CLIPPINGS FOR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2018

A. SEC. EFP QUOTED

MANILA BULLETIN
Govt to help farmers fight schistosomiasis
Flood market with rice – DU30; 'Price cap' for rice, chicken – NFA

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
40,000 bags of hoarded rice seized

BUSINESS WORLD
#Nation at a glance: Saturday market

BUSINESS MIRROR
Tow Iligan City traders nabbed for 'hoarding'
Group opposes removal of NFA's licensing power

MANILA STANDARD
Rice-driven inflation entails policy change, says Finance

THE MANILA TIMES
The 2018 ASEAN golden agrow awardees

B. DA FAMILY

MANILA BULLETIN
House panels OK bill to boost coconut industry
Rice key culprit for high inflation – DOF

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Stubbornly high inflation? Blame rice prices, says DOF

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Agrilink Int'l Trade Expo opening
Rice multiplies inflation weight 10-fold
Help our farmers sell

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Rice lib to doom 3M farmers

BUSINESS WORLD
#Nation at a glance: 7.9ha in Boracay set as agrarian reform area
Japanese firm evaluating possible new application for Philippine banana fiber

THE DAILY TRIBUNE
Rice contributes the most to inflation

BUSINESS MIRROR
Rice's share in inflation levels rises tenfold
ICT specialists develop app featuring PHL rice varieties
PCA revamp pushed to better manage coco-levy fund

THE MANILA TIMES
Time to level up PH agriculture
DA eyes Halal certification for Cagayan Valley products
Native pork products to hit the market

TEMPO
2 Traders arrested for hoarding rice

PILIPINO MIRROR
Oversupply ng kamatis vs artificial shortage
NFA siniguro na may sapat na stcok ng bigas sa Negor hanggang Disyembre
NFA nagtakda ng 4 na label para sa bigas

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

MANILA BULLETIN
Imported NFA rice arriving in NegOcc
P300-M confiscated rice subjected to forfeiture case

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Hardin ng Lunas harvest time

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Science comes to endangered Lake Sebu

THE DAILY TRIBUNE
Gov't forfeits P300M smuggled rice

THE MANILA TIMES
Villar: Family farms key to inclusive growth

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL TONIGHT
Poe: Farmers to benefit from free rice import

PILIPINO MIRROR
P300-M puslit na bigas nakumpiska ng PNP

D. FOREIGN STORY

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Soybeans slide anew

THE MANILA TIMES
UN: World must slash meat consumption to save climate

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: 15

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Govt to help farmers fight schistosomiasis

By **MIKE U. CRISMUNDO**

BUTUAN CITY – The regional office of the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) of the Department of Agriculture here will assist livestock farmers in combatting the spread of schistosomiasis infection, DA regional spokesperson Emmylou T. Presilda said Thursday.

Schistosomiasis, which is known to infect humans, likewise attacks animals, especially farm animals exposed to contaminated water.

Presilda said the BAI is planning to tap the Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratories (DA-RADDL) to include schistosomiasis diagnosis.

"This is in relation also to the program of the Duterte administration through DA Secretary Manny Pinol that food program of the government will not be disrupted by any disease of the animals and the government is ready to assist our farmers," she said.

To capacitate laboratory personnel, BAI and Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) of the Department of Health conducted a 3-day extensive training in Butuan City hosted by DA Caraga RADDL recently.

Presilda explained that farm animals exposed in areas with the presence of the intermediate host snail called Oncomelania species will most likely contract schistosomiasis.

"Oncomelania species of snail is very small, as small as the tip of the ballpen," said Dr. Manalo.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: 13

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PUNCHLINE

Flood market with rice – DU30; 'price cap' for rice, chicken – NFA

By **FRED M. LOBO**

IN a bid to check worsening inflation, President Duterte has authorized the "unimpeded" importation of rice.

Boost rice supply and lower prices, Duterte ordered.

* * *

The National Food Authority (NFA) has approved the imposition of a suggested retail price (SRP) for rice and chicken effective the end of this month.

Time to curb the rising cost of food commodities, it said.

* * *

The President ordered the liberalization of rice importation following a "principled and fierce" discussion on rising prices at the recent Cabinet meeting, according to presidential spokesman Harry Roque.

"The President approved unimpeded importation of rice as a measure to reduce inflation," Roque said.

* * *

Duterte expressed serious concern after his economic team finally recognized that food prices were primarily responsible for the recent spike in inflation .

"He wants to flood the market with rice so that even if the price of crude and other oil prices should go up still further, the people will have access to affordable rice," Roque added.

* * *

Roque explained that big private companies like San Miguel Corporation can now import rice as much as they can, provided they pay the proper tariff.

"Anyone who can afford it and will pay tariffs for rice will be allowed to import rice," he said.

* * *

He said that upon the orders of the President, the National Food Authority (NFA) no longer has the power to accredit who can import as well as to determine how much rice to import.

"There will no longer be restrictions as long as they pay the tariffs and we will use the tariffs to help our Filipino farmers," he added.

* * *

Rice importation was a "very hot issue" recent Cabinet meeting, Roque said though denying there was a shouting match among some Cabinet officials who supported and opposed to the proposal.

Hot as burning rice. Whew!

* * *

Roque said that during the " principled and fierce" discussion about the current rice importation system, "there was no maximum and that's why the decision to liberalize, for all intents and purposes, the importation of rice was really the ultimate means by which to rein in inflation as far as food items are concerned."

"There was a thorough discussion of the issue and after presenting all the issues, the President decided to fully liberalize the importation of rice," he said.

* * *

Roque added the government would still push for the rice tariffication bill in Congress "but we will not wait for it" as import liberalization is urgently needed.

Yes. Aanhin pa ang damo kung patay na ang gutom na kabayo, as the saying goes.

* * *

Meanwhile, the NFA announced it will impose a suggested retail price (SRP) for rice effective the end of this month, in a bid to address the rising cost of the main staple.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) will also sign a memorandum of agreement (MOA) imposing a moving price ceiling on chicken, it added.

* * *

"The price range (for rice) will be determined in a meeting that will be held on October 18 with the stakeholders, millers, traders, and farmers," said Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol, who is now the chairman of the NFA Council.

The sale of rice under deceptive commercial brand names will also be banned and rice will be properly identified as local or imported, he said.

* * *

"Sinandomeng, Angelica, Jasmine, and Dinorado are among the common names given to commercial rice sold in the market at prices as high as ₱55 to ₱60 per kilo. But the truth is, aside from Dinorado and Jasmine, there is no such thing as 'Sinandomeng' or 'Angelica' rice varieties," Pinol said.

May be "Dinuraan"?

* * *

The DTI and DA will also ensure observance of the planned "price cap" for rice and chicken , which will be updated every three days, Piñol added.

Yes to measures that would check inflation and rising prices.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: 1 & 10

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

40,000 bags of hoarded rice seized

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Some 40,000 bags of rice were seized by the government from hoarders in Iligan City following an intensified campaign against illegal rice trading in the country, which is being considered as the primary reason for the continued increase in rice prices.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said the National Food Authority (NFA), which

Turn to Page 10

40,000 From Page 1

was recently reverted to the Department of Agriculture (DA), reported that two Iligan City-based rice traders were arrested on Wednesday for hoarding 40,000 bags of rice.

Rice stocks of Filipino-Chinese trader Sonia Payan and Taiwanese Jhonny Tan were kept in four warehouses in Iligan City and were raided by the Subcommittee on Rice Hoarding, Cartel and Smuggling.

The committee includes the NFA, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, National Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Customs (BOC), Philippine National Police (PNP), Philippine Ports Authority, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Philippine Coast Guard and the Department of Labor and Employment.

"The traders were the first to be arrested in the intensified campaign against rice hoarding ordered by President Duterte," Piñol said.

"The documents in the possession of the two traders were inconsistent with their stock inventory and appeared spurious, prompting the NFA to order the seizure," he added.

The traders will be charged with hoarding, involvement in cartel operations and profiteering.

Last August, the NFA created a technical working group that aims to coordinate with government enforcement agencies, combat illegal rice trading in the country and resolve the issue of artificial rice shortage.

Under the law, the NFA has the power "to order the seizure, whenever there is cornering, or hoarding, as may be defined by the authority of rice and/or other grains and their substitutes and/or the byproducts thereof, to stabilize the supply in the area of scarcity and restore prices to normal levels."

It is part of the function of the NFA to ensure industry regulation and development by conducting monitoring of the grains market and businessmen, enforcement of rules and regulations governing grains business.

License revocation

Business groups and individuals involved in some P300 million worth of smuggled rice seized by the PNP and BOC recently during raids in warehouses in various areas across the country may face permanent revocation of their import license.

PNP spokesman Chief Supt. Benigno Durana Jr. said the BOC is now pursuing cases against groups and individuals behind the smuggling of the seized rice.

"Even as restrictions on rice importation has been relaxed, entities behind the P300-million rice smuggling may face permanent revocation of their import license," he said.

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said the joint PNP-BOC team discovered 124,807 sacks of illegally imported rice in seven warehouses in Bulacan when it conducted a random inspection of 801 warehouses containing 1,059,729 sacks of rice in various locations nationwide.

Albayalde said among the 801 warehouses inspected, 168 were in Central Luzon, 137 in Cagayan Valley and 139 in the Ilocos region. The rest were scattered in different regions in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

He added that two warehouses in Metro Manila were also inspected, 40 in the Cordillera Administrative Region, 59 in Western Mindanao and 75 in Bicol region.

All 801 warehouses inspected had an aggregate holding capacity of 7.2 million sacks but contained only 1,059,729 sacks during the inspection.

Other specific details about the series of raids were not immediately available.

Durana said the PNP initiated the inspection of rice warehouses upon the instruction of Duterte to crack down on hoarding and smuggling of rice that resulted in an artificial shortage in the grains supply.

'Unimpeded' importation

In a related development, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda yesterday suggested that the government ask hotels, fast food and restaurant chains and big corporations to import rice to force the retail price of the food staple to go down.

Salceda said the DA and the NFA should facilitate rice purchases by these establishment from abroad in line with Duterte's directive for "unimpeded" rice importation.

"Unimpeded means no one should block rice importation. If inflation dos not go down, it means DA and NFA officials impeded it and mismanaged the presidential directive. The President should discipline those officials," Salceda said.

The fall in rice prices will result in a decline in inflation, which represents increases in the cost of goods and services, according to the lawmaker, as he noted that spiraling rice prices contributed one percent to the 6.7-percent inflation rate last month.

In other developments, concerned groups yesterday said Duterte's Administrative Order 13, which removes the non-tariff barriers and streamlines administrative procedures on the importation of agricultural products, will only worsen the rice crisis.

"Month after month, the Duterte government has promised that rice importation will stabilize rice prices. Filipino consumers have been suffering for months with the weekly rice price hikes since January. After more than half a year going through those empty promises, this is only what the administration could amount to: a recycled and flawed solution," Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy Estavillo said. – **With Cecille Suerte Felipe, Jess Diaz, Rhodina Villanueva, Louella Desiderio**

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Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: 12/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

#nationataglance

AVRIVERA/VIA MPIÑOL FB PAGE

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION: TAGUIG CITY

Saturday market

Goods from at least 30 farmers and fishermen's organizations around the country will be available, direct from the producers and at farm gate prices, here at the Taguig Lakeshore Hall in Lower Bicutan on Saturday, Oct. 13 as part of the Department of Agriculture's (DA) roving TienDA Malasakit Store. In a social media post, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said this would be the biggest TienDA so far with products such as tuna from General Santos City, bangus from Pangasinan, fruits and vegetables from Mindanao, and tomatoes from Laguna, where farmers recently lost money as they had to dispose tons of unsold harvest. Mr. Piñol said after this partnership with the Taguig City government and earlier with Muntinlupa, the DA aims to bring the TienDA to other parts of Metro Manila.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: A9

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Two Iligan City traders nabbed for 'hoarding'

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas @jearcalas

THE government has seized 40,000 bags of rice in four warehouses and arrested two Iligan City-based traders who were allegedly hoarding the stockpile, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said an interagency government group made the successful operation on October 11. The two traders, a Filipino-Chinese and a Taiwanese, would be charged with hoarding, profiteering and involvement in cartel operations, according to Piñol.

"NFA [National Food Authority] Acting Administrator Tomas Escarez said the rice stocks of Filipino-Chinese businessman Sonia C. Payan and Taiwanese trader Jhonny D. Tan kept in four warehouses in Iligan City were seized by the government," he said in a Facebook post.

"Escarez said the documents in the possession of the two traders were inconsistent with their stock inventory and appeared spurious prompting the NFA to order the seizure," Piñol added.

Citing Escarez, the DA chief said Payan and Tan are the first people to be arrested in the administration's intensified campaign against rice hoarding.

"The arrest of the suspected hoarders and the seizure of the rice stocks was the first major accomplishment of the government team involved in the campaign against rice hoarding," Piñol said.

The interagency government team against rice hoarding, cartel and smuggling is comprised of members of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Customs, the Philippine National Police, the Philippine Ports Authority, the Philippine Coast Guard, NFA and the Departments of Labor and Employment and of Trade.

Crackdown

IN a statement on Thursday, the National Movement for Food Sovereignty (NMFS) urged the government to strengthen its crackdown on unscrupulous traders to shield farmers from unfair rice trade.

"To reduce price speculation and uncontrolled rice price spikes, the government should make good at going after and prosecuting unscrupulous traders," the NMFS said. "Giving them more economic clout by allowing them to export any volume is tantamount to protecting and encouraging their nefarious and profiteering activities."

The NMFS argued that flooding the market would not be sufficient to bring down the high retail prices of rice. It explained that price manipulation by big traders and cartels is big a factor to price spikes.

As an example, the group cited the 2008 to 2009 rice crisis, wherein the government's importation of about 2 million metric tons (MT) was not enough to reduce the prevailing retail prices that have risen to P40 per kilogram from P30 kilogram (kg).

"[Minimum access volume] imports of around 600,000 MT in 2016 and 888,000 MT in 2017 have not even driven domestic prices down at P41.72 per kg and P42.55 per kg in 2016 and 2017, respectively, for well-milled rice, suggesting that supply and demand is not the only determinant of price," it said.

"[Pieces of evidence] point to price manipulation of traders and cartels often lead to price spikes that affect the welfare both of producers and consumers," the NMFS added.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Group opposes removal of NFA's licensing power

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas @jearcalas

THE Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said removing the National Food Authority's (NFA) power to issue import licenses would harm local farmers as the government will lose a tool that will prevent a glut in domestic rice supply.

Former Agriculture Secretary and FFF National Policy Board Chairman Leonardo Q. Montemayor said the Senate's version of tariffication bill that seeks to remove the NFA's licensing power is "worrisome."

"Almost all countries, including those in Asean, and even advanced countries like Japan and Korea, require all rice importers to obtain licenses so that imports can be monitored and kept within bounds," Montemayor said in a statement on Thursday.

In a separate interview, FFF National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said the loss of government regulation over imports could lead to an oversupply in the domestic market, which could slash the income of farmers.

"The problem is that without any tool to rein in on imports [if needed], there could easily be overimportation and oversupply in the market leading to very low rice, and therefore, palay prices," he said.

"We are not against imports, but there must be some way to manage imports so that they do not go out of hand. Most countries use licensing, others were able to set their tariffs at very high levels and they adjust it when needed, and others give a monopoly over rice imports to a state agency like the NFA," he added.

The FFF also questioned the Senate's decision to reject proposals to allow rice farmers and their organizations to advise the Department of Agriculture (DA) on the use of the proposed rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF). The RCEF is an earmarking fund to the rice industry coming from all the rice tariffs collected.

"We just think that the farmers should have a say in how that money is spent, because it is supposed to benefit them. In the past [with the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund], there was no such consultative mechanism and the money was wasted," Montemayor said.

"And if we leave it up to the DA, chances are they will favor their own priorities. We want to use the money for truly innovative projects that do not get funding support at present," he added.

The FFF also criticized the "pre-allocation" of the RCEF for certain government programs, removing the policy space for the DA to adjust to the needs of the rice farmers.

"Worse, the Senate version proposes to bypass the DA secretary in the allocation of the RCEF, so that the money will go directly to selected DA line agencies," Montemayor said.

"The RCEF has also already been pre-allocated for certain programs, so that it cannot be used for other programs that farmers may want or need in the future," he added.

Montemayor said the farmers should have the right to participate in the utilization of the RCEF as they are the ones supposed to benefit from it.

The pre-allocation of the RCEF, which is a sort of grant to government agencies, "contradicts" Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol's soft loan programs, according to Montemayor.

"This will clash with Secretary Piñol's plan of providing soft loans as a form of support to farmers so that they have the freedom to choose what brand and type of inputs they want to buy," he explained.

Manila Standard

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Rice-driven inflation entails policy change, says Finance

By Julito G. Rada, Macon Ramos-Araneta and Maricel V. Cruz

THE contribution of rice to the inflation rate grew 10 times this year, signaling a need for food policy reforms, the Department of Finance said Thursday.

In a report, the DoF said basic food items such as rice, fish, meat and vegetables have been major drivers of inflation this year, with the contribution of rice alone rising 10 times to 1 percentage point of the inflation rate.

Next page

Rice-driven...

From A1

Philippine Statistics Agency data showed that rice was the number one contributor to inflation in September 2018, and that food items in the consumption basket accounted for more than half of the inflation rate in the same month.

In its presentation during the latest Cabinet meeting, the DoF said that in contrast, the contribution of non-food items such as electricity, gas and other fuels has slowed down since July this year.

"Rice tariffication and reforms in food policy are needed to address the repeated rice supply problems," Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III said during the Cabinet meeting.

The rice tariffication bill, once passed into law, is expected to liberalize the importation of rice. It is aimed at lowering rice prices while providing enough support for local farmers who will be affected by the influx of cheaper rice imports.

This measure has been certified as urgent by President Rodrigo Duterte. Economic managers said liberalizing rice imports will lower the retail price of rice by P2 to P7 per kilo (based on latest estimates), and reduce inflation rate by 0.4 percentage points.

Inflation in September climbed to 6.7 percent from 6.4 percent a month ago, bringing the first nine months' average to 5 percent, surpassing the target of 2-4 percent set by the government earlier.

Among the short-term measures recommended by the DOF during the meeting were for the Department of Agriculture to undertake steps to bring down food prices, and for the Departments of Social Welfare and Development and of Transportation to speed up the release and distribution of cash cards to the poorest households and fuel subsidy cards to operators of public utility vehicles, respectively.

The release of unconditional cash transfers by the DSWD and fuel subsidies through the Pantawid Pasada Program are among the social mitigation measures under the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Act (TRAIN) that are meant to cushion the impact of inflation on vulnerable sectors.

Inflation has continued to rise, however, hitting nine-year highs.

"Food inflation is the main driver of inflation, especially in recent months. The DA, which is the key to bringing down food prices, has been empowered under several presidential directives to put in place measures to increase food supply and bring down food prices," said Finance Assistant Secretary Antonio Joselito Lambino II in a Malacañang press briefing.

These presidential directives include Administrative Order No. 13, which removed administrative restrictions on the importation of agricultural products.

The President also issued Memorandum Order 26 directing the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry to implement measures to reduce the gap between the farmgate and retail prices of agricultural products.

MO 27, meanwhile, ordered the DA, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Philippine National Police, and the Metro Manila Development Authority to "adopt measures to ensure the efficient and seamless delivery" of imported agricultural and fishery products from ports to markets; while MO 28 directed the National Food Authority to immediately release existing rice stocks in its warehouses.

Lambino said the contribution of fish to inflation has been growing since 2017 while vegetables added to the inflation rate largely because of supply issues due to weather disturbances. The contribution of meat to inflation also rose reflecting a "pricing mismatch."

The directives issued by the President formed part of the measures unveiled in early September by the Economic Development Cluster of the Cabinet to help rein in inflation.

The DA, meanwhile, announced a massive procurement of rice from local farmers.

Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol said they will begin by scouting areas where the price of rice is low such as Mindoro and Bicol to help local farmers.

The NFA will buy each kilo of rice for P17 with incentives of up to P3.70.

"A farmer who brings his rice to the NFA at 14 percent moisture content, will be earning P20.70 for every kilo of paddy rice that he brings to the NFA," said Piñol.

The DA will station drying facilities in all NFA buying stations across the country, which farmers may use for free, he said.

Farmers cooperatives may also use the accumulated points in exchange for farming equipment from the DA such as tractors, rice harvesters and solar power irrigation systems.

Piñol said these measures are aimed at reducing the impact of rice imports on local farmers.

Also on Thursday, Senator Grace Poe said a bill liberalizing rice imports would also provide for a fund that would subsidize local farmers.

Poe is a co-author of Senate Bill 1998 that seeks to lift quantitative restrictions or quota on rice importation by amending Republic Act 8178.

She said the measure is expected to temper inflation, as food prices continue to be the main driver for the rise in commodity prices.

Under SB 1998 or the Rice Tariffication bill sponsored last month by the Senate agriculture committee, rice imports will be slapped a 35 percent tariff rate in lieu of quantitative restrictions that limit the volume of rice imports every year.

The Manila Times

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

THE 2018 ASEAN GOLDEN AGROW AWARDEES

The Asean Business Advisory Council Philippines named the first batch of Golden Agrow Awardees in the last Asean Agriculture Summit 2018 held on October 1, 2018 at the SMX Convention Center Manila. Awardees include (from left): Huang Ho Agricultural Farms (Brunei) represented by Secretary General Choo Jun Lee; Amru Rice Co. Ltd. (Cambodia) represented by Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Saran Song; GarudaFood (Indonesia) represented by Director of Manufacturing Rudy Brigianto; Burapha Agroforestry Co. Ltd. (Laos) represented by Deputy CEO Souphayvanh Thiengchanxay; Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad (Malaysia) represented by Operations Director Samuel Teh Sar Moh Nee; Myanma Awba Group Co. Ltd (Myanmar) represented by Chairman and Group CEO U Thadoe Hein; SL Agritech Corp. (Philippines) represented by Chairman and CEO Henry Lim Bon Liong; Olam International Ltd. (Singapore) represented by co-founder and Group CEO Sunny Verghese; Swift Co., Ltd. (Thailand) represented by Managing Director Paphavee Suthavivat; and ITA Rice Fragrant Rice Research and Export Corp. (Vietnam) represented by General Director Tran Hoang An. The awards were handed over to the awardees by Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol, Asean Business Advisory Council Philippines Chairman Joey Concepcion, 2018 Asean BAC Chairman Robert Yap Asean Business Advisory Council Philippines Member and Vice Chairman of SM Investments Corp. Tessie Sy-Coson, and Asean Business Advisory Council Philippines Member and Philippine Chamber of Commerce Industry Chairman George Barcelon. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: OCT. 13 2018 Page: 4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

House panels OK bill to boost coconut industry

By **CHARISSA M. LUCI-ATIENZA**

The House Committee on Government Enterprises and Privatization and the House Committee on Agriculture and Food recently approved an unnumbered substitute bill seeking to empower the country's coconut industry.

The panels on Wednesday passed the substitute bill to House Bills 3537, 141, 2464, and 3883, subject to form and style.

Deputy Speaker and AAM-BIS-Owa Party-list Rep. Sharon Garin, who authored HB 3537, cited the need to grant the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) corporate powers and functions to "make it a profitable, sustainable, and development-oriented agency."

"The appeal to this body is, if we want the industry to improve, thereby improving thereby improving the lives of the coconut farmers, we need to fix the agency that is supposed to do that," she said during the recent joint committee hearing.

She said the PCA, as the lead agency overseeing the welfare of coconut farmers, should be well equipped in terms of funding in order to function and fulfill its mandate.

According to the House leader, she is concerned "about the challenges faced by the agency in terms of manpower and their ability to effectively implement the five billion-peso annual disbursement from the Coco Levy Trust Fund and the 10 billion-peso allocation for the development of the coconut industry from the General Appropriations Fund (GAA)."

The partylist lawmaker said the measure equips the PCA with a solid and multifaceted mandate, which focuses on developmental, governmental, regulatory, research and development, and corporate powers and functions.

"Another key feature of the bill is allowing more representation from the farmers, processors, traders, researches, and academe comprising seven board seats out of 11 board seats," she said.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: 1 & 6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Rice key culprit for high inflation – DOF

By **CHINO S. LEYCO**

The Department of Finance (DOF) claimed that rice is the culprit for the higher than expected inflation this year noting that the contribution of the staple food to the rate of increase in consumer prices soared tenfold.

In a statement, the Finance department said the contribution of rice has risen by 10 times to one percentage point of the inflation rate in the first nine months of the year, which also fuelled the cost of basic food items such fish, meat, and vegetables. ▶6

Rice key culprit for.:. ◀1

Based on the Philippine Statistics Agency (PSA) data, rice was the number one contributor to inflation in September 2018, while food items in the consumption basket accounted for more than half of the inflation rate in the same month.

In its presentation during the latest Cabinet meeting, the DOF bared that in contrast, the contribution of non-food items such as electricity, gas and other fuels have slowed down since July this year.

"Rice tariffication and reforms in food policy are needed to address the repeated rice supply problems," Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III said during the Cabinet meeting.

The rice tariffication bill, once passed into law, is expected to liberalize the importation of rice in the country. It will also help lower rice prices while providing enough support for local farmers who will be affected by the influx of cheaper rice imports.

The measure has been certified as urgent by President Duterte.

Lower by ₱2 to ₱7

Economic managers said liberalizing rice imports will lower the retail price of rice by ₱2 to ₱7 per kilo based on latest estimates, and reduce inflation rate by 0.4 percentage points.

Among the short-term measures recommended by the DOF during the meeting were for the Department of Agriculture (DA) to undertake steps to bring down food prices.

The DOF also suggested that the Departments of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Transportation (DOTr) speed up the release and distribution of cash cards to the poorest households and fuel subsidy cards to operators of public utility vehicles, respectively.

The release of unconditional cash transfers by the DSWD and fuel subsidies through the Pantawid Pasada Program are among the social mitigation measures under the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Act (TRAIN) that are meant to cushion the impact of inflation on vulnerable sectors.

"The DA, which is the key to bringing down food prices, has been empowered under several presidential directives to put in place measures to increase food supply and bring down food prices," Finance Assistant Secretary Antonio Joselito Lambino II said.

These presidential directives include Administrative Order No. 13, which removed administrative restrictions on the importation of agricultural products.

The President also issued Memorandum Order (MO) 26 directing the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to implement measures to reduce the gap between the farm gate and retail prices of agricultural products.

MO 27, meanwhile, directed the DA, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Philippine National Police (PNP), and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to "adopt measures to ensure the efficient and seamless delivery" of imported agricultural and fishery products from ports to markets.

Memorandum Order 28 directed the National Food Authority (NFA) to immediately release existing rice stocks in its warehouses.

A death warrant

Meanwhile, pro-farmer congressmen slammed the unimpeded rice importation policy set by the Duterte administration.

"[First], it's a death warrant to the agriculture sector especially our farmers. Second, it does not guarantee the lowering of prices because it enables and strengthens cartel operations," said Anakpawis Party-list Rep. Ariel. Casilao.

The move, he said would not benefit Filipinos, especially farmers.

For Butil Party-list Rep. Cecil Chavez, this new government policy should be a temporary thing.

"At best, the policy of import-till-you-drop should be an ad hoc, temporary measure in answer to an emergency," she said, adding, "We have to realize the great folly on relying on imports to fill our food security requirements."

Chavez opined that the unimpeded rice import should be rescinded as soon as the country's supply of the staple grain becomes secure. According to her, a "production-driven rice adequacy policy" should replace it.

"The trinity of delayed imports, natural calamities, and the failure to fund a viable rice production program caused the acute rice shortage, and of the three, only the factor of calamities is the one that cannot be reversed," she said. (With a report from Ellson A. Quismorio)

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B2-1

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Stubbornly high inflation? Blame rice prices, says DOF

By Daxim L. Lucas
@DaxINQ

Basic food items such as rice, fish, meat and vegetables have been major drivers of inflation this year with the contribution of rice rising 10 times to 1 percentage point of the inflation rate, according to the Department of Finance (DOF).

In particular, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed rice was the number one contributor to inflation in September 2018, while food items in the consumption basket accounted for more than half of the inflation rate in the same month.

In a presentation during the last Cabinet meeting, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III pointed out that, in contrast, the contribution of nonfood items such as electricity, gas and other fuels have slowed down since July this year.

"Rice tariffication and reforms in food policy are needed to address the repeated rice supply problems," he said.

The rice tariffication bill, once passed into law, is expected to liberalize the importation of rice in the country. It will also help lower rice prices while providing enough support for local farmers who will be affected by the influx of cheaper rice imports. This measure has been certified as urgent by President Duterte.

Economic managers said liberalizing rice imports would lower the retail price of rice by P2 to P7 per kilo, and reduce inflation rate by 0.4 percentage point.

Among the short-term measures recommended by the DOF during the meeting were for the Department of Agriculture to undertake steps to bring down food prices, and for the departments of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Transportation to speed up the release and distribution of cash cards to the poorest households and fuel subsidy cards to operators of public utility vehicles, respectively.

The release of unconditional cash transfers by the DSWD and fuel subsidies through the Pantawid Pasada Program are among the social mitigation measures under the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Act.

"Food inflation is the main driver of inflation, especially in recent months," Finance Assistant Secretary Antonio Joselito Lambino II said in a recent briefing. "The DA, which is the key to bringing down food prices, has been empowered under several presidential directives to put in place measures to increase food supply and bring down food prices."

These presidential directives included Administrative Order No. 13, which removed administrative restrictions on the importation of agricultural products.

The President also issued Memorandum Order (MO) 26 directing the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry to implement measures to reduce the gap between the farm gate and retail prices of agricultural products.

MO 27 ordered several government agencies to "adopt measures to ensure the efficient and seamless delivery" of imported agricultural and fishery products from ports to markets, while MO 28 directed the National Food Authority to immediately release existing rice stocks. INQ

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B16

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

AGRILINK INT'L TRADE EXPO OPENING: Sen. Cynthia Villar (center), chairperson, committee on agriculture and food, and Edwin Chen (2nd from right), chairman of Agrilink 2018, together with foreign ambassadors and VIP guests, led the ceremonial ribbon cutting during the opening day of Agrilink Int'l Trade Expo, the country's premiere event on agriculture, food and aquaculture held at the World Trade Center last Oct. 4 to 6.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B11 & B12

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Rice multiplies inflation weight 10-fold

By MARY GRACE PADIN

The contribution of rice to inflation multiplied tenfold this year amid issues on supply and importation, underscoring the need to implement reforms in the government's agricultural policies, according to the Department of Finance (DOF).

In his presentation to members of the Cabinet, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said rice has become one of the major drivers of inflation in 2018, with its contribution to inflation growing 10 times from 0.1 percentage point last year to one percentage point in September.

Overall, Dominguez said food items in the consumption basket accounted for more than half of the 6.7 percent inflation rate recorded in September.

On the other hand, the finance chief said the increase in prices of non-food items, including electricity, gas and other fuels, had slowed down since July this year.

Baring these figures to the Cabinet, Dominguez reiterated his call for the implementation of reforms in policies to ease rice importation and distribution.

"Rice tariffication and reforms in food policy are needed to address the repeated rice supply problems," Dominguez said.

Once passed into law, the rice tariffication bill is expected to liberalize the importation of rice in the country. It is also seen to help lower the retail price of rice by as much as P7 per kilo and reduce inflation by 0.4 percentage points.

The measure has been certified as urgent by President Duterte.

Meanwhile, Dominguez also recommended for the Department of Agriculture (DA) to undertake steps to bring down food prices.

Finance Assistant Secretary Antonio Lambino, for his part, said some measures are already in place to empower the DA to achieve this goal.

"Food inflation is a main driver of inflation, especially in recent months. The DA, which is key to bringing down food prices, has been empowered under several presidential directives to put in place measures to increase food supply and bring down food prices," Lambino said.

These presidential directives include Administrative Order 13, which removed administrative restrictions on the importation of agricultural products, and Memorandum

Turn to B12

Order 26, directing the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry to implement measures to reduce the gap between the farmgate and retail prices of agricultural products.

Duterte also signed MO 27, which calls for the adoption of measures to ensure the efficient delivery of imported agricultural and fishery products from ports to markets; and MO 28, which directed the National Food Authority to immediately release existing rice stocks in its warehouses.

Over the medium term, Lambino said the country needs to increase agricultural productivity to stabilize food prices. To do this, he said the government should individualize collective titles under agrarian reform to improve property rights and incentivize farm production, and reallocate the budget to more broad-based farm infrastructure, research and development, and support services.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: OCT 12, 2018 Page: B4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Help our farmers sell

The picture of tons and tons of locally grown tomatoes dumped by farmers in Laguna in a waste dumpsite was very troubling. For one, the farmers toiled to grow those tomatoes and now they get nothing for their effort.

For another, the price of tomatoes in Metro Manila markets is still rather high and those tomatoes may have been able to dampen the price somewhat. Laguna, after all, is next door to Metro Manila, not in Mindanao.

According to a story on *abs-cbnnews.com*, the farmers lost as much as P4 million because of a supposed oversupply bringing down the farm gate price to P2.50 to P5 a kilo depending on size. But when I checked the price at Unimart Capitol Commons, the price of local tomato is P71 a kilo.

DEMAND AND SUPPLY

BOO CHANCO

The usual traders who buy from Laguna farmers and sell at Divisoria and Balintawak were reported to have returned the smaller tomatoes to the farmers. They claim the tomatoes were unsalable. I get the feeling the traders were just abusing the farmers who have nowhere else to go.

I suppose the farmers figured they have nothing more to lose and decided to keep their pride by dumping their produce instead. That deprived the traders of the opportunity to make their unholy profits at their expense.

If the tomatoes were grown in Mindanao or the Visayas, I can understand how difficult it is to bring the produce to Metro Manila. This is why when Berna Romulo-Puyat was still at the Department of Agriculture, she helped farmers get their produce to Manila with the help of the Air Force.

I understand that they are still doing that these days and the low priced produce are sold out at the San Andres Market in a matter of minutes. But this is not sustainable because Air Force planes are not always available or have other missions.

I like what Rep. Arthur Yap did when he was secretary of agriculture. He had a program to set up Barangay Food Terminals (BFT) and *bagsakan*, or drop-off centers, in Metro Manila to cushion the effects of rising prices on Filipino consumers.

This program probably produces strong positive impact that could be felt right away by the grassroots. It addresses the twin problems of low farm gate prices for farm produce and high retail prices of basic foodstuff in the urban areas.

As I wrote in my column last Jan. 16, 2008, Rep. Art had put on his thinking cap as a businessman and he determined the missing link in the supply chain. This is the role traditionally played by the notorious middlemen who abuse both farmers and consumers in the process of bringing foodstuff from the farm to our dinner tables.

By addressing the need to increase farm incomes and decrease food costs of urban dwellers, Yap had hit two birds with one *bagsakan*.

The Barangay Food Terminals (BFTs) is a project involving direct marketing of fresh agricultural and fishery food products from food producers to the BFT for sale at a price lower than the prevailing wholesale and retail prices in the market. The basic food commodities include fish, chicken, meat, fruits and vegetables.

An important role of the agriculture department here is the provision of credit. They help growers/producers who supply agricultural and fishery products to the BFTs and *Bagsakan* Centers in Mega Manila and in the regions obtain credit with a loan facility at eight percent per annum interest rate so they can buy refrigerated or delivery trucks through the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC).

On the other hand, the agri department, through the National Agribusiness Corp. (NABCOR) and the Bureau of Postharvest Research and Extension (BPRE), provides chest freezers and vegetable chillers including plastic crates to BFTs for free.

Before he exited as agriculture secretary, I recall Rep. Art telling me his plan to put up cold storage facilities in strategic locations all over the country. Farmers can store their produce there and get the ability to say no to traders who quote a low farm gate price.

The reactions of some of my Facebook friends when I reposted the *abs-cbn* news report are typical of those who instinctively use their brains to solve a problem.

Lito Madrasto, a construction industry veteran, confirmed that in his hometown in Laguna, "the individual farmers are forced to deal with the traders because they don't have the means to go direct to the market. They lack the connections to the retailers and food manufacturers. This is where the government has been failing the farmers."

A US-based Filipino commented: "Logistics companies could (and some now do) tap this as another market since often their trucks return to Manila empty. More than the actual 'connections' to retailers it's a logistics problem.

"Plus it isn't prohibitively expensive to equip trucks with refrigeration and collapsible containers to reduce spoilage. This could pull the rug from under traders who are effectively swindlers."

Arnel Casanova, who was formerly CEO of BCDA agreed: "This is the reason why I invited the Rungis Market of Paris to set up the food logistics hub in Clark Green City.

"Our farmers are being shortchanged by middlemen. If there will be a global food logistics hub in Clark such as the Rungis Market, they have direct access to the market and other needed facilities and even investments. Before my term ended, I even wrote Sec. Piñol about it."

Our officials are scurrying around like headless chickens because of a rather high food inflation rate that's threatening to become a hot election issue. But they need not re-invent the wheel.

Art Yap had the same problem during his watch and he started something that should work. They could dust off and resurrect the project. Farm to market logistics is a problem we can now solve, if we want to.

Boo Chanco's e-mail address is *bchanco@gmail.com*. Follow him on *Twitter @boochanco*

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B1 & B2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Rice lib to doom 3M farmers

BY JED MACAPAGAL

A FARMERS group yesterday said the government's plan to lift volume restrictions on rice imports would spell doom to 3 million farmers who would stand to lose income.

The National Movement for Food Sovereignty (NMFS) in a statement said only big companies and rice cartels will profit from the mega rice import transactions.

President Duterte earlier this week approved the "unimpeded" importation of rice to address inflation, marking an end to two decades of volume restriction on the country's staple food.

NMFS said higher production costs due to the higher fuel prices have slashed the already minimal earnings of farmers in the country.

The group cited data from the Philippine Statistics Authority which showed that as of last year, net returns from palay farming were only at P25,193 and P21,743 during the dry and wet season respectively or a total of P46,936 annually.

Tariffication

The group also cited projections of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) on the impact of rice tariffication on a farmer's income.

The PIDS said every P4 per kilogram reduction in the farm gate price of palay would cut a farmer's earnings by 29 percent.

This means a farmer's annual rice income will decline to P33,325 or from P3,911 per month to P2,777 per month equivalent to an income loss of P13,611 per year.

NMFS said the proposed cash transfer or decoupled payment to farmers in the event of tariffication of P9,500 per hectare will not compensate for this loss since most farmers are indebted and dependent to traders and financiers.

It said government should instead focus on strengthening the country's domestic capacity to produce rice and lower production cost which

See RICE ➤ Page A4

Balancing act. Replacing volume limits with tariffs may lower the retail price of rice by P2 to P7 per kilo but it would it slash incomes of farmers to P33,325 from P46,936 annually.

PART 1 OF 2

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B1 & B2

PART 2 OF 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

RICE

now stands at P12.40 per kilo which is double than Vietnam's P6 per kg.

The group said this can be done by providing sufficient support in the form of subsidies for seeds, fertilizer and fuel paired with credit, price support, functioning irrigation systems and farm machineries.

"On the longer-term, rice tariffication may actually induce reduction in domestic rice output that could trigger further rice price increases, especially when supply tightens. Our country could not rely on the international market for our food security, since international rice trade accounts for only 5 percent to 6 percent of global rice production," NMFS also warned.

The group also said flooding the local market with imported rice will not assure prices will fall as price manipulation is induced by traders and cartels.

Lawmakers are working on a bill that would replace the current quantitative restriction on rice with a 35-percent on imports from Southeast Asia under the existing free trade agreement and up to 180 percent on imports from outside the region.

President Duterte has certified the bill as urgent.

In a study released by the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) in 2014, a scenario wherein the government lifts the quantitative restriction and slaps a 35 percent tariff on rice would at least result in a 3.33 percent decline in the harvest area of rice in the country as farmers would be discouraged to plant due to lower farmgate prices.

"...The expected lower retail prices of rice brought about by trade lib can make consumers more rice-secure. On the contrary, if rice based farm households fail to cope with a relatively open rice economy, their reduced income could lead to their food insecurity. But then again, if majority of these families buy more rice than they sell or eat more rice than they produce, they would also benefit from this trade reform," the agency's conclusion from the study stated.

According to the PSA, as of 2017, the country's total area harvested with palay is at 4.8 million hectares.

Contribution to inflation

Meanwhile, the DOF said the contribution of rice rose by 10 times from just last year to one percentage point of the inflation rate in September 2018.

According to data from PSA, rice was the number one contributor to inflation in September, while food items in the consumption basket accounted for more than half of the inflation rate in the same month.

The DOF said in contrast, the contribution of non-food items such as electricity, gas and other fuels have slowed down since July this year.

"Rice tariffication and reforms in food policy are needed to address the repeated rice supply problems," Carlos Dominguez, DOF secretary, said.

The DOF said the rice tariffication bill, once passed into law, is expected to liberalize the importation of rice in the country.

It added that it will also help lower rice prices while providing enough support for local farmers who will be affected by the influx of cheaper rice imports.

Economic managers said liberalizing rice imports will lower the retail price of rice by an estimated P2 to P7 per kilo, and reduce inflation rate by 0.4 percentage points.

"Food inflation is the main driver of inflation, especially in recent months. The Department of Agriculture (DA), which is the key to bringing down food prices, has been empowered under several presidential directives to put in place measures to increase food supply and bring down food prices," Antonio Joselito Lambino, finance assistant secretary, said.

These presidential directives include Administrative Order No. 13, which removed administrative restrictions on the importation of agricultural products.

The President also issued Memorandum Order (MO) 26 directing the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry to implement measures to reduce the gap between the farmgate and retail prices of agricultural products.

MO 27, meanwhile, ordered the DA, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Philippine National Police, and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority to "adopt measures to ensure the efficient and seamless delivery" of imported agricultural and fishery products from ports to markets; while MO 28 directed the National Food Authority to immediately release existing rice stocks in its warehouses. - ***With A. Celis***

BusinessWorld
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Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: 12/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
#NATION AT A GLANCE:

MEMBERS of the Ati indigenous people of Boracay, with assistance from the Department of Agriculture (DA), are setting up an organic high-value vegetables farm and restaurant in Boracay.

WESTERN VISAYAS: BORACAY, MALAY

7.9 ha in Boracay set as agrarian reform area

EIGHT LOTS with a total area of 7.9640 hectares has been set as agrarian reform land in Boracay island and will be up for distribution. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Western Visayas (DENR-6) turned over on Oct. 10 the technical documents for the land to the regional office of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). DENR-6 Regional Executive Director Jim O. Sampulna said the two agencies conducted the joint ground verification on areas suitable for agriculture. Mr. Sampulna said the eight lots, all located in Barangay Manoc-Manoc, are free of structures but there are claimants to the land. DAR will be in charge of settlements prior to distribution to qualified beneficiaries, particularly members of the Ati indigenous group. DAR Assistant Regional Director for Operations Gideon A. Umadhay Jr. said the survey was in response to the statement of President Rodrigo R. Duterte to impose land reform on the resort island. "With that technical document turned over to us, we have now the jurisdiction to conduct survey, approval of survey returns of DENR as well, and likewise the disposition of the 7.9-hectare lots," he said. DAR aims to distribute the lands by December 2018. — **Louine Hope U. Conserva**

BusinessWorld
INCREASE YOUR BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: 6/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Japanese firm evaluating possible new applications for Philippine banana fiber

THE Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA) said it will deliver a trial shipment of banana fiber to a Japanese company looking to order as much as 2,000 metric tons from the Philippines.

It said the trial shipment is 10 kilos and will be evaluated at the company's facilities.

"The 10 kilos of banana fiber they requested from Region 10 will be sent within the month for lab tests/research," PhilFIDA Executive Director Kennedy T. Costales said in a text message on Thursday.

According to Mr. Costales, the company, which he did not identify, is looking for a lighter fiber for various applications including papermaking.

He said the company has expressed interest in a possible volume order of 2,000 MT of banana fiber. The prevailing prices for fiber are about P50-P70 per kilo.

Mr. Costales, in a Facebook post, said the country has the capacity for servicing any new banana fiber applications because it is home to many banana varieties, which are known by their market names of *saba*, *lacatan*, *latundan*, *bungulan*, Cavendish, *morada*, pitog Los Baños, señorita, *tindok*, gloria, *ganda* and *tumok*.

"The country has nearly 447,000 hectares of land under banana plantations, majority of which is in Northern Mindanao, North and South Cotabato, Bukidnon, and the Bicol region. This can generate 307,000 tons of banana fiber or an average of 686.80 kilos per hectare per year," according to Mr. Costales.

— **Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio**

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: 9

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Rice contributes the most to inflation

Basic food items such as rice, fish, meat and vegetables have been major drivers of inflation this year with the contribution of rice rising 10 times to 1 percentage point of the inflation rate, the Department of Finance (DoF) said.

According to Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data, rice was the number one contributor to inflation in September 2018, even as food items in the consumption basket accounted for more than half of the inflation rate in the same month.

In its presentation during the latest Cabinet meeting, the DoF said that in contrast, the contribution of non-food items such as electricity, gas and other fuels has slowed since July this year.

"Rice tariffication and reforms in food policy are needed to address the repeated rice supply problems," Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III said at the Cabinet meeting.

The rice tariffication bill, once passed into law, is expected to liberalize the importation of rice in the country. It will also help lower rice prices while providing enough support for local farmers who will be affected by the influx of cheaper rice imports.

This measure has been certified as urgent by President Duterte. Economic managers said liberalizing rice imports will lower the retail price of rice by P2 to P7 per kilo (based on latest estimates), and reduce inflation rate by 0.4 percentage points.

Among the short-term measures recommended by the DoF at the meeting were for the Department of Agriculture (DA) to take steps to bring down food prices, and for the Departments of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and of Transportation to speed up the release and distribution of cash cards to the poorest households and fuel subsidy cards to operators of public utility vehicles, respectively.

The release of unconditional cash transfers by the DSWD and fuel subsidies through the Pantawid Pasada Program are among the social mitigation measures under the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Act that are meant to cushion the impact of inflation on vulnerable sectors.

"Food inflation is the main driver of inflation, especially in recent months. The DA, which is the key to bringing down food prices, has been empowered under several presidential directives to put in place measures to increase food supply and bring down food prices," said Finance Assistant Secretary Antonio Joselito Lambino II at a news briefing, where he gave the same presentation to the media.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Rice's share in inflation levels rises tenfold

By Rea Cu
@ReaCuBM

THE contribution of rice to the country's inflation levels rose 10 times to one percentage point, while other food items were also major drivers to inflation this year, the Department of Finance (DOF) has said.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed rice was the No. 1 contributor to inflation in September 2018, while food items in the consumption basket like fish, meat and vegetables accounted for more than half of the inflation rate in the same month.

CONTINUED ON A2

Rice's share in inflation levels rises tenfold

CONTINUED FROM A1

The DOF, in its presentation during a recent Cabinet meeting, bared that in contrast, the contribution of nonfood items—such as electricity, gas and other fuels—slowed down since July this year.

"Rice tariffication and reforms in food policy are needed to address the repeated rice-supply problems," Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III said.

The DOF said the rice tariffication bill, once passed into law, is expected to liberalize the importation of rice in the country.

The measure is also seen to help lower rice prices, while providing enough support for local farmers who will be affected by the influx of cheaper rice imports.

President Duterte this week certified as urgent the rice tariffication bill, with his economic managers estimating that liberalizing rice imports will lower the retail price of rice by P2 to P7 per kilo, and reduce inflation rate by 0.4 percentage point.

"Food inflation is the main driver of inflation, especially in recent months. The DA [Department of Agriculture], which is the key to bringing down food prices, has been empowered under several presidential directives to put in place measures to increase food supply and bring down food prices," said Finance Assistant Secretary Antonio Joselito G. Lambino II in a Malacañang news briefing on Wednesday.

These presidential directives include Administrative Order (AO) 13, which removed administrative restrictions on the importation of agricultural products.

The President also issued Memorandum Order (MO) 26, directing the DA and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to implement measures to reduce the gap between the farm gate and retail prices of agricultural products.

Under MO 27, the DA, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) are ordered to "adopt measures to ensure the efficient and seamless delivery" of imported agricultural and fishery products from ports to markets; while MO 28 directed the National Food Authority to immediately release existing rice stocks in its warehouses.

Over the medium term, Lambino said the country needs to increase agricultural productivity to stabilize food prices by individualizing the agrarian reform collective titles to improve property rights and incentivize farm production; as well as improving efficiency by reallocating the budget from favoring certain crops and production inputs to more broad-based farm infrastructure, research and development, and support services.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at the business
LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B8

ICT specialists develop app featuring PHL rice varieties

EVERY cropping season, new and veteran rice farmers would ask themselves what variety they would plant. They also have concerns about the yield of a particular rice variety and its suitability under local condition.

The need for this information motivated information and communications technology (ICT) specialists Nehemiah Caballong and Paul Austian Alday of the Philippine Rice Research Institute to develop the Binhing Palay app with the National Cooperative Testing Group.

Launched during the recent National Rice Research for Development Conference, the digital application features a catalog of all released rice varieties in the Philippines.

The app, which can be downloaded in the Google Play Store, provides fast and easy access to basic and updated varietal information. It also works on offline mode.

"Using their smartphones or tablets, farmers, seed growers, extension workers and other agriculture enthusiasts can use the app to get the latest information on modern rice varieties," Caballong said.

The app currently contains 289 rice varieties including their agronomic characteristics, pest and disease resistance and grain quality. It automatically updates every time a new variety is released and has a sort and filter list feature.

"App users can filter through the list based on location, environment, season, crop establishment, seed classification or year of release," the 27-year-old specialist said.

Recommendations for the dry and wet cropping season based on reports from the DA regional offices are also included in the app.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at Philippine business
LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B3

PCA revamp pushed to better manage coco-levy fund

THE Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) must be revamped so it could efficiently manage and spend the P100-billion coconut-levy fund, a House deputy speaker said on Thursday.

Deputy Speaker Sharon S. Garin of Aambish-Owa Party-list said the current extent of power and authority of the PCA is incapable of properly overseeing the use of the coconut-levy trust fund.

Garin argued that the agency's powers under Presidential Decree 1468 "reflects the realities of 40 years ago and the agency can only do so much with its meager budget."

"The appeal to this body is, if we want the industry to improve, thereby improving the lives of the coconut farmers, we need to fix the agency that is supposed to do that," Garin said in a statement on Thursday.

Garin, the author of House Bill (HB) 3537, expressed concern that the PCA would not be able to implement the P5-billion annual coco-levy trust fund disbursal and additional P10-billion annual allocation for the coconut industry due to lack of manpower.

" Under the proposed measure, the PCA shall be equipped with a solid and multifaceted mandate, which focuses on developmental, governmental, regulatory, research and development, and corporate powers and function," she said.

THIS file photo shows copra, the flesh of the coconut. A lawmaker pushed for the revamp of the Philippine Coconut Authority, which will oversee the coconut-levy trust fund. BLOOMBERG NEWS

Another key provision of the bill is allowing more representation from the farmers, processors, traders, researchers and academe over government representatives, according to Garin. Under HB 3537, seven seats out of the 11 PCA board seats would be allocated to the industry stakeholders.

PCA Administrator Romulo J. de la Rosa told the BUSINESSMIRROR that there is a need to expand its manpower to allow the agency to fulfill its mandate and implement the objectives of the coconut-levy trust fund.

"There is a need to beef up the capacity of the PCA to manage all these funds. Because right now, the PCA is operating on a very skeletal work force," de la Rosa told the BUSINESSMIRROR in an interview in August.

"After the rationalization plan implemented in 2013, our approved plantilla has been only around 850 people. Our corporate income at the moment could only support about 500 of the 850. Can you imagine how handicapped [we are] as far as human resources of the PCA is concerned?" he added.

Under the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Act approved by the bicameral conference committee in August, the P100-billion coconut-levy fund would be invested in government securities, such as Treasury bills, to earn at least 2 percent to 3 percent annually.

Sen. Cynthia A. Villar said the fund will be managed by a "reconstituted" PCA instead of a separate committee. The reconstituted PCA means that the board would be comprised of four government representatives, one industry representative and six coconut farmers.

According to Villar, the trust fund will be used accordingly annually: 30 percent for shared facilities; 30 percent for farm development; 15 percent for empower of farmers' organizations; 15 percent for scholarship and 10 percent of health benefits of farmers. ***Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas***

The Manila Times

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Time to level up PH agriculture

(Last of three parts)

WAYS OF THE OASIS

DR. WILLIAM DAR

THE Asean Agriculture Summit 2018 staged last October 1 was a huge success given the number of attendees and resource speakers who showed up, proving that agripreneurship is taking root (literally) in the Philippines. Presidential Adviser on Entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion led the staging of the summit at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City that had the theme "Champions and Emerging Icons of Inclusive Business, Technology and Innovation in Agriculture."

So let me congratulate Concepcion and all the people who made the event possible!

The message from the Asean Agriculture Summit 2018 was very clear: agripreneurship is the game changer in unlocking the potential of agriculture in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and ending poverty.

The summit had five forums: Shaping the Future of Food Security and Agriculture; 3Ms (Mentor, Money, Marker) Model as Championed in the Agriculture Industry; Asean Total Factor Productivity; Technology and Innovation as Game-Changers in Agriculture; Inclusive Finance for Agribusiness; and Platforms and Opportunities in Growing Agriculture Market Access.

Let me discuss briefly what were discussed in those forums.

From the Shaping the Future of Food Security and Agriculture forum, we learned that agriculture must be treated as a business with expected gains and profitability. Further, we must pursue processing and export markets.

From the 3Ms Model as Championed in the Agriculture Industry forum, we learned that we should assist micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in scaling up their businesses through mentoring by successful business practitioners on different areas of entrepreneurship.

The Technology and Innovation as Game-Changers in Agriculture Science forum imparted lessons on how technology and innovation are also tools that encourage the youth to go back to farming. ICT also has the vast potential to improve the agribusiness environment by connecting producers to markets.

The Inclusive Finance for Agribusiness forum also taught us that affordability and accessibility of credit must be taken into consideration on making policies for inclusive financing.

For the Platforms and Opportunities in Growing Agriculture Market Access forum, it was emphasized that e-commerce enables farmers to market their products faster and more direct at fair and reasonable prices through digital means. Also, online platforms must be crafted in a way that small farmers and entrepreneurs won't get intimidated in using it.

The way forward

Having discussed the above-mentioned in the five forums of the summit, I believe that the following steps should be taken to realize the fullest potential of agriculture/agribusiness in Southeast Asia and the Philippines: create more agri-based MSMEs; facilitate more farm-based trade within the Asean; institutionalize the Asean Mentors for Entrepreneurs (AMEN); and make the 21st Century Farmer the new face of farming.

Creating more MSMEs is absolutely necessary for agripreneurship to take root in the country, as less than 1 percent of the country's more than 1 million MSMEs are involved in the farming, fishery and forestry industries.

The cornerstone for creating more MSMEs in the Philippine is to institutionalize the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country. A legislative agenda should be crafted for that.

Another cornerstone for creating more MSMEs in the agriculture sector is to enhance research, development and extension so most if not all R&D outputs should have commercial applicability for stakeholders from farmers and fisher folk to small to large agro-industrial companies.

Also, let us make our MSMEs more globally competitive through the following: R&D and innovation; technology business incubation; financial literacy trainings; affordable credit; and market development/promotion.

And finally, policies should give preference to business models that can work in food-insecure areas.

To get the Philippines and more countries to trade more farm products within Asean should be an effort spearheaded by the Department of Agriculture, Department of Trade and Industry, and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Compliance with trade agreements should also be honored such the removal of the quantitative restrictions on rice imports as required by the World Trade Organization.

As for AMEN, it has proven to be an excellent venue for mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs, especially for agripreneurs. However, AMEN must be institutionalized for it to have a wider impact on MSME creation and poverty reduction. Once AMEN is institutionalized, it can generate more support from the government, private sector and civil society for the "three Ms," which are mentoring, money and markets.

Finally, let us make the 21st Century Farmer (and Fisherman) as the new face of agriculture in the Philippines replacing the archaic image of the barefoot Filipino farmer alongside his carabao.

The qualities of the 21st Century Farmer are: young in age and/or thinking; tech-savvy; entrepreneurial; green-oriented and socially conscious.

I have explained the qualities of the 21st Century Farmer in my column two weeks ago, which is essentially the first part of this three-part series. But let me add that being socially conscious means being aware of the need to protect the environment and be part of social change by helping to put in place inclusive growth.

Finally, being tech-savvy also means ready to adopt disruptive technologies in agriculture like 3D printing, robots, drones, sensors, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality and blockchain, among others.

What were discussed in the Asean Agriculture Summit 2018 were enough to fill a whole book, which shows the event should be a continuing effort to level up Philippine and Asean agriculture. So again, let me congratulate Concepcion and the rest of the people who organized the summit as it was truly a huge success. So see you in next year's edition!

The Manila Times

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DA eyes Halal certification for Cagayan Valley products

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

THE Department of Agriculture is pushing for the agri-based industry in the Ilocos region to embrace new marketing prospects for their products in connection with the DA's Halal Food Industry (DA-HFID) program.

With this, DA-Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) recently conducted an orientation seminar on Halal Certification through the Agribusiness Marketing Assistance Division at Regency Hotel in Calasiao town, Pangasinan.

The orientation-seminar was attended by 35 agribusiness entrepreneurs, producers and food manufacturers who are interested in the marketing prospects for Halal products.

Sahraman Disomimba, project development officer of the Halal Program Management Office (HPMO), said the orientation-seminar also provided an avenue to understand better the set standards, objectives, strategies and activities of the HFID program, its features and components for better understanding and appreciation of the program.

In his discussion about the DA-HFID, Disomimba emphasized the benefits that could be derived in promoting Halal products, processes and services.

"This will enhance the capacities and global competitiveness of agricultural products," Disomimba explained also emphasizing on the health advantages that it could provide for both Muslim and non-Muslim stakeholders.

He said there is an increasing demand for Halal products both in local and international markets, and gave hope to the agribusiness entrepreneurs during the seminar on the potential market of their products especially for those who are engaged in goat production.

"Since Ilocos is a major goat producing region in the country, goat raisers need to learn the basic requirements in securing Halal certification," Disomimba said.

However, he said that prior to securing the Halal certification, there is a need to provide first the basic knowledge and information about Halal and the HFID program to those who are interested.

Disomimba explained that Halal is a Qur'anic term that means permitted, lawful, legal, legitimate, allowed, acceptable, unprohibited or unforbidden for consumption or to be eaten in accordance with Shariah Law.

He further explained Halal by distinguishing it from Haram, which is the opposite of Halal, as any activity or food that is forbidden, prohibited, not permitted or unlawful according to Shariah Law because of ad or harmful effects to health, environment or society, like eating meat from swine such as pork, ham, gammon and bacon including its by-products.

He said the improper slaughtering of animals and improper ritual rites before they are slaughtered can also be considered as Haram.

"It is important to secure a Halal certification from the accredited Halal Certifying Body when taking advantage on the benefits of this possible marketing outlet for agri-based products," Disomimba said.

He said applicants for Halal certification would have to coordinate with the HPMO and the Regional Halal Focal Person subject to some conditions and documentary requirements.

Knowledge and information about the requirements and certification standards and enabling regulations on Halal were also discussed during the seminar.

It included topics based on the Philippine National Standards or the Code of Halal Slaughtering Practices for Poultry, Ruminants and Fisheries Products by the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS).

The DA has included the DA-HIFD as among its major banner programs.

The Manila Times

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Native pork products to hit the market

PROCESSED products from native pigs including lechon, tapa, tocino and siomai, developed by the Camarines Norte Lowland Rainfed Research Station (CNLRS) of the Department of Agriculture-Region 5 (Bicol Region) will soon be available in the markets of Daet, Camarines Norte.

The initiative was made possible through the project "Production, Promotion and Commercialization of Native Pigs in Camarines Norte" funded by the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) through its National Technology Commercialization Program (NTCP).

The project aims to promote technologies on native pig production and commercialize processed native pork products in the province and help expand the native pork industry as a whole.

Leading the project are engineers Bella Frias, CNLRS center chief, and John Leonard Andaya, study leader who played vital roles in accomplishing the activities and outputs.

Currently, the products are now being processed with the packaging and labeling soon to be ready for mass production together with Kristel Gabelle Moraleda Patawaran, the technology adaptor.

■ **Among the processed native pork products that will be launched in the markets of Daet, Camarines Norte, is the Native Lechon, which comes in a neat package.**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

2 traders arrested for hoarding rice

Two rice traders, one of them a Taiwanese, were arrested yesterday in Iligan City for allegedly hoarding 40,000 bags of rice, according to Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol.

In his Facebook post, Piñol said businessmen Sonia C. Payan, a Filipino-Chinese, and Jhonny D. Tan, a Taiwanese, will be charged with hoarding, involvement in cartel operations, and profiteering.

National Food Authority acting Administrator Tomas Escarez said the rice stocks kept in four warehouses in Iligan City were seized by the government.

Escarez said the two traders were the first to be arrested in the intensified campaign against rice hoarding ordered by President Duterte.

Members of the Sub-Committee on Rice Hoarding, Cartel, and Smuggling, which include the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Customs, the Philippine National Police, the Philippine Ports Authority, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Philippine Coast Guard, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the NFA, swooped down on the four warehouses following reports of alleged hoarding by the two grains traders.

Escarez said the documents in the possession of the two traders were inconsistent with their stock inventory and appeared spurious, prompting the NFA to order the seizure.

NFA Adjudication Officer Sam Dimaporo and Chairperson of the Sub-Committee NFA Director Diane Silva of Region 10 together with ARD Buerano and all Region 10 PMs conducted the adjudication proceedings.

The arrest of the suspected hoarders and the seizure of the rice stocks were the first major accomplishment of the government team involved in the campaign against rice hoarding.

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• SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: 5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Ang aming pananaw...

OVERSUPPLY NG KAMATIS VS ARTIFICIAL SHORTAGE

***MALINAW** na may nagmamanipula ng presyo ng mga bilihin, kasama na ang presyo ng mga gulay.*

Ito ang pinatutunayan ng oversupply at pagkabulok ng mga kamatis sa lalawigan ng Laguna dahil hindi nabibili.

Paano ngayon ipaliliwanag ang halaga ng kamatis sa merkado na mistulang P10 na ang isang piraso?

Dapat ay bagsak na ang presyo ng kamatis ngunit nanatiling tumataas ito. Pagkaganid ng mga middlemen at mga nangangalakal at pananabotahe sa pamahalaan ang maaaring nasa likod ng misteryong ito.

Ito ang dapat na iniimbestigahan ng Department of Agriculture (DA) at Department of Trade and Industry DTI) upang matumbok na ang artipisyal na pagtataas ng mga bilihin, lalo't nalalapit na naman ang panahon ng Kapaskuhan.

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• SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

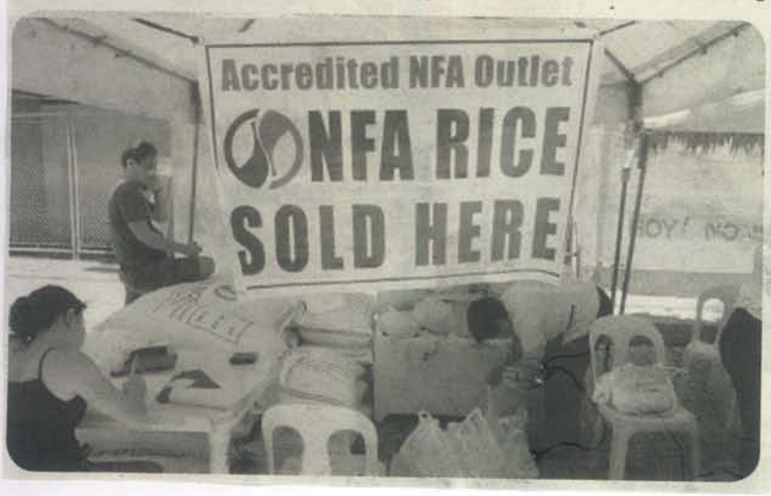
NFA SINIGURO NA MAY SAPAT NA STOCK NG BIGAS SA NEGOR HANGGANG DISYEMBRE

DUMAGUETE CITY--- SINIGURO ng National Food Authority (NFA) sa Negros Oriental na may sapat na buffer stock ng government rice na tatagal hanggang Disyembre ngayong taon.

Nagbigay ng kasiguruhan ang NFA-Negros Oriental manager na si Hilaria Ganzon sa pagsisimula ng grains agency ng kanilang "Bigasan sa NFA Compound" dito para maging abot-kaya ang bigas galing sa gobyerno kaysa sa commercial rice at madaling mabili ng publiko.

Ayon sa kanya, hindi kinakapos ang bigas dito, at ang katunayan, patuloy ang pagdidiskarga ng imported rice sa kalapit na probinsiya sa Cebu sa magkasunod na pagdating ng dalawang barko ng bigas.

"Ang atoang madawat from June until December, naka-schedule ta ug 250,000 bags, (from June to December, we are calendared to receive 250,000 bags)," ani Ganzon.



Sa ngayon, nakatanggap na ang NFA dito ng 81,000 sako ng imported rice, aniya, dagdag pa na ang balanse ay idi-deliver sa Negros Oriental sa mga susunod na buwan hanggang Disyembre.

Ang mga available rice sa kasalukuyan ayon sa huling imbentaryo ay nasa 12,000 sako, sabi ni Ganzon.

Sinabi pa niya na ang shipment ng She 33,000 sako ng bigas ay inaasahan anumang oras sa susunod na linggo.

Sana ay magkaroon ng magandang panahon para mai-deliver ang shipment ng bigas sa Negros Oriental mula sa Cebu City nang naaayon sa iskedyul, sabi pa ni Ganzon. **PNA**

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• SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Dinorado wala na

NFA NAGTAKDA NG 4 NA LABEL PARA SA BIGAS

APAT na klase na lamang ng bigas ang kailangang ibenta ng mga retailer at ito ay tatawagin na lamang "regular-milled", "well-milled", "whole grain" and "special" simula ngayong Nobyembre, ayon sa National Food Authority (NFA).

Itinakda ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang opisyal na label para wakasan na ang praktis ng "branding" o paglalagay ng brand ng mga retailer, ayon sa report.

Ipinaliwanag ni Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol na dahil ang presyo ng bigas ay magkakaiba bawat klase, kumikita ang mga retailer ng mas malaki sa pamamagitan ng panloloko sa mga konsyumer para isipin ng mga ito na may specific brand ang bigas.

"It actually boils down to deception and mislabeling," sabi ng DA chief. "While it is not really dinorado, why label it dinorado so that you can sell if for a higher price?"

Bukod sa profiteers na nagbebenta ng bigas ng maling label, sinabi ni Piñol na hahabulin nila going ang mga retailer na nagbebenta ng bigas ng lagpas sa suggested retail prices (SRP).

Ipinaliwanag ni Roland Gomez, pinuno ng NFA's quality assurance division, na ang SRP sa bawat klase ng bigas ay base sa milling degree na nagbibigay ng indikasyon kung paano ang balat ng palay ay tinatanggal sa butil ng bigas.

"'Yung mga palay, babalatan 'yun. Lalabas du'n ay brown rice at pagkatapos noon ay ipopolish mo. Ang tinatanggal mo du'n 'yung darak so ang milling degree is the extent of bran removal so regular milled ang kanyang milling degree," sabi niya.

Para matulungan ang mga mamimili na makita nila ang diperensiya, Binigyang-diin ni Gomez na ang well-milled rice ay makikitang mas maputi kompara sa regular-milled rice, na ang halaga ay mababa sa P2.

"'Pag ikinumpara natin ang dalawa, mas marami ang natatanggal na bran diyan kaya mas maputi siya," sabi niya.

Ang whole grain, na mayroon pang 95 porsiyento ng butil, ay pangalawa sa pinakamahal na klase sunod sa "special" rice.

May listahan ng mga produkto na kaklasipikahin bilang "special rice" na ire-release ng food authority.

May mga na-interview na konsyumer ang umamin na nahihirapan silang malaman ang iba't ibang klase ng bigas at ang pagkakaiba nito, tulad ni Leoncio Lim na pinaniniwalaan ang sinasabi ng mga retailer.

"Tayo, mga layman, 'di rin natin alam" sabi niya. "'Di ba kung ano sinabi niya naniwala tayo mabuti kung totoo nga sinabi nila kung hindi, parang nagogoyo tayo."

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: Oct. 12, 2018 Page: 14

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Imported NFA rice arriving in NegOcc

By **MARK L. GARCIA**

BACOLOD CITY – The National Food Authority (NFA) in Negros Occidental will deliver 100,000 bags of rice from Thailand to the province in November.

Provincial Manager Frisco Canoy told Manila Bulletin that if the supply becomes sufficient during that time, they might allow government offices and business establishments to directly buy NFA rice for their employees.

Canoy said that based on the reports they received, the MV Inlaco Express was being loaded with rice in Thailand, and will carry 600,000 bags for Davao, General Santos, and Negros Occidental provinces.

General Santos and Davao will get 250,000 bags each. The Inlaco will then proceed to Bacolod.

While NFA is waiting for the shipment, 10,000 bags of imported rice coming from Iloilo will be transported to Bacolod and added in the remaining 5,000 bags in the province, Canoy said.

As of Wednesday, about 2,500 bags have arrived from Iloilo, he added.

An individual will only be allowed to buy a maximum of 5 kilos of rice a day.

NFA will also open more Tagpuan stores in the province and the cities of Bacolod and Bago.

Canoy said that apart from opening Tagpuan stores in barangays where there is a high demand for NFA rice, NFA also plan to directly sell from its compounds in Bacolod and Kabankalan City, and Ilog town in south Negros.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: OCT. 2, 2018 Page: 6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

₱300-M confiscated rice subjected to forfeiture case

By **AARON B. RECUENCO**

Some ₱300 million worth of confiscated rice are now being subjected to forfeiture proceedings in favor of the government, the Philippine National Police (PNP) disclosed Thursday.

PNP spokesman Chief Supt. Benigno Durana said the confiscated rice were the result of the various operations with the Bureau of Customs and the Department of Trade and Industry last month.

"There were hundreds of warehouses inspected and this resulted in the confiscation of tons of rice," said Durana.

Among the 801 warehouses inspected, 168 were in Central Luzon, 137 in the Cagayan Valley Region, and 139 in the Ilocos Region. The rest were scattered in other regions of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Two warehouses in Metro Manila were also inspected, 40 in the Cordillera, 59 in Western Mindanao, and 75 in Bicol region.

"All 801 warehouses inspected had an aggregate holding capacity of 7.2-million sacks but contained only 1,059,729 sacks during the inspection," said Durana.

It was recalled that the PNP initiated inspection of rice warehouses on instruction of President Duterte to crackdown on hoarding and smuggling of rice that resulted in an artificial shortage in rice supply.

Even as restrictions on rice importation had been relaxed, entities behind the P300-million rice smuggling may face permanent revocation of their import license.

Durana, however, said that it is the Bureau of Customs which was tasked to file charges against the owners of the confiscated rice.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B16

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Hardin ng Lunas harvest time

Hardin ng Lunas sa HPA is a joint undertaking of the Philippine Army and the Tarlac Heritage Foundation (Isabel and Isa Cojuangco Suntay), and Corvill Agricom Inc. (Anthony A. Cortes). Hardin aims to develop idle camp lands to make them productive for the benefit of PA personnel and their dependents and to train families in organic gardening techniques for them to make a positive contribution to the food chain.

Vegetables can be bought fresh and at farmgate prices by anyone. The funds generated by the sale will be used to maintain Hardin ng Lunas. Photo shows Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana (left) with Heritage and Army officers.

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: B2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Science comes to endangered Lake Sebu

A NEW species of freshwater crab was discovered last year in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

The Sundathelphusa miguelito crab is "very likely to be endemic to Mindanao, and worthy of conservation and further study," says Jose C. E. Mendoza, a lecturer at the National University of Singapore who, with Emerson Sy of the Philippine Center for Terrestrial and Aquatic Research, made the discovery.

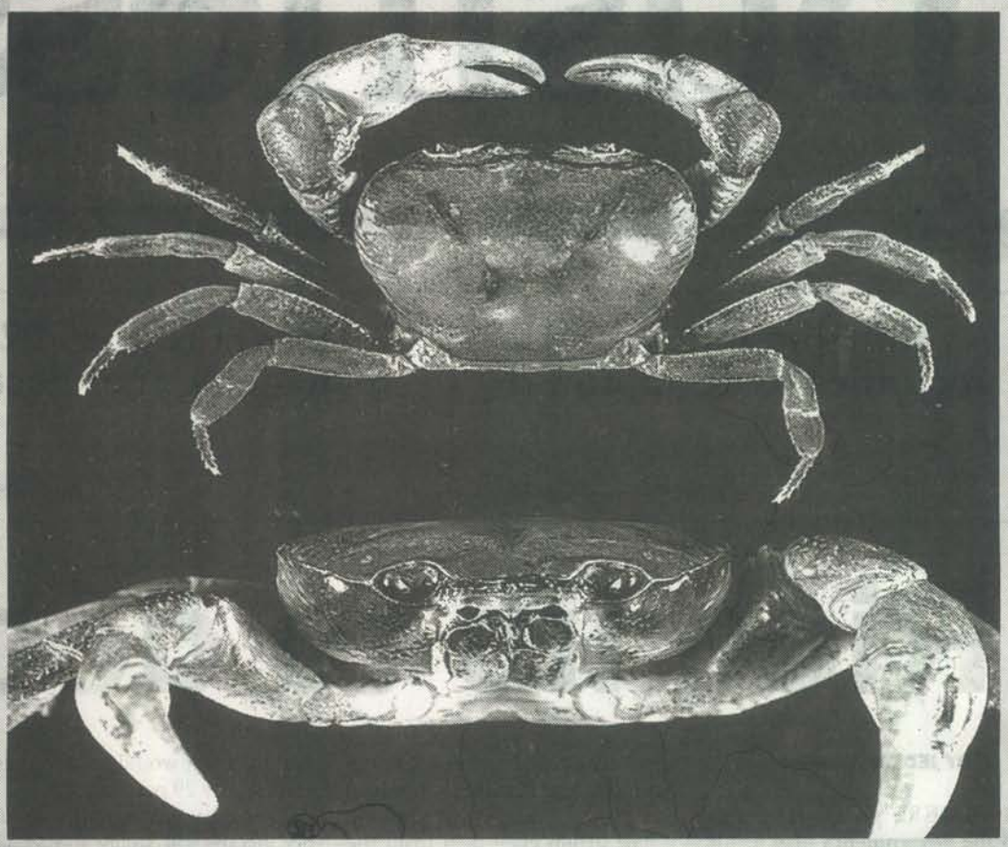
The edible crab, characterized by shorter claws, is the fifth species of freshwater crabs discovered in Mindanao.

The crab reflects the biodiversity of Lake Sebu which will be put under assessment by scientists led by Dr. James Namocatcat of the Mindanao State University-General Santos. The research is funded by the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development, Department of Science and Technology.

The project will review local ordinances, comprehensive land use plans and master plans to help guide in making policy directions. It is expected to provide a biodiversity profile as well as depth and water data of the three upland ecosystems of Lake Sebu municipality.

Lake Sebu needs urgent attention. Located within the Alah Valley in Lake Sebu town, the area was proclaimed a Protected Landscape in August 1966. With seven falls, Lake Sebu is the biggest in the municipality, followed by Lahit and Seloton lakes.

It is one of the many bodies of water that are sources of irrigation water for Sultan Kudarat and South Cotabato. The T'boli and Ubo tribes inhabit the lake shores.



Worthy of conservation. The new crab species discovered in Lake Cebu will be assessed by scientists.

Fish kills have characterized aquaculture in the lake in recent years after tilapia fish cages proliferated starting in the1980s. Tilapia fish cages occupy about 56 hectares or 15 percent of the lake's area, beyond the 10-percent limit allowed by the Fisheries Code.

The aquaculture has exceeded the carrying capacity of the lake, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Pollution is affecting lake water quality, due mainly to the feeds used in aquaculture farms; it is estimated by local authorities that only 30 percent of the feeds are consumed by the tilapia in fish cages while the rest settles on the lake bed.

Namocatcat, a marine biologist, has called for a moratorium on aquaculture, citing that at a depth of four feet, dissolved oxygen has nearly reached zero level especially where fish cage operations are concentrated. This has deprived fisheries, water hyacinths, algae and bacteria the oxygen they require.

In 1984, Lake Sebu, Surallah and T'boli towns in South Cotabato and Bagumbayan in Sultan Kudarat were included in the Allah Valley Protected Landscape, a watershed forest reserve and one of the key biodiversity areas of the country. In Lake Sebu town, the watershed covers nearly 10,000 hectares.

The Allah Valley Protected Landscape is also home to the T'boli, the legendary Dreamweavers who design and fashion textiles based on their dreams.

Allah Valley is one of 240 protected areas, protected by virtue of their unique physical and biological significance, managed to enhance biological diversity and protected against destructive human exploitation. - ***P. Icamina***

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: 8

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Gov't forfeits P300M smuggled rice

The Bureau of Customs (BoC) has ordered forfeiture proceedings against some 124,807 sacks of smuggled rice worth nearly P300 million.

The rice was seized by joint elements of the BoC and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in seven warehouses in Bulacan when they conducted random inspections in 801 warehouses containing 1,059,729 sacks of rice in different locations nationwide.

Among the 801 warehouses inspected, 168 were in Central Luzon, 137 in the Cagayan Valley Region and 139 in the Ilocos Region. The rest were scattered in different regions of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Two warehouses in Metro Manila were also inspected, 40 in the Cordillera and 59 in Western Mindanao and 75 in Bicol region.

All the warehouses inspected had an aggregate holding capacity of 7.2-million sacks but contained only 1,059,729 sacks during the inspection.

The PNP initiated inspection of rice warehouses on instruction of President Rodrigo Duterte to crack down on hoarding and smuggling of rice that resulted in an artificial shortage in rice supply.

Even as restrictions on rice importation had been relaxed, entities behind the P300 million rice smuggling may face permanent revocation of their import licenses.

The Manila Times

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Villar: Family farms key to inclusive growth

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna: "Family farms are truly key players for inclusive growth and rural development, as well as to our food secure future."

Thus said Sen. Cynthia Villar, chair of the Senate Agriculture and Food Committee during her keynote speech at the 2nd National Small and Family Farmers/New and Beginning Farmers Conference held at the headquarters of the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture here last September 20-21.

The conference aimed to promote the creation of systems of farming capable of maintaining their productivity and usefulness to the community. The conference's central theme was how to mobilize small and family farmers/new and beginning farmers for food security, sustainable tourism, and rural development.

Villar said that she was glad the event gave importance and priority to small and family farmers, who should not belittle their contributions to society. The agriculture sector, she noted, supports two-thirds of the country's economy. With the surging population, she said there is a strong pressure in the agriculture sector to produce more food, and small and family farms have important roles to play in terms of the country's food security. She encouraged the participants not to leave their farms because the future generations depend on them for food.

She outlined several major legislations that have been passed in the Senate to help the farmers. These include the following:

– Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Act, which creates the coconut levy trust fund that would provide interventions for the coconut industry's development;

– Free Irrigation Service to Small Farmers Act, which gives free irrigation to farmers who own land not larger than eight hectares and condones unpaid irrigation fees and writing off of loans of farmers who own the same size of land;

– Farm Tourism Development Act, which seeks to promote environment-friendly, efficient and sustainable farm practices; provide alternative recreation facilities and farm tourism activities for families, students and other clientele; and promote health and wellness with high-quality farm-produced food.

– Rice Tarrification Bill, which provides for the removal of the prescribed rice import volume and rice imports can eventually be opened to private rice traders who can import additional volumes of the crop from Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and Vietnam but will have to pay a 35-percent tariff. The collected tariffs will be used to fund mass irrigation, warehousing and rice research.

Villar emphasized that in all the bills she has authored, she made sure there was adequate fund to provide research and development and further training of farmers, and guarantee that family farmers would be the center of agricultural policies and programs.

PEOPLES JOURNAL Tonight
http://www.journal.com.ph

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: 7

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Poe: Farmers to benefit from free rice import

Poe

By MARLON PURIFICACION

FLOODING the country with imported rice by doing away import quota will not just bring down the prices of Filipino's staple food but will also benefit farmers, Senator Grace Poe maintained yesterday.

Poe said the creation of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, will mainly be sourced from rice tariffs to finance the procurement of farm machinery and equipment, irrigation, subsidies and credit to farmers and rice research to improve the competitiveness of the country's rice sector.

"Nararapat lang na magkaroon ng 'rice fund' na manggagaling sa taripa ng imported na bigas, at dapat mabantayan ito nang maigi at masigurong mapupunta sa ikauunlad ng mga maliliit na magsasaka ng palay at hindi matulad sa coco levy fund na hanggang ngayon ay hindi pa natitikman ng mga magniniyog," Poe said, referring to an oversight committee that will be constituted to review the fund periodically.

Some sectors feel that the influx of imported rice will have a negative effect on local farmers that will be disenfranchised.

Poe is a co-author of Senate Bill 1998 that seeks to lift quantitative restrictions or quota on rice importation by amending Republic Act 8178, as amended.

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

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: 3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

P300-M PUSLIT NA BIGAS NAKUMPISKA NG PNP

CAMP CRAME – AABOT sa P300 milyon ang halaga ng puslit na bigas na nasabat ng Philippine National Police (PNP) katuwang ang Bureau of Customs (BOC).

Ayon kay PNP Chief, Dir. Gen. Oscar Albayalde, nadiskubre ng pinagsanib na PNP at BOC ang 124,807 sako ng bigas na ilegal na naipasok sa bansa sa pitong bodega sa Bulacan makaraang magpatupad ng random inspection sa 801 warehouses sa lugar kung saan may kabuuang 1,059,729 sako ng bigas sa iba't ibang lugar sa buong bansa.

Kabilang sa 801 warehouses na nasiyasat ay 168 sa Central Luzon, 137 sa Cagayan Valley Region, at 139 sa Ilocos Region.

Ang iba naman ay nakakalat sa iba't ibang rehiyon sa Luzon, Visayas, at Mindanao. Dalawa namang warehouses sa Metro Manila ang ininspeksiyon, 40 sa Cordillera, 59 sa Western Mindanao at 75 sa Bicol region.

Nabatid na ang lahat ng 801 warehouses na siniyasat ay nakasaad na kaya ang 7.2-million sacks na kapasidad subalit mayroon lamang na 1,059,729 sacks nang inspeksiyunin ang mga ito.

Ang pagsisiyasat sa mga bodega ay alinsunod sa atas ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na lansagin ang pagtatago at pagpupuslit ng bigas na naging sanhi ng pagliit ng supply nito at pagtaas ng presyo. **EUNICE C.**

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: OCT. 12, 2018 Page: A9

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Soybeans slide anew

SYDNEY- US soybean futures fell for a third consecutive session on Thursday as ample global supplies and concerns that a Sino-US trade war could escalate kept prices near their lowest since the start of the month.

Corn fell to a 10-day low, while wheat fell for a second session.

The most active soybean futures on the Chicago Board Of Trade were down 0.3 percent at $8.49-1/2 a bushel, having closed down 1.2 percent on Wednesday when prices hit a low of $8.47-1/4 a bushel - the lowest since Oct. 1.

Analysts said bearish fundamentals hang over soybeans, although market direction would be driven by the latest US Department of Agriculture report later in the session.

"Negative momentum remains," said Tobin Gorey, director of agricultural strategy, Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

"The USDA updates US and global inventory estimates tonight and that will determine whether it can be broken."

The USDA is expected to raise its US corn and soybean yield and production forecasts and increase its end-of-season US and global stocks projections for corn, soy and wheat.

The most active corn futures eased 0.1 percent to $3.62-1/4 a bushel, near the session low of $3.61-1/2 a bushel - the lowest Oct 1. Corn closed down 0.7 percent in the previous session. -***Reuters***

The Manila Times

Date: OCTOBER 12, 2018 Page: A3

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UN: World must slash meat consumption to save climate

PARIS: The world must drastically reduce its meat consumption in order to avoid devastating climate change, scientists said Wednesday in the most thorough study so far on how what we eat affects the environment.

As humanity grapples with tough choices to offset a rapidly heating planet, the research suggests that the Western world would need to slash its meat intake by 90 percent to avoid crippling Earth's ability to sustain an anticipated 10 billion people by 2050.

Food production — which produces damaging greenhouse gases from livestock, ruins enormous swathes of forests and uses unsustainable amounts of water — is a major contributor to climate change.

A study published Wednesday in the journal *Nature* offers the most comprehensive look yet at just how bad intensive agriculture is for the planet.

Without a huge drawdown in the amount of meat consumed, its authors said, the food industry's already vast impact on the environment could increase by as much as 90 percent by mid-century.

That, coupled with a sharp projected rise in global population, would devastate mankind's ability to effectively feed itself — and dash any realistic hope of curbing runaway global warming.

The scientists called for a "global shift" towards more plant-based diets, slashing food waste and improving farming practices with the aid of technology to cope with the burden.

"No single solution is enough to avoid crossing planetary boundaries," said Marco Springmann of the Oxford Martin Program on the Future of Food and the Nuffield Department of Population Health at the University of Oxford, who led the study.

"But when the solutions are implemented together, our research indicates that it may be possible to feed the growing population sustainably."

The stark message comes just days after the publication of a landmark UN report in which some of the world's most eminent climate scientists warned that governments must fundamentally change course in order to keep global warming under 1.5 C by the end of the century.

Experts argue that cutting meat consumption is one obvious way that citizens can do their bit for the climate, even as world leaders are locked in discussions over what precisely should be done to rein in the effects of a warming planet.

Ditch the steak

Livestock farming poses a triple threat to Earth's atmosphere, as animals produce huge amounts of the greenhouse gas methane, coupled with the loss of carbon-absorbing forests that are felled to accommodate their grazing areas.

In addition, immense amounts of water are needed to sustain the livestock — 500 grams (a pound) of beef is estimated to require close to 7,000 liters of water.

Wednesday's report said halving the amount of food that is wasted or lost to poor management alone could reduce the environment fallout by 16 percent.

It pointed to better education, industry reform and improved efficiency as ways towards tackling the problem.

"When it comes to diets, comprehensive policy and business approaches are essential to make dietary changes towards healthy and more plant-based diets possible and attractive for a large number of people," Springmann said.

AFP