CLIPPINGS FOR MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 2018

A. SEC. EFP QUOTED

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
DA plans to open fish markets amid high prices

MANILA STANDARD
Bohol fish market to serve as template for agri-tourism TienDA

MANILA BULLETIN
Gov’t to focus on supply solution, not tariff cuts

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Tariff cuts on food imports junked

BUSINESS WORLD
#Nation at a glance: NFA brings rice to Zamboanga City villages after shortage

REMate
DA chief sinisisi ang kakulangan ng pondo

B. DA FAMILY

BUSINESS MIRROR
Breeding tuna in PHL: Is it doable?

THE DAILY TRIBUNE
NFA blamed for rising rice prices

THE MANILA TIMES
Local firms be tapped for grains drying system

MANILA STANDARD
Rehab of Laguna Lake, Manila Bay pushed

BUSINESS MIRROR
Farm-gate price of palay hits P21.80/kg
NFA grants original proponent status to ANI’s rice import bid

BUSINESS WORLD
PhilMech hoping to bring improved palay dryer to market
Tawi-Tawi town gets P20Million from PRDP for seaweed project

MANILA BULLETIN
SIRA sees improvement in sugar prices
PCA not ready to handle P150-B coco levy funds

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
PCA to beef up workforce
C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

THE MANILA TIMES
‘Karding’ leaves P58M in agri, infra damage

BUSINESS MIRROR
Soft commodities hit record low with more losses seen for sugar
Price of live chicken down by nearly 9%

BUSINESS WORLD
Seed form targets indigenous peoples for knowledge transfer

MANILA BULLETIN
Not enough cheap rice behind surge in prices of basic items

TEMPO
P58-M damage to agri, infra

BALITA
Nasira ng habagat sa agri, infra, P60-M na!

D. FOREIGN STORY

BUSINESS WORLD
Canada to phase out crop chemicals linked to bee deaths

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Wheat tops one-week high
DA plans to open fish markets amid high prices

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Department of Agriculture targets to open fish markets in landlocked areas in several parts of the country amid the continued high prices of the basic commodity, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said. The Bohol fish market model, which was started last week, would also be implemented in towns and provinces which have limited or do not have fishing grounds like Baguio City, Bukidnon, Abra, Tarlac and North Cotabato, among others.

The DA recently opened the Bohol Fish Market in the Agriculture Promotions Center in Tagbilaran City where nearly seven metric tons of fish coming from the fishing grounds of Zamboanga, Caraga, Samar, Misamis Oriental and Iloilo were sold. “A validation made by a study team of the DA showed that traders and middlemen controlled the trading of fish, including other agricultural products in the province, resulting in prices of the common table fish galunggong soaring to as high as P220 per kilogram,” Piñol said.

The next fish market to be launched after Bohol will be in Baguio City where the DA has a facility within the Benguet State University compound. “The program will be replicated nationwide to ensure stable supply of fish at affordable prices and to address the problem caused by the control by traders and middlemen of the food supply chain,” Piñol said.

In the meantime, fish markets will be opened during Saturdays and Sundays until storage facilities are installed in the areas.

The agri chief said the Department of Transportation has already committed to give 200 units of refrigerated containers to serve as cold storage facilities for fish coming in from other provinces.

The DA will also link fishermen’s groups to other regions, especially Zamboanga Peninsula, to ensure direct contact and avoid the presence of middlemen. Likewise, stakeholders will be trained in financial literacy, while agricultural loans will also be made available.

The DA has already issued the certificate of necessity to import a maximum of 17,000 MT of galunggong for wet markets as a measure to stabilize price and supply.
Bohol fish market to serve as template for agri-tourism TienDA

AGRICULTURE Secretary Emmanuel Piñol has called the newly launched Bohol Fish Market in Tagbilaran City “an overwhelming success” and plans to replicate it in various parts of the country.

“The successful staging of the Bohol Fish Market will serve as a template for similar activities in other areas to bring down the prices of food,” Piñol said. He added the Bohol Fish Market would later be developed into a tourism destination, as eateries will be opened in the area where fish bought in the market would be cooked and served.

The Bohol Fish Market is the Department of Agriculture’s first provincial-level TienDA project through its Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

It was the department’s first major step to address the fast-rising commodity prices, particularly in Bohol. “It is the response of the DA to the complaints of local residents over very high prices of fish in the public market,” Piñol said.

TienDA is a marketing strategy launched by the DA in Metro Manila last year to help promote the availability of affordable food nationwide by providing venues where farmers and fishermen can directly sell to consumers.

The DA then staged TienDA in Barangay Payatas, an urban poor community in Quezon City, so residents could access lower-priced food. PNA
Gov't to focus on supply solution, not tariff cuts

Realizing that tariffs of most commodities are already at minimal levels, the multi-government agency Committee on Tariff and Related Matters (CTRM) has proposed supply-side interventions to minimize the impact of inflation and lower the prices of agricultural commodities instead of further tariff cuts.

Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon Lopez, chair of CTRM, said they have approved during their recent meeting to focus on supply-oriented actions and volume enhancements that would have immediate impact.

During the CTRM meeting on 15 August, Lopez reported that the August 15 CTRM Meeting concluded that the reduction on most favored nation (MFN) rates will not significantly reduce prices as the agricultural products are already being sourced from Free Trade Agreement (FTA) partners under lower preferential rates.

Potential solutions to reduce inflation as well as the results of the public hearing on the proposed tariff modification on meat, edible oil, fish, edible vegetables, feed wheat, and corn were discussed.

This developed after the Tariff Commission reported that modifying the tariff rates will not have a significant impact on the prices of agricultural products because many of these have relatively lower tariff base already, or would have landed costs lower than local prices.

"After consulting with various stakeholders as well as the current status of tariff rates, there'll be minimum movement if we bring the tariff to 5 percent," said Lopez.

So, this would not be the solution," said Lopez.

"We need to focus our efforts in finding realistic and practical solutions to lower the prices while balancing the interests of both consumers and producers," Sec. Lopez added.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture had issued a Certificate of Necessity allowing a maximum 17,000 MT of galunggong to be imported by accredited fish importers.

The articles will only be unloaded in Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)-accredited cold storage facilities and will be sold in Navotas Fishport.

This is part of the government's inflation mitigating measure.

"We're also amending the Fisheries Administrative Order No. 195 to allow the sale of imported fish in wet markets," said Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol.

DA also requested the Bureau of Customs to temporarily suspend the imposition of Special Safeguard Measures on chicken meat imports.

In the case of pork supply, it was reported that MAV certificate holders utilize 50 percent only of their allocations.

Piñol directed MAV certificate holders to utilize their allocations, otherwise, these can be cancelled and rebidded to others.

DTI and DA will also be conducting regular inspection of commodity importers' warehouses to establish level of inventory. Likewise, arrival and distribution of NFA rice imports will also be monitored.

The CTRM meeting was attended by the departments of Finance (DOF), Budget and Management (DBM), Foreign Affairs (DFA), Labor and Employment (DOLE), Agrarian Reform (DAR), and Transportation (DOT). Representatives of the Office of the Executive Secretary, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Tariff Commission, Board of Investments (BOI), and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) were also present.

(BCM)
Tariff cuts on food imports junked

The Committee on Tariff and Related Matters (CTRM) rejected the proposal to lower tariff rates on imports of agricultural products, pushing for supply-side interventions instead in a bid to tame inflation.

Inflation in July hit a new high in more than five years at 5.7 percent, an issue that lawmakers tried to address by pushing to lower tariffs on agricultural imports to boost supply in the market and consequently lower prices.

This, however, would hardly help at all, according to Lopez, who also heads the CTRM, an advisory board tasked to advise the President on the effects of tariffs on the country.

"Based on the report of the Tariff Commission, modifying the tariff rates will not have a significant impact on the prices of agricultural products because many of these have relatively lower tariff base already, or would have landed costs lower than local prices," he added.

The committee met on Aug. 15 to discuss potential solutions to reduce inflation as well as the results of the public hearing on the proposed tariff modification on meat, edible offal, fish, edible vegetables, feed wheat and corn.

It was concluded, however, that the reduction on most favored nation rates would not significantly reduce prices as the agricultural products were already being sourced from Free Trade Agreement partners under lower preferential rates.

Upon consultation with stakeholders and looking into the current tariff rates, Lopez said there would be "minimum movement" in the prices if the tariff were brought down to 5 percent.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, who is also part of the CTRM, said the body would not recommend to the President the issuance of an executive order that would reduce the import duties on the food items.

In a statement sent by the DTI, Piñol was quoted as saying that his department was amending the Fisheries Administrative Order No. 195 "to allow the sale of imported fish in wet markets." Piñol has also ordered the importation of about 17,000 metric tons of round scad (galunggong) at the normal tariff rate in a bid to address the rising prices of the fish variety in the market.

He said meat importers were ordered to fast-track their importation in time for the lean months.

DTI said that DA also requested the Bureau of Customs to temporarily suspend the imposition of Special Safeguard Measures on chicken meat imports.

In the case of pork supply, Piñol has directed minimum access volume certificate holders to use their allocations or risk these being canceled, after finding out that certificate holders use up only 50 percent of their allocations.
ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA: ZAMBOANGA CITY
NFA brings rice to Zamboanga City villages after shortage
FOLLOWING A grave rice shortage in Zamboanga City in the past two weeks that saw regular mill rice sold at as much as P80 per kilogram, the National Food Authority (NFA) Zamboanga Peninsula regional office has launched a program to bring supply directly to the different villages. "Aside from the market places, we will also have distributions of NFA rice in the different villages in the city," said NFA Assistant Regional Director Ruben M. Manatad. The program, dubbed Tagpuan Day, sets up temporary selling points in the barangays with NFA rice priced at P32 per kilogram. "Each person is allowed to purchase at least five kilograms of NFA rice," Mr. Manatad said. Earlier this month, Zamboanga City and its neighboring island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi experienced a sudden increase in commercial rice prices due to a strengthened campaign against smuggled rice, coupled by the delay of imports by the government and the off harvest season.

Last week, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel " Manny " F. Pinto flew to the city to assess the rice shortage situation. "We would like to assure the people of Zamboanga that we have an available supply of rice," he said. "What happened was the delay of the importation, this was one of the reason why the price increased," he said, "and the untimely off harvest season, so it complicated the problem." — Albert F. Arcilla

NFA distributes rice directly to the villages after a major shortage in Zamboanga City.
SINO nga ba ang dapat sasihin sa walang pag-unlad na kaganapan ng Department of Agriculture? Ayon sa mga datos, tatlong taon nang nasa weakest point ang sektor ng Agrikultura na may 6% na growth sa Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
Itô ay may 0.2% na pagtaas lang sa loob ng Abril-Hulyo. At mas mababa pa nga itô sa rate target ng Philippine Development Plan of NEDA na 2.5% - 3.5%.
"You cannot milk an emaciated cow," katwiran ni Agri-
culture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol.

Degdag na niya, itô naman daw ay hindi kabiyan ng kanilang performance sa buong taon.
Para sa taong itô, may budget ang DA na P53.4 bilyon at sa susunod na taon ang ahensya ay bibigyan ng P49.8 bilyon.

Itô ay bumaba para sa susunod na taon dahil na nga siguro na nagging resulta ng aktibidad nito ngayong 2018. Marahil ang pagbabata ng budget ng ahensya ay sen-

yales na dapat mas pagbutihin pa ng sektor ang kanilang mga aktibidad upang malalagat ang kanilang departamento at muling mahanay sa iba't ibang ahensya na patuloy ang pag-unlad sa kani-kanilang pokus.

Nararapat lamang na malutas agad ng sektor ang mga ganitong suliranin nang sa ganon ay maaari pa nilang mapababa ang pagtaas ng mga gula'y at iba pang produkto na mula sa Agrikultura.
At hindi rin magkaroon ng kakulangan sa isa sa mga pangunahing pangangailangan, ang pagkain.
"With what is going on right now, and the stakeholders agree, we need to remind the government how important it is to ensure food security," ang huling pahayag ni DA Sec. Piñol.
Breeding tuna in PHL: Is it doable?

By Jonathan L. Mayuga @jonimayuga

After successfully breeding bangus (milkfish) and tilapia, and at some extent, grouper or more commonly known as lapu-lapu, Department of Agriculture officials are now floating the idea of breeding tuna.

Part 1 of 3
Is it doable?
Best Alternatives Campaign, an environmental communications think tank, believes it is so. It views breeding tuna as the best alternative to the global problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated illegal fishing, particularly of the commercially viable tuna.

Jonah van Beijnen, cofounder of Fins and Leaves, who endeavored to develop and successfully market one of the Philippines' first grouper hatcheries 10 years ago believes that sustainable production and consumption of seafood is the key to ensuring a better world for all people.

With tuna being highly migratory, making them agile and meaty, as they travel long distances, would breeding tuna not affect their natural taste and texture?

Beijnen told the BUSINESS MIRROR via e-mail and social media that, indeed, tuna swim long distances constantly, which lowers their fat content.

Better-tasting tuna
HOWEVER, he said, overall a tuna’s price is mainly determined by its fat content, as Japanese customers and sushi lovers prefer, which they say has better taste.

"Tuna grown in cages overall have a higher fat content because they are fed well and don't swim too far. Another big advantage is that you can harvest the fish and sell them immediately, while most fishing vessels go out for many days, storing fish on board an ice box. Except for sustainable handline-caught tuna, fresh tuna from a fishing boat is sometimes a week old before sold," he said.

Best Alternatives Campaign founder Gregg Yan believes that, despite lagging behind in terms of technical capacity compared to other countries, sustainable aquaculture and mariculture remains the best alternative for the Philippines, thereby supporting Beijnen's analysis when he admitted that the Philippines is a bit behind with culturing marine finfish.

Beijnen added: "Species like grouper, snapper and sea bass are already cultured in large quantities in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. [The Philippines is somewhat left behind mainly because of local bureaucratic hurdles and a somewhat riskier investment climate]."

He noted, however, the Philippines "has the best marine waters and water quality in Southeast Asia and is in the best position to make this [breeding tuna] work."

Yan, a Filipino, said any tuna size for harvesting in fish cages is economically viable, because full-cycle mariculture is a means to reduce pressure on wild-captured fisheries.

"Any size. Because eggs are produced, several tuna can quickly grow to several hundred," Yan said.

Ideal breeding ground
WITH many islands and surrounding calm and productive waters, the Philippines, which sits at the center of the natural spawning grounds of wild yellowfin tuna, is ideal for breeding tuna.

"Juvenile tuna love these warm and calm waters teeming with food. This might just give the Philippines a big advantage in the future closed-cycle culture of yellowfin tuna," he explained.

Realizing this potential, even the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) on July 11 issued a statement announcing the plan to collaborate with the Japanese government to start yellowfin tuna-fattening operations in Samar. Juvenile tuna will be gathered there for farming from their spawning grounds in municipal waters.

Beijnen added that cages for tuna are pretty large, but are very similar with cages that are used to farm milkfish or bangus at sea. This means that the Philippines has the resources for putting up tuna cages with available local materials.

A lucrative business
ACCORDING to Beijnen, at this time, it is not easy to peg how much would it cost to start tuna-breeding business but cautioned that hatcheries are not cheap to establish and require a long-term approach.

"This is why we propose that the Philippine and the Japanese governments build a research station together. Successful private companies can start growing tuna after buying captive-bred juveniles from the research center and hatchery," he said.

He said there should also be a proper guideline that will take into consideration the situation that tuna is already overfished and that the global stock is depleted. "We have some concerns with the plan of BFAR to catch juvenile tuna for fattening purposes. We believe that the sea is already overexploited. A better alternative would be to focus on producing juvenile tuna from the eggs in captivity," he said.
“Besides promoting sustainable systems like handline fisheries, limiting fishing effort and improving enforcement, [the use of] closed cycle aquaculture or breeding tuna can be a best alternative—especially for the Philippines,” he said.

Fattening operations

He said that, in Europe and Japan, the culture of tuna started many years ago with fattening operations.

Special purse seiners in Europe and Japan target wild juvenile and sub-adult tuna, which are carefully caught and towed back to special fattening farms.

“Upon arrival, these tuna are transferred to large floating cages where they are fattened to attain better marketable sizes and to improve the fat percent-
age of their meat. Fatter tuna fetch higher prices,” he said.

Feed options

Since pellet feeds for tuna are still under development in Europe, fresh fish like sardines and mackerel are used as feed, he said.

The feed-conversion ratio of fresh fish fed to tuna is not yet very efficient and approximately 15 kilograms to 20 kg of other fish is used to produce 1 kg of tuna.

About 10 years ago, with the number of fattening operations rising and most tuna stocks overfished or fished close to their maximum sustainable yields, a number of governments, nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders expressed their concerns about the sustainability of these farming practices.

This eventually drove the European Union and the Japanese governments to steer their aquaculture sectors away from fattening wild-caught juvenile fish and instead invest in developing technology for the sustainable closed-cycle aquaculture of tuna.

Hatchery projects

According to Beijnen, hatchery projects for Atlantic bluefin tuna are already operating in Spain, Malta, Greece, Croatia, Egypt and Turkey.

“Since 2014 many of these projects have successfully produced small quantities of fingerlings and some harvestable fish. The first tuna products from these efforts are already available in the Netherlands,” he said.

Beijnen added that, in Japan, scientists have been working hard to close the lifecycle of its closely related Pacific bluefin tuna, a species that is also found in the Philippines, especially around the recently protected Philippine Rise, east of Luzon.

“After many years of trial and error, approximately 20 hatchery facilities are now producing Pacific bluefin tuna with an average survival rate estimated from 3 percent to 5 percent,” he said.

In 2016 the hatcheries produced a total number of 500,000 fingerlings.

Commercial viability

The sales from grow-out operations using hatchery-produced Pacific bluefin tuna have lifted off as well, with 900 metric tons of sales in 2016 and over 1000 metric tons of sales in 2017—thereby proving beyond doubt that the closed-cycle aquaculture of bluefin tuna is viable, profitable and an excellent alternative to wild-capture fisheries.

In the meantime, two projects in Panama (South America) and Bali (Indonesia) have been focusing on yellowfin tuna. Both projects have been able to produce plenty of eggs in captivity and some fingerlings.

“Although there are still plenty of challenges in improving the survival of tuna larvae and fingerlings, improving the sustainability of feeds and minimizing the environmental impacts of farming activities, the potential of the sector is clear,” he said.

“Besides promoting sustainable systems like handline fisheries, limiting fishing effort and improving enforcement, [the use of] closed cycle aquaculture or breeding tuna can be a best alternative—especially for the Philippines.”—BEIJNEN
NFA blamed for rising rice prices

By Abraham Doctor

Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian on Sunday blamed the rising prices of rice partly on the National Food Authority (NFA).

In a radio interview, the senator dismissed assumptions that the Tax Reform Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law kicked the prices of different goods and services in the country up. Gatchalian said the NFA is partly liable due to the problem in its operation and failure to comply with its responsibilities of stabilizing rice prices and sustaining the staple’s availability.

The senator said it may be for the better if NFA is to be abolished.

He also claimed that the agency does not monitor purchases of NFA rice and omits buyer’s social class, which is also important since the NFA is tasked to provide cheap rice to the poor.

Before the Senate hearing on the TRAIN law’s impact on inflation last 16 August, the senator revealed having sent orders to probe Valenzuela’s local markets as there were no supplies of NFA rice available.

More pressing is the NFA’s accumulated losses that, according to the senator, has ballooned to almost P160 billion.

The senator said it may be for the better if NFA is to be abolished and prices on rice to be deregulated with the government carefully monitoring its market.

“Let’s remember if a government agency is losing, we are all paying for it. As a taxpayer we are the ones who give subsidy to losing government corporations,” Gatchalian said.
Local firms to be tapped for grains drying system

THE Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) will start commercializing its locally-developed Fluidized Bed Dryer, a technology that aims to provide better grains drying system for rice farmers.

In a statement, PhilMech said it will select companies from the local farm machinery fabrication industry to manufacture the farm equipment.

The technology underwent testing and trials in the past two years and proved its efficiency. Its commercialization will be conducted in the latter part of the year, the agency added.

"PhilMech researchers and scientists have vastly improved on the Fluidized Bed Dryer prototype that the agency developed in 2015. From the latter part of this year, PhilMech will take steps to commercialize the technology," Dr. Jallorina said.

"From the prototype developed in 2015 that only had 500 kilograms capacity per batch, PhilMech was able to develop a model that can dry one ton of palay per batch," he added.

The drying cost per kilo of the new technology is below the industry average of P1 per kilo. According to PhilMech, a typical fluidized bed drying system uses heated air to dry commodities like grains. During the fluidization process, hot air or gas is introduced through the bed of solid particulates. The gas or air will move upwards through the spaces between the particles.

Besides the agriculture sector, PhilMech noted that fluidized drying has applications in the food processing, chemical, pharmaceutical, dairy, metals, and dyes industries, among others.

As part of the commercialization process, PhilMech will have to accredit and select manufacturers that will fabricate the farm equipment.

The development of the technology, the agency said, is also in line with its advocacy to promote locally-developed and fabricated farm equipment.

"PhilMech fully supports the development of the local farm machinery industry that has the potential to employ more people especially in the rural areas, not only in the actual manufacture of the machines but also in the provision of after-sales or maintenance services," Jallorina said.

Jallorina emphasized that drying palay remains an issue needed to be addressed as most small farmers still dry their grains on the road which can be inefficient.

Farmers who can't properly dry their palay are forced to sell their products to traders with drying facilities at a much lower price, Jallorina added.

PhilMech said improperly dried palay can result in less quantity or poor quality of rice recovered during the milling process.

Usually, milling results in 50 to 60 percent rice recovered based on the weight of palay, it added.

During the rainy season, palay harvested wet is more prevalent, making it more challenging for the rice industry to produce quality rice.

The ideal moisture content for palay is 14 percent.

PhilMech is the leading institution for farm mechanization in the Philippines as mandated by the Agriculture and Fisheries Mechanization Act (AFMech or Republic Act No. 10601).

The agency develops protocols and processes where technologies produced by the agency and locally-available equipment are tapped for easier adoption by farmers, cooperatives, and agribusiness enterprises.

BREENE JAIREE GOMEZ
Rehab of Laguna Lake, Manila Bay pushed

MALACAÑANG "ought to do a Boracay" on Laguna Lake and Manila Bay, which are both rotting fast due to unrestrained human activity, Buhay Rep. Lito Atienza said Sunday.

"Fish prices have gone up in Metro Manila partly due to the rapid degradation of our municipal waters. Even subsistence fisherfolk can no longer catch enough fish to feed their families," said Atienza.

Atienza's remarks came amid reports that the price of "galunggong" (round scad) has surged to as high as P180 per kilo in wet markets around Metro Manila.

In a bid to stabilize the price of the widely-consumed fish variety, the Department of Agriculture issued an administrative order last week permitting the importation of 17 million kilos of galunggong for direct sale to wet markets.

"Actually, it is not just the price of galunggong that has gone up. We had the wet markets surveyed, and the prices of practically all fish varieties have gone up by at least P20 per kilo compared to a week ago," Atienza said.

"If Malacañang can strongly arm the environmental renewal of Boracay, surely it can also do the same to Laguna Lake and Manila Bay," he added.

Atienza blamed illegal fish cages, industrial waste, untreated sewage and unchecked land reclamation for the decay of the waters around Metro Manila.

"Aquatic life in our municipal waters is being suffocated. This is why we have fish kills or mass die-offs everywhere," Atienza said.
Farm-gate price of palay hits ₱21.80/kg

BY JASPER EMMAŅUEL Y. ARLCAS

AFTER dipping slightly in the third week of July, the average farm-gate price of unmilled rice recovered and reached a new record high of ₱21.80 per kilogram (kg) in end-July.

A price-monitoring report from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the current average palay quotation as of the fourth week of July was 1.02 percent higher than the previous week’s ₱21.59 per kg recorded a week ago.

“This was also higher by 11.79 percent from the level a year ago at ₱19.51 per kg,” the PSA said in the report published recently.

The previous record-high average palay quotation was recorded in the second week of July at ₱21.61 per kg.

From July 25 to 31, the PSA recorded the highest farm-gate price of palay in Central Visayas region at ₱23.78 per kg, while the lowest quotation was seen in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao at ₱18.50 per kg.

Also, both the wholesale and retail prices of regular-milled rice and well-milled rice varieties sustained increments during the fourth week of July.

The average wholesale price of regular milled rice at ₱39.13 per kg was 0.69 percent higher than the ₱38.86 per kg recorded in the third week of July.

“Relative to the same period in the previous year, this week’s price level accelerated by 10.72 percent,” the PSA said.

The average retail price of regular milled rice ₱41.49 per kg picked up by 0.78 percent compared to the previous week’s level of ₱41.27.

“It likewise, climbed by 9.71 percent from the level a year ago at ₱37.91 per kg,” the report read.

The PSA noted that the wholesale price of well-milled rice grew 0.71 percent to ₱42.60 per kg during the reference period, from the previous week’s ₱42.30 per kg.

“Relative to the same period in the previous year, it was also priced higher by 8.81 percent,” it said.

“The average retail price of well-milled rice at ₱45.32 per kg posted an uptick of 0.71 percent from the level a week ago. Similarly, it rose by 8.83 percent, from ₱41.95 per kg in the previous year,” the PSA added.

The arrival of rice imported by the National Food Authority was expected to ease the increase in rice prices. However, bad weather delayed the delivery of rice imports to NEA’s warehouses and prevented the agency from immediately distributing rice to local markets.

“It is possible that-[the price of rice continues to increase due to delay in our import arrival]. If you are only infusing a little volume in the market, definitely it will affect the price,” NEA Spokesman Rex Estoperez told the BUSINESSMIRROR in an earlier interview.
LISTED Agrinuture Inc. (ANI) said its unsolicited joint venture (JV) proposal for the financing and purchase of imported rice to augment the country’s buffer stock was granted original proponent status by the National Food Authority (NFA).

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, ANI said it received a letter from NFA acknowledging receipt of its proposal and that the company has been considered and recognized as original proponent.

Under the proposed JV agreement, ANI shall finance the supply of NFA rice with no cash out on the part of government. Both parties shall jointly determine the origin, suppliers, delivery and arrival periods, packing, and loading and discharging ports. The NFA will solely determine the type of commodity to be imported, specifications and quantity.

As accepted by the NFA, the ANI consortium will import as much as 500,000 metric tons (MT) of rice, equivalent to a two-week national inventory of subsidized NFA rice per quarter. ANI assured that the NFA will not spend for the purchase of imported rice.

Under its mandate, NFA is required to ensure national food security and to stabilize supply and prices of staple cereals like rice both in the farm and consumer levels.

At any given time, the agency is required to maintain a rice buffer stock good for 15 days, and good for 30 days during lean months. Since the Philippine daily rice requirement is estimated at 32,750 MT, the plan of ANI to bring in 500,000 MT is just enough to fill the NFA’s 15-day requirement.

During the lean months, the NFA needs to import more in keeping with the mandate of President Duterte to maintain a 60-day buffer stock.

ANI said its JV proposal will not replace local supply and that it only aims to augment the country’s rice inventory.

It also assured that NFA has no risk or exposure to losses and that all risks shall be borne by the ANI consortium from the time of purchase up to the point of dealing with undisposed stocks.

After being granted original proponent status, ANI said the project proposal will now proceed in accordance with both the technical and legal processes under the National Economic and Development Authority’s “Guidelines and Procedures for Entering into Joint Venture Agreements between Government and Private Entities.”
PhilMech hoping to bring improved palay dryer to market

THE Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) expects to commercialize its Fluidized Bed Dryer mainly for rice farmers within the year.

In a statement sent over the weekend, PhilMech Executive Director Baldwin G. Jallorina said that the center has managed to increase the dryer’s capacity to one ton of palay per batch from 500 kilograms previously.

“PhilMech researchers and scientists have vastly improved on the Fluidized Bed Dryer prototype that the agency developed in 2015. From the latter part of this year, PhilMech will take steps to commercialize the technology,” he added.

The agency will be selecting farm machinery fabricators to manufacture the dryer, thereby promoting domestically-made farm equipment.

Aside from processing palay (unmilled rice) the Fluidized Bed Dryer can also be used in food processing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, dairy production, and by the metal and dye industries.

“[T]he local farm machinery industry […] has the potential to employ more people especially in the rural areas, not only in the actual manufacture of the machine but also in the provision of after-sales or maintenance services,” Mr. Jallorina said.

With the commercialization of the dryer, PhilMech expects better-quality rice, especially during the rainy season when smaller farmers who resort to sun drying are at a disadvantage.

The center said rice yields drop to around 50% to 60% if palay is improperly dried.

Access to a dryer means farmers will not need to sell their palay at a lower price to traders who have drying facilities, Mr. Jallorina said. — Anna Gabriela A. Mogato
Tawi-Tawi town gets P20 million from PRDP for seaweed project

DAVAO CITY — The Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) has allocated about P20 million for the development of the marine industry in a town in the island province of Tawi-Tawi.

PRDP, in a statement last week, said the funds will help set up four post-harvest facilities in Tandubas, a key producer of seaweed and fish products as well as cassava and coconuts. The facilities are three warehouses with solar driers that will benefit 861 households, and a fish landing that will help 258 members of the village.

Local government officials said they decided to submit a marine-related proposal to the PRDP rather than one involving farming as the seaweed industry is expected to have a more significant impact on the communities.

Tandubas Mayor Hija Rahima A. Salih said the facilities will help seaweed producers reduce post-harvest losses and improve income.

"We must all be in step with the goals and aspirations we have set in order to contribute to local and national development, not only for ourselves, but also for generations to come," said Ms. Salih.

Danilo T. Alesna, PRDP deputy project director for Mindanao, noted "the strong leadership of the municipal officials and support from the province of Tawi-Tawi."

Mr. Alesna said the PRDP’s implementing agency, the Department of Agriculture, is also "very much supportive." Based on the PRDP guidelines, proposals need to be backed by value chain analysis and a Provincial Commodity Investment Plan. — Carmelito Q. Francisco
SRA sees improvement in sugar prices

By MADELAINE B. MIRAFLO

The Sugar Regulatory Administra-
tion (SRA) expects improvement in sugar prices as it pro-
ceeds with auction of smuggled sugar from South Korea and Thailand and the onset of a new crop season.

Upon the request from the Bureau of Customs, the SRA recommended that the smuggled sugar seized at the ports of Manila and Cagayan De Oro City be sold and reclassified as B sugar, which is meant for domestic use.

"We recommended the floor price at P1,900.00 [per 50-kilo bag] and that those who will be allowed to participate in the auction should be the SRA-accredited local and international traders," SRA Board Member Roland Beltran said in a mobile phone message.

"The Sugar Board commends the BOC for seizing the smuggled sugar even as we encouraged the BOC to further intensify its efforts in curbing unauthorized entry into the Country of Imported Sugar," he added.

Based on SRA's estimates, the value of smuggled sugar seized in port of Manila stood around P42.75 million, while that in Cagayan De Oro would cost around P8.01 billion. A few shipments of imported high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) worth P3.5 million were also seized.

Last week, Customs District Collector Erastus Sandino Austria wrote SRA a letter saying "in order to generate revenue from non-traditional source and decongest the port," the agency intends to immediately offer the illegal shipment to public auction.

"This refers to the shipment of 45x20 containers of approximately 1.12 million kilogram or 22,500 sacks of refined sugar that arrived at the Port of Manila on various dates from June 30 to July 21 from Thailand and has expiry date of February 6, 2020," Austria said.

Aside from this, Customs seized another 2,913 bags of 50-kilos each from Thailand and 2,167 bags from Korea.

When asked if the smuggled sugar to be sold in the domestic market can help further stabilize prices, Beltran said "this is within the tolerable level of supply even as we are about to enter the new crop season for year 2018 to 2019."
PCA not ready to handle P150-B coco levy funds

By MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR

The Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) admitted that it cannot handle the P150-billion coconut levy fund should the government decide to give it to the agency, instead of directly giving it to farmers.

PCA Administrator Romulo Dela Rosa said in an interview that the agency must be massively reorganized first because it is not geared to handle funds as huge as P15 billion every year.

Early this month, the Bicameral Conference Committee, chaired by Senator Cynthia Villar, passed a bill that would facilitate the release of the coco levy fund.

The coco levy fund, which came from the taxes imposed on coconut farmers by the Marcos administration, is now estimated to have grown to around more than P180 billion. The Bicameral Committee agreed that the funds will be released to the PCA at P5 billion annually until it runs out, which is estimated to be within 25 years.

Villar also proposed to inject additional P10 billion to the reconstituted PCA which should come from the government coffers. “We will be overwhelmed with too huge of a budget, that’s why we really need to organize PCA so we can enhance our absorptive capacity,” Dela Rosa said in Filipino.

“Right now, we are not yet ready to handle funds like that,” he added.

Dela Rosa said the problem is that PCA, like any other government agencies, lacks manpower and hurrying to get more people is not going to be easy.

To recall, PCA has to reduce the number of its employees by half in 2019 following a rationalization plan. The agency is still beefing up its human resource development program.

“We’re giving our people training and upgrading their skills,” Dela Rosa said. “We are still making a study on how many people we will get and there will be a special unit dedicated to handling the coco levy funds.”

As part of the proposed coco levy measure, a reconstituted PCA should include six representatives from different coconut farmers’ groups.
PCA to beef up workforce

THE Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) is beefing up its workforce in preparation for the expected annual infusion of as much as P15 billion budget through the coco levy fund.

The agency anticipates P15 billion annually out of the P105-billion coconut levy fund whose creation has been authorized by the passage of a bill in the bicameral conference committee.

PCA’s 2019 budget is only P1.4 billion.

“We need to reorganize and get more people because in 2013, we had a rationalization plan. We reduced the total personnel contingent by at least half. We currently have 850 plantilla positions because of the passing of the GCG Law (Governance Commission for government owned and controlled corporations),” said Romulo dela Rosa, PCA administrator.

PCA derives its budget for the salaries of its employees from its corporate income from regulatory fees which could only support 500 of 800 the agency’s personnel requirement.

“We are understaffed as far as regular staff is concerned. Majority of our people are contratuals,” dela Rosa said.

But he clarified the P15-billion budget will be utilized to support the 3.5 million coconut farmers in the country as they plan to source the salary of additional PCA employees through Sen. Cynthia Villar’s proposal to grant the PCA with additional P10-billion fund.

“We’re giving our people training, upgrading of skills and human resource development program is being beefed up. We are still making a study on how much more personnel we will add as there will be a special unit dedicated to handle the coco levy funds,” dela Rosa said.

PCA is also readying the coconut industry roadmap.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, the country produced as much as 14,049,131.06 metric tons of coconut last year.
FARM-GATE PRICE NG MANOK BUMABA

BUMABA ng may siyam na porsiyento ang farm-gate price ng manok sa kalagat na ng Agosto dahil sa mataas na demand habang lumilipat ang mga maminili ng isda at karne sa manok.

Ayon kay United Broiler Raisers Association (UBRA) President Elias Jose Inciong, bumababa ang presyo dahil mas marami ang bawat ngayon ng mga consumer dahil sa pagmahal ng isda at mga karne.

Sinasabi ito ay yearly pattern ng interaksiyon ng supply-demand.

Sa linggulang price monitoring survey ng UBRA ay lumilitaw na sa Agosto 17 ay nasa P93 per kilogram na ang manok na 5.1 porsiyentong mas babas sa P98 kada kilo ng farm-gate price nitong Agosto 10.

Ang farm-gate price ng regular-sized broiler ay bumagsak ng 6.23 porsiyento o P92.67 kada kilo muli sa P98.83 kada kilo nitong nakaraan.

SUMIPA ang presyo ng wholesale at retail prices ng regular-milled rice at well-milled rice varieties sa Hulyo, ayon sa Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Sa price monitoring report ng PSA, ang average wholesale price ng regular milled rice ay nasang P39.13 per kg, mas mataas ng 0.69 percent sa P38.86 price level na naitala sa ikatlong linggo ng Hulyo.

"Relative to the same period in the previous year, it was also priced higher by 8.81 percent," sabi pa ng PSA.

"The average retail price of well milled rice at P45.32 per kg posted an uptick of 0.71 percent from the level a week ago. Similarly, it rose by 8.03 percent from P41.95 per kg in the previous year."

ANG pagdating ng bigas na inangkat ng National Food Authority (NFA) ay maasaahang magangalababa sa presyo ng bigas. Gayunman, dahil sa masamang panahon ay naitala ang delivery ng rice imports sa mga bodega ng NFA, dahilan para hindi ito agad magpapadala sa mga local markets.

"It is possible that [the price of rice continues to increase due to delays in our import arrival]. If you are only infusing a little volume in the market, definitely it will affect the price," pahayag ni NFA Spokesman Rex Estoperez.

Sa datos ng PSA, ang kasasaktikan ng average palay quotation hanggang noong huling linggo ng Hulyo ay mas mataas na 1.02 percent sa P21.59 per kg price level na naitala sa ikatlong linggo ng Hulyo.

"This was also higher by 11.79 percent from the level a year ago at P19.51 per kg," pahayag ng PSA.

Sa reference period mula Hulyo 25 hanggang Hulyo 31, naitala ng PSA ang pinakamataas na farm-gate price ng palay sa Central Visayas region sa P23.78 per kg, habang ang pinakamababa ay sa ARMM sa P18.50.

JASPER ARCICALAS
LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Laguna Lake
ipasasara rin

IPINASASARA na rin pan-
samantala ng isaang kon-
gresista ang Laguna Lake.

Panawigan ito ni BUHAY
Partysist Rep. Lito Atienza sa
ikabubuli at kakalaya na rin
anya ng Laguna Lake katu-
lad ng ilanggawang palag-
pasara ng administrasyong
Duterte sa Bataay na naga-
yon ay makikita na ang mga
pagbubago.

Ignat ng mambabatas na
masyado na ngunong pulson
na ito ng baklad na labis na
nakaaspekto sa mga ito.

Ito ayon kay Atienza ay
dahil hawak o pagmamay-an
na ng mga makapangyari-
hang heneral, akaa, gober-
nador at posibleting mga kong-
resista ang mga baklad sa
Laguna Lake na halip na ma-
punta ito sa malili na manging-
ngisid ng dapat nakikinabang
sa lahat. Pinuna ni Atienza ang
matatag na pagayo ngayon ng
"galungan" na umaabot na
sa P180, kadi kio sa buong
Metro Manila.

AtTruly, tabi ang gisin-
wang kahibang ng Department
of Agriculture na upang mana-
ting matutulungan ang presyo ng
galungan ay nag-aalito ng
administrative order na nag-
bibigay daan sa importasyon
ng 177 myong kidang galungan
ng ma direkta ta botebinta sa
merkado.

Infahian nila ng Atienza
ang Laguna Lake sa pagpas-
asa ni Pangulong Duterte
noong April sa Bataay ng
animo na buwan upang big-
yang daan ang rehabilitasyon
ng sa lahat sa puong mun-
do dahil sa "white sand
beach." Ayon sa mambabatas
kung nagawa ng gobyerno
ang rehabilitasyon ng Bataay
ay maaari ring pansamanta-
lag pasara ang Laguna Lake
para ito ay malinis at maisa-
lin sa rehabilitasyon.

Sinabi ko rin ni Atienza
ang mga hukom na puwede sa
demolisyong mga ilegal
fisipen sa Laguna Lake.

Pagtuwing "sinkat" ng
kongresista ang mga baklad
na ilegal na napatuyo sa Lagu-
na Lake at maling paraan ng
pektakong isip na sa

MELIZA MALUNTAG
Mas maitam uma- 
ong buwagin na lang 
ang National Food Au-
thority (NFA) dahil ibi-
nabson lang nito ang 
gobyerno at taumbay-
yan sa bilyon-bilyong 
pisong utang kada 
taon, ayon kay Sena-
dor Win Gatchalian. 
Sa kasalukuyan, 
unabot na sa P150 bil-
yon ang utang ng NFA at 
sa kabila nito, bigo ang 
ahensiy na siguradu-
hing sapat at matatag 
ang suplay ng bigas. 
Ayon sa senador, 
tiyak umanong mas 
gaganda ang suplay at 
presyo ng bigas kung 
mawawala ang NFA 
para wala nang ko-
kontrol sa mga pri-
badong kompanya sa 
pag-aangkat ng bigas. 
"It's very sad to 
say that government 
is a very bad mana-
gen. Kung makita na-
tin ang Napocor (Na-
tional Power Corpo-
ration) may utang pa, 
ang MRT hindi pa ma-
ayos. Hayaan na natin 
ang private sector na 
mag-ayos, gobyerno 
dapat sa governance 
na lang," pahayag ni 
Gatchalian. 
Nauna nang sina-
bli ng mambabatas na 
hinog na para ilausan 
ang NFA dahil bigo ito 
sa kanilang manda-
to na bigyan ng segu-
ridad sa pagkain ang 
 mga Filipino.
'Karding' leaves P58M in agri, infra damage

BY DEMPSEY REYES

A TOTAL of P57.8 million worth of infrastructure and agriculture were damaged from heavy rains and flooding brought by the southwest monsoon or habagat enhanced by tropical storm "Karding" last week, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

Of that amount, damage to infrastructure was placed at P33.5 million while damage to agriculture amounted to P24.3 million, the NDRRMC's situational report said on Sunday.

Most of the infrastructure damaged were in the Cagayan Valley region where damage to national roads in Nueva Vizcaya were pegged at P30 million.

Meanwhile, a total of P3.5 million worth of infrastructure was reported damaged in Batanes.

The NDRRMC reported that of the P24.3-million damage to agriculture, most were in the Cordillera region, particularly in Abra and Mountain Province.

In the Ilocos region, a total of P6.5 million worth of rice and livestock were damaged in La Union and Ilocos Sur.

In the Cordillera, P2.4 million worth of vegetables were damaged by the onslaught of "Karding" and the rains brought by the southwest monsoon.

Mountain Province suffered the most brunt of habagat with P4.9 million worth of vegetables, while Abra incurred P1.1 million and Benguet with P1.4 million in damages.

The NDRRMC also said about 347,419 families were affected in the Ilocos region, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Cordillera Administrative Region and Metro Manila where 817 areas were flooded.
Soft commodities hit record low with more losses seen for sugar

SOFLOFT commodities are getting hit by one blow after another, and some traders are predicting the worst is yet to come for sugar prices.

Chaos for emerging-market currencies could make producers in countries like Brazil more eager to offload supplies at a time when mammoth coffee and sugar inventories are already weighing on the market. Meanwhile, Turkey’s financial crisis could limit the major cotton buyer’s demand just as prospects for production in the United States start to improve.

The Bloomberg Softs Subindex, which measures returns for the trio of commodities, tumbled to a record low on Friday, data through 1991 show. Raw sugar in New York touched the cheapest in a decade, while coffee and cotton posted weekly losses.

“The reverberation of the lira’s plunge has created the perfect storm for emerging-market currencies,” Julio Serra, risk management consultant for INTL FCStone, said in a telephone interview from Miami, referring to Turkey’s currency. That’s putting a lot pressure on agricultural commodities as Brazilian and Colombian currencies drop, encouraging local producers to boost sales which fetch dollars in return, he said.

Brazil is the world’s biggest sugar and coffee exporter, and Colombia ranks No. 2 for arabica beans.

On ICE Futures US, raw sugar fell as much as 1.8 percent to 10.11 cents a pound on Friday. That’s the lowest since June 2008. Prices could drop to 8 cents if global economic conditions continue to deteriorate, according to Nick Gentile, the managing partner at Nick Jen Capital Management in New York. The commodity hasn’t reached that level since September 2004.

The plunge in the Brazilian reais is “saving the producers,” who are able to make up for lower prices with dollar-linked sales, Gentile said by phone. “They still can hedge here and make money,” in local currency terms, he said.

“What’s frightening is that traded volume is still pretty good at the lows, which tells me that there are still willing sellers,” he said. “They are not going away.”

There are signs that sugar consumers are also expecting more declines.

The volume of sugar expected to leave Brazil fell to a 10-year low as prospective buyers use up stockpiles in anticipation of even lower prices, thanks to a global supply surplus.

Ports in Brazil may ship 1 million metric tons of the sweetener in the next few weeks, half the amount that was scheduled a year ago and the lowest for mid-August since 2008, according to data from the shipping agency Williams.
Price of live chicken down by nearly 9%

The average farm-gate price of broiler declined by almost 9 percent in mid-August, as chicken supply outpaced demand, according to local growers belonging to the United Broiler Raisers Association (Ubra).

According to the results of a weekly price monitoring by Ubra, the average quotation for off-sized broiler as of August 17 was at P93 per kilogram. The figure was 5.1 percent lower than the P98 per kg average farm-gate price observed in August 10.

The farm-gate price of regular-sized broiler fell by 6.23 percent to P92.67 per kg, from the previous week’s P98.83 per kg.

Prime-sized chicken were sold at P94.12 per kg, 8.68 percent lower than the quotation of P103.07 per kg recorded on August 10.

All three broiler sizes could be sold in wet markets, according to Ubra President Elias Jose Inciong.

Broiler prices are usually quite high during the July-to-September period due to the so-called third-quarter syndrome—a combination of factors that leads to lower production due to extreme weather conditions, according to Inciong.

"Based on our records, our expectation is that prices would start to collapse in late-August until October," Inciong said in an earlier interview with the BusinessMirror.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the poultry subsector recorded a 4.87-percent hike in gross earnings in the second quarter, which amounted to P58.1 billion at current prices.

In a report, the PSA said the 5.76-percent growth in the gross value of chicken production was due to higher prices and improvement in production level.

"The poultry subsector, which contributed 16.83 percent to total agricultural output, grew by 5.14 percent during the quarter. Expansion of broiler farm capacity, resumption of farm operations, the improvement of farm facilities and opening of new commercial broiler farms in Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Zamboanga Peninsula and Soccsksargen contributed to the 4.47-percent increase in chicken production," the PSA said.

The PSA also said, there was a 7.94-percent hike in chicken-egg production. The agency attributed this to "better egg-laying efficiency" and expansion of layer commercial farms in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos region, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Bicol region, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas and Zamboanga Peninsula.

Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcasas
VEGETABLE seed producer and supplier East-West Seed Co., Inc. (EWS) said its Knowledge Transfer program is being positioned for the use of indigenous peoples and smallholders.

In a statement, EWS said it signed a partnership agreement with Assisi Development Foundation, Inc. (ADF1) to develop vegetable gardens with 80 Mangyan Alangan families in Mindoro, as part of a six-month project which began in June.

Under the extension program, which is part of the Zero Extreme Poverty 2030 Philippines-Partnership for Indigenous People Project, EWS will provide training as well as a vermi-composting area and nursery while ADFI will provide agricultural kits.

Vermi-composting improves soil quality by making earthworms process organic waste.

EWS Philippines Knowledge Transfer Manager Girlie F. Banada in a statement said that aside from quality seed, good agronomic practices are also needed to make farming profitable.

“For farmers to grow their business, they need to be equipped with knowledge and skills to improve their productivity,” she added.

“Knowledge Transfer can also contribute long-term economic development in rural areas, and provide better access to high-quality and safe-to-eat vegetables for consumers.” EWS and ADFI previously partnered in the Yaman sa Gulay program in Javier, Leyte from 2013 to 2014. The project provided assistance to 244 beneficiaries.

EWS and ADFI also extended assistance to 1,000 smallholder farmers affected by Typhoon Yolanda in 2014 and 2015.

The EWS began Knowledge Transfer in 2000 in partnership with the Department of Agrarian Reform, since branching out to over 100 extension activities assisting 67,962 smallholder farmers in the Philippines and overseas.

EWS also entered a partnership with the international development group Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (Cordaid) to aid 150 farmers in Mandaya City in developing climate-smart vegetable production through the construction of a farm field school.

EWS began its collaboration with Cordaid in 2015, providing extension services on climate-smart and sustainable vegetable production in Cebu, Palawan and Samar.

The partnership has so far helped more than 600 farmers. — Anna Gabriela A. Mogato
Not enough cheap rice behind surge in prices of basic items

By CALVIN CORDOVA

CEBU CITY — The low supply of cheap rice in the market is one of the main reasons why prices of basic commodities are on the rise.

This was revealed by Zeno Ronald Abenoja from the Department of Economic Research of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) during the public information campaign forum on inflation Sunday here.

The forum was attended by at least 100 participants from the academe, government agencies, Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) and Cebu Bankers Club.

Abenoja said a survey by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) on poor families showed that 20 percent of their budget goes to buying rice.

Also contributing to the price increase of basic commodities was the constant change in weather that prevents farmers from delivering enough supply of rice to the markets in the region.

Unlike in Central Visayas, regions that are considered rice-producing areas are not experiencing a price rise.

The BSP said other factors behind the price surge are the soaring oil prices in the global market, and the higher excise tax on oil and sweetened beverage due to the implementation of the Tax Reform Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law.

Ira Camarao of the Department of Finance’s Strategy, Economics, and Results Group said the effects of the TRAIN Law in the price increase is only at 0.4 percent of the total 3.7 percent inflation rate in July.
**P58-M damage to agri, infra**

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said yesterday that close to P58 million in infrastructure and agriculture were damaged due to the effects of the southwest monsoon or "habagat" enhanced by tropical storm "Karding" (international name "Yagi").

Undersecretary Ricardo B. Jalad, executive director of the NDRRMC and administrator of the Office of Civil Defense, said P57,886,773.05 in infrastructure and agriculture were damaged in Regions 1, 2, and the Cordillera Autonomous Region. (Francis T. Wakefield)

---

**Nasira ng habagat sa agri, infra, P60-M na!**

Halos umaibot sa P60 milyon ang nasira sa agrikultura at infrastruktura bunsod na rin ng pagbawyo ng sa bansa ng habagat na pinaagting ng baybayang 'Karding' kamakailan, ayon sa National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC). Pinarahayang ni Undersecretary Ricardo Jalad, Executive Director ng NDRRMC at kasalukuyang Administrator ng Office of Civil Defense (OCD), aabot sa kabuuang P57,886,773.05 halaga ng nasalanta sa agrikultura at infrastruktura ang naaaktala sa Region 1, 2, at sa Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR).

Sa nasabing halaga, aabot sa P33,500,000 ay napalalag na nasira ang agri habang aabot naman sa P24,866,773.05 sa infrastruktur.

Apektado rin ang mga kabuuang 364,600 pamilihan sa 1,082 barangay sa Regions 1, 3, CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), CAR (Cordillera Autonomous Region) at NCR.

Naalala rin ng abensya ang 47 na insidente sa nasabing kalamidad sa Region 1, 2, at CALABARZON.

Kabuuang 817 lugar naman ang naaaktala na lubog sa bahay sa Region 1, 3, CALABARZON at NCR simula pa nito ng Agosto 11, 2018. (Francis T. Wakefield)
Canada to phase out crop chemicals linked to bee deaths

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — The Canadian government said on Wednesday it would move to restrict use of two types of crop chemicals that have been linked to deaths of aquatic insects and bees, in a victory for environmentalists and the latest setback for companies that sell the pesticides.

Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) said it would phase out, over three to five years, the outdoor use of thiamethoxam, made by Syngenta AG, and clothianidin, produced by Bayer AG.

A review found the chemicals at levels in water bodies high enough to harm aquatic insects that are food for fish and birds. The widely used chemicals protect corn, soybean, and canola crops from insect damage.

Health Canada's move is subject to a 90-day consultation period, followed by final decisions in late 2019.

Neonicotinoids, also called neonicos, are a class of pesticides applied as a seed treatment or sprayed on leaves. Neonicos have drawn scrutiny after research pointed to risks for honey bees, which have been in decline in North America, possibly due to pesticides, loss of habitat, and climate change. — Reuters
Wheat tops one-week high

CHICAGO- US wheat futures jumped to their highest prices in more than a week on Friday, supported by concerns that Russia may consider curbs on grain exports, traders said.

Talk of potential limits on shipments from Russia, the world's top wheat exporter, fuelled worries about tightening global supplies, after drought has reduced harvests from the Black Sea region to Europe and Australia.

Russia will consider restricting 2018-19 exports once they reach 30 million tons, following a request from meat-producing regions, according to traders who met with the agriculture ministry.

The ministry denied it discussed export curbs, although the meeting still added to doubts about Russia's capacity to export a projected 35 million tons of wheat in 2018-19.

Constraints on Russian exports would typically increase demand for wheat from the European Union, but the bloc's harvests have suffered from unfavorable dryness, said Artan Soderman, chief commodities economist for US broker INTL FCStone.

"With the smaller crop in Europe this year, the demand would shift to the United States," Soderman said.

Most-active wheat futures climbed 13-1/2 cents to $5.75-1/2 a bushel by 12:20 CDT (1720 GMT) at the Chicago Board of Trade. Earlier in the session, the contract hit $5.82-3/4, its highest price since Aug. 7.

Most-active soybean futures slumped 12 cents to $8.85 a bushel. Corn futures dipped 3 cents to $3.76-3/4 a bushel, after reaching their highest price since Aug 10 at $3.82-1/2.

These losses were a turnaround from Thursday when grain and soy prices rose on plans for Beijing and Washington to hold fresh talks to address the trade war that has reduced US agricultural shipments to China.

China is the world's top importer of soy and last year bought shipments from the United States worth some $12 billion, making the oilseed America's top farm export to China.

The trade stand-off, however, has prompted Beijing to impose extra tariffs on imports of US soybeans and shift its purchases to Brazil. - Reuters