 million to boost the production of organic products in the province by more than 100 farmers in barangays Pingkilan and Tidang in Kayapa town, barangays Beceneg and Sinapaoan in Sta. Fe town, Macalong and Antutot in Kasibu town and barangays Canabay and Carolotan in Dupax del Sur town.

The fund will also be used to establishing new marketing channels other than middlemen; production of high-profit vegetables and fruits using sustainable farming technologies; capacity building and knowledge development of producers in marketing of organic and reduced-chemical products; improvement of local governments and partners in consolidation of the production environment; and dissemination of techniques and knowledge to other producers in the area.

The fund is part of Japan’s financial assistance through Japanese NGOs in the Philippines amounting to P204 million as of April 2012.

The fund was released under the Livelihood Improvement Project for upland farmers by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through grant assistance for Japanese NGO projects.
ANI infuses P100 M to affiliate agri bank

By IRIS GONZALES

AgriNurture Inc. (ANI) is expanding its micro-finance initiatives to enhance credit access to farmers by strengthening its affiliate Agricultural Bank of the Philippines (ABP).

Last week, the company's board of directors agreed to infuse P100 million into ABP to boost the bank's capital to P200 million, subject to final approval by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

ABP's capital hike would fund the expansion of the bank's P2P platform and e-wallet business, ANI said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE).

The capital infusion would allow ANI to enhance supply chain micro-finance access of Filipino farmers in remote areas using technology, said ANI president and CEO Antonio Tiu.

ABP's P2P platform will allow farmers to borrow money directly using their mobile phones.

Proceeds of the loan can then be stored in the farmers' e-wallet, which can be exclusively used for purchases in ANI's accredited merchants nationwide.

To complete the company's "farm-to-plate agri-eco system for immediate fintech integration," ANI also approved the incorporation of a technology subsidiary.

Agri Technology Holdings Inc. (ATHI), a 100 percent owned subsidiary, will have an initial capital of P100 million.

The technology subsidiary will serve as ANI's post harvest and farm technology arm that would also collaborate with hybrid seed producer BeidaHuang and agri-biotech company Ocean Biotech, both ANI subsidiaries.

ANI's board also approved a P320-million subscription of Japanese investor Takuhiro Kasumi in the agri firm, subject to foreign equity limits set by law.

ANI's subscription to increase ABP's capital as well as the incorporation of the technology arm ATHI are both awaiting approval of the SEC.

ANI is a company engaged in various agro-commercial businesses, specifically focusing on the export of fresh produce as its main revenue stream.
TARGET ng Department of Science and Technology (DOST) na mapataas ang produksiyon ng mangga, saging at iba pang prutas.

Ayon kay DOST Secretary Fortunato Taneico Dela Peña, masust nilang pinag-aaralan at pinopo- dohan ang mga bagay na posibleng makatulong sa pagpaparami ng produksiyon ng mga panganahing kalakal ng bansa.

Paliwanag ni Dela Peña, hindi nila maaaring basta na lamang hayaan na bumagsak ang produksiyon ng mangga at saging dahil magresulta ito ng pagtaas ng presyo na maaapekto sa mga consumer. Kaugnay nito, nagpasalamat ang DOST sa lahat ng mga sumusupor-

ta sa kanilang ahensya para maisakatuparan ang mga proyekto.

DWIZ 882
US farmers stressed, angry at trade wars

NEW YORK (AFP) – US farmers find themselves in the crosshairs of a trade war with China and others launched by President Donald Trump, who was elected with the support of many in rural America.

On Friday, Trump announced long-threatened trade tariffs on tens of billions of dollars worth of Chinese goods, sparking an immediate retaliation from Beijing on an equivalent of US products including agricultural goods, notably soy.

"For American farmers, this isn't theoretical anymore, it's downright scary," the Farmers for Free Trade lobbying group said of the prospects for escalating tariffs.

"It's no longer a negotiating tactic, it's a tax on their livelihoods."

China is the largest buyer of soybeans, buying $12 billion in 2017, about 30 percent of the US harvest.

"We were already in a depressed market. These trade uncertainties add a lot of stress to this situation," said Jamie Beyer, a farmer in Wheaton, Minnesota who grows soybean, corn, sugar beets, wheat and alfalfa. "We feel these tariffs are very damaging to our agricultural economy."

Farmers are the most at risk in this trade battle, as their incomes already were falling, declining by around 50 percent since 2013, and this year expected to reach the lowest level since 2006.

Easy target

The sector already was shaken up by the difficult negotiations on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico, two major importers of agricultural products.

On her family farm in Oklahoma, Hope Pjesky raises cattle and grows winter wheat, and says she is "very nervous" about recent developments.

"Unfortunately, agriculture seems to be the industry that they hit back on when there is retaliation. I just wish there were a better way to go about addressing that issue," she said.

That is according to plan, since US trading partners have singled out American products from states strongly supportive of Trump, in hopes of increasing the pressure on him to reconsider.

But Pjesky noted that "there are a lot of people who voted for him that still have faith that it is just going to end up well."

It is difficult to quantify the precise cost of Chinese sanctions, but Missouri corn and soybean farmer Blake Hurst said he already is seeing an impact on prices.

The weather remains the main factor influencing the price of corn, wheat, soybeans and cotton, but the threat of renewed tensions between Beijing and Washington hit the market hard this week and the soybean price fell by more than six percent.

"It will affect our profitability" and cut the number of acres cultivated, he said.

Trump support

Roger Johnson, who leads the country's second largest agricultural union, the National Farmers Union, said the group supports the White House goal of reducing the US trade deficit.

"But our organization grows increasingly concerned that this administration does not have a plan to ensure family farmers and ranchers aren't thrown under the bus for the sake of these goals," he said.

Even so, few blame Trump directly.

Hurst said many in Missouri are still willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. But, he cautioned, "if we don't see any success, then patience will wear thin."
US-China trade war brewing

WASHINGTON (AFP/AP) – US President Donald Trump on Friday ignited his trade war with China, slapping tariffs on tens of billions in Chinese imports and sparking immediate retaliation from Beijing.

The moves brought the world’s two largest economies to the verge of an all-out confrontation long feared by markets and industry.

And the China trade offensive is only one side of Trump’s multi-front battle with all major US economic partners.

The announcement caps months of sometimes fraught shuttle diplomacy in which Chinese offers to purchase more American goods failed to assuage Trump’s grievances over the soaring trade imbalance and Beijing’s aggressive industrial development policies.

And as Trump warned of ‘additional tariffs’ should Beijing hit back with tit-for-tat duties on American goods, China fired back Saturday by raising import duties on a $34 billion list of American goods, including soybeans, electric cars, and whiskey.

The government said it was responding in “equal scale” to Trump’s tariff hike on Chinese goods in a conflict over Beijing’s trade surplus and technology policy that companies worry could quickly escalate and chill global economic growth.

China “doesn’t want a trade war,” but has to “fight back strongly,” said a Commerce Ministry statement.

It said Beijing also was scrapping agreements to narrow its multibillion-dollar trade surplus with the United States by purchasing more American farm goods, natural gas and other products.

The United States and China have the world’s biggest trading relationship but official ties are increasingly strained over complaints Beijing’s industry development tactics violate its free-trade pledges and hurt American companies. Europe, Japan and other trading partners raise similar complaints, but Trump has been unusually direct about challenging Beijing and threatening to disrupt such a large volume of exports.

545 US products in tariff list

“In this trade war, it’s the US who is playing the role of provocateur, while China plays defense,” said the Global Times, a newspaper published by the ruling Communist Party. “China is a powerful guardian and has enough ammunition to defend existing trade rules and fairness.”

Beijing will impose an additional 25 percent tariff starting July 6 on 545 products from the United States, including soybeans, electric cars, orange juice, whiskey, lobsters, salmon and cigars, according to the Ministry of Finance.

Most are food and other farm goods, hitting Trump’s rural supporters hardest.

Beijing appeared to be trying to minimize the impact on its own economy by picking US products that can be replaced by imports from other suppliers such as Brazil or Australia.

Trump justified the imposition of tariffs.

“The United States can no longer tolerate losing our technology and intellectual property through unfair economic practices,” Trump said.

“These tariffs are essential to preventing further unfair transfers of American technology and intellectual property to China, which will protect American jobs.”

But at least initially, Trump’s new China tariffs will not cover the full $50 billion that Trump announced Friday.

818 Chinese products affected

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said the punitive duties will apply on 818 Chinese products valued at $34 billion starting July 6, with a second list of $16 billion to be considered under a new review process — bringing the total possible affected import volume to $50 billion.

But it is likely companies will seek more exemptions so the final total could fall short of that amount.

Beijing’s countermeasures closely mirrored Washington’s, with 545 American exports, also valued at $34 billion, facing punitive duties as of July 6, including agricultural products and vehicles, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

The State Council said another 114 items will be subject to tariffs at a later date, according to Xinhua.

US farmers are especially concerned about the impact of a trade war, since they are sure to feel the hit.

Stinging reprisals as vote looms

China’s Ministry of Commerce said the decision to impose tariffs meant “all previously agreed trade negotiation results are no longer valid.”

“It is deeply regrettable that in disregard of the consensus between the two sides, the US has demonstrated flip-flops and ignited a trade war,” the ministry said.

It also called on other countries to “take collective action” against this “outdated and backwards behavior.”

But the White House maintains that any Chinese countermeasures would be unjust and could be met with further US sanctions.

“We have taken essentially a defensive action," a senior US official told reporters, adding that “further threats that are going to hurt other industries... would be a mistake.”

The official, who asked not to be identified, declined to say whether Trump would make good on a March threat to hit another $100 billion in Chinese goods with tariffs in response to Beijing’s retaliation.

China in April already put punitive duties on 128 US goods, including pork, wine, and certain pipes in response to global US tariffs on steel and aluminum imposed by Trump the month before.

The US president outraged Canadian, Mexican and European leaders last month by imposing the steel and aluminum tariffs to protect American producers from allegedly unfair competition.

Brussels, Ottawa, Beijing and Mexico City already have shown they intend to inflict damage on export industries in politically-sensitive voting districts — something which could prove damaging to Republicans already facing a loss of power in November’s midterm elections.

A conversation on Friday with French President Emmanuel Macron, Trump “called on the European Union to enter into negotiations to reduce trade barriers,” the White House said in a statement.

On Capitol Hill, influential Texas Republican lawmaker Kevin Brady, chairman of a House tax legislation committee, said he was “alarmed” by the tariffs which he said exposed US industries to “devastating retaliation.”
"I am concerned that these new tariffs will hurt American manufacturers, farmers, workers and consumers," he said.

And the powerful US Chamber of Commerce warned that hundreds of thousands of Americans could lose their jobs if the trade war escalated and included the auto import tariffs that Trump has threatened.

"If these actions continue, our businesses will lose customers, workers will lose jobs, and American consumers will lose family income through higher taxes and higher prices," Chamber President Thomas Donahue said.

He also noted that the metals tariffs have pushed steel prices 40 percent higher since January.
US farmers angry at trade wars

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