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'UNCOVERED'

Sinamantala ang Farm Gate Price!

NI MARLON PURIFICACION

BINABATI ko ang Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) dahil sa inilunsad nilang Suking Outlet sa Paranaque City kung saan makabibili ng mas murang halaga ng ilang basic goods at prime commodities.

Sa gitna ng walang humpay na pagtaas ng presyo ng bilihin, maganda ang ginawang hakbang na ito ng pamunuan ni DTI Sec. Mon Lopez. Sana lang, magkaroon din ng Suking Outlet sa iba't ibang panig ng bansa -- hindi lamang sa tapat ng Paranaque City Hall kundi dapat sa mga palengke sa ating mga lugar.

Maraming dahilan kung bakit mataas ang 'inflation rate' ng ating bansa. Bukod sa mapangahas na TRAIN (Tax Reform for Acceleration Inclusion) Law ng Duterte administration, epekto rin ito sa pagtaas ng krudo sa pandaigdigang merkado na lalong gumugulpi sa bulsa ng mamamayang Filipino.

Aminado si Department of Agriculture (DA) Sec. Manny Pinol na higit na pinalala ang presyo ng bilihin sa bigas, karne ng baboy, manok, baka at iba pang pangunahing bilihin dahil na rin sa ginagawang 'hoarding' ng mga mapagsamantalang traders sa bansa.

Pilit nilang iniipit ang kanilang mga produkto upang mapuwersa ang merkado na magkaroon ng kakulangan ng supply, tumaas ang demand at higit pa nilang mapataas ang presyo ng bilihin. Habang kumikita ng malaki ang mga oportunistang trader, lalo namang nalulumpo sa mataas na gastusin ang ating mga kababayan.

Mula't mula pa ay hindi na tayo pabor sa pag-import ng bigas mula sa labas ng bansa. Naniniwala kasi tayong ito ang papatay sa hanapbuhay ng mga kababayan nating magsasaka.

Bukod dito, naniniwala rin tayong ginagawang gatasan na lamang ito ng ilang opisyales sa National Food Authority (NFA) at ilang sindikato sa bigas.

Sigurado ako, kung may 100,000 tonelada ng bigas man ang nabibigyan ng import permit, higit pa rito ang nakalulusot dahil sa smuggling. Ginagawang pasaporte ng ilang sindikato ang nasabing import permit, pero tulad ng sindikato sa kambal na plaka ng ilang bus company -- ganito halos din ang kanilang sistema sa larangan ng smuggling.

Ang masaklap pa, karamihan sa mga ini-import na bigas na sa halip na gawing NFA rice, isinisilid ito sa mga sako na pang komersiyal upang higit na mas mataas ang presyo pagdating sa merkado.

Imposibleng hindi ito alam ni Sec. Pinol dahil ang ganitong uri ng kalakaran ay matagal nang nangyayari kahit sa mga nakalipas na administrasyon.

Minsan, napapaisip na tuloy ako kung 'change is coming' ba talaga o 'worst is coming' na?

Ang mga dating problema na isinuka ng mamamayang Filipino sa mga nakalipas na rehimen ay nangyayari pa rin hanggang ngayon. Ang masaklap, patuloy na lumalala ito at isang malaking patunay dito ang 6.4 percent na inflation rate na pinakamataas sa kasaysayan ng bansa sa nakalipas na siyam na taon.

Gusto ko rin barilin ang sinabi ni Sec. Pinol kamakailan na wala sa 'farm gate level' ang problema kaya tumataas ang presyo ng bilihin.

For your information Mr. Secretary, marami na pong mga backyard farmer ang matagal nang umiiyak dahil sa mga mapagsamantalang trader na kinokontrol ang farm gate price.

Wag na tayong lumayo. Sa usaping manok na lang po.

Kamakalawa lamang umabot sa P80 ang bilihin ng manok sa bawat baryo o malalaking farm sa buong Luzon region. Last week, umabot po ang farm gate price hanggang P62 pero noon pa man ang presyo ng manok sa merkado kada kilo ay umaabot na ng P140, P160 hanggang P180 per kilo.

Sundan sa Pahina 7

SINAMANTALA... *Mula sa Pahina 5*

Ibig sabihin, higit pa sa doble ang itinataas nito pagdating sa merkado.

Dapat lang kumita ang mga trader, pati na rin ang mga may tindahan sa merkado. Pero hindi naman dapat gipitin ang mga kababayan nating nagtya-tyagang mag-alaga, magpalaki ng baboy at manok tapos babaratin lang ng mga kumag na namimili sa kanilang baryo.

Alam ng DA kung gaano kamahal ang mga commercial feed ngayon. Ang tubig na ginagamit nilang panglinis sa mga alagang hayop at higit sa lahat ang hindi maawat na kalamidad -- ulan o bagyo.

Sa halip na pagtakpan ang pagsasamantala ng ilang traders sa 'farm gate price,' magtakda ang DA, DTI at iba pang local government units ng hiwalay na 'suggested retail price' para naman sa mga farm gate price.

Kasi, kung nababarat ang ating mga kababayan sa 'farm gate price,' mapipilitan din silang huminto sa pagsasaka at pagaalaga ng hayop na lalong malaking problema para sa ekonomiya ng bansa.

Alam kong matatalino ang mga opisyales natin sa pamahalaan. Lalo na si Senadora Cynthia Villar na hindi matawaran ang suporta nito sa ating mga magsasaka, mangingisda at sa sektor ng agrikultura.

Pero sana po, pagtuunan n'yo ng pansin na i-monitor araw-araw ang farm gate price.

Dapat nga, magkaroon ng hotline number o i-deputize ang bawat barangay officials at kooperatiba sa rural areas upang sila ang magbantay kung masyado bang nababarat ang ating farm gate price.

Madali naman sigurong gumawa ng matrix kung magkano dapat ang farm gate price, magkano ang dapat kitain ng mga trader at magkano rin ang dapat na tubo ng mga nagtitinda sa merkado.

Sa ganoon, makokontrol kahit papano ang pagtaas ng presyo ng bilihin.

Ang masakit na katotohanan kasi, barat ang farm gate price, pero pagdating sa merkado ay sobra naman ang taas ng presyo.

Asan ang hustisya, mga ate at kuya?

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Tuna catchers decry raw deal on payment

SPECIAL REPORT

By Bong S. Sarmiento
@inqmindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—After spending a month at sea with other tuna catchers, Esmeraldo Asombrado returned home to his family in General Santos City with P35,000 in hard-earned cash.

The 53-year-old fisherman was not happy with the fat pay, however, though it was more than threefold the region's minimum wage for the agriculture sector of around P9,000 monthly or P290 daily.

The volume of tuna that Asombrado caught fetched P185,000 at the General Santos fish port, from where they were sold and shipped fresh and chilled to markets in Japan and the United States at much higher prices. His P35,000 take-home pay was only a fifth of that price.

"We put our lives at risk in the high seas to catch these high-value tuna, but at the end of the day, we earned the least," Asombrado told the Inquirer on Sept. 5, as the city hosted the 20th National Tuna Congress.

Asombrado, who is a "pasahero" (passenger), or fish catcher in the handline sector of the tuna industry, attributed his "disproportionate income" to the unregulated sharing scheme imposed by owners or operators of the fishing fleet. About 40 people, including the boat captain and crew members, join the fleet.

The pasaheros use hook-and-line gear in going after tuna on board dozens of "pakura," or smaller boats that accompany the fleet's mother vessel. They venture farther out in the Pacific and Indian oceans.

4:1 sharing scheme

They are paid under a sharing scheme called "nilima," or a 4:1 ratio, in favor of the fleet owner. The scheme varies depending on the owner, but before any income is to be divided, the owner first deducts expenses for the fishing expedition, including the "bale," or cash advance that the pasahero usually leaves as allowance to his family.

According to industry estimates, fuel accounts for 60 to 70 percent of the total cost of a fishing trip in the handline sector.

Another fisherman, Joel Guindulan, who catches tuna in Philippine waters in a small 3-ton fishing boat, supported Ambrosado's appeal to regulate the income-sharing scheme. In his case, the boat owner gets twice the value of the catch after deducting the costs of expedition.

"The situation out there in the high seas is difficult and unpredictable. Our lives are at stake," he said. Sometimes, he pointed out, they would suddenly encounter waves higher than a basketball ring and backboard.

The tuna industry employs some 137,000 people in General Santos, touted as the "Tuna Capital of the Philippines." Of this number, some 71,000 are engaged in handline fishing, usually catching yellowfin tuna, which are shipped to markets and restaurants abroad.

The rest of the fishermen, or 65,250, are into purse seine and ring net fishing, which targets skipjack tuna needed by the canneries. Six of the country's seven tuna canneries are based in General Santos.

Last year, yellowfin tuna unloaded in the city reached 106,000 metric tons, up by 2.57 percent from the previous year, industry data showed.

Close to 2,000 fishing vessels were registered with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in the region as of August 2016, records showed. Most of the vessels, or 94 percent, are owned by small- and medium-scale operators.

Buyer's market

At the fish port complex near the heart of General Santos, the buyers, not the sellers, usually dictate the prices of large, mature tuna caught by the handline fishermen. This has prompted Asombrado to suggest the imposition of regulations on the market price of tuna to help uplift the lives of small fish catchers.

"It has always been a buyer's market here. The producers have no influence over the pricing," said Raul Gonzales, spokesperson for the Alliance of Tuna Handliners.

Gonzales called on the Department of Agriculture to check and intervene, if the need arises, in the buying price of large fresh tuna.

More importantly, the alliance has supported the clamor of handline fish catchers to standardize the sharing scheme. It is against the regular payment scheme because of the uncertainty in engaging in passive fishing.

'Passive' fishing method

Gonzales, who operates a handline fishing fleet, described the handline fishing method as "passive," unlike the "active" one employed by large-scale operators using purse seine and ring nets.

It has been "a time-honored tradition between the boat owners and the fish catchers even before the tuna industry started to boom (beginning in the 1970s). They did not talk about regular salary because of the uniqueness of the sector," he said.

He said the sector should not be covered by an order of the Department of Labor and Employment setting the minimum wage, holiday and premium pay, overtime pay, night-shift differential and other labor benefits, such as health insurance, housing and social security contributions.

Department Order No. 156-16, issued by then Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz, is expected to be implemented this year.

Gov't attention

Usually, the more tuna the fisherman catches, the bigger his pay is. Without a catch, the fisherman goes home with an empty pocket, weighed down still by his debt to the boat owner for financing the expedition.

Currently, the fisherman gets only 20 percent of the total value of his catch.

"I believe it is high time that we standardize the sharing system so that the fish catchers will know what to expect regarding their take-home pay no matter who owns the boat that they will board," Gonzales said.

He noted the government's growing attention to the handline sector, citing, among other initiatives, the designation of several tuna conservation zones

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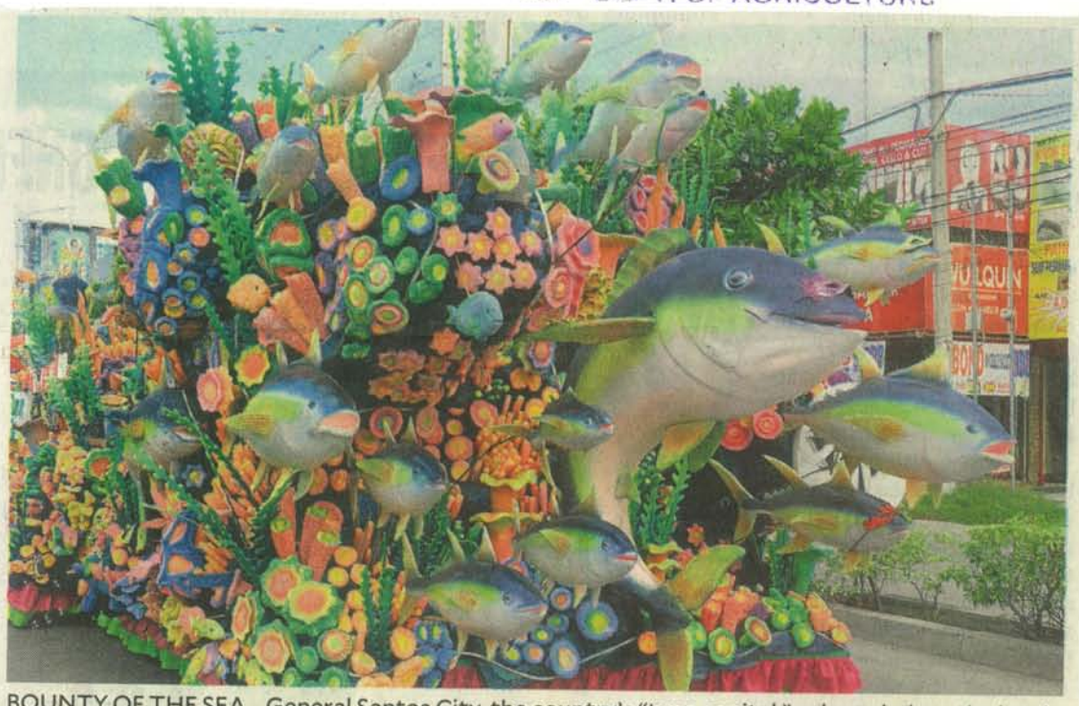

BOUNTY OF THE SEA General Santos City, the country's "tuna capital," acknowledges the local fishing industry as a major economic driver through a festival that honors fishermen and features street dancing and float parade (above). Top photo shows freshly caught tuna, classified as export quality, at General Santos' fish port. —PHOTOS BY BONG S. SARMIENTO AND ARJOY M. CENIZA

in the country exclusively for the use handline fishermen.

For the first time after 20 years, the marginalized tuna fishermen were accorded a Fisher's Night on Sept. 4 during the celebration of the annual Tuna Festival in General Santos, in recognition of their contribution to the growth of the city.

Night of fun

Hundreds of fishermen and their families were treated to a night of food and fun, initiated by the Oblates of Notre Dame (OND) with the support of local government officials.

"If there are no fishermen, we would not have fish on our table," said Sister Susan Bolanio, executive director of the OND Hesed Foundation Inc.

The foundation administers the Apostleship of the Sea, which has been managing the Stella Maris Seafarers' Center at the General Santos seaport since 2006. The center has been helping distressed, poor tuna fishermen, including those jailed for illegal fishing in Indonesia.

Councilor Brix Tan, chair of the city council's committee on fisheries, marine life and aquatic resources, said Bolanio earlier broached the idea to organize a Fisher's Night for fishermen in the city during the weeklong tuna festival.

"The small tuna fishermen deserved to be recognized. They are an instrumental part for the growth of our tuna industry," said Tan, a scion of a tuna fishing tycoon.

Asombrado said he hoped the government would "look into this longtime practice to give tuna catchers their fair share." INQ

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Nueva Vizcaya boosts claim as Region 2's 'citrus capital'

By **RUDY FERNANDEZ**

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna – Thanks to citrus, the quality of life of many people in Nueva Vizcaya has improved significantly.

Over the years, this commercially produced agricultural crop continued to provide employment opportunities to the people of Nueva Vizcaya, one of the provinces that comprise Region 2 or Cagayan Valley, the northeasternmost flank of Luzon.

"The citrus industry in Nueva Vizcaya has improved the quality of life of the farmers of the province, especially Malabing Valley in the municipality of Kasibu, where citrus is grown abundantly, making Nueva Ecija the 'citrus capital' of Region 2," said Gov. Carlos Padilla.

He credited the progress of his province to, among other things, the strides of the citrus industry.

The Citrus Farms and Industry Encounters through the Science and Technology Agenda (FIESTA) was celebrated under the joint auspices of the Cagayan Valley Agriculture, Aquatic and Resources Research and Development (CVAARRD) Consortium and the Los Baños-based Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Resources Research and Development (DOST-PCAARRD).

The event showcased citrus R&D programs, projects, and initiatives in Cagayan Valley and exhibited fresh citrus products, student activities promoting the citrus industry through cooking, dessert-making, poster-making, essay writing, quiz contests, investment forums, and visit to the Malabing Valley.

The FIESTA activities were supported by state colleges and universities in the Cagayan Valley Region such as the Nueva Vizcaya State University, Isabela State University, and Cagayan State University; and the DOST, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Trade and Industry.

During the FIESTA forum, Padilla, NVSU president Andres Taguiam, ISU's Ricmar Aquino and officials of R&D and academic institutions in northeastern Luzon reiterated their commitment to continue supporting the citrus industry in the region.

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TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Turning farmers into entrepeneurs

By **CATHERINE TALAVERA**

Government research partner Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) has established capability-building courses for trainers and agricultural entrepreneurs to help boost productivity of mango, abaca, cacao and herbal-medicinal products.

The training will beef up skills of Filipino farmers-businessmen in ensuring their farms thrive as profit-making businesses, rather than as mere source of sustenance.

SEARCA also supported the publication of an investment guide of the Bureau of Agricultural Research-Department of Agriculture (BAR-DA) with the same title. BAR launched the investment guide during its Agriculture and Fisheries Technology Forum last Aug. 30.

"We believe that given the right opportunities, training, and innovation, farmers and fishers can be 'agripreneurs'," said Nicomedes Eleazar, executive director at DA-BAR.

Participants in these courses will also be trainors of agricultural entrepreneurs.

SEARCA's major thrust is to support the training of farm technologists and entrepreneurs in a bid to further develop the country's agricultural sector.

It is also pushing for harmonization of skills standards of farm technicians in ASEAN through a competency certification in partnership with institutions such as TESDA (Technical Education & Skills Development Authority).

Through these programs, SEARCA expects to boost farm productivity and Philippine exports while ensuring the future generation is lured into becoming farmers and agri-businessmen.

Those that already completed the program include agriculture technocrats of the DA, its attached agencies, state universities and colleges in 16 selected projects funded by DA-BAR and farm managers.

The topics include cost and return analysis, partial budget analysis, break-even analysis, and financial cash flow analysis.

SEARCA has supported personnel training for 16 DA-BAR projects involving mango conservation in Masbate and Sorsogon, lotus production for food and medicinal purposes in Region 3, village-level processing and commercialization of abaca yarn in Region 8, development of postharvest equipment for carrot processing and marketing of sweet potato, adlay and soybean in Region 10, development and commercialization of potato products and commercialization of organically-grown cucumber and carrots in Bukidnon.

Other projects include organic production technologies for rice and muscovado sugar for smallholder farmers and agrarian reform beneficiaries, piloting Arabica coffee rooted cuttings as plant materials in the Highlands Macadamia Conservation in Luzon, development of cacao technologies, commercialization of soya nuggets/chunks and Rimas ice cream, and product improvement and marketing plan for *dalanghita* nectar.

SEARCA is a regional treaty organization that promotes inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural development through graduate education and institutional development, R&D, and knowledge management. It has been a long-time partner of DA-BAR in research, capacity building, and knowledge management projects.

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WHY NOT?

DR. EMIL Q. JAVIER

Still on rice: Mechanization, an immediate game changer

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

Our rice problem has two dimensions: 1) how to raise income of farmers, and 2) making rice affordable to consumers. Flooding the market with cheap imported rice will address the problem of affordable rice to consumers. However, it exacerbates the problem of low income among the producers. It should not come as a surprise that soon rice farmers will be up in arms in Quezon Circle seeking redress.

In previous columns, I wrote about the many measures needed to be taken to raise the income of rice farmers. Basically, the idea is 1) to further intensify rice cultivation in favorable rice growing areas i.e. those with irrigation, and 2) to divert the less favorable areas i.e. rainfed lowlands and uplands into other higher valued crops.

Both approaches are technically very feasible but require a lot of resources and time. The impending lifting of quantitative restrictions on the import of cheap rice will bring immediate relief to rice consumers. In the meantime, the rice farmers will unjustly bear the full burden of adjustment to market liberalization.

Price support and input subsidies which are the common ways of helping farmers have not really worked for us. We have been doing these all these years with very little to show for all the money we have spent.

Hence, our proposal to explore the alternative of direct payments to bonafide rice farmers based on area farmed as indicated in land titles and tax declarations. With this approach most, if not all, the subsidies will accrue to the intended beneficiaries. The payments will be good for a period of ten years which should be more than sufficient time for rice farmers in the transition. The payments can be sourced from the 35% tariffs on imported rice.

Mechanization, an immediate game changer

For those who will continue rice farming there is an immediate game changer available to raise their incomes — full mechanization.

The latest figures from the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) show that the landed price of 25% broken rice is US$484 per ton, which at the prevailing peso-dollar exchange rate of ₱54.00:US$1.00 amounts to ₱26,136 per ton. With 35% tariff, freight, insurance and other costs, the import parity price of rice at wholesale is around ₱37,000 per ton or ₱37 per kilogram.

To match the price of imported rice, the palay farm gate price should be at most half i.e. ₱18.50 per kilogram. Thus, as an immediate response, instead of the current buying price of ₱17 per kilogram palay, NFA should now raise its support price accordingly. ₱22 per kilogram as proposed by some quarters is necessary and inflationary.

The less inflationary and less costly way to maximize the income of farmers is to bring down the cost of producing palay as low as possible versus the new ₱18.50 per kilogram benchmark. As reported by PhilRice, the costs of producing palay are ₱12.41, ₱8.85 and ₱6.53 per kilogram respectively for the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Our fertilizer, irrigation, land rental and credit costs are a little higher than our two competitors and we should take steps to bring them down but the biggest disparity is in the cost of hired labor which are ₱3.76, ₱0.66 and ₱0.46 per kilogram, respectively for the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Thai and Vietnamese rice farms are heavily mechanized and their need for extra hired labor is minimal.

Except for some areas where they still use carabaos to prepare the land, most of our rice farmers now use two-wheel tractors for plowing. The ₱3.00 per kilogram difference is due to the manual costs of transplanting, harvesting and threshing. The costs of transplanting can be substantially reduced by 1) direct seeding, or 2) by use of tractor-mounted transplanters. Instead of manual harvesting and threshing, both operations can be accomplished more efficiently with the use of grain combines.

The agronomic measures to raise productivity will take time. On the other hand, the cost-saving impact of mechanization is immediate. In fact, the more progressive among our rice farmers are now benefitting from their use.

Countryside farm services providers

However, very few farmers have the means to acquire tractors, mechanical transplanters, combines and dryers. Besides because of their small landholdings it is not practical for them to invest in machines which they will use for only a few days in the entire year.

Farm machines not only reduce cost of labor but also improve timeliness of operations and raise quality of farm produce. Over the years we have been distributing free farm machines to cooperatives and farmers associations for their common use. Unfortunately, for the most part this has not worked as the machines soon break down and nobody assumes responsibility for their maintenance.

But even now there are some enterprising farmers who have purchased small tractors, threshers, and dryers for their own use but also provide service to their neighbors for a fee.

Therefore, the more cost-effective, sustainable solution to rice mechanization is empowering enterprising farmers in all the rice growing areas to become farm service providers to their neighbors. All these entrepreneurs will need is training on machine operations and maintenance. With a bank guarantee under the Agriculture Guarantee Loan Fund, the farmers so-trained can obtain loans with which to purchase the machines.

For the larger, more expensive machines like the tractor-mounted transplanters and grain combines, the big operators in Isabela, Nueva Ecija and elsewhere are leading the way. Since they are commercially bankable they should be on their own.

*****

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

For any feedback, email eqjavier@yahoo.com.

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NGAYON
Diyaryong disente ng masang intelihente

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SALAD MAY ADDITIONAL CHARGE NA

Tama ba 'yun na pag-nag-order ka ng salad sa isang restaurant, sasabihin sa 'yo ng waiter, 'may additional P50 pesos dahil mahal ang gulay ngayon?'

Hahaha. As in tumitingin ka pa lang sa menu, sasabihin na sa 'yo ng waiter na may additional P50 sa salad.

Grabe samantalang kung tutuusin eh agricultural country tayo at maraming gulay na available pero anyare at pag-inorder mo ay salad, may dagdag. Hahaha.

At ito nang magdala naman ng mga gulay dito sa Manila ang ilang farmers na organized ng *Department of Agriculture* para nga raw bumaba ang presyo ng gulay dito sa Manila, sinugod ng mga mamimili ang weekend market (last week) as in over flowing ang tao. Pero ang pinaka-masaklap, hindi raw nagbayad ang karamihan sa mga namakyaw. Nag-unahan daw kumuha ang karamihan sa mga dumayo pero biglang lumayas na hindi man lang nagbayad.

Kawawa ang local farmers na dinala ng DOA para magbenta, nalugi pa raw at halos magka-trauma ayon sa isang nagkuwento.

Ewan ko lang kung anong nangyari after dahil ang sabi nagbigay na ng assistance ang DOA para ma-organized na ang susunod na 'weekend market.'

So umiral nga ang kawalan ng disiplina ng ilan nating kababayan.

Oh well hindi na bago 'yan.

Pero sana nga, maayos ito para naman makakain pa rin tayo ng gulay. Naku #GulayIsLife.

PILIPINO MIRROR
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• SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

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BULACAN, BINAHA NG MURANG IMPORTED RICE MULA SA NFA

ASAHANG bahagyang mababawasan ang suliranin ng mga Bulakenyo sa mataas na halaga ng commercial rice sa merkado makaraang bahain ng murang bigas mula sa National Food Authority (NFA) ang mga pamilihang-bayan at accredited rice retailers sa tatlong lungsod at 21 bayan ng Bulacan.

Ayon kay Elvira Obana, Manager ng NFA sa Bulacan, dumating na nitong Huwebes ang 60,800 sako ng bigas sa mga NFA warehouses sa lalawigan at bahagi ito ng imported rice na inangkat ng gobyerno na ang bawat kilo ay nagkakahalaga ng P32 at nagsimula nang mabili sa merkado sa lahat ng sulok ng probinsiya.

Bukod dito, inilunsad din ni Obana ang 36 na Bigasang Bayan sa Bulacan na may alokasyong 50 hanggang 100 sako ng NFA rice bawat araw depende sa kapasidad ng tindahan na matugunan ang pangangailangan sa pangunahing butil ng mga mahihirap na Bulakenyong nais makabili ng murang bigas sa merkado.

Sinabi pa nito na itinaas na rin ang rice allocation ng 300 NFA accredited rice retailers sa Bulacan sa 30-40 sako kumpara sa 10 hanggang 20 sako na alokasyon bawat araw na inabot pa sa pagbaba sa 5 hanggang 10 kaban lamang at dahil ito sa replenishment ng kanilang rice stocks.

Bunga nito,tiniyak pa ng NFA Manager na makakaasa ang consumers na makakabili sila ng murang bigas mula sa NFA dahil sa pagbaha ng suplay nito sa accredited rice retailers at Bigasan Bayan at positibo ang paniniwalang babalik na sa normal ang sitwasyon sa pangangailangan ng bigas ng mga bulakenyo.

Ipinaliwanag pa ni Obana na ang kanilang tanggapan ay nagbebenta sa accredited traders ng bigas sa halagang P1,500 bawat sako o P30 bawat kilo at puwede nila itong ibenta sa publiko ng P32 kilo kaya kikita sila ng P2 piso bawat kilo o P100 bawat sako.

A. BORLONGAN

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

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Ang aming pananaw...

NFA PABABABAIN ANG PRESYO NG BIGAS

***NAGULAT** maging ang Malakanyang nang dumalo sa pulong ng National Food Authority (NFA) Council ang nagbitiw na administrador na si Jason Aquino at tinututulan ang importasyon ng bigas ng Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC).*

Si Aquino ang sinisisi ni Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque Jr. na pangunahing dahilan sa pagmanipula ng mga rice trader sa presyo ng bigas at kinasuhan na siya at si dating NFA accounting services manager Gerry Ambrosio ng technical malversation sa Office of the Ombudsman sa diversion ng pondong nakalaan para sa seguridad sa pagkain.

Malinaw na hindi ginawa nang maayos ni Aquino ang kanyang trabaho kaya nagkaroon ng krisis sa bigas ang ating bansa na naging sanhi ng pagtaas ng presyo ng mga pangunahing bilihin kaya wala siyang karapatang pumapel pa sa importasyon ng bigas.

Ngayong inihayag na ni NFA spokesman Rex Estoperez na babaha ng NFA rice sa mga pamilihan sa loob ng isang buwan, asahan nang bababa ng presyo ng pangunahing butil sa P37 hanggang P30 kada kilo. Magandang halimbawa ito ng political will para makontrol ang patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas na nagpapahirap sa hilahod nang mamamayan.

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

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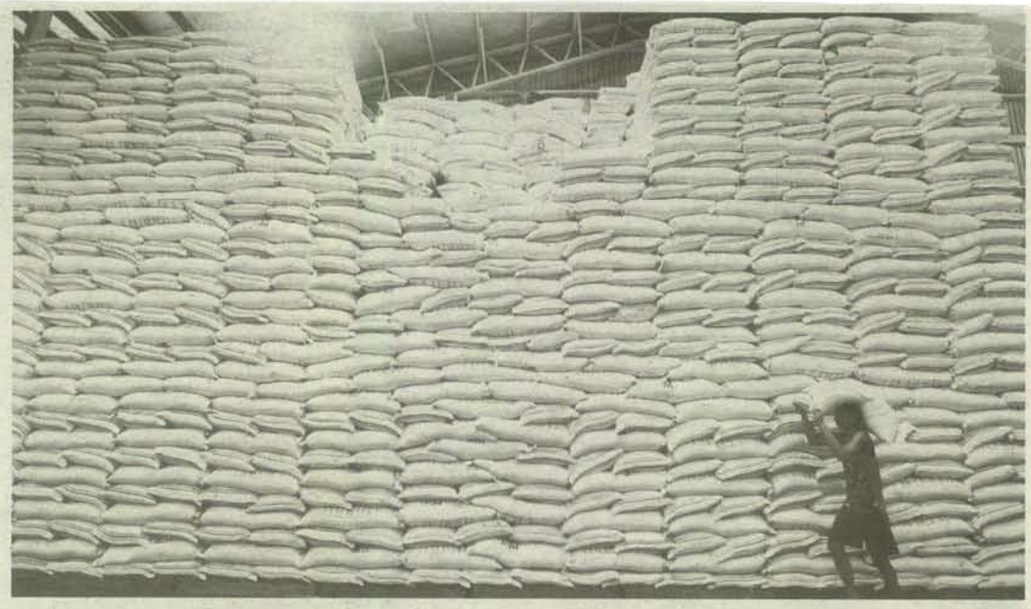

WORKERS arrange sacks of National Food Authority rice stored inside the NFA warehouse on Visayas Ave., Quezon City. The Department of Agriculture said the NFA Council has approved the importation of an additional 500,000 metric tons of rice, on top of the previously imported 250,000 metric tons of rice earlier this year, to boost stocks amid supposed problems on local supply. (Mark Balmores)

BALITA
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IMPORTED Pinapatas ng mga obrero ang saku-sakong imported na bigas sa bodega ng National Food Authority sa Visayas Avenue, Quezon City. Ayon sa Department of Agriculture, inaprubahan ng National Food Authority Council ang pag-aangkat ng karagdagang 500,000 tonelada ng bigas. **MARK BALMORES**

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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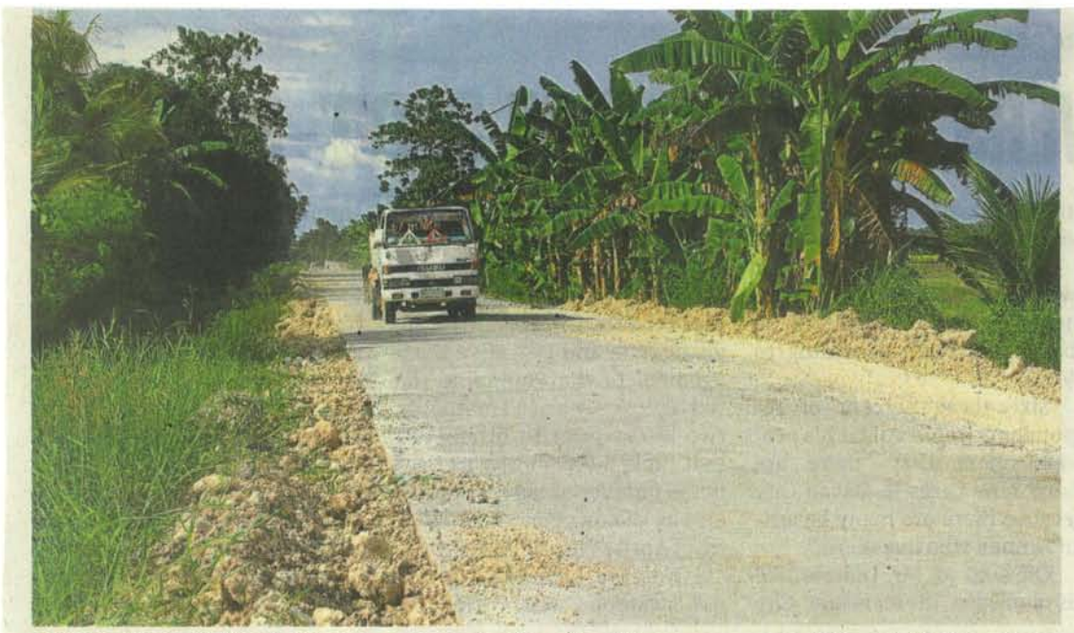

PAVING THE FUTURE Notorious for being the site of the massacre of 44 Special Action Force policemen in 2015, Mamasapano town in Maguindanao province is now on its way to being one of the ARMM areas with well-paved roads.—CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

ARMM rising: 1,599 km of roads completed

By Bong S. Sarmiento
@inqmindanao

KORONADAL CITY—The highest-ranking official of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) boasted of at least 1,599 kilometers of roads, connecting the region's five provinces, being completed by the ARMM government in six years.

ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman, in a statement, said the roads made the people feel government presence.

He said most of the road projects were completed in areas with security problems.

"The region's constituents will now have easy access to government's services on transportation, health, trade and industry, agriculture and fishery, and tourism, all considered vital in boosting the region's economy," he said.

Hataman said the ARMM's infrastructure program "directly promotes peace and development."

Stunted growth

The decades-old conflict waged by various Moro fronts has been blamed for the stunted growth of the ARMM, which has consistently been among the poorest regions in the country.

Hataman said some 509 km more of road projects, or a little over 22 percent of the target, were still under construction as of Sept. 14 while the construction of 183 km of road, or around 8 percent of the target, had yet to begin.

Among the five provinces of the ARMM, Lanao del Sur received the most road projects with 335, followed by Maguindanao, 306; Sulu, 277; Basilan, 247; and Tawi-Tawi, 173.

The ARMM government allocated over P35 billion for these road projects in the last six years.

To be replaced

Many of the road projects were located in remote and conflict areas, according to Hataman, who was appointed ARMM caretaker in 2011 until he was elected officially as governor in the 2013 and 2016 elections.

ARMM would be deemed abolished once the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) is ratified in a plebiscite scheduled on Jan. 21 next year.

The BOL is anchored on the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, the final peace agreement signed by the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 2014. INQ

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TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Unilab unit joining Agrilink trade exhibit

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

Univet Nutrition and Animal Healthcare Co. (Unahco), a wholly owned feed and veterinary company of Unilab Inc. will take part in this year's Agrilink trade exhibit in a bid to support the development of the country's agriculture and animal industry.

The company is one of the major sponsors of the 2018 Agrilink, Foodlink, and Aqualink trade exhibit set on Oct. 4 to 6 at the World Trade Center in Pasay City organized by the Foundation for Resource Linkage and Development Inc. (FRLD).

Unahco president and chief operating officer Ricardo Alba believes in FRLD's mission to gather under one roof all agri, food and aqua stakeholders to establish linkages and facilitate information and technology transfer to expedite the growth of the agriculture and animal industries.

"This is Unahco's humble way of helping uplift the agri and animal industries and in supporting the government's drive to achieve food safety and security for all Filipinos," Alba said.

Agrilink is a highly effective venue to touch base with crop farmers, animal raisers, farm owners, dealers agrivet store owners, veterinarians, LGUs, among others.

"Through its participation in Agrilink, Unahco, through its business units Pigrolac, Univet and Sarimanok, is able to meet with existing and potential customers and discuss with them its new products and product innovations which are adapted from the latest global trends and technology in farming and animal raising," Unahco said.

Agrilink is set to feature Pigrolac, Sarimanok and Univet's "Galing Univet, Galing Univet" campaign which aims to highlight the quality of Univet products, which have earned the trust and continuous patronage of animal raisers.

Unahco is the manufacturer and distributor of animal nutrition and healthcare products Pigrolac, Early Wean, Mamapro, Sarimanok, Vetracin, Jectran, Latigo, Bexan, Bacterid and Apralyte.

Turning 52 years in October, Unahco has remained steadfast in its commitment to help animal raisers as well as agri farmers by providing them with quality veterinary, feed and agricultural products that will help them improve their farm efficiency and increase productivity, profitability and sustainability.

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US FDA reminds food firms on renewal of registration

Filipino food and beverage firms exporting to the United States must renew the registration of their facilities with the US Food and Drug Administration starting next month to continue serving the US market.

The biennial facility registration period will run from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31.

Failure to register a facility during this period may limit the ability of importers to enter food products into the US.

"Shipments from the Philippines may be refused entry to the United States when the associated food facility registration is not renewed properly," the Department of Trade and Industry's Export Marketing Bureau (EMB) said in an advisory.

The registration requirements apply to domestic and foreign facilities that that manufacture, process, pack, or hold food for human or animal consumption in the US.

Among the facilities required to register with FDA are grain elevators, feed mills, flour mills, corn and oilseed processors, pet food manufacturers, renderers and others.

All food facility registrations must contain an assurance that the FDA will be permitted to inspect the facility at the times and in the manner permitted by the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act.

The biennial registration renewal for food facilities is mandated under the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), which was signed into law by then US president Barack Obama in 2011.

Facilities should be also aware that the compliance deadlines have passed for the FSMA Preventive Controls Rule for both small and large facilities.

"Such rule requires facilities to implement written Hazard Analysis and Risk-Based Preventive Controls (HARPC) Food Safety Plans. Plans such as HACCP, BRC, ISO and SQF do not satisfy this new requirement," the DTI-EMB said.

"Facilities that have not yet developed their plan should do so immediately. USFDA may request a facility's food safety plan as part of a routine inspection," it added.

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5 provinces commit to protect Visayan sea

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Five local government units have committed to adopt a fisheries management framework to protect the Visayan Sea, one of the country's major fishing grounds, from illegal fishing activities to ensure a sustainable fisheries sector.

The governors of Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Capiz, Masbate and Cebu recently signed the "Commitment to Adopt and Implement the Management Framework for the Conservation, Protection, and Restoration of the Visayan Sea Fisheries Management Area," a major provision of the Amended Fisheries Code which mandates local governments to implement management measures in municipal waters.

The local unit of international organization Oceana said the commitment is a product of collaboration among local and national government officials, fisherfolks, academe, scientists and partner civil society groups.

"We hope this historic milestone will pave the way for the official designation of the Visayan Sea as the first fisheries management area in the country with science-based management framework in place," Oceana Philippines vice president Gloria Ramos said.

The Visayan Sea provides food and livelihood to 100,000 municipal fisherfolks and about one million rural folks in 33 municipalities in five provinces.

The designation of FMAs is among the provisions under the amended Fisheries Code, where a comprehensive science-based fisheries management plan will be enforced to ensure sustained productivity and protection from overfishing, illegal fishing, and destructive fishing practices.

"The governors have made it clear that they want to protect and rehabilitate the Visayan Sea and strengthen governance of this very important fishing ground. We are supportive of this initiative, including the implementation of a management plan for each province as this will restore fisheries abundance in this very important marine ecosystem," Ramos said.

Oceana hopes the initiative will inspire other LGUs to comply with the Fisheries Code amid the issuance of the memorandum circular on the implementation of the Fisheries Compliance Audit (FishCA) by the Department of Interior and Local Government.

FishCA is a scorecard to gauge the performance of coastal LGUs on fisheries law enforcement and governance, including the issuance of municipal ordinances, protection of municipal waters and marine protected areas, and participation of fishers and their respective Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils as required under the amended Fisheries Code.

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FILIPINO INVENTORS SOCIETY MARKS 75TH YEAR

THE Filipino Inventors Society (FIS) will mark its diamond anniversary on the third week of November.

The highlight of the celebration is the holding of an Inventors' Night with a dinner, an awarding and fellowship night at a hotel in Quezon City. More than 200 inventors from all over the country and their distinguished guests are expected to attend the event.

Prior to the Inventors Night, the FIS will have its National Inventors' Week with the theme "Go Innovations! The Green Light for a Greater Philippines" at a mall in Quezon City from November 15 to 21.

This is in line with the Presidential Proclamation 285 of 1993 to showcase unique and marketable inventions of Filipinos to the Filipinos.

In line with this, FIS is seeking the support of President Duterte to help mobilize the Inventors' Innovations and Grand Caravan.

The goal is to strengthen the invesntors' support to the Duterte administration's quest for inclusive growth and economic boost of the marginalized sectors like farmers, fisher folk, urban poor, etc; regreening of the country's air, land and sea environments; heighten ways to enhance and reduce costs of socialized housing construction; upholding ways to enhance employment generation in the face of certain displacements in countries that do not provide equitable treatment to our co-Filipinos; and upraise urban farming and fishing to provide for self-liquidating livelihood and daily sustenance opportunities

The FIS was founded in 1943, amid World War II, by an intrepid triad of Teo Puruganan, Pastor Reyes-Torres and Dalmacio Buenaventura.

Incorporated in 1953 as a nonstock, nonprofit organization, FIS aims in promoting the interests of inventors and their work by providing assistance in developing, protecting and locating markets for their inventions, utility models and industrial designs; diffusing information relating to industrial intellectual property; speaking for inventors nationwide; and cooperating with similarly bent persons and entities.

The achievements of FIS include the first National Exhibition of Inventions in 1957. This set the stage for Filipino inventors trying its hand in lobbying Congress for the inclusion of invention development assistance in government's priority agenda.

It resorted to lobbying, for four years before the bill creating the Philippine Inventors Commission was passed in 1964. PIC, a creation of FIS, was renamed Philippine Invention Development Institute (PIDI) in 1982.

In 1967 FIS initiated and organized, in cooperation with PIC, the observance of the first Inventors' Week, wherein amateur and professional inventors competed in a national contest of their exhibited inventions and innovations.

In 1970 the PIC and FIS launched an initiative jump-starting innovative skills among the youth, a forerunner of the present Inventschool and Creativity Cram School flagship program by FIS-affiliate Manila Innovation Development Society Inc., headed by FIS Director Virgilio Malang.

Thereafter, then-President Ferdinand E. Marcos, heeding a petition by FIS, issued Presidential Decree (PD) 1423 on June 9, 1978. It created an Invention Guarantee Fund to assure the unsecured portion of industrial loans for the exploitation and manufacture of any registered Filipino invention, utility model or industrial design; granted a five-year exemption from all taxes and fees for inventors in the manufacture and commercialization of their industrial IPs; and enabled financial aid for prototyping and patenting.

FIS also secured Proclamation 187 that paved the way for the national annual observation of Inventors' Week, a much-touted activity until 1988.

After Marcos was ousted in 1986, his

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successor former President Corazon C. Aquino's first act was to abrogate PD1423, effectively annulling all tax exemptions and abolished all incentives and privileges hard-won by the inventors.

Aquino also abolished PIDI and replaced it with the Technology Application and Promotion Institute (TAPI) under the Department of Science and Technology.

The FIS members marched back to Congress to fight for the passage of a legislation better than PD 1423. Eventually, FIS pulled yet another coup with the passage of Republic Act 7459, also known as the Inventor and Inventions Incentives Act of 1992. However, incentives under the Act's compromise provisions were not exclusively for inventions but for "technologies developed by local researchers or adapted locally from foreign sources, including inventions."

Hence, FIS has petitioned for a revised set of implementing guidelines in simple, understandable terms, which, hopefully, FIS and TAPI will draft in the near future.

FIS linked up with academe for research and development. It has standing agreements with the Polytechnic University of the Philippines and De La Salle University to provide members with an outlet for their commercial creations.

It spearheaded the establishment of the Filipino Inventors' Multipurpose Cooperative (Fimcoop) with a retail store, products display and office in Quezon City.

To locate markets abroad for commercialized inventions and innovations of members, Fimcoop, headed by Malang, established the Filipino Inventors Export-Import Inc., which incorporators include FIS Saudi Arabia Chapter.

Since it was established, FIS did not have a permanent place of business. Work has stalled but may soon resume on a planned P30-million Philippine Invention Development Center funded by Congress. The building shall serve as the national hub for the interaction of all inventors, including the unaffiliated and holders of intelectual property rights and proponents.

FIS also received assurance for another P30 million for the purchase of research and development equipment for the facility.

By the looks of it, FIS certainly is back and bound on track.

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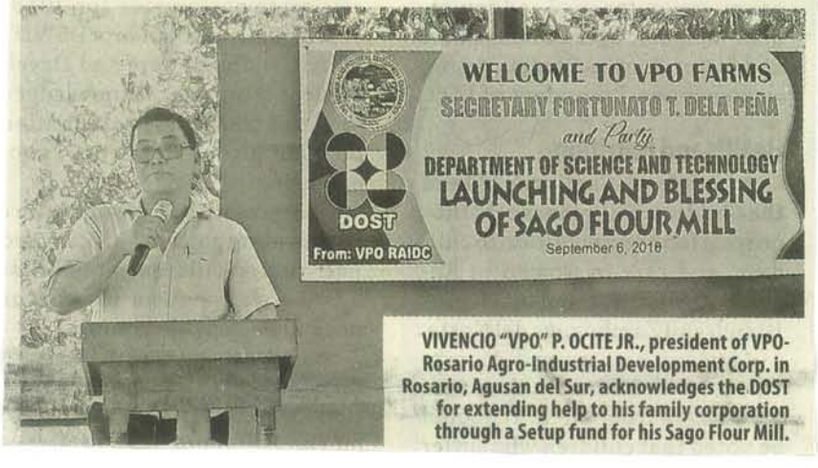
DOST continues to make a difference for Caraga MSMEs through Setup

STORY & PHOTOS BY EDD K. USMAN | *Special to the* BUSINESSMIRROR

BUTUAN CITY—Programs of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) continue to make a difference for the ordinary people. This includes the Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (Setup).

DEPARTMENT of Science and Technology (DOST) Caraga Regional Director Dominga D. Mallonga (center) assists Science Secretary Fortunato T. de la Peña and the officials of Caraga State University in Butuan City, Agusan del Sur, in the launching of "Navigatu," the Technology Incubation Center for start-ups funded by the DOST. The ribbon-cutting was part of the DOST Caraga Regional Science and Technology Week.



VIVENCIO "VPO" P. OCITE JR., president of VPO-Rosario Agro-Industrial Development Corp. in Rosario, Agusan del Sur, acknowledges the DOST for extending help to his family corporation through a Setup fund for his Sago Flour Mill.

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For 2018 Setup has a total budget of P847 million, of which the national government should still increase to benefit more micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Setup is one of the DOST's flagship programs.

Previous years' annual budget for Setup is only to P500 million. The Philippines has 17 regions, including the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Scores of MSMEs need assistance to improve their operation with the introduction of modern technology to increase productivity.

Figures in 2016 from the Department of Trade and Industry showed there are 900,914 MSMEs in the country, which generated 4,879,179 jobs and contributed 25 percent of total export revenue.

Obviously, those figures alone make MSMEs and their owners deserving of more assistance to help them become more competitive.

The Caraga region has been attending to the needs of the MSMEs in the five provinces of Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Dinagat Islands, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur.

Dominga Mallonga, DOST Caraga regional director, told the BusinessMirror that Setup has already assisted 378 MSMEs in the region from 2002 to August 2018 with with P210,776,314 fund.

She said that, of the five provinces, Agusan del Norte has the most number of assisted MSMEs with 111 firms; Surigao del Sur second at 90; Agusan del Sur third with 83; Surigao del Norte is fourth, 77; and Dinagat Islands fifth with 17.

Mallonga said DOST-Caraga already graduated 64 projects, with 314 still ongoing and under a grace period. She disclosed the figures during the Regional Science and Technology Week (RSTW) held in a mall in Butuan City early this month.

Led by Science Secretary Fortunato T. de la Peña, the DOST has been staging RSTW events across the country's regions to communicate the government's Science for the People programs, projects, the products and services of the various DOST agencies promoting technology and innovation.

Part of RSTWs included visits to Setup-assisted firms and their projects that received funding from the DOST.

Setup is DOST's "nationwide strategy that encourages and assists small and medium enterprises to adopt technology innovations to improve their operations and boost their productivity and competitiveness."

It was designed to enable enterprises to address their technical problems using innovative technology solutions.

Clients or beneficiaries of Setup can expect to receive free technical advice from consultants; technical training courses for workers/employees; new equipment to mechanize and/or improve production lines; improve product quality; and increase productivity and competitiveness.

Under Setup, the priority covers MSMEs engaged in food processing; gifts, decors and handicrafts; metal and engineering; pharmaceutical and health products; furniture; agriculture, marine and aquaculture; information and communication technology; and halal products.

DOST regional offices may have their other priorities, as well.

One of the projects visited was the VPO-Rosario Agro-Industrial Development Corp. (VPO-RAIDC), a family business that sits on around 2,000 hectares of land in Rosario, Agusan del Sur.

VPO-RAIDC was approved as a farm tourism site, a thrust of the government to get people to visit agri-business sites and, perhaps, attract the young people to go to farming and other related endeavors.

The family of Vivencio P. Ocite Jr. owns and operates the corporation, which started operation in 1987 as VPO Enterprises, then a small-time gold mining processor.

Fondly called "VPO," the corporation's president is an agricultural engineer and has been wanting to go into his passion in agri-business. He did after 30 years.

Ocite, a proud Lumad, ventured into agricultural farming and production of livestock and poultry. In his vast tract of land, he planted rubber, cacao, coffee and other crops. He expanded his farming operation in 2010.

Ocite now produces his own animal feeds and fertilizers, as well as the electricity required to run his farming enterprises.

Some staff of the DOST-Caraga, when asked how wide his farm area is, would say "as far as the eyes can see"—which would exactly greet visitors as they enter Ocite's vast farmland.

While others may just wish for "from-farm-to-table" products,

> "It is not right [for the sago palm] to be lost. As a lumad myself, I have [benefited] a lot from it. We owe it a big gratitude because in times of scarcity the sago palm saved my family, my ancestors."—Ocite

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VPO-RAIDC can already make a claim to it.

The corporation's products are being sold in "Sinubong by VPO" specialized stores with branches in Caraga and Compostela Valley, Davao region, such as eggs, meat products, rice, corn, coffee, cacao products, sugar palm products like sweeteners, vinegar, sugar palm wine, adlai cereal and sago flour.

VPO-RAIDC operates the following enterprises in its integrated farm complex:

1. Poultry and hatchery that produce around 90,000 to 120,000 eggs a day and hatches 45,000 chicks per week;
2. Piggery and slaughterhouse that butchers around 60 to 90 heads of pigs and 5,000 to 7,000 heads of chickens a day;
3. Pangasius farm producing around 2 tons to 3 tons a week;
4. Feed, rice and corn mills with a combined output of 70 tons to 80 tons a day;
5. Rubber-processing plant producing 250 metric ton of crumb rubber per month;
6. Agri-farm planted with rubber, cacao, rice, corn, coffee, sugar palm, sago palm, coconut trees and others;
7. Sago-processing plant;
8. Food-processing plant for products like sugar palm wine, vinegar, cocoa, coffee and adlai cereal
9. Biogas digesters that supply most of the power requirements of the integrated farm enterprise: The two biogas digesters (22,050 cubic centimeters and 16,800 cm^3 that convert the pig manure, chicken dung and other wastes from the farm into methane gas to electricity in a powerhouse that gives 420 KVA of electricity;
10. Organic foliar fertilizer from farm wastes; and
11. Product display center.

If there's a product that is closer to Ocite's heart, it would probably be from the sago palm tree, which abounds in the region.

One proof is that he sought DOST Caraga's Setup intervention for a project, titled "Product and Quality Enhancement of Sago Flour Processing through S and T [Science and Technology] intervention."

He got an assistance worth P3.341 million which he used to buy equipment, such as shredder, pulverizer, mechanical drier and sago drill.

The Setup arrangement also came with technical assistance: plant layout, food and safety training in good manufacturing process, and training on chocolate making.

"We saw that the sago flour being the food of the Lumad was no longer getting much attention. Sago palm trees were being cut down in many areas," Ocite recalled as he acknowledged the DOST for the help that became the firm's Sago Flour Mill.

"Our company launched a program to save the sago palm and, in fact, encouraged and convinced them [lumad] to plant more of this palm tree so they can earn from it," he said.

The VPO-RAIDC president said they strengthened their advocacy of conserving and planting the sago palm that is endemic in Agusan del Sur through an industry that turns out products.

"It is not right [for the sago palm] to be lost. As a lumad myself, I have [benefited] a lot from it. We owe it a big gratitude because in times of scarcity the sago palm saved my family, my ancestors.

"Now, we are trying to give back with the small knowledge that we have. Agusan del Sur has about 40-percent lumad population," Ocite said.

Other DOST-Caraga-assisted projects visited were the Bayugan Farmers Millers Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Bayugan City, Agusan del Sur; Eel Farm in Cabadbaran, Agusan del Norte; Hillsview Resort for its Mangosteen Tea in Trento, Agusan del Sur; and Geo-Safer Mindanao at Caraga State University, Main Campus, Butuan City.

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Agri-Talk

By ZAC B. SARIAN

Bougainvillea Trending Picking Up

(Memoirs of an Agri Journalist)

Grace Belleza

In the September 9 issue of this magazine, we featured the efforts of Baby Spowart in promoting the use of bougainvilleas in landscaping and other purposes. Through her Chat Group, Bougainvillea Philippines in the Internet, we thought that she was determined to create a trend espousing the desirable traits of bougainvilleas.

And now, it seems that Baby is succeeding in her efforts. Producing bougainvilleas as an income-generating project is picking up. At the Kadayawan garden show in Davao City last August, for instance, we met **Grace Belleza** from Davao del Norte who happened to be a member of Baby's Chat Group. She was enjoying brisk sales of her grafted bougainvilleas at the show.

In 2015, Grace recognized the potentials of bougainvilleas as a good source of income. So she started her own nursery, using a portion of her mother's rice farm to produce grafted bougainvilleas. Why grafted? Because that is the trend in Thailand. Growers graft onto one rootstock two or more varieties to produce one plant with flowers of different colors and other characteristics. And these plants command a high price because they are something unique.

Grace is a 30-year-old housewife who earlier took up a culinary course hoping to become an OFW someday. But OFW it was not to be because she has found growing grafted bougainvilleas as a profitable small business. Because of her membership in Baby Spowart's Chat Group, she has become a friend of so many other bougainvillea enthusiasts from all over the tropical world. And she has accumulated at least 200 varieties in her collection through plant exchanges as well as by purchases.

Grace said she had an easy time learning to graft bougainvilleas by viewing the procedure on You Tube. And so today, she has at least 5,000 grafted plants and counting. She has also learned to nurture newly gathered rootstock materials by her hunters. Many of the sources include homeowners who have long wanted to get rid of their old bougainvilleas.

Aside from selling her grafted plants in garden shows and in her nursery, Grace also sells her grafted beauties online. One lady from Pangasinan has been ordering Grace's bougainvilleas which she sends through LBC. Within a short span of time, Grace has sent to the Pangasinan aficionado at least ₱30,000 worth of grafted bougainvilleas.

A grafted bougainvillea, two feet tall, with two of the more common varieties sells from ₱250 to ₱350. On the other hand, a single graft of the rare varieties, like Red Fantasy from Malaysia, sells for ₱700. The highest price she got for a big plant onto which 19 different varieties were grafted was ₱35,000.

Grace has a strategy on how to win the continuing interest of her buyers. She only releases a few varieties in one year. The following year, she would release new ones. That way, buyers will always go back to find out what new varieties are available.

Now you see, there is money that can be made on bougainvilleas. We will be watching if the trend will continue.

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After Boracay, rehabilitate Laguna de Bay, Manila Bay

LONG before he acted decisively on the "cesspool" that, he said, Boracay's waters had become, President Duterte had singled out Laguna de Bay as a body of water that demanded immediate government attention and action.

"Itong Laguna Lake," he said in his very first State of the Nation Address on July 25, 2016, when he was just a few weeks in office, "Wala na ang fishermen. Iyon na lang... one big fish pen to the other. Makita mo sa plane every time I go to Davao." He went on to vow: "Laguna Lake shall be transformed into a vibrant economic zone showcasing ecotourism by addressing the negative impact of watershed destruction, land conversion, and pollution."

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) set out to carry out the President's instructions. A year later, many of the fish pens operated by business establishments had been torn down to give small fishermen a bigger part of the lake in which to fish. The Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) said that in the first half of 2017, it had planted 19,000 seedlings in denuded areas around the lake. It presented a 10-year Laguna de Bay Region Master Plan in which fishing would be limited to 60 percent of the area, while 40 percent would be reserved for leisure parks and eco-tourism.

Early this week, Malacanang called on the LLDA to look into the possibility of dismantling all the fish pens and fish cages in Laguna de Bay to enable the lake to recover from all these years of commercial abuse, along with the destruction of the surrounding forested areas and the pollution coming from households all around the lake. Presidential spokesman Harry Roque cited former DENR Secretary Lito Atienza's call for the dismantling of all fish pens to allow the lake's recovery and rehabilitation.

The President and the DENR were decisive in shutting down Boracay last May as it appeared to have been abused by so many business establishments -- hotels, resorts, and restaurants -- catering to the millions of international tourists descending on the country's top tourist attraction. Boracay is due to reopen this October, after six months of an all-out drive to stop the pollution, preserve island's natural attractions, and end violations of so many local ordinances.

The same kind of decisive action should be taken to restore Laguna de Bay to its natural productivity and beauty -- after which, the cleanup, restoration, and rehabilitation process should be extended to its outlet, the Pasig River, and on to the Manila Bay which may have an even worse problem than Laguna de Bay.

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EDITORIAL

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PAGPAPATAW NG TARIPA SA BIGAS SUPORTADO NG IMF

NAGPAHAYAG ng suporta ang International Monetary Fund (IMF) sa plano ng pamahalaan ng Filipinas na magpatupad ng rice tariffication sa halip na rice importation quota system.

Gayunman, binigyang-diin ng IMF ang pangangailangan na pangalagaan ang kapakanan ng maliliit na magsasaka.

"Directors welcomed the progress made by the authorities on structural reforms and encouraged them to deepen the reform efforts in seeking broader economic benefits," nakasaad sa statement na ipinalabas ng IMF nitong Setyembre 27 kaugnay sa Article IV Consultation sa Filipinas noong nakaraang Hulyo.

Ayon sa mga opisyal ng IMF, sinusuportahan nila ang plano ng gobyerno na palitan ang rice import quota system ng taripa, subalit binigyang-diin na kailangang suportahan ang mga maliliit na magsasaka na maaapektuhan ng reporma.

Samantala, sinabi ng isang opisyal ng Department of Finance (DOF) na ang panukalang rice taffication measure ay may provision na naglalaan ng revenues mula sa rice tariffs para sa maliliit na magsasaka.

"Yes, the version of the bill that the Economic Development Cluster strongly supports includes a Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund to be initially funded by the GAA and eventually by the tariff," wika ni DOF Assistant Secretary Antonio Joselito Lambino.

Aniya, ang bill na inakda ni Senadora Cynthia Villar ay nagkakaloob ng P10 billion annual subsidy, na inisyal na kukunin sa General Appropriations Act (GAA) o sa national budget hanggang sa maging sapat ang Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) para suportahan ang rice sector.

Samantala, ang bersiyon ng bill sa Kamara ay inilalaan naman ang lahat ng tariff revenues sa mga magsasaka.

Inaprubahan na ng mga miyembro ng Kamara sa ikatlo at huling pagbasa ang House Bill 7735, o ang panukalang Revised Agricultural Tariffication Act, noong Agosto 14.

PNA

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EDITORIAL

Matapos ang Boracay, rehabilitasyon para sa Laguna de bay at Manila bay

BAGO pa man ipasara ang Boracay, na aniya'y naging "cesspool" na, una nang tinukoy ni Pangulong Dutere ang Laguna de Bay bilang isa sa mga anyong tubig sa bansa na nangangailangan ng agarang aksiyon at atensiyon ng pamahalaan.

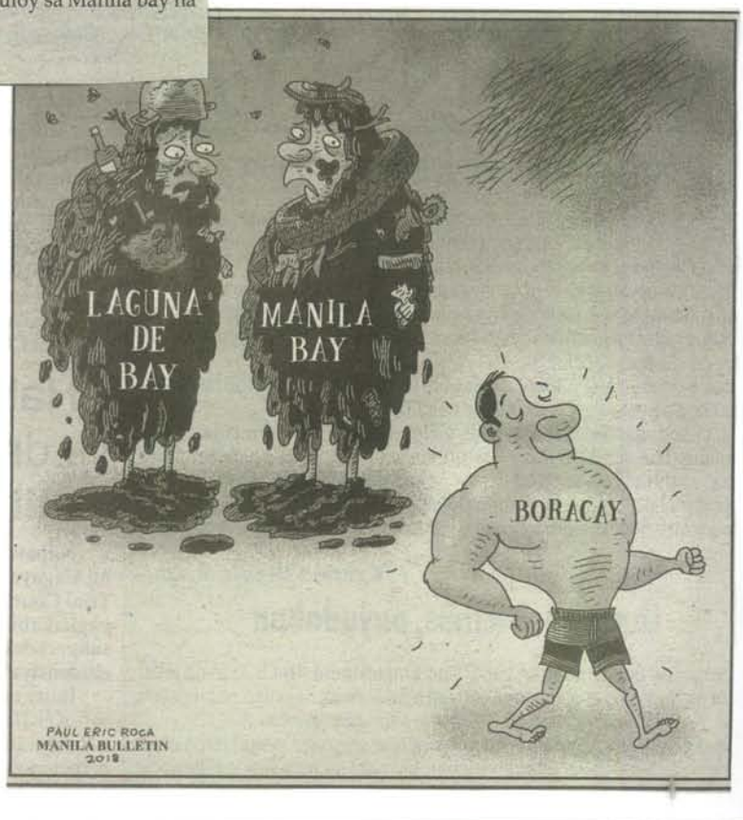
"Itong Laguna Lake," pahayag niya sa kanyang unang State of the Nation Address noong Hulyo 25, 2016, ilang linggo pa lamang ang nakalilipas nang maupo siya sa kanyang puwesto, "Wala na ang fisherman. Iyon na lang...one big fish pen to the other. Makita mo sa plane every time I go to Davao." Nangako siyang, "Laguna Lake shall be transformed into a vibrant economic zone showcasing ecotourism by addressing the negative impact of watershed destruction, land conversion, and pollution."

Kumilos ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) upang tugunan ang direktiba ng Pangulo. Makalipas ang isang taon, giniba na ang naglalakihang baklad na pinapatakbo ng ilang kumpanya upang bigyan ang maliliit na magsasaka ng mas malaking parte na maaaring pangisdaan. Sinabi ng Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) na sa unang kalahati ng 2017, nasa 19,000 binhi na ang kanilang naitanim sa mga hindi napakikinabangang lugar sa paligid ng lawa. Ibinahagi din nito ang 10-year Laguna de Bay Region Master Plan kung saan lilimitahan sa 60 porsiyento sa lugar, habang ang 40% ay ilalaan bilang mga parke at eco-tourism.

Kamakailan lang, binigyan ng direktiba ng Malacañang ang LLDA para tingnan ang posibilidad na pagtanggal sa lahat ng mga palaisdaan at mga baklad na nasa Laguna de Bay upang mabigyan ng panahon ang lawa na makabawi at manumbalik mula sa nakalipas na maraming taong komersiyal na pang-aabuso, kasama ng pagkasira ng kagubatan sa paligid nito at sa polusyong dulot ng mga kabahayang nakatayo sa palibot ng lawa. Binanggit din ni presidential spokesman Harry Roque ang panawagan ni dating DENR Secretary Lito Atienza na pag-aalis sa lahat ng baklad na natakayo sa lawa upang maisakatuparan ang pagsasaayos at rehabilitasyon nito.

Naging desidido ang Pangulo at DENR na ipasara ang Boracay nitong Mayo dahil lumalabas na lubos na itong naabuso ng maraming negosyo doon – mga hotel, resort at kainan – na tumatanggap at nagsisilbi sa milyun-milyong turista mula sa iba't ibang bahagi ng mundo na nagtutungo sa pangunahing atraksiyon ng bansa. Nakatakdang muling buksan ang Boracay ngayong Oktubre, matapos ang anim na buwang malawakang rehabilitasyon ng lugar upang maihinto ang polusyon, maipreserba ang natural na atraksiyon ng isla, at maitigil ang mga paglabag ng maraming lokal na ordinansa.

Isang katulad na tiyak na aksiyon ang dapat na ipatupad upang mapanumbalik ang natural na yaman at ganda ng Laguna de Bay – kasunod ng paglilinis, pagsasaayos at proseso ng rehabilitasyon na dapat iimplementa sa karugtong nito na ilog Pasig patuloy sa Manila bay na maaaring mas may malaking problema kumpara sa Laguna de Bay.



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PAHINA SIYETE

Clemen Bautista

Laguna de Bay: Isang pagbabalik-tanaw

MAIHAHAMBING na isang santuwaryo ng mga mangingisda ang Laguna de Bay noon sapagkat malaya silang nakapangingisda sa nasabing lawa na ang lawak noon ay may 90,000 ektarya. Sinasabing mayaman noon ang Laguna de Bay sa iba't ibang isdang tulad ng kanduli, dalag, hito, bangus, bidbid, karpa, ayungin, biya, at tilapia.

Maging ang mga susô noon sa Laguna de Bay ay nagsilbing pangunahing pagkain ng mga alagang itik ng mga mamamayan sa Rizal at Laguna. Bukod pa ang mga hipon na nahuhuli sa sakag. Ipinagbibili sa mga palengke at inihahalo sa pagkain ng mga inaalagaang itik. Hanapbuhay noon ang pag-aalaga ng mga itik sa mga bayan sa Rizal na malapit sa Laguna de Bay.

Ang ibang pinalad o sinuwerte sa pag-aalaga ng mga itik ay nagsiyaman. Nakapagpaaral at napagtapos sa kolehiyo at unibersidad ang kanilang mga anak.

Ang inyong lingkod ay nag-alaga rin ng mga itik noong nag-aaral sa high school. Ako ang kumakahig ng mga susô sa Laguna de Bay na pangunahing pagkain ng inaalagaan kong mga itik. Bukod pa ang maliliit na hipon na huli sa sakag na isinasama o inihahalo sa sapal ng niyog at darak na pagkain din ng mga itik.

Alas kuwatro pa lamang ng madaling-araw ay nagsisimula nang kumahig ng mga susô sa Laguna de Bay. Alas siyete na ng umaga kung makabalik sa bayan at naisakay sa kariton ang mga susông inilagay sa sako. Ang nasabing mga susô ay inilalagay sa batyang may tubig at doon kinakain ng mga inaalagaan naming mga itik. Ang mga susô ay malaking tulong upang magpatuloy sa pangingitlog ang mga itik.

Ayon sa mga dating mangingisda sa Laguna de Bay, ang pukot (isang uri ng pamalakaya sa Angono, Binangonan, Cardona at iba pang bayan sa Rizal at Laguna na malapit sa Laguna de Bay) ay maraming nahuhuling isda sa lawa. May pagkakataon pa na kapag "nababad" (maraming huling mga isda), halos inaabot ng maghapon bago matapos ang paghango sa mga nahuling isdang kanduli.

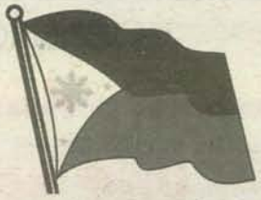
Ang mga biya at malalaking ayungin ay ipinagbibili naman sa ibang sakadora o mamimili ng mga isda. Dinadala at ipinagbibili sa mga palengke sa iba't ibang bayan sa Rizal.

Ang mga mangingisda naman na hindi sumasama sa pukot ay may sariling mga sakag ng hipon, kitid, pante at pahuran (tawag sa pangkahig o pagkuha ng mga suso sa lawa) ay maligaya sapagkat maraming nahuhuling mga isda at nakakahig na mga susô at tulya sa lawa. Marami sa kanila ay umunlad ang buhay at hindi dumanas ng paghihikahos sa buhay na karaniwang dinaranas ngayon ng mga mangingisda sa lawa. May araw na maraming huling isda at may araw na kakaunti ang huling mga isda. Umaabot lamang sa dalawa o tatlong kilo ang naibebenta sa mga sakadora. Ang natira'y iniuuwi ng mga mangingisda para iulam ng pamilya.

Sa pakikipag-usap ng inyong lingkod sa mga dating mangingisda at mamumukot sa Laguna de Bay, sinabi nila na noong wala pang mga itinayong fishpen sa Laguna de Bay ay malaya silang nangingisda kahit saang bahagi ng lawa. Ang mga pukot ay maraming nahuhuling isda at maging ang maliliit na mangingisda na kitid at pante ang gamit.

Sa pagtatayo ng mga fishpen sa Laguna de Bay, nabawasan ang lugar na pangisdaan ng malilit na mangingisda. Kailangan nilang lumayo sa mga fishpen at sa laot mangisda. Mapanganib rin na mangisda na malapit sa mga fishpen sapagkat itataboy sila ng mga fishpen guard na armado ng matataas na kalibre ng baril. Marami nang pagkakataon na may mga mangingisdang binaril at napatay ng mga fishpen guard, na ang naging kasalanan lamang ay nangisda malapit sa fishpen. Ang mga may-ari ng malalaking fishpen sa Laguna de Bay ay mga dating sirkero at payaso sa pulitika, mga dating heneral at iba pang mayaman at maimpluwensiyang negosyante.

Masaya at nagkakaroon ng magandang pagkakataon ang mga



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malilit na mangingisda sa lawa kapag nagkaroon ng malakas na bagyo, na dahilan para mawasak ang malalaking fishpen sa lawa.

Ang pangangalaga sa Laguna de Bay at ang pagbibigay ng permit sa mga fishpen operator na makapagtayo ng mga fishpen ay nasa pamamahala ng Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA).

Isang ahensiya ng pamahalaan na pinagkatiwalaan ng mamamayan na mangangalaga sa Laguna de Bay upang mapakinabangan ng lahat, hindi lamang ng iilan maimpluwensiyang tao ang lawa.