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Tagbilaran fish market launched

By **DAVE ALBARADO**

TAGBILARAN CITY – A fish market will be launched by the Department of Agriculture (DA) here on Thursday in an effort to bring down the price of fish in Bohol.

During the opening of the Sandugo Agri-Fair last July, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol vowed to "flood Bohol" with fish to bring down its price.

Piñol is expected to be at the launch of the fish market, which is patterned after the Agriculture department's TienDA at the Agriculture Promotions Center compound right next to the City Hall.

Agriculture Regional Director Salvador Diputado was quoted as saying that some 9,000 kilos of fish from Zamboanga will be sold at the market. The supply is expected to arrive by dawn Thursday in time for the launch.

Piñol is expected to deliver the keynote speech at the event.

The fish market will also sell other agricultural products, a statement from the local office of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources said.

Other than the launch, other activities that will be held today are financial literacy seminars for rural farmers.

There will be a seminar on gardening and vegetable production, introduction to food safety and other agriculture-related topics.

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Pilipinas Angat Lahat Alliance supports President Duterte

After months of anticipation and preparation, we officially launched the Pilipinas Angat Lahat Alliance in Malacañang Palace. President Duterte, Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez, government officials, members of our 30 alliance partners, state ambassadors, mentors and entrepreneurs were all in attendance for the momentous event.

In my speech, I shared the programs which we in the private sector are doing to support the mission of pursuing inclusive growth through MSME development.

NEGOSYO PILIPINAS ANGAT LAHAT!

JOEY CONCEPCION

Let me share it with you.

The reason why we gathered for the biggest public-private alliance is because we really want our President to fulfill his mission in helping many of the Filipino people out there who are suffering from poverty. Our micro and small entrepreneurs — 99.6 percent of them, are the ones that are severely challenged.

We plan to help by focusing on mentorship, money, and market. The power of mentorship is extremely huge. Many of the attendees are actual beneficiaries of this immense power — from schools, parents, colleagues. They continue to mentor each other to become successful entrepreneurs and businessmen. Yet, many of those at the bottom of the pyramid lack that skill. And this is where we intend to focus.

I'd like to recount how our President helped painter Macky Bongabong two years ago. With that help, he has gained a lot of momentum. When our President found him, he helped him by asking him to do the portrait of our President and it was hanged on the halls of Malacañang. Macky, since then, has done really well. In fact, he has now a joint project with Joey Antonio, who is an excellent photographer. They are going to do a collaboration of his painting and his photography. That is the power of mentorship.

So far, together with the Department of Trade and Industry, we have trained and mentored and passed 5,125 mentees. Secretary Mon Lopez and his entire team have been one of the greatest partners we've had in really scaling down mentorship to the grassroots level. Secretary Manny Piñol, as well, with his programs in the Department of Agriculture. We have worked with 425 cooperatives with their heads and their treasurer. This is led by Ginggay Hontiveros-Malvar, who has worked very hard not only in this project as well as in many of our projects in Mindanao, especially Marawi. And the pursuit of helping Marawi and Sulu still continues. With the help of everyone in the private sector last year and the year before — supporting, bringing, and helping them in their own negosyos.

The other M is money. I know our President wants to get rid of the 5-6 lending scheme. The way to do it is to digitalize our micro and small entrepreneurs. Manny Pangilinan and Fernando Zobel, the owners of Smart and Globe, play a unique opportunity of trying to create a platform that will reach our microentrepreneurs by enabling them to use a smartphone to borrow money. With their platforms, Lendr and Mynt, and with the help of our fast-moving consumer goods companies Unilever, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, P&G, etc. We have laid the framework and the start whereby many of these FMCG companies know the best clients, the best sari-sari stores, they will now share these data with these platforms of both Globe and Smart. Thereby, enabling them to access different lenders at much lower interest rates.

We will now share the data with these platforms both Globe and Smart, thereby enabling them to access different lenders who offer much lower interest rates. They will be able to compete with the 5-6 lending because the collection can be done through the phone weekly, monthly. And some of them are going to give free insurance, they will have a financing scheme for their phones, and even free data. This, to me, is the biggest game-changer. Digitalizing our micro and small entrepreneurs, eventually cascading that to the provinces, agriculture workers and all of that. We have invited a number of digital entrepreneurs, Lazada, Shopee, Angkas, and Gawin.

The advent of digitalization is actually going to democratize the entire sector. It's going to give them a chance to reach the market place and the money place without us, brick-and-mortar businesses controlling them. Eventually, all banks, rural banks and MFIs will need to jump into this platform for them to be able reach the millions of Filipinos who are at the bottom of the pyramid and the only way is to reach it through the telephone.

Maybe the challenge is connectivity but I guess between the two of them, the intense competition, the amount of investment that they are going to pour in will be immense. I had shared my thoughts with Manny Pangilinan that, "Why don't you guys share powers? Try to go to areas wherein maybe it's not profitable but jointly, it might be profitable."

The challenge of digitalization is reach and connectivity. The platforms are there, the young entrepreneurs are ready to go. Because in the end, if you have mentorship but without money, it's useless.

You may have the mentorship, you may have the money, but you don't have the access to market. The Build Build Build program is the key to it, but we need greater participation from the private sector. I would like to thank our President for giving the privilege to our private sector to be partners with government in airports: San Miguel with Bulacan, now the group of seven having the OPS for the NAIA rehabilitation. I believe that with the modernization of all our airports, tourism will be the biggest game-changer.

President Duterte's very bold move of closing down Boracay shocked everyone but in the end I think it was the right decision. It was a painful decision, but it stressed the point that if we want this country to have and maintain its treasures — which are the beautiful islands, we must take care of them. And that has become a lesson for many out there — in local government and entrepreneurs as well, that all the beaches, all the beautiful resorts that have potential in the Philippines have to be taken care of. I believe that he sent that message. He has appointed a secretary who is very good in marketing and I believe these combination, and together with the support of private sector to hasten and join government in building these airports, will be the biggest game-changer.

Likewise, the Build Build Build in roads, ports, and all of that are equally important because access from farm-to-market is key in developing our agriculture sector. Bulk of the 99.6 percent of our microentrepreneurs belong to the agriculture sector. It is the most challenging sector actually out there, and we can help

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them through mentorship, we can provide them the money, but we must also provide them the access to market. These roads are very important for them to reach their products -- to get their products to the shipping lanes, to the market stalls on time. So, I believe for us to really make this country inclusive, this is the way forward.

I know our President will be making a very important decision in the structure of government and our Madame Speaker will also be making a very important decision on the right structure that this country should look forward to. But whatever structure it is, I think it is the structure that should encourage investors to continue to invest in this country. It should encourage greater competition. It should encourage everybody to be able to reach the poorest entrepreneur out there.

As a small corporation, it is an asset for one to make centralized decisions. As one grows and becomes like an Ayala, then you can decentralize the decision and control of resources. It is where we put the Philippines to be, whether we are a small corporation or a large corporation.

In the end, we pray that our nation makes that right decision that will continue the massive movement of change that is now helping our country move forward. Our President has our full support with whatever decision he makes. He has won because he has the mandate of the poor people out there that they wanted to see a better future for themselves. Together with the alliance, with the 30 chambers and organizations, we are committed to this vision because in the end, the Philippines has to gradually move away from poverty. In his last four years, we will definitely support President Duterte in trying to attain that vision and dream.

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Galunggong imports to arrive ahead of closed fishing season

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has allowed the entry of up to 17,000 metric tons (MT) of round scad, commonly known as *galunggong*, which will reach markets ahead of the closed fishing season when supply of the fish is expected to dwindle.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol signed the Certificate of Necessity enabling the import of round scad on Wednesday. The timing of the permit will allow imports to arrive by Sept. 1.

On Friday, the DA and the fisheries industry agreed to set a tariff rate of 5% for such imports.

"In order to ensure national food security taking into consideration public welfare and safety... the importation of round scad up to a maximum of 17,000 MT is hereby certified as necessary to be imported by accredited fish importers," according to the certification.

"The imported round scad under this certificate of necessity shall be unloaded only in Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources-accredited cold storage facilities and shall be sold wholesale in Navotas Fishport."

The DA also amended an old Fisheries Administrative Order by allowing fishermen's groups and sellers, alongside food processors, to import round scad.

Round scad, a staple protein for low-income families and therefore politically sensitive, is so far the only fish allowed for import to help shore up domestic supply.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) round scad output dropped 9.56% year-on-year in the first six months in 2018. More broadly, fisheries output fell 2.14% during the same period amid high fuel costs and unfavorable weather conditions.

Prices of round scad correspondingly rose 11.66% in the first six months.

The closed fishing season starts in about two months.

Mr. Piñol told reporters on Tuesday that the DA will be imposing a different suggested retail price (SRP) on imported round scad, which is frozen, as against domestically-caught, fresh, round scad.

Round scad was one of the eight non-processed agricultural commodities placed under an SRP scheme by the DA in June.

— **Anna Gabriela A. Mogato**

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PHL POULTRY RAISERS ON GROUND ZERO STILL COPING

Fowl farmers' fears persist 1 year after bird flu flare-up

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas

FIFTY-FIVE weeks ago, poultry farm owner Librada Sese celebrated life; today she can only recall death as thousands of chickens, some she raised, were killed on orders of government.

She had a premonition on July 24, 2017, but a friend's birthday peck on her cheeks brought her back to the bustle of activity inside her one-story house in San Carlos, San Luis, Pampanga. The distant cackles and cock-a-doodle-do's from layers inside buildings adjacent to her house were brushed aside by laughter and chatter of guests.

It was festive as Sese, "Nanay Librada" to many, was celebrating 78 years of her life on this planet. Another reason to be happy that day: 2017 was turning out to be a good year for her layer farm.

For the first two quarters, demand for table eggs was growing, which pushed farm-gate prices to rise to unprecedented level.

It was a year Sese, a layer raiser for more than four decades, envisioned to be "the year."

"I was going to pay my debts and save more money for myself," she told the BusinessMirror.

The good fortune brought to Sese's life by the first six months of 2017 allowed her to go with her usual birthday routine: set a feast and invite all the people from the barrio.

Gifts arrived. Greetings were received. But an unusual visitor also reached her: rumors of a plague creeping into their small town, about 60 kilometers from the nation's capital.

"Some of my visitors told me [that day that] the flocks of our neighbors have died," she recalled. She was speechless.

Year of the Rooster

SESE steeled herself as her farmhand brought her the news she dreaded to hear.

She was roused from sleep near dawn the day after turning 78 when her caretaker told her, "Ima, *may namatay na po roon sa* Building 1," Sese, who has a dozen poultry houses, said. "200 *na po*." [Mother, about 200 birds have died in Building 1.]

She ordered the farm worker to give medicines to her layers, hoping it was just a normal illness that's affected the farm.

By noon the same day, another 500 birds were dead.

When she asked how many chickens could die, her farm worker became silent. She got an answer 17 days after she turned 78.

Sese's poultry farm of 60,000 head of layers was declared on August 11, 2017, as the ground zero of the country's first confirmed avian influenza (AI) case.

The year that Nanay Librada thought would be one of the best years of her business turned out to be the worst.

She lost more than P30 million with the eradication of her flock, with majority being culled

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by government officials to contain the virus.

Coincidentally, 2017 was the Year of the Fire Rooster—the same year that bird flu hit Central Luzon.

Harbinger of death

THE ringing of a phone jolted the attention of Roy M. Abaya from the Excel file he had been tweaking since arriving at his office at 8 a.m. of August 10, 2017.

Abaya, Regional Field Office 3 chief for the Department of Agriculture (DA), was in his office in San Fernando, Pampanga, preparing his region's budget for 2018 when he received an unusual call. It was from his boss.

"The Secretary told me that we have to announce this and then prepare immediately," Abaya, who was four months into his work as regional director, told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

About 68 kilometers away, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol replaced the receiver on his phone at his office in Quezon City after talking to Abaya.

"Fear was overwhelming," he told the BUSINESSMIRROR of his experience during the bird-flu outbreak last year.

"It was just an overstated poultry disease," the DA chief pointed out. "Admittedly, it actually caused deaths in other countries but the feared fatal effect of the disease was not present in the Philippine experience."

Piñol did doubt it at first, as what was expected from a former journalist. But when the laboratory results came out, Piñol knew it was a monster that the government must take down.

"I was shocked," he said. "The first thing I did was to think like a farmer. I knew right there and then we have to cull the birds so as to contain the virus."

"NANAY" Librada Sese bares to the BUSINESSMIRROR on August 10, 2018, her experience as a layer raiser during the outbreak of bird flu at San Carlos, San Luis, Pampanga, last year. NONIE REYES

Premonition, omen

A WEEK prior to Piñol's call, Abaya already knew that some poultry farms in Barangay San Carlos have already tested positive from AI.

"It was hard for me to believe it because we have been bird flu-free for so long. There have been false alarms before, yes," Abaya told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

"But when we sent the samples to the BAI [Bureau of Animal Industry] laboratory and [they] confirmed it was AI—I was shocked. It was the most valuable thing we have been holding on for so long for our poultry products: that we are bird flu-free," he added.

Two things immediately crossed Abaya's mind that time: "What would be the effect of this on our poultry supply and how are we going to contain this?"

"We really did not know what to do at first. Even me; I had to study the [Avian Influenza Protection Program] AIPP," he said.

"So the fear over how to respond immediately is really there. And it was aggravated [by the fact] that a lot of our stakeholders are already complaining," added Abaya, who has been in the DA for more than three decades.

Grim reaper

SINCE assuming the helm as DA regional director for Central Luzon in March, Abaya said he never received any reports of unusual mortality among poultry flocks—not until end-July of 2017.

"The poultry owners had the initiative to treat their problem. They did not want to expose [to outsiders] that their flock have health problems because they wanted to protect their businesses," Abaya told the BUSINESSMIRROR. "But when they [were unable] to handle the deaths and they were already alarmed about the matter, that was the [only] time they informed government officials."

An engineer by profession, Abaya admitted that time he also didn't know the possible extent of damage a bird-flu virus could bring.

"When our veterinarians told me that within a day it can kill thousands of birds, then I was really afraid," he said. "And when we saw on the ground what's happening it was really extreme. They [would] report to us today, and then tomorrow all their flocks would be wiped out."

Fowl play

EVEN after the DA declared Baran-

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gay San Carlos ground zero for bird flu, poultry raisers hesitated to cooperate with the government. They also had difficulty accepting the fact their flock would be culled no matter what.

"They only opened up when the Secretary announced there will be compensation for the chickens culled," Abaya said. "When the Secretary also announced that there will be no movement of products within the 7-kilometer radius, then the poultry raisers reached out to us to cull their flock to not incur more losses."

In its official report to the Office International des Epizooties (OIE or World Organization for Animal Health), the DA culled a total of 208,471 birds in the San Luis outbreak. However, DA-RFO 3 estimates show that total birds culled in the area reached 500,000 head, including those surrendered outside the 1-kilometer quarantine area.

Official tally submitted by the DA to the OIE showed that it culled nearly 200,000 birds in the Nueva Ecija AI-affected poultry farms. DA-RFO 3 estimates that total birds reached about 400,000 head, bringing the total number of poultry animals culled in the country to 900,000 head at least.

During the DA's budget hearing in Congress, Piñol disclosed that they gave more than P60 million worth of indemnification to poultry farmers affected by AI in Central Luzon.

Art of culling

THE DA faced a lot of challenges given that this was the first confirmed bird-flu outbreak of the country. One major challenge was choosing the most efficient procedure of culling.

"We were not accustomed [to] using personal protective equipment; it was very huge and very hot inside. We thought that it was a piece of cake," Abaya said. "But just two hours into the gear you are already exhausted."

At first, the culling teams of the government were manually dislocating the spinal cord of the birds. However, this was tedious and exhaustive.

The teams shifted to carbon dioxide suffocation to fast-track the culling procedures. The animals were placed in carbon dioxide-filled black bags to ensure loss of consciousness.

Abaya said they imposed two shifts for the culling of birds: 5 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. This meant it took four hours a day to kill the birds.

"Work got easier when the military helped us and when poultry raisers were already volunteering for the culling of their flock in exchange of the indemnification," he said.

Another problem faced by the government's veterinarian was basic: where to bury the culled chickens.

"It was rainy season that time. The water table was so low. When you bury the culled chickens, their corpses would float a few seconds after," Abaya explained.

"And that is a not allowed under our manual because water contamination could be a channel to spread the virus further."

Due to these above-mentioned challenges, it took the DA-BAI two weeks to totally depopulate the San Luis farms.

Poultry solution

THE National Research Council of the Philippines (NRCP) accused the DA of lacking an effective communication plan and risk communication specialists, resulting in miscommunication of message during the bird-flu outbreak.

In its draft policy brief, the NRCP recommended the DA should communicate better during times of disaster or disease outbreaks.

The NRCP is an attached agency of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) mandated by law "to provide advice on problems and issues of national interest."

The NRCP proposed that the DA should create an "effective communication plan specific for outbreak communications" to be able to send its message clearly to the public.

"Include in the communication plan the capacity building and training of focal persons in the [local government units] to properly communicate the risks at the local level to address the problem of non- and under-reporting of AI incidences," the NRCP said in the draft policy brief, a copy of which was obtained by the BUSINESSMIRROR.

The NRCP also recommended that the DA should "have a pool of risk communication specialists who shall be responsible for disseminating information on outbreaks for public consumption to minimize mishandling of information and media sensationalism."

The NRCP also recommended that the DA-BAI should include "traded game cocks and smuggled chicken from other countries" in its surveillance coverage.

Nuggets of knowledge

FOR Elias Jose Inciong, president of United Broiler Raisers Association (Ubra), the "low-keyness" of the government during the disease outbreak speaks louder than verbal pronouncements.

For him, the government should just treat bird flu as a normal avian disease and eradicate it at the soonest possible time with the least public noise.

"For more effective handling of the situation, we recommend that the government keep it quiet unless there is really a necessity to announce it such as that it could harm human beings. Right now, based on our experience, the best thing to do is to keep it low," Inciong told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

"In effect you still have a way to announce it through the OIE. But it doesn't have to be a major production. There's no need for press conferences or press releases," Inciong added.

Piñol acknowledged the agency was beset with communication problems last year, which resulted in the unintended detrimental impact on broiler raisers.

To address this, Piñol said he would be the sole authority allowed to speak in behalf of the government on bird flu-related matters.

"There will be no more announcements to be made on issues involving animal health problems [from other officials] except the Secretary," he said.

"We have learned our lesson in the last bird-flu outbreak wherein everybody talked about it—the mayors, the health department, other government officials, which scared people and affected the market," he added.

Novel strain

THE highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) subtype H5N6 discovered in San Carlos is a lethal one, according to the OIE.

In fact, it is described as a novel strain as it could wipe out poultry flocks in a blink of an eye.

Worse, it has the tendency to be transmitted to human beings, such as the strain that affected 19 people in the People's Republic of China.

OIE Deputy Director General Matthew Stone told the BUSINESSMIRROR it is "crucial" for countries to have effective biosecurity measures to ensure that AI will not be reactivated.

Biosecurity measures, according to Stone, do not only cover the poultry-producing farms, but the whole value chain, including the way poultry products reach the market.

"For example, the entry and exit procedures for trucks and farm workers in poultry farms are vital to ensure no avian disease virus is brought inside and outside the premises."

Furthermore, Stone noted that the population of poultry houses is an important aspect of biosecurity as overpopulation could lead to faster contamination.

"All these aspects are very, very, important for the poultry industry to think about," Stone said in a phone interview from Paris.

All at risk

UNLIKE commercial-scale farms, small-scale farms are at risk from avian diseases due to lack of capital to invest in biosecurity measures

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according to Stone.

"That's a big challenge for countries with diversified farming types in poultry. You have large multinational companies to small family-owned farms," he said.

"And more often, these small ones have limited means and costs which makes it a bit challenging for them to have a strong level of biosecurity," he added. "As a result, often, they are exposed to ongoing circulation of AI; therefore, zoonotic threats could occur."

Stone pointed out that a strong cooperation between the government and the poultry industry is a must to ensure prevention of avian diseases, including AI.

"The idea of public-private partnership is extremely important," he said. "The government needs an effective partner in the industry. It is also very important that authorities have a very good relationship with the industry."

Stone said no country is immune to the risk of AI and that all countries must put in place a "good" level of biosecurity measures.

A key biosecurity measure, according to Stone, is an early warning system that immediately detects a possible threat of avian disease in a specific area.

Such system would allow government to impose additional biosecurity measures particularly during high-risk periods, according to him.

"For example, in many European countries right now, they direct that all poultry must be held indoors during high-risk period of AI," he said. "It is quite a challenging measure for industries to adopt. But it is an effective one."

Probable cause

THE Philippine government has yet to announce the probable cause of the bird-flu outbreak in San Carlos.

The DA has tapped the expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to trace back the bird-flu outbreak.

The BUSINESSMIRROR sought FAO Philippines's comments but these had not been received as of the deadline for the story.

Nevertheless, officials have easily blamed migratory birds as the possible culprit for the entry of AI in the country. Various veterinarians and industry stakeholders oppose such argument. They said migratory birds have been in the country for decades now, but this is the first time there was a confirmed case of AI.

Officials also considered the possibility the AI virus entered the country through smuggled Peking ducks.

Chump change

MOVING forward, Piñol disclosed to BUSINESSMIRROR more of the changes that will be undertaken in the government's bible on AI: the AIPP Manual of Procedures.

First, the DA-BAI will now abolish the 1-kilometer quarantine area and 7-kilometer control area.

The stamping out or depopulation of flocks would now be farm-specific to avoid losses for unaffected poultry farms. At the same time, the government will intensify its surveillance for possible spread of the virus to nearby farms or areas.

The government will not hamper the movement of poultry and poultry products outside the AI-affected farms, according to Piñol.

He said the DA will also divide the country into three quarantine regions: Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao. This is unlike the 25 National Avian Influenza-Free poultry production zones indicated under the 2016 AIPP.

"With this, the OIE will not red-flag the whole country as affected by bird flu but only a certain region, for example, Luzon," Piñol told the BUSINESSMIRROR. "It will not unduly affect other stakeholders located in the Visayas and Mindanao regions."

Going app

AS for the issue of nonreporting by raisers of unusual mortality among flocks, Piñol said he hopes the DA's new mobile phone application called "Farmhelp" would encourage them to do so.

One way of reporting on their problems, according to Piñol, is by sending photos of their flocks through Farmhelp.

The app was acquired by DA at a bid price of "a little less than P30 million," the DA chief said. The DA will commence a nationwide information campaign on Farmhelp as well as distribution of "low-cost" smart phones starting September.

"Now it is up to them if they will report or not, given the available options. And if they still do not report unusual mortality, then it may cost them more," Piñol said. "Despite our farm-specific protocol, the virus could still affect their neighbors which would put at risk their area's livelihood anew."

Augusto S. Baluyut Jr., Pampanga Provincial Veterinarian, said the government is also considering adopting defoaming as a procedure to cull chickens.

Defoaming, a practice by the United States in culling birds, uses fire-extinguisher-like sprayers containing foam agents that would suffocate the flock.

Kits cut

EDUARDO L. LAPUZ JR. told the BUSINESSMIRROR the DA-RFO 3 has spent P2 million this year to buy sufficient laboratory test kits.

"We bought a lot of test kits so that we will have readily available materials. We can avoid the depletion of stocks like what happened during the outbreak last year," added Lapuz, DA-RFO 3 Regulatory Division Chief.

Furthermore, Abaya said the DA-RFO 3 has purchased two trucks mounted with power sprayers to disinfect poultry farms. The regional office has already awarded contracts for the power sprayers and delivery is expected within the month, he added.

Lapuz said they allocated a budget of P3 million per unit but were able to purchase the two trucks at a "lower" price. He did not disclose how much was the bid price.

Furthermore, Abaya said they are planning to purchase two wall-mounted disinfectants to be put at entry points of San Luis's poultry farms this year.

"So when trucks pass by the area they will be disinfected," he said. "It will be put in entry points of San Luis."

Spray corps

LAPUZ said the savings of the DA-RFO 3 from the procurement of the test kits and power sprayers will be used to purchase the wall-mounted disinfectants.

"We already found a supplier, which proposed a cost of P1.5 million per unit," he said. "We are eyeing to buy four units, if not five, based on our savings."

Lapuz added the DA-RFO 3 has also a budgetary allocation for laboratory supplies next year of about P2 million, which is way higher compared to the measly funding they received prior to the bird-flu outbreak.

Piñol said they will procure more power sprayers if the equipment is proven effective.

Furthermore, the DA will establish AI focal groups nationwide to not only monitor poultry farms but assist farmers in disinfecting their respective areas.

"After harvesting their flocks, the farmers could request the DA to disinfect their farms. At the same time it would allow our veterinarians to monitor the areas for possible virus," he said.

"This would also allow us to inspect if the farms are conforming to biosecurity measures. The disinfection service of the government would be free for all poultry raisers," he added.

Fear factor

FIVE words by Abaya will continue to haunt Sese and poultry raisers: "It will always be there."

"It is just a matter [of time when] the virus will be reactivated or not," he told the BUSINESSMIRROR. "We just really have to intensify our prevention measures particularly in terms of biosecurity."

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This is a sentiment that Piñol shares.

"The risk will always be there. The danger of the disease of coming back will always be there."

The Agriculture Chief, nonetheless, is confident the government is ready if a bird-flu outbreak returns.

"We have seen the monster face to face. And we did not blink," he said. "If it comes back, we will be ready. We would no longer be scared as before."

These words, however, may have yet to soothe Sese's nerves.

Thirty-two weeks ago, Sese secured a government clearance to restock. She hesitated.

"The fear is always there," she said.

"We wanted to start again. But the question was, how? And where am I going to get my capital?"

Sese used the P2 million she received from the government indemnification program to purchase 6,000 day-old-chicks (DOCs) in January.

"*Hindi ko naisip* [*na umalis sa* poultry business] *dahil wala akong ibang tatakbuhan*," Sese said. "*May edad na ako at ayaw ko nang mag-isip ng iba pa* [I never considered opting out of the poultry business because where will I go? I am already old and I do not want to think about of a lot of other things]."

Sese just stocked 12,000 DOCs in her poultry farm, which are expected to lay eggs by year-end.

She will settle at 18,000 head if the government will not provide any more support to them. In an interview with the BUSINESSMIRROR on August 10, Sese said she will not stop hoping for "the year" that mimicked the first half of 2017, before the tragedy began.

"*Iniisip ko na lang na darating 'yung panahon na gaganda ulit 'yung kita*," she said under an indigo sky. "*Sa una talaga mahirap, at sana mag-*pick up *sa mga susunod na buwan o taon* [I always imagine that time will come when income would be better. I know it's always difficult at first but surely sales will pick up in the coming months]."

Surely, it's a hope she cannot be begrudged for holding on to.

CHICKENS line a poultry farm in this August 10, 2018, photo. The BUSINESSMIRROR visited San Carlos, San Luis, Pampanga, which was declared by the Department of Agriculture on August 11, 2017, as the ground zero of the bird-flu outbreak. NONIE REYES

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Palay output seen declining by nearly 2% in 3rd quarter

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

THE country's unmilled rice output could decline by nearly 2 percent to 3.323 million metric tons, from the previous year's 3.39 MMT, according to latest forecast of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

In its quarterly "Rice and Corn Situation and Outlook" report, the PSA attributed the possible decline to the contraction in harvest area and the decision of farmers to delay planting.

The PSA expects total harvest area for the July-to-September period to shrink by 2.82 percent 829,000 hectares, from 853,000 hectares recorded a year ago.

In contrast, yield per hectare could increase to 4.01 MT per hectare, from 3.98 MT per hectare in 2017, according to the PSA.

"The considerable decreases in production are foreseen in Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon, MIMAROPA and SOCCSKSARGEN," the PSA said in the report published recently.

"Cutbacks in output may be attributed to delayed plantings due to the late release of irrigation water and late onset of rainfall in Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon, MIMAROPA, Western Visayas, SOCCSKSARGEN and Caraga," it added.

Based on farmers' planting intentions, the PSA noted that palay production in the fourth quarter may be higher than the previous year's level.

"This may be attributed to the perceived availability of irrigation water coupled with occurrence of rain during the planting period," it said. The PSA did not provide a production forecast for the fourth quarter.

Price drop

AGRICULTURE Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said in a Facebook post that he sees the farm-gate price of palay in the third quarter to decline "drastically" due to the influx of imports.

"The farm-gate price of locally produced paddy rice, which went up to an unprecedented level today, could fall drastically this harvest season because of the delay in the arrival of rice supplies from Vietnam and Thailand imported by both the National Food Authority (NFA) and the private sector under the Minimum Access Volume (MAV)," Piñol said on August 15.

"The PSA reported a few days ago that the national average farm-gate price has fallen [from an] all time high of P22 per kilogram (kg) to P21.50 per kg. Prices are expected to fall further at peak harvest season because this will be the time when imported rice is expected to reach the market," he added.

Piñol said the decline in paddy rice prices is a "welcome relief" for consumers as this could ease the rise in the retail price of the staple.

"The delay in the arrival of rice imported by both the NFA and the private sector is also the main factor behind the spike in the price of rice in the market," he said. The agriculture chief said the delay in the arrival of rice imports was due to by the conflict between the NFA and the NFA Council.

Piñol noted that rice imports usually arrive during the country's lean season, which runs from July to September, to beef up local supplies. The country has minimal harvest during the lean months.

"The issuance of the import permits both for NFA and the private sector, however, was delayed because of a disagreement between the NFA and the NFA Council, the governing body composed of several government agencies (but not including the Department of Agriculture), over the mode of importation," he said.

Furthermore, Piñol said the late arrival of the imported rice has "placed the country's buffer supply at critical level resulting in speculation in the market which further pushed rice prices up."

"The private sector importation, however, is expected to arrive by the end of August toward early-September by which time the farmers would already start harvesting their paddy rice," he said.

Palay production in the second quarter reached 4.09 MMT, 1.44 percent lower than the 4.15 MMT recorded output a year ago due to contracted harvest area. Harvest area shrank by 1.52 percent to 932,790 hectares, from 947,190 hectares.

The Manila Times

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DA to import up to 17,000 MT of *galunggong*

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will import 17,000 metric tons of *galunggong* (round scad) to curb the increasing prices of fish and ensure food security.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol signed a Certificate of Necessity on Wednesday allowing accredited traders to import fish.

The Agriculture department said the importation of galunggong is in accordance with Section 61 of Republic Act 8550 or the Philippine Fisheries Code, as amended by Republic Act 10654, and Fisheries Administrative Order No. 195, series of 1999.

Galunggong, a staple for most Filipinos, is the only fish the country is allowed to import. The price of galunggong is considered a barometer of the economy.

It is covered by the DA's order on suggested retail price (SRP) on basic commodities. Its market price must not exceed 10 percent of its SRP of P140 per kilogram.

The imported fish will ensure sufficient supply during the holidays with domestic production shut down due to the closed fishing season, which will run from November until March.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that galunggong production dropped 9.5 percent in the first half of the year due to strong winds and rough seas as well as the high cost of fuel, which discouraged fishing voyages.

The imported galunggong shall be unloaded in Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) accredited cold storage facilities and shall be sold wholesale in Navotas Fishport.

EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

Malaya
Business Insight

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PH to import 17K MT of galunggong

EMMANUEL Piñol, secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA), has signed the certificate of necessity that would authorize the importation of up 17,000 metric tons of roundscad (galunggong) to be sold in wet markets.

The move hopes to augment supply and lower the price of the fish that is most commonly purchased by ordinary Filipinos.

There are no estimates on how much the price of galunggong will go down but the fish now retails at P160 per kilo in Metro Manila wet markets.

The DA secretary has the power to issue a certificate of necessity to allow the importation of a certain type of fish when it faces supply shortage in the market. Private traders wishing to import galunggong under the scheme need to apply for permits.

Such issuance is only given under special cases as fish importation is allowed for use by manufacturers and processors.

The imports will only be unloaded in cold storages accredited by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and must also be sold wholesale in the Navotas Fishport.

Piñol said the certificate will be effective for a period of 90 days starting September 1.

The fish will be sourced at 5 percent tariff.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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ARRIVAL OF IMPORTS, HARVEST SEASON

DA CHIEF EXPECTS DECLINE IN PALAY FARM-GATE PRICES

By Karl R. Ocampo
@kocampoINQ

The delayed arrival of rice imports from Vietnam and Thailand is seen to affect the farm-gate price of palay "drastically" as its release will coincide with the harvest season, the country's agriculture chief said.

The prospect of rice flooding the market—both from imports and local produce—may depress the buying price for palay which breached the P21-a-kilo mark for the first time in nearly two years.

"While this is a welcome relief to the consumers who have complained of rising prices of rice in the market, this could be a sad development for the country's rice farmers who have, for the first time in the history of the industry, enjoyed good returns from their farms," Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said in a Facebook post.

To recall, the delay in the arrival of the imports is the "main factor" behind the spike in the retail prices of rice.

Since the start of January, rice prices have been on an upward trend and has not declined since. As of the third week of July, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed regular-milled and well-milled rice were priced at an average of P41.27 and P44.98 a kilo, up by 8.89 percent and 7.27 percent from a year ago.

Due to disagreements between the NFA management and its policy-making body on rice importation, the purchase of imported rice was held up and had resulted in the depletion of the agency's stocks.

Supposedly, imports should be distributed in the market in time for the country's lean months or when the supply of rice is low.

For the first and second quarter of the year, the average buying price for palay has increased by 8.14 percent and 13.44 percent to P19.76 per kg and P21.75 per kg, respectively.

Based on PSA data, this was the highest recorded average farm-gate price of palay since 2015, when the country's palay production decreased due to the El Niño dry spell. INQ

Tempo
NEWS IN A FLASH
THE NATION'S FASTEST GROWING NEWSPAPER

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DA launches Bohol fish market

TAGBILARAN CITY – A fish market will be launched by the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Thursday in an effort to bring down the expensive fish prices in Bohol.

The fish market launching is in response to the promise of Agriculture secretary Emmanuel Piñol last July during the opening of the Sandugo Agri-Fair which aims to bring down prices of the commodity in the province.

Piñol is expected to grace the launch of the fish market patterned after the TienDA of the DA at the Agriculture Promotions Center compound which is adjacent to the Tagbilaran City Hall in barangay Dao.

DA Regional Director Salvador Diputado said some 9,000 kilos of fish will be brought to Tagbilaran from Zamboanga for the fish market. The supply is expected to arrive by dawn today in time for the launch of the fish market.

Piñol is expected to deliver his keynote speech at the launch of the fish market.

The fish marker will also feature other agricultural products, a statement from the local office of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources said. **(Dave Albarado)**

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- SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN -

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PINAS AANGKAT NG 'GG'

Para mapigilan ang price hike

Istorya ni JASPER ARCALAS

PINAYAGAN ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang mga importer na magpasok ng 17,000 metric tons (MT) ng roundscad (Decapterus spp.) o galunggong simula sa Setyembre upang mapigilan ang pagtaas ng presyo ng fisheries products sa merkado. **SUNDAN SA PAHINA 9**

Mula sa pahina 16

Nilagdaan kahapon ni Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol ang certificate of necessity na nagpapakita ng pangangailangan na mag-import ng fisheries products upang matiyak ang food security sa bansa.

"In order to ensure national food security taking into consideration public welfare and safety and in accordance with Section 61 of Republic Act No. 8850 or the Philippine Fisheries Coded, as amended by Republic Act No. 10654, and Fisheries Administrative Order No. 195, series of 1999, the importation of Roundscad (Decapterus spp.) up to a maximum volume of 17,000 MT is hereby certified as necessary to be imported by accredited fish importers," wika ni Piñol.

Ang imported roundscad ay ibabagsak lamang sa Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (Bfar) accredited cold storage facilities at ibebenta nang wholesale sa Navotas Fishport, nakasaad sa certificate.

Mahigpit na babantayan ng BFAR at Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) ang importation at unloading activities na isasagawa ng mga importer.

"This certificate of necessity shall be effective from September 1, 2018 until the expiration thereof after the lapse of 90 days, as provided for under Fisheries Administrative Order No. 195, or until earlier revoked by the Secretary of Agriculture," nakasaad sa certificate.

Sa ilalim ng FAO 195, o 'Rules and Regulations Governing Importation of Fresh/Chilled/Frozen and Fishery Aquatic Products', kailangan munang sertipikahan ng agriculture chief ang pangangailangan na mag-import ng isda upang matiyak ang food security, fish price stability at mapalakas ang fishery resource conservation ng bansa.

JASPER ARCALAS

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
Everybody's Newspaper

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DA mulls price caps for more agri products

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is mulling putting price caps and suggested retail prices (SRPs) on more agricultural commodities, such as sugar, soon.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said Tuesday this might come soon to prevent uncontrolled spiraling of prices ahead of the Yuletide season.

"There's no way to maintain market prices. The only way to go is control these to levels that consumers aren't complaining," Piñol said at the press conference for the 32nd National Coconut Week celebration in Metro Manila.

He said the DA will continue consulting with stakeholders regarding the possibility of setting SRPs for additional agricultural commodities before deciding on the matter.

Last June, the DA set Metro Manila SRPs for regular milled rice (PHP39/kilo), medium to big milkfish of two to five pieces per kilo (PHP150/kilo), medium-sized tilapia of six pieces per kilo (PHP100/kilo), medium galunggong of 11 to 20 pieces per kilo (PHP140/kilo), red onion (PHP95/kilo), white onion (PHP75/kilo), imported variety garlic (PHP70/kilo), and local variety garlic (PHP120/kilo).

Selling prices of such commodities must not exceed 10 percent of the SRPs, or violators would be charged with profiteering, Pinol said.

He said a profiteer faces imprisonment and fine of up to around PHP1 million.

Sugar is among the next batch of agricultural commodities the DA is considering for possible SRP coverage, Piñol said.

In its situationer covering the fourth week of July 2018, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported price for a kilogram of brown sugar increased by PHP1 in Kidapawan City and by PHP3 in Region I's San Fernando City, but fell by PHP2 in Cebu City and by PHP5 in Baguio and Davao.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
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DA gets lower budget of ₱10 B for farm-to-market road projects

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

Despite its own perceived improvement in the way it spends its yearly budget, the Department of Agriculture (DA) still failed to convince the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) of its capacity to fully utilize its funds.

Because of this, the DA will only receive nearly ₱10 billion for next year's implementation of what is considered as one of the agency's biggest programs, the farm-to-market road (FMR) projects.

DBM said the smaller allocation was due to "the department's slow budget disbursement registered in the past years."

In 2014, the DA's disbursement rate was a measly 5.9 percent. This means that out of the ₱12-billion FMR appropriations, the DA disbursed a meager ₱708 million.

The DA, however, registered a significant increase in disbursement rate for 2015 at 42.8 percent. But this eventually went down anew to 39.1 percent and to 38.1 percent for 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Last year, the DA appealed to lawmakers to pump the budget for FMR program to ₱20 billion, but it was never granted.

"We want the DA to improve its disbursement rate and translate its budget to actual delivery of FMR projects," DBM Secretary Benjamin Diokno said in a statement on Wednesday.

This is in line with the shift to an annual cash-based appropriations from the two-year obligation-based budgeting system.

Under the new scheme, contracts should be fully delivered by the end of the FY, which effectively shifts project implementation to a one-year horizon.

As such, government agencies have to keep up by improving their performance in terms of disbursements and actual delivery of goods and services, Diokno said.

Republic Act No. 8435 or the Agriculture and Fisheries Act of 1997 mandates the DA to be on top of the construction and upgrading of FMR projects.

FMRs improve the mobility of goods, services, and the general public. They serve as links for better access to basic social services such as health centers, schools, and areas for employment.

"FMRs are the foundation of modern ▶B-11

DA gets...

◀B-1

agriculture," the DA's FMR Network Plan states.

Based on the National Expenditure Program for 2019, the ₱10-billion budget for FMR program will be directly sent to the Department of Public Works and Highway (DPWH) for the construction, rehabilitation and repair of the roads.

For this purpose, the DA shall ensure that the FMR network plan shall include the scope of work, estimated length in kilometers, and specific location for each of the FMR projects, and that FMRs are implemented are properly geotagged.

The approved FMR network plan shall be regularly updated to prioritize major rice, corn, and high value commercial crops producing provinces, areas where the majority of small farmers and agrarian reform beneficiaries are located, provinces or region where the absolute number of poor farmers, and incidence of poverty are high as identified in the latest official poverty statistics of Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
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ONLY 5 KILOS EACH – Local residents pack the Department of Agriculture (DA) office in Basilan to be able to buy five kilos of National Food Administration (NFA) rice per consumer from 'Bigasan sa Parokya'. The rice shortage arose after the Malaysian government reportedly decided to stop the delivery of the staple food supply to the provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi (BASULTA). (Jinky Tabor)

BusinessMirror
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editorial

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The politics of rice trading

THREE weeks after President Duterte asked Congress in his State of the Nation Address to prioritize the approval of the rice-tariffication measure, the House of Representatives on Tuesday passed on third and final reading House Bill (HB) 7735, or the proposed "Revised Agricultural Tariffication Act," which would convert the quantitative restriction on rice into tariffs. The bill will now be transmitted to the Senate for its own deliberations and approval.

Notable among the provisions of HB 7735 is the creation of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, which comes from the duties collected from rice imports, to help rice farmers become more competitive. The Senate will have its chance to strengthen the safety nets for rice farmers and consumers through import tariffication.

The rice tariffication bill will help reduce the price of rice by P3.40 per kilogram. If implemented in the last quarter of this year, bill sponsors said it could reduce headline inflation by about 0.20 percentage points, and an additional 0.60 percentage points in 2019.

Under HB 7735, the Lower House has set the bound tariff rate for rice imports outside the minimum access volume at 180 percent. The measure indicated that the Philippines will impose a bound tariff rate of 35 percent for rice from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, regardless of volume. Manila will also impose a 40-percent bound tariff most-favored nation rate for in-quota rice imports from countries that do not belong to the Asean.

Other provisions of HB 7735, however, need further study. For example, the bill authorizes the National Food Authority to allocate import permits among certified and licensed importers. In other words, it gives the NFA the discretion to choose its preferred rice importers. We all know that discretion breeds corruption. And we also know that, for the longest time, the biggest headaches for our regulators are the rice cartels and rice smugglers. Legislators now have a chance to craft sanctions to curb rice smuggling.

Unscrupulous traders will always try to evade paying duties and taxes if the government won't press its heavy foot on their throats. The problem with the current system is the absence of coordination among government agencies as far as rice importation is concerned. For example, a rice trader—Jomerito "Jojo" Soliman, owner of Sta. Rosa Farm Products—recently cried foul over allegations made by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) that he was behind the unlawful importation of 200 containers of Thai rice, insisting that his transactions were legal.

The rice trader maintained that all of his rice importations were allowed and cleared by the NFA. He said a letter issued by the NFA on July 27, 2018, upheld the rice importation of Sta. Rosa Farm subject to the payment of 50-percent tariff. Insisting that the shipment was not smuggled, he said it was a "special importation" channeled through the NFA so that it will be sold at a lower price in the market to help replenish the country's rice stock.

The BOC, however, said the 200 containers of rice arrived from Thailand at Manila International Container Port without import permits. That's why they were seized and were later auctioned off even before the expiration of the prescribed period for appeal.

Hopefully, with the rice-tariffication measure signed into law, cases like this will become a thing of the past. We need the help of rice traders to help boost the country's supply of our staple food. But we also need to clean up the rotten setup where crooks in the government can demand bribes from rice traders. This measure can help remove the politics involved in the rice business.

The Manila Times

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Rice, corn output lower in Q2 – PSA

THE Philippines' rice and corn production likely dropped in the second quarter of 2018 because fewer fields were planted with the crops, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said on Wednesday.

In its "Rice and Corn Situation and Outlook" report, the state-run statistics agency said rice and corn output probably dipped by 1.44 percent and 3.42 percent to 4.09 million metric tons (MT) and 1.28 million MT in April to June from 4.15 million MT and 1.33 million a year ago, respectively.

The projected volumes reflect the reduced number of harvested rice and corn areas to 932.79 thousand hectares (ha) and 392.24 thousand ha in the quarter from 947.19 thousand ha and 401.51 thousand ha last year, respectively.

Rice yield hit 4.38 MT per ha in the period; corn, down by 1.14 percent to 3.27 MT per ha from 3.31 MT last year.

Reduced rice production was noted in Regions 2 (Cagayan Valley) at 3.25 percent and 12 (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and Sarangani provinces and General Santos City, or Soccsksargen) at 0.46 percent.

According to the PSA, ample water supply allowed farmers in Cagayan Valley to plant the crop early in some areas in the fourth quarter of 2017, causing the number of harvest areas to drop.

Also, "farmers opted to harvest in the later part of the first quarter to avail [themselves] of [the] good prices offered by traders," the agency said, noting that some had shifted to planting cassava and sugarcane.

Advance harvesting prompted by hot weather, and the closure or rehabilitation of some of the National Irrigation Administration's (NIA) canals in the first quarter, resulted in the decrease in harvest areas in Soccsksargen, it added.

Based on standing crops, probable *palay* (unhusked rice) production in the third quarter may fall by 1.97 percent from 3.39 million MT last year. Harvest area may shrink by 2.82 percent from 1 thousand hectares in 2017. Yield per hectare may rise to 4.01 MT from 3.98 MT per a year ago.

Production decreases from July to September are predicted in Regions 2, 4A (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon provinces, or Calabarzon), 4B (Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan provinces, or Mimaropa) and 12.

For corn, cutbacks in production were seen in Regions 2 and 12 at 3.29 percent and 2.17 percent, respectively; and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), 1.95 percent.

The PSA expects corn output in the third quarter to drop in Cagayan Valley because of the declining number of harvest areas and less rainfall during the planting season.

Data on production and harvest area estimates came from the Monthly Palay and Corn Situation Reporting System, conducted in between *palay* and corn production survey rounds.

EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

The Manila Times

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NFA ASSURES COMPOSTELA VALLEY CONSUMERS OF ENOUGH RICE SUPPLY

DAVAO CITY: The National Food Authority (NFA) in Compostela Valley of Davao Region has assured the public of enough supply of rice as it launched its Tagpuan Day-Rice Response Delivery (TRRD) program to benefit thousands of informal settlers, farm workers and the indigenous people in the province. Janette Linao, NFA-ComVal provincial manager, said they have enough supply of NFA rice until the middle of September this year with additional supply expected to arrive by the end of this month. Rice supplies are also available in the market of various towns in Compostela Valley, Linao added. TRRD is a rice distribution strategy that will ensure cheap but good quality NFA rice to its target beneficiaries. It will be piloted in the remote upper valley areas of Montevista town, particularly Barangay Bankerohan and will benefit about 200 indigenous people's beneficiaries. Under the program, consumers will be able to purchase NFA rice at the selling price of P27 per kilo. Linao added the price will provide the ordinary consumers with an elbow room to deal with the high prices of commercial rice that range from P45 to P50 per kilo. **ALEXANDER D. LOPEZ**

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

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THE more militant members of Congress on Wednesday slammed a Department of Agriculture proposal to import round scad or galunggong, saying such would adversely impact on the domestic price of the commodity.

ANALY LABOR

PILIPINO MIRROR
FILIPINO MIRROR MEDIA GROUP CORPORATION
· SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN ·

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Sentro sa 32nd National Coconut Week Celebration

KINABUKASAN NG COCO FARMERS TUTUTUKAN

PASAY CITY- *TIME is now!* Ito ang tema ng 1st World Coconut Congress na nagsimula noong Martes at magwawakas ngayong araw (Agosto 14-16) na bahagi ng selebrasyon ng 32nd National Coconut Week sa SMX Convention Center sa Pasay City.

Sa pagharap ni Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) Administrator Romulo dela Rosa sa mga delegado sa iba't ibang lugar at sa international community, inihayag nito na ang coconut tree, na pangunahing pananim sa Filipinas, ay *"tree of life"*.

Ito ay dahil sa mula ugat hanggang dahon nito ay nagagamit, mula sa pagkain, paggawa ng gamot o medisina, para sa kalusugan, personal care gaya ng paggawa ng sabon at pamahid sa balat, eleochemicals, kagamitan sa bahay gaya ng pawid, upuan, dekorasyon at iba pa.

Ang Filipinas ang dambuhalang nagluluwas ng coconut oil sa mundo dahil sa rami ng pinaggagamitan nito mula sa cooking oil, panggamot at pampakinis ng balat.

Sa datos, ito na ang nangungunang agricultural export revenue generator at noong 2017 ay mahigit $2 billion o mahigit P100 billion ang kinita ng bansa at dapat sana ay maalwan ang pamumuhay ng coco farmers subalit taliwas ito sa reyalidad.

Batay naman sa pahayag ni Senator Cynthia Villar, chair ng Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, ang mga magkokopra o coco farmer ang pinakamahirap na manggagawa sa agrikultura.

Aniya, masuwerte nang kumita sila ng P50 kada araw o kulang $1 habang sa record ay 93% sufficient sa nasabing agricultural product ang Filipinas at tanging 7% lamang ang inaangkat.

Ang nasabing isyu ang tinutukan sa tatlong araw na pulong na naglalayong tulungan agad ang mga coconut farmer.

Katuwang ng PCA ang United Coconut Authority, Department of Trade and Industy upang suportahan ang chambers of commerce na naglalayong pagugnayin ang may 500 global stakeholders para matiyak ang pag-angat ng kanilang industriya sa buong mundo.

Bukod sa pangkalahatang pulong, may mga exhibition o display rin ng mga produkto na gawa mula sa coconut gaya ng ice cream, spread (palaman sa tinapay), sabon, suka, pamahid panggamot, langis, lotion, sarisaring craft mula bag, tsinelas, rug, at mga kagamitan sa bahay.

EUNICE CALMA

ABANTE TONITE
MABILIS SA BALITA

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Importasyon ng galunggong inalmahan

Nagbabala ang Makabayan bloc laban sa anila'y magiging epekto sa sektor ng agrikultura ng Administrasyong Duterte kasabay ng pagpasa ng rice tarrification sa Kamara kamakalawa, gayundin ang panukala ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na mag-angkat ng galunggong upang mapababa ang presyo ng isda.

Sa pulong-balitaan kahapon, sinabi ni ACT-Teachers Antonio Tinio na ang pagluwag ng pamahalaan sa pagpasok ng mga imported agricultural product ay papatay sa lokal na mga magsasaka.

Iginiit naman ni Anakpawis Party-list Rep. Ariel Casilao, suporta sa mga magsasaka at mangingisda ang kailangan at hindi imported na bigas at galunggong ang sagot upang mapababa ang presyo ng mga ito.

Ayon naman kay PAMALAKAYA National chairman Fernando Hicap, walang basehan ang pag-angkat ng galunggong dahil mayroon naman tayong lokal na mapagkukunan ng iba pang mas masarap na isda. **(Ronilo Dagos)**

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TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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UN agri agency ready to support Phl fisheries sector

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The United Nations agriculture agency is ready to support governments, including the Philippines, to formulate measures against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and promote management and development of the fisheries sector.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recognizes the Philippines' acceptance of two international agreements that will further boost efforts in ensuring sustainable management of the country's marine resources.

But FAO Representative to the Philippines José Luis Fernandez said "Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing continue to be a major threat to our marine resources, as well as to the well-being and resilience of fishing communities whose livelihoods and food security depend on this vital sector."

The Philippines is a global center of marine biodiversity and boasts one of the longest coastlines in the world. The country is among the top fish producers globally, according to FAO's 2018 State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture report.

"The effective implementation of these international instruments ultimately contributes to the long-term conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources and marine ecosystems," Fernandez said.

"FAO stands ready to support governments, including the Philippines, in their capacity to formulate sound measures to combat IUU fishing, and promote management and development of the fisheries sector," he added.

The Philippine government has formally accepted the following: Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (Compliance Agreement), and Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. The two agreements were approved by FAO member states and entered into force in 2003 and 2016, respectively.

The healthy status of world fisheries and aquatic resources and the well-being of fishing communities and fisher workers are central to FAO's policy work, its Blue Growth Initiative and FAO's Strategic Programme to Reduce Rural Poverty, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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Revenue surge lifts AgriNurture profit

Listed agricultural trading firm AgriNurture Inc. (ANI) saw its net income surge to nearly P50 million in the first semester on the back of higher revenues.

In a regulatory filing, the company said consolidated sales jumped 42 percent to P846 million, while gross profit soared 85 percent to P256 million despite the sharp drop in local distribution sales.

Export sales went up 21 percent to P59 million on stable selling prices of banana and coconut juice in the world market and the increase in number of customers.

The company expects sales volume of bananas to increase in the last two quarters on top of increased volume in shipments for mango and beverage products such as canned coconut water.

Foreign operations contributed the bulk or 81 percent of the consolidated sales, while local operations accounted for the remaining 19 percent.

Meanwhile, retail and franchising sales went up three percent to P51 million due to improvement of operations and increase in franchise revenues and events.

Foreign trading operations, likewise, jumped to P689 million due to the consolidation of operations of Fucang , which was 51 percent owned by the company as of July 2017.

Operating expenses rose to P114 million from P103 million due to higher manpower costs for regular employees and depreciation and rental expenses.

ANI said it would continue to expand its core business and increase coverage in the distribution, retail and export sales channels, while its retail arm is expanding the franchise of its network overseas.

The company is involved in various agro-commercial businesses focusing on trading of grains and fresh produce in the Philippines and export markets.

ANI supplies other homegrown fruits such as banana, pineapple, mango, processed fruits and coconut water to Hong Kong, China, Australia and Europe, among others.

– Louise Maureen Simeon

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Lower palay, corn output seen in Q3

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The country's production of palay (unhusked rice) and corn is seen to continue its downward trend in the third quarter due to delayed plantings and the effects of the recent weather disturbances.

Based on the latest crops outlook of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), palay production for July to September may reach 3.23 million metric tons (MT), two percent lower than the year before.

Harvest area is forecast to shrink 2.8 percent to 829,000 hectares, but yield may slightly improve to 4.01 MT per hectare from the previous year's 3.98 MT.

The considerable decreases in production are foreseen in Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon, Mimaropa and Soccsksargen, PSA said.

"Cutbacks in output may be attributed to delayed plantings due to the late release of irrigation water and late onset of rainfall in some areas like Western Visayas and Caraga," it added.

For the fourth quarter, PSA expects production to bounce back and exceed last year's level with the expected availability of irrigation water coupled with occurrence of rain during the planting period.

Meanwhile, corn production for the third quarter is seen to decline by 16 percent to 2.18 million MT. Harvest area may also contract by 11 percent to 784,000 hectares and yield may drop to 2.78 MT per hectare.

"Possible drop in output may be large in Cagayan Valley resulting from the decline in harvest area due to less occurrence of rainfall during the planting period," PSA said.

For the last quarter of the year, PSA expects corn production to increase as farmers signify more plantings in anticipation of good weather condition and government intervention on seed subsidy.

In a separate release, the seasonally adjusted palay production for the second quarter fell 1.85 percent following a decline in harvest areas owing to early plantings.

"Some farmers harvested in the later part of the first quarter to avail of good prices offered by traders. Downturns in production were large in Cagayan Valley and Soccsksargen," PSA said.

The seasonally adjusted farmgate price for palay rose by five percent in the second quarter.

Likewise, wholesale and retail prices for rice increased by two percent each from their respective levels in the previous quarter.

Wholesale and retail prices of rice were also higher by seven percent and five percent, respectively.

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Rains, floods damage ₱94-M crops and infra in Bulacan

By **FREDDIE C. VELEZ**

CITY OF MALOLOS, Bulacan – Heavy rains and massive flooding triggered by the southwest monsoon (habagat) and enhanced by tropical storm Karding damaged ₱94.1 million worth of infrastructure, crops and agricultural products in Bulacan, according to the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office.

DRRMO chief Liz Mungcal said that as of 5p.m. on Tuesday, total estimated damage was pegged at ₱94,169,828.78 (₱45,860,000 for infrastructure, ₱47,655,468.78 for rice, and fisheries and ₱654,360 for livestock).

In her report as of Tuesday afternoon to Bulacan Governor Wilhelmino M. Sy-Alvarado, Mungcap said 129,886 families or 632,196 individuals from 12 towns and two cities gripped by floodingf were displaced.

Out of the 129,886 families, 10,834 (14,105 individuals) were evacuated to 55 evacuation centers in the different parts of the province.

As of 6 p.m. on Tuesday, the water level of Ipo dam was at 101.02 meters (spilling level 101).

Bustos dam's water level was at 17.58 meters (spilling level 17.50 meters).

The water elevation of Angat Dam was 205.44 meters, still way below its spilling level of 210 meters.

Thousands of prophylactic medicines for those exposed to floodwaters were distributed by the Provincial Health Office in the flooded ares of Bocaue, Bulakan, Bustos, Guiguinto, Calumpit, Hagonoy, City of Malolos, Marilao, Meycauayan City, Obando, Pandi, Paombong, Plaridel, San Rafael and Pulilan.

Thousands of relief goods were also distributed by PSWDO at the Calumpit town's evacuation center in Barangays Caniogan, Corazon, Gugo, San Jose, Meyto, Panducot and Sta. Lucia.

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AGRI PLAIN TALK
ZAC B. SARIAN

Taking care of fruit trees in container

After having shown exotic fruit trees in our presentation at the Agribiz Kapihan recently, not a few people have asked for additional pointers in taking care of them.

Well, there are several fruit varieties that are suitable for growing in containers. Even big mango varieties can be grown in containers. We had a Millennium mango before that was bought by a lady for giving away as gift to a special family friend.

Another good candidate is pomelo. We have several that are planted in medium rubberized containers that are reguarly fruiting. There are many varieties of pomelo. Some produce superior fruits in terms of sweetnesa and juiciness. Among our favorites are two Vietnam varieties Nam roi and Da Xanh, some Thai varieties and our very own Magallanes pomelo.

Chicos are also highly suitable for growing in containers. These include the Variegated, the Pineras, the Yusepeng and Mapino from the Institute of Plant Breeding in Los Baños.

Guavas are also suitable for growing in containers. Our favorite is the seedless guava. Others are the pink variety from Vietnam and the orange variety from Taiwan.

The imported makopa varieties make good container fruit trees. These include the Mini makopa from Indonesia, the Apple makopa from Malaysia, the Green and some other makopa varieties from from Thailand.

The small citrus varieties are also great as container fruiting trees. These include calamansi like the Luz variety usually with just two seeds, the variegated calamansi which is very pretty, and of course our ordinary calamansi. Other small citrus varieties

VARIEGATED ORANGE – This is a very pretty citrus. Its leaves and fruit are variegated yellow and green. Its fruit is also sweet and juicy. Propagation is by grafting and marcotting.

are the Key lime, the native Dayap, Chinoto or Japanese orange, American lemon and others.

Now, how do you take care of them? For best results they should be placed under bright light or full sun. They should be grown in a nice potting mix. This could be a mixture of organic fertilizer (our favorite is Durabloom), carbonized rice hull or even non-carbonized rice hull. Add about 40 percent of rich top soil.

Because the tree is growing in a limited space, fertilize it regularly, say every month with organic and granular chemical fertilizer with trace elements. Spraying foliar fertilizer or plant booster every 10 days will make the tree robust and fruitful. Pruning is very important. If yhou want to keep your tree low-growing, you should topcut it. Prune the small brances inside because they are not needed. Watering should be done regularly because the potting media dries up more easily than the soil in the ground.

PROPAGATION – There are a number of ways of propagating fruit trees for container planting.

The easiest is by marcotting. The varieties that are easy to marcot are makopa, pomelo, oranges and other small citrus. The beauty about marcotting is that you can propagate branches that are ready to bear fruit once established in the container.

Grafting is another way of multiplying fruit trees in containers. Pomelos and other citrus that are easy to marcot can also be multiplied by grafting. One can produce more planting materials by grafting than by marcotting. One grafting technique that can produce bigger planting materials is called inarching or approach grafting.

AS A BUSINESS – Growing fruit trees in containers can be a rewarding business. Fruiting trees in containers command a high price. A fruiting pomelo that's about seven feet tall and laden with severl fruits will sell for at least five thousand pesos. Of course, it could even be more if the variety is something very special.

Who are the buyers of fruit trees in container? They are the senior citizens who can't wait a long time for their fruit trees to bear fruit. Of course, even young professionals will want to have a fruit tree in their own farms or gardens. Other buyers are gift givers who want to impress their recipients.

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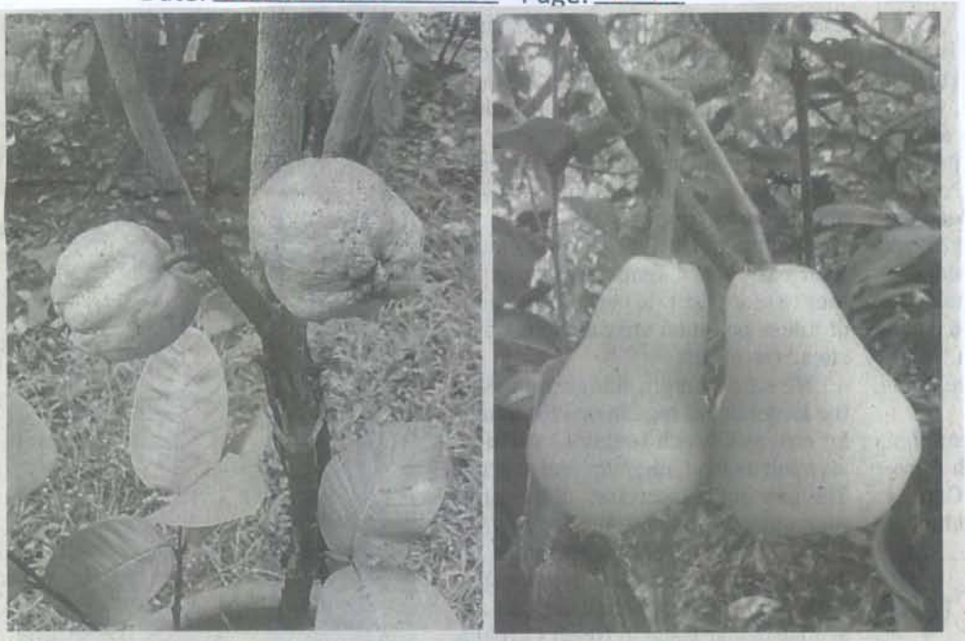

SEEDLESS GUAVA & GREEN MAKOPA – At left is a seedless guava while at right is a green makopa from Thailand. Both are good candidates for growing in containers. Both are nice to eat and are very easy to take care. Just give them enough sunlight, fertilizer and breathing space.

PRIZE-WINNING VARIEGATED CHICO – This is a big variegated chico laden with fruits. It was a second prize winner in a fruit-in-container competition at the Kadayawan garden show last year in Davao City. A much smaller plant in the show was bought for P10,000 by a government official's wife. So you see, there is money in fruit trees in containers.

BARBADOS CHERRY – This is a small tree that is highly suitable for container growing. Marcotted branches may bear fruit in one year from planting, depending on the size and the care provided. The fruits are very rich in vitamin C. Marcotting is an easy way of propagating this tree.

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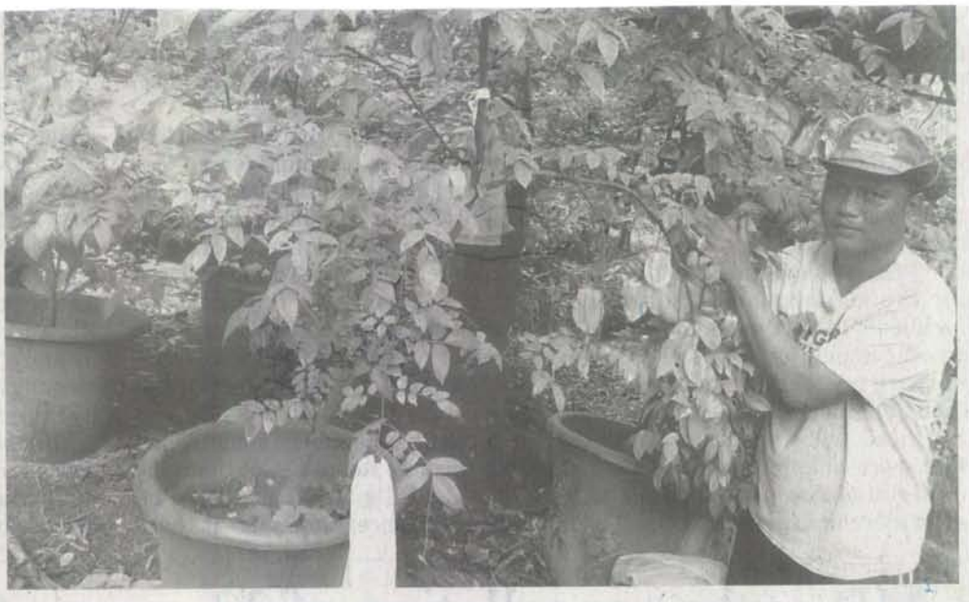
SWEET DALANDAN – Photo shows a low-growing dalandan in a medium pot with full-sized fruits. The trick is to regularly fertilize the tree so it will flourish and bear fruits regularly. Organic and chemical fertilizer can be combined to nourish the small tree. A foliar fertilizer can also applied every 15 days or thereabouts.

BALIMBING IN CONTAINER – Another good candidate for growing in container is the sweet balimbing. There are two varieties of this small tree at the Sarian Farm in Teresa, Rizal. They are regular bearers once established. Plants just about two feet tall may already bear flowers that could result in fruits. But it may not be advisable to allow the fruits to develop to maturity if the plant is too small. Photo shows fruiting sweet balimbing in rubberized container with Wendell Sarian.



BusinessWorld
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BW FILE PHOTO

A NUMBER of fish varieties available in a fish market in Quezon City

Finance dep't reiterates fears about fish prices, supply driving inflation

THE GOVERNMENT is "very concerned" about the rising price of fish amid declining production over the past five years, raising the risk of reduced access to and higher prices for a type of food deemed to be a key source of low-cost nutrition for the population.

"We're very concerned about the price of fish. It seems that our fish catch has really been dropping since 2012. Maybe it's because of climate change, overfishing. We don't really know, but we're just signaling that this is becoming a serious problem," Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III said in a media forum yesterday.

In 2017, fisheries production fell 1% year-on-year, though the decline narrowed from 6.3% in 2016.

Inflation in fish prices was 12% in the first quarter, up from 5% a year earlier.

In June, fish prices rose 11.2%, and accounted for 0.6 percentage point of CPI growth which came in at 5.2% that month.

Economic managers are considering the import of fish more freely and at lower tariffs to contain food prices, which are becoming a contentious political issue for the government.

Also proposed for importation at a 5% tariff rate were meat, vegetables, feed wheat and corn.

The Philippine Tariff Commission conducted a public consultation on Aug. 10. Congress is scheduled to adjourn between Aug. 16 to Aug. 27, which would provide President Rodrigo R. Duterte an opportunity to lower tariffs via Executive Order.

Mr. Dominguez has said that lower tariffs are not expected to hurt government revenue significantly as tariffs and customs duties represent about 5% of Bureau of Customs collections.

He added that imports at higher volumes might offset lower tariffs.

In July, the DoF issued an economic bulletin calling for more sustainable fisheries management practices and more intensive application of technology in the fisheries sector to ensure adequate supply. It also noted that fish products have played a significant role in the elevated inflation levels of the past few months.

— **Elijah Joseph C. Tubayan**

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Inflationary price drop harms farmers

COMMENTARY

ERNESTO M. ORDOÑEZ

There is a proposed diesel price decline that is surprisingly inflationary and will harm farmers. It recommends that diesel price should be lessened by replacing the 2 percent expensive coconut methyl ester (CME) diesel component at P60 a liter with regular diesel which is priced at P45 a liter. This will allegedly help curb inflation.

But by doing this, demand for coconut will further go down due to the loss of the CME market. This will consequently result in further decline in coconut farm-gate price, which has already fell to P4.50 from P11.50 over the last six months, and in the farmers' income. Even now, many are already cutting and selling their trees just to survive, jeopardizing their source of livelihood.

The 2006 Biofuels Act mandated that CME should constitute 5 percent of diesel by 2020. CME is now at 2 percent, which has been unchanged for the last 12 years. The proposed CME elimination will decrease the price of diesel fuel by only 0.8 percent from P45 to P44.70. But given a broader view, this decrease can be inflationary.

Inflation means getting less value for P1 spent. If you spend P0.30 less for a liter but sacrifice 12-15 times (or P3.60 to P4.50) of the corresponding diesel value because of less mileage used due to inefficient fuel without CME, there is a huge net loss. Therefore, you get less value for a peso spent.

CME for efficient fuel use is analogous to fertilizer for a plant. While eliminating fertilizer decreases cost of production, the resulting decline in the value of production is much more than the fertilizer cost. Therefore, it makes sense not to decrease the plant production cost by eliminating fertilizer. Instead, the added fertilizer cost should be spent because of the much higher value from the increased plant's production.

The same holds true for CME. On Aug. 13, a senior Department of Energy (DOE) official told us that the perspective of looking at CME in this context was not made clear when the proposal of eliminating the CME to cut fuel price was made.

According to Rafael Diaz of the Asian Institute of Petroleum Studies, the University of the Philippines (UP) with DOE supervision conducted a 2013 study on this issue. For the first 1 percent of the CME made as a diesel component, the return was 12-15 percent in Metro Manila, and more than 20 percent in less congested provincial roads. Therefore, removing even 1 percent CME today will already lose at least 12 times the return from increased mileage use due to cleaner fuel. This does not even include the benefits CME contributes to the environment.

The Agri-Fisheries Alliance (AFA) has submitted a position paper to the DOE strongly opposing the proposed CME elimination. Other ways of decreasing fuel prices, such as temporarily lessening it's excise tax, can be used to help curb inflation. The AFA instead recommends increasing the CME component to 5 percent. The UP study showed this would have at least 5 times the return in terms of added mileage from cleaner more efficient fuel.

Increasing CME to 5 percent is not only counter inflationary and economically correct. It should be done with utmost urgency to the address the coconut farmers' sad plight. In 2012, because of an announced (but not implemented) CME increase to 5 percent, farm-gate price rose by some 50 percent. If the 5 percent CME content in diesel is implemented, coconut farm-gate price will increase and farmers' incomes will improve.

Coconut farmers are waiting for the coconut levy release, which still needs another law. They need more responsive government initiatives, such as intercropping in the two out of three million coconut hectares that are largely idle and coconut processing that can multiply their incomes. Meanwhile, Increasing the CME requirement to 5 percent makes economic sense and addresses the coconut farmers' crisis today. INQ

The author is Agriwatch chair, former Secretary of Presidential Programs and Projects and former Undersecretary of DA and DTI.
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BULACAN UNDER STATE OF CALAMITY

BAD WEATHER SPARES BENGUET VEGGIE FARMS

By Inquirer Northern and Central Luzon
@InqNational

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—Torrential rains in the past days have left minor damage to vegetable gardens, and will not lead to a supply shortage, farmers and officials here said.

Citing initial data from 13 towns in Benguet province, provincial agriculturist Lolita Bentres on Wednesday reported low crop damage that "left an insignificant dent on the overall vegetable supply."

About 27,000 hectares of vegetable gardens, some carved out of mountainsides, are the sources of over 80 percent of the country's salad vegetables such as carrot, cabbage, cauliflower and lettuce.

Price increases

This week, vegetable prices increased by P3 to as much as P20. The price of carrots, for instance, rose from P50 to P90 a kilogram.

Traders said the delayed arrival of vegetables at the trading post here accounted for the spike, but costs might increase due to losses from transporting vegetables to Metro Manila.

Trucks loaded with vegetables had been diverted to the Baguio-Bauang Road (also known as Naguilian Road) after the Department of Public Works and Highways closed Marcos Highway to heavy vehicles on Aug. 14.

'Bangus' losses

In Pangasinan province, P5 million worth of "bangus" (milkfish) swam to the open sea when fish ponds overflowed due to the monsoon rains and swollen rivers.

Bangus growers were still trying to recover from another P5-million loss from massive flooding last month, according to Dagupan City agriculturist Emma Molina.

Supply of vegetables from Benguet remains stable despite heavy rains in the province.—EV ESPIRITU

Bangus, Dagupan's main aquaculture product, is grown in more than 900 ha of ponds in the city.

On Wednesday, 21 of the city's 31 villages remained submerged, prompting city government officials to suspend classes for the third straight day.

Molina said P2 million worth of newly planted "palay" in 155 ha of rice fields were also destroyed by floodwaters.

On Wednesday, the National Power Corp. said it was reducing the number of open spillway gates of the San Roque Dam in San Manuel town from five to three. The dam had been spilling water into the Agno River since Sunday to lower its reservoir's water level.

State of calamity

In Central Luzon, Bulacan province was placed under a state of calamity as flooded villages in the region increased to 357 from 338 on Tuesday, according to the regional disaster risk reduction and management council.

In declaring a calamity state, the provincial board cited massive floods in nearly all 24 towns and cities due to high tide and rains induced by the southwest monsoon since last month. —REPORTS FROM KARLSTON LAPNITEN, GABRIEL CARDINOZA, CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE AND TONETTE OREJAS INQ

Pilipino Star
NGAYON
Diyaryong disente ng masang intelihente

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P200-M smuggled rice ibigay sa mga biktima ng habagat

Hinikayat kahapon ni Sen. Nancy Binay ang Bureau of Customs (BOC) na ibigay na lamang sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) ang nasa P200 milyong halaga ng smuggled rice na nasakote ng ahensiya upang mapakinabangan ng mga biktima ng habagat.

Nasakote ng BOC ang nasa 50,000 sako ng bigas na nagkakahalaga ng P175 milyon noong nakaraang Lunes, bukod pa sa 10,000 sako na nakuha naman sa isang warehouse sa Laguna noong Hulyo.

Sinabi ni Binay na sa halip na mabulok lamang ang mga nasabing bigas o kaya ay ipagbili ito, dapat ay ikonsidera ang kapakanan ng libu-libong mamamayan na naapektuhan ng mga nagdaang bagyo at ng habagat.

Bukod aniya sa makakatulong ang BOC sa relief efforts ng DSWD, maiiwasan pa ang pagkabulok ng mga saku-sakong bigas. *(Malou Escudero)*

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EDITORIAL

Serve seized rice

THIS is one case where the use of fruits of illicit operations for moral or humanitarian goals or purposes is justified.

It should not be a hard moral choice for the government to donate basic and vital commodities like food, medicine, and safe drinking water for victims of natural disasters.

We know there is a standing order from the President to burn or destroy smuggled and seized items from the Bureau of Customs; the purpose is to not only to punish the smugglers but also to prevent the diversion of the contraband for other illegal purpose.

But burning or destroying a staple grain during the season of typhoons, floods, and landslides is simply unconscionable.

And so we agree and support Sen. Nancy Binay in urging the BoC to turn over the smuggled rice the agency has seized to the social welfare department's relief operations for flood victims.

"Nanawagan po ako kay Commissioner Isidro Lapeña ng Customs na i-turn over na lang ng kanilang ahensya 'yung P200 million worth ng bigas na nasabat nila nitong mga nakaraang araw sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)," Binay said.

The bureau intercepted 50,000 sacks of rice worth P175 million last Monday, while another 10,000 sacks were seized in a Laguna warehouse last July.

Binay said that instead of letting the rice rot in warehouses or in container vans, or reselling it, the BoC should consider the welfare of thousands affected by past weather disturbances.

"Marami pong mga kababayan nating nasalanta ng mga nakaraang bagyo at ng habagat ang matutulungan nung nasabat na 60,000 sacks of rice," Binay said.

"Nakatulong na tayo sa relief efforts ng DSWD, imbes na masira o mabulok lamang ang bigas na ito sa mga warehouse o container vans," she added.

Binay also said that the BoC can also turn over the rice to the affected local government units (LGUs) themselves.

"Kung gusto po ng BoC, pwede po nilang i-diretso na ang turn over ng bigas sa mismong mga LGUs," Binay said.

"Sa ganitong paraan, mas mapapabilis siguro ang distribution sa mga kababayan nating nangangailangan," she added.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), in its August 15 situational report, said that around 820,000 persons or about 187,000 families were affected by the southwest monsoon, which was enhanced by Tropical Storm Karding (Yagi).

These families are in regions I, III, CALABARZON, CAR and NCR.

Of these, around 41,000 families or about 181,000 persons are being served inside and outside evacuation centers.

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Give smuggled rice to families hit by habagat, Binay tells BoC

By Marlon Purificacion

SENATOR Nancy Binay yesterday urged the Bureau of Customs (BoC) to turn over for the relief operations of the Department of Social Welfare and Development for flood victims the P200 million worth of smuggled rice the agency has seized instead of letting it rot.

"Nananawagan po ako kay Commissioner Isidro Lapeña ng Customs na i-turn over na lang ng kanilang ahensya sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) 'yung P200 million worth ng bigas na nasabat nila nitong mga nakaraang araw," Binay said.

The BoC intercepted 50,000 sacks of rice worth P175 million last Monday while another 10,000 sacks were seized in a Laguna warehouse last July.

Binay said that instead of letting the rice rot in warehouses or in container vans or reselling it, the BoC should consider the welfare of thousands affected by past weather disturbances.

"Marami pong mga kababayan nating nasalanta ng mga nakaraang bagyo at ng habagat ang matutulungan nung nasabat na 60,000 sacks of rice," she said.

Another option is that the BoC can also turn over the rice to the affected local government units themselves.

"Kung gusto po ng BoC, pwede po nilang i-diretso na ang turnover ng bigas sa mismong LGUs. Sa ganitong paraan, mas mapapabilis siguro ang distribution sa mga kababayan nating nangangailangan," Binay said.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported that around 820,000 persons or about 187,000 families were affected by the southwest monsoon enhanced by tropical Storm Karding (Yagi).

These families are in regions I, III, CALABARZON, CAR and NCR.

Of the number, around 41,000 families or about 181,000 persons are being served inside and outside evacuation centers.

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Soy exports' boost to US short-lived?

BY KAREN BRAUN

CHICAGO- The US economy grew at its fastest pace in nearly four years during the second quarter of 2018, and bigger soybean exports were cited as a primary contributor.

This is more likely a one-off factor than a growing trend, however, given the relatively modest impact of soybean exports on the larger US economy and the less optimistic outlook for US soybean trade over the next year.

Between April and June, US gross domestic product (GDP) increased at a 4.1 percent rate, the Commerce Department said in a report late last month. GDP is a primary indicator of a country's economic health.

This was the strongest performance for the US GDP since the third quarter of 2014, and it was reportedly driven by both consumer spending and the rush to ship soybeans to China to beat the retaliatory tariffs that took effect in early July.

US soybean shippers indeed had a stellar second quarter, shipping 8.4 million tons of the oilseed between April and June, up 48 percent over the same period a year earlier. The previous record for that time frame was 6.43 million tons in 1982.

Data from the US Census Bureau suggests that these additional shipments largely went to destinations other than China, including Mexico, the Netherlands, Pakistan and Indonesia.

US soybean exports to China between April and June totaled 1.21 million tons, down 15 percent from the same period in 2017 and well short of 2012's record 2.01 million. The United States is the second-largest exporter of soybeans behind Brazil.

The US Department of Agriculture expects 2018/19 soybean exports to decline 2 percent on the year, largely due to disrupted trade with China, the world's top consumer.

Agriculture, food, and related industries employed about 11 percent of the American workforce in 2016, but agriculture's footprint on the US economy, including exports, is smaller.

Earlier this year, data from USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) showed that agriculture contributed a record $1.05 trillion to the US GDP in 2016. This represents 5.6 percent of the 2016 total US GDP of $18.6 trillion.

The direct contribution of farm output to the 2016 GDP was less than 1 percent of the total at $136.7 billion, the lowest in six years. This is down about 27 percent from the record in 2013, when agricultural commodity prices were significantly higher than they are today.

Exports of US goods and services were valued at a total $2.21 trillion in 2016, accounting for 12 percent of the US GDP that year, which was the second year in a row that the share had fallen. The International Trade Administration attributed this decline to increased personal consumption playing a larger role in US GDP.

The value of US agricultural exports totaled $129.6 billion in fiscal year 2016, about 6 percent of the country's total export value, and soybeans accounted for $20.4 billion.

The total value of soybean exports through the first nine months of fiscal year 2018 was $18 billion, a 10 percent decline from the same period a year earlier. But the cumulative value of beans shipped to China was down 26 percent on the year.

The value of US soybean exports to China in fiscal year 2017 hit a record $14.6 billion.

It is very likely that the United States in July shipped a record amount of soybeans for the month given the high reported volumes that have recently been processed at ports, and there is still a healthy volume of beans on the books to be shipped in the 2017/18 marketing year that ends Aug. 31.

But lead buyer China has only 1.33 million tons of US soybeans booked for shipment in 2018/19, its lowest volume for this time of year since 2005. Some 61 percent of total US bean shipments arrived at Chinese ports last year.

US soy exports peak between October and December following the harvest, so more clarity on how much business the United States may or may not have lost will begin to arrive in a month or two.

Back in May, ERS projected the total value of US agricultural exports in fiscal year 2018 at $142.5 billion, up from both the February forecast of $139.5 billion and the $140.5 billion from 2017. The increase was based on a predicted boost in corn and cotton exports. The 2018 fiscal year ends on Sept. 30.

This was a good call as US corn exports between April and June also set a record for the time frame, soaring 45 percent above the same period last year. This was due to the attractively priced US grain relative to its competitors, which is the same reason for the elevated soybean business of late.

The next update from ERS is expected on Aug. 29 and should contain the initial outlook for the value of US agricultural trade in fiscal year 2019. USDA's latest soy export forecast for the 2018/19 marketing year that begins Sept. 1 was 10 percent lighter than its original outlook in May. – ***Reuters***

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Soybeans spooked by trade war

SYDNEY- US soybeans fell on Wednesday, dropping for the first time in three sessions, as the market worried the continuing trade war between Washington and Beijing will limit demand at the same time US production may rise to a record.

Corn declined after posting gains of more than 1.5 percent in the previous session, while wheat also fell 0.5 percent.

The most active soybean futures on the Chicago Board Of Trade were down 0.3 percent at $8.77 a bushel, as of 0337 GMT, having closed up 1.3 percent on Tuesday.

"Soybean prices are so dependent on geopolitical factors and the trade war between the United States and China shows little signs of abating," said Phin Ziebell, an agribusiness economist at National Australia Bank.

"You would have to be pretty brave to be buying at the moment."

The ongoing dispute between the United States and China has spooked traders that are grappling with expectations of record North American supplies.

US Department of Agriculture (USDA) projected domestic farmers will harvest the biggest US soybean crop ever.

China, the world's top soy importer, has increased purchases of the oilseed from South America due to the trade row with the United States.

Analysts expect China will be forced to buy US beans again before the end of the year.

The most active wheat futures were down 0.4 percent at$5.39-3/4 a bushel, after ending 1.5 percent higher in the previous session.

The most active corn futures were down 0.1 percent at $3.76-1/4 a bushel, having gained 1.6 percent in the previous session.

In a weekly report issued after the close of trading on Monday, the USDA lowered its condition ratings for the soybean and corn crops. – ***Reuters***

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Turkey hikes tariffs on imports of US products

ANKARA: Turkey is hiking tariffs on imports of certain US products in response to American sanctions on Ankara that caused the value of the lira to plunge, a decree published Wednesday said.

Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay said that the rises were ordered "within the framework of reciprocity in retaliation for the conscious attacks on our economy by the US administration."

The hikes were published in Turkey's *Official Gazette* in a decree signed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The move comes after US President Donald Trump announced that the United States was doubling steel and aluminium tariffs on Turkey, as the two NATO allies' row escalated over the detention by Turkish authorities of American pastor Andrew Brunson.

The tensions and the tariff hike by the United States have caused the Turkish lira to bleed value, fanning fears the country is on the verge of an economic crisis that could spillover into Europe.

Erdogan has repeatedly described the crisis as an "economic war" that Turkey will win.

The tariff increases amount to a doubling of the existing rate, the state-run Anadolu news agency said, in an apparent parallel response to Trump's move.

The decree said the move brought tariffs to 50 percent on imports of US rice to 140 percent on hard alcoholic drinks like spirits, 60 percent in leaf tobacco and 60 percent on cosmetics.

The tariffs on auto imports are now up to 120 percent depending on the type of vehicle.

However the latest outburst of tensions did not so far cause harm to the lira, which on Tuesday clawed back some ground after losing just under a quarter of its value in trade on Friday and Monday.

The lira was trading at 6.3 to the dollar, a gain in value on the day of 0.8 percent. **AFP**

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Turkey hikes tariffs on some US imports, escalating feud

ANKARA, Turkey—Turkey announced on Wednesday that it is increasing tariffs on imports of certain US products, escalating a feud with the United States that has helped trigger a currency crisis.

In a decision announced in the Official Gazette, Ankara said it will impose extra tariffs on imports of products including rice, vehicles, alcohol, coal and cosmetics. Tariffs on American cars were doubled to 120 percent, while tariff on alcoholic drinks to 140 percent.

Turkey's Vice President Fuat Oktay said on Twitter that the tariffs on certain products were increased "within the framework of the principle of reciprocity in retaliation for the deliberate economic attacks by the United States."

The Turkish lira has dropped to record lows in recent weeks, having fallen some 42 percent so far this year. The currency strengthened to around 6.20 lira against the dollar on Wednesday after the government took steps to shore up the currency by reducing the daily limit in bank foreign currency swap transactions and amid news that the finance minister would address foreign investors on Thursday.

Investors are worried not only about Turkey's souring relations with the US, a longtime Nato ally, but also Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's economic policies and the country's high debt accumulated in foreign currencies.

Turkey has accused the United States of waging an "economic war" as part of a plot to harm the country.

Washington has imposed financial sanctions on two Turkish ministers and doubled steel and aluminum tariffs on Turkey, as US President Donald J. Trump tries to secure the release of Andrew Brunson, an American pastor being tried in Turkey on espionage and terrorism-related charges.

The decision to impose new tariffs came a day after Erdogan said Turkey would boycott US electronic goods, singling out iPhones. He suggested Turks would buy local or Korean phones instead, although it was unclear how he intended to enforce the boycott. ***AP***

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Turkey hikes tariffs on some US imports, escalating feud

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The Turkish lira has dropped to record lows in recent weeks, having fallen some 42 percent so far this year. The currency has now stabilized at around 6.50 lira against the dollar.

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