CLIPPINGS FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY11, 2019

A. SEC. EFP QUOTED

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Agriculture sector falls short of all projections
Vegetables rot in Benguet due to oversupply
Farm sector posts 1% growth in 2018

THE MANILA TIMES
DA allots P100-M aid to Cordillera veggie farmers
Agri sector slowdown exceeds govt forecast
Cagayan breeding station to benefit goat raisers

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Farm output growth slowed to 1% in 2018

BUSINESS MIRROR
DA chief Piñol assures assistance to N. Luzon vegetable growers

BUSINESS WORLD
Storm-lashed 2018 dampens farm output, growth falls to 1%
DA to compensate Cordillera farmers for dumped crops

BALITA
Catbalogan modelo ng 'Pinas sa fish drying

B. DA FAMILY

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Photo: Looming shortage
Commentary: Stop land conversion

THE MANILA TIMES
Unlawful trading of meat products
Benguet coffee industry gets boost
Research center for Cordillera completed

MANILA STANDARD
Swine flu update: NAIA seizes 216 kilos of processed meat
Red tide warning up in East Visayas
Editorial: A new rice regime

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Supermarkets sell low-priced sugar

BUSINESS MIRROR
PIDS study: Mediocre farm performance to continue after tariffication

THE DAILY TRIBUNE
Customs tightens meat watch
Collared over corals
'Red tide' alert up
Agri product prices most reasonable

PILIPINO MIRROR
Presyo ng agricultural products bumaba na – DTI
Stock ng NFA rice sa SOCCSKSARGEN, ARMM sapat na

C. **AGRI-RELATED STORY**

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
'Inflation for poorest households slows in November'

THE MANILA TIMES
Victorias Milling profit hits P81M in Sept-Nov

BUSINESS MIRROR
Unfazed, exporters see 6% rebound from sluggish '18 growth

BUSINESS WORLD
#nationataglance: Meat, vegetable prices in QC lower than in other parts of Metro Manila
Victorias profit rises 74% in Q1

THE DAILY TRIBUNE
Agri products seized in Davao
13 Pinoy firms join in WFFS 2018

D. **FOREIGN STORY**

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Soybeans down; wheat, corn fall

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: B1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

2018 growth only 1%

Agriculture sector falls short of all projections

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

The country's agriculture sector has failed to meet all expectations for the year, even the much lower growth projection Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol has made just a few weeks ago.

A review of the sector's performance recently done by the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Management Council (MANCOM) showed Philippine agriculture and fisheries only went up by 1 percent last year.

This was not only lower compared to the nearly 4 percent growth the sector has achieved in 2017. A 1 percent growth is also not anywhere near the DA's target for 2018, which has been revised a couple of times.

First, the agency was expecting the sector to grow by at least the same level as it did two years ago. By December, it became much more realistic with a growth forecast of 2.5 percent.

"2018 was a tough year," Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said on Thursday following the annual review of the agency's MANCOM.

It was the typhoons, he said, that significantly brought down the sector's performance. In 2018, a super typhoon and 12 more tropical storms hit the country almost every month, wiping out 1.8 million metric tons (MT) of crops with an estimated value of ₱36 billion.

Sector-wise, DA missed most of its target production level for the year, except for poultry, which posted higher-than-expected numbers.

The country, for instance, was expected to produce a total of 19.4 million metric tons (MT) of rice by the end of 2018, which would have been the country's highest palay output, but it looks like year-end output only totaled to 19.1 million MT.

The corn sector, also a main staple, lost about ₱10 billion worth of production.

The official data measuring the growth of the agriculture sector would come from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which is due for release more than a week from now.

In the meantime, MANCOM — which is composed of all top officials of the DA and heads of its bureaus and attached agencies including the National Food Authority (NFA) and the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) — agreed to adopt measures to mitigate the effects of tropical disturbances and climate change to the agriculture sector.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 13

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Vegetables rot in Benguet due to oversupply

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet – Tons of vegetables are rotting in Benguet farms amid low prices.

August Balanoy, Benguet Farmers Marketing Cooperative general manager, said some farmers are left with no choice but to throw away their excess produce as oversupply of vegetables by as much as 300 percent resulted in a drop in prices.

Balanoy said farmers harvested around 3.5 million kilos per day since the start of the year. The normal daily harvest is only 1.2 million kilos.

Balanoy said the glut was due to weather conditions in the third and last quarter of 2018, which affected production and marketing schedules.

"We ask the agriculture department to step in," he said.

Benguet farmers also called on the government to build bigger processing facilities to address oversupply.

At the La Trinidad Trading Post last week, the price of Chinese cabbage dropped to P1 to 7 per kilo, potatoes at P15 to 50 and carrots at P1 to P35.Prices have barely increased since Wednesday.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said the government would allocate P100 million in compensation to affected farmers in the Cordilleras.

"Traders refused to buy vegetables delivered by the farmers to the Benguet trading center because the floods in Bicol prevented them from shipping the commodities," Piñol said.

Piñol said allegations that the Department of Agriculture (DA) is insensitive to the plight of Cordillera vegetable farmers are "baseless and prematurely hurled."

He said the DA and the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. would start identifying the affected farmers for the release of insurance payments.

The process is expected to take two weeks. – **Artemio Dumlao, Louise Maureen Simeon**

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: B3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Farm sector posts 1% growth in 2018

By **LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON**

The local agriculture sector managed to grow by one percent last year despite the consecutive weather disturbances that hit the country which damaged P36 billion worth of crops, particularly rice.

During the Department of Agriculture's Management Council meeting, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said the farm sector likely grew by a measly one percent in 2018, much lower than the four percent increase recorded the previous year.

The one percent growth was also lower than the DA's earlier projection of 2.5 percent.

Official figures are expected to be released by the Philippine Statistics Authority a week from now.

"The DA missed most of its target production level for the year, except for poultry which exceeded growth projections. This as a super typhoon and 12 more tropical storms battered the country almost every month of the year," Piñol said.

The combined damages of Typhoons Agaton, Basyang, Domeng, Henry, Inday, Josie, Karding, Ompong, Rosita, Samuel and Usman destroyed 1.8 million metric tons of crops valued at P36 billion.

Rice production only reached 19.1 million metric tons last year, short of the government's target of 19.4 million MT.

The DA, however, expects to bounce back this year amid better rice production with the additional funds coming from the liberalization of the industry.

The growth is seen increasing to as much as 3.5 percent this year as local farmers are assured of P10 billion financing from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), which will be used to improve mechanization and seeds input.

The Manila Times

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A7

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DA allots P100-M aid to Cordillera veggie farmers

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has allocated P100 million in financial assistance to vegetable growers in the Cordillera region who experienced lower income during onslaught of typhoons last year.

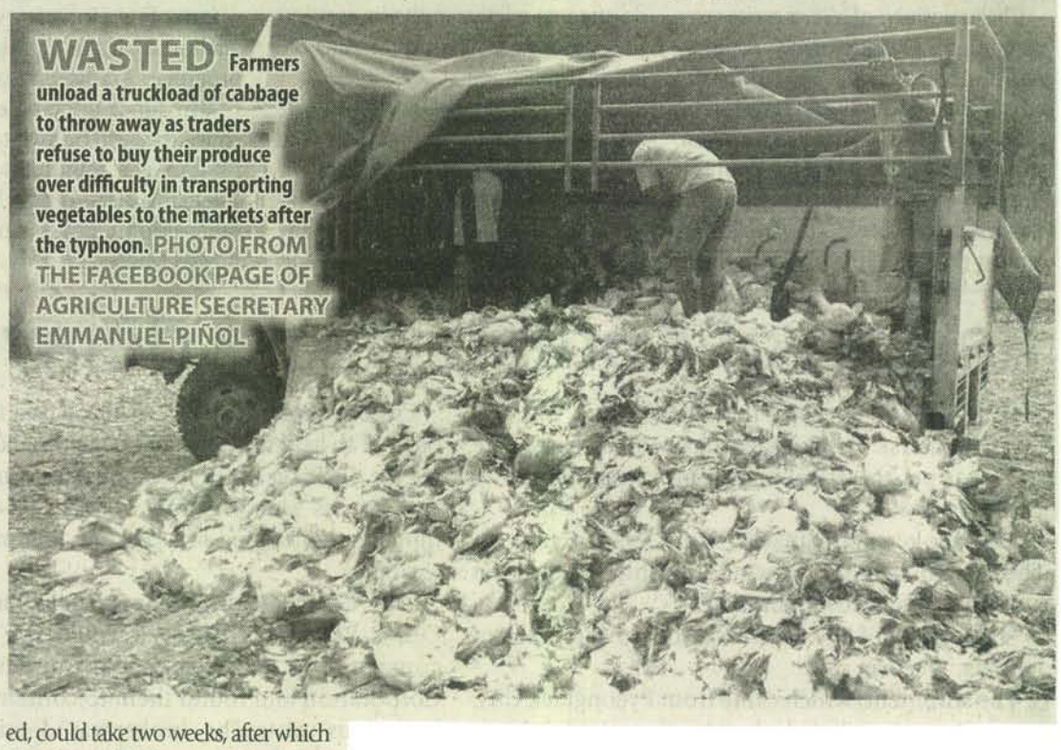
Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel "Manny" Piñol said the credit facility aims to assist Cordillera farmers who were forced to throw away truckloads of vegetables "because there were no buyers" as floods made it difficult for the produce to be shipped to the market.

"Traders refused to buy the vegetables delivered by the farmers to Benguet Vegetable Trading Center because the floods in Bicol prevented them from shipping the commodities there and to the Visayas," Piñol said in a statement on Thursday.

Most of the farmers who lost their vegetables were beneficiaries of DA's Production Loan Easy Access credit program, which provides up to P50,000 loan at an interest of 6 percent annually, he added.

The Agriculture chief said the DA and the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. would start the validation process this Friday to identify farmers who suffered losses and determine the estimated value of the vegetables they threw away.

The validation process, Piñol added, could take two weeks, after which the release of the insurance payments would start.



WASTED Farmers unload a truckload of cabbage to throw away as traders refuse to buy their produce over difficulty in transporting vegetables to the markets after the typhoon. PHOTO FROM THE FACEBOOK PAGE OF AGRICULTURE SECRETARY EMMANUEL PIÑOL

The Cordillera Region is the traditional source of vegetable supplies for Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon but because of Typhoon Ompong, which hit the country in September last year, crops ready for harvesting in the northern parts of the country were destroyed.

EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

The Manila Times

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: B1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Agri sector slowdown exceeds govt forecast

BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

THE agriculture sector slowed much more than expected last year, a Cabinet official said on Thursday, with the result attributed to severe typhoons that caused billions of pesos in farm damage.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said the sector expanded by just 1 percent in 2018 based on preliminary data, well below the projected easing to 2.5 percent from the previous year's nearly 4-percent expansion.

Official figures, including overall gross domestic product growth results, will be released by the government before the end of the month. As of the end of the third quarter, agriculture growth was nearly flat at 0.15 percent based on latest data.

Piñol attributed the 2018 slowdown to storms that hit the country, most especially super typhoon Ompong that caused more than P36 billion worth of damage to the farm sector in September.

"A super typhoon and 12 more tropical storms battered the country almost every month of the year, destroying 1.8 million metric tons of crops with an estimated value of P36 billion," he said.

Rice production fell below the Agriculture department's 19.4-million metric ton (MT) goal, totaling 19.1 million MT given an output loss of around 900,000 MT valued at P20.7 billion.

"While the 2018 rice production was higher by 1.5 million metric tons than the 17.6-million MT production of the Aquino administration in 2016, it was 170,000 metric tons lower than the 2017 production," Piñol claimed.

It should be noted that the Duterte government assumed office in the middle of 2016.

The corn sector likewise lost about P10 billion worth of production last year, Piñol also said without elaborating.

The Agriculture department, he claimed, would focus developing alternative production under the "Southern Swing" initiative, which will identify an estimated 300,000 hectares of new farm areas in regions least affected by typhoons.

In a recent meeting, the department also identified areas of focus for agricultural funding this year. These include completion of a 13,000-kilometer farm-to-market road network, intensification of the Solar-Powered Irrigation System project to cover 500,000 hectares over the next three years, and the establishment of fisheries and agriculture post-harvest facilities to enhance productivity and lessen losses.

Also to be prioritized are investments in logistics and transport facilities to ease the movement of agricultural products from remote regions to urban centers.

To alleviate rural poverty, meanwhile, Piñol said more funding would be allotted to the Agriculture department's easy access credit program.

The Manila Times

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Cagayan breeding station to benefit goat raisers

The Cagayan Breeding Center in Solana town, Cagayan Province will be the venue for this year's grand fiesta carnival, gathering farming and livestock stakeholders and participants from Cagayan Valley. PIA PHOTO

CAGAYAN province, aspiring to become one of premiere agri-tourism destinations in the Philippines, is opening its gates to farmers, livestock raisers and the public to gain access to the latest technology in agriculture, particularly chevon processing.

This as the Department of Agriculture (DA)-Cagayan Valley (Region 2) office announced the conduct of a grand farm carnival tentatively scheduled in March this year at the DA-Southern Cagayan Research Center (DA-SCRC)-Cagayan Breeding Station (CBS) located at *Barangay* (village) Maguirig in Solana town.

Rose Mary Aquino, DA-Cagayan Valley technical director, said the grand farm carnival will feature climate-smart technologies for appreciation of the general public.

The CBS, which is the venue for this year's carnival, is a satellite station of DA-SCRC, with goat as its main commodity. It is the source of quality goat stocks that caters not only to Cagayan farmers but also to raisers of Cagayan Valley and nearby areas.

Aquino said the types of goats raised in the breeding station were the Boer and Kalahari Red.

The CBS promotes goat meat or chevon utilization, and link players of the goat industry in the region. Also, raisers are given updates on production and management practices and learn in producing chevon products for increased income. Produced from best Boers and Kalahari Reds include smoked sausage, chevon Hungarian sausage and chevon meatloaf, and leather crafts, among others.

The CBS also showcases genetic resources that can be used to develop the chevon industry in the region where the demand for meat goat has been increasing.

Narciso Edillo, DA-Cagayan Valley executive director, said the supply of goat meat in the region or even in Northern Luzon was still very low and to address this, the CBS had been raising and producing Boer and Kalahari Red goats.

Edillo said the breeding station was established to help the goat farmers improve the genetic makeup of their native goats, and be taught proper goat handling, feeding, slaughtering and meat processing.

"The CBS is committed to help in technology commercialization of the different product lines of goat and assists raisers and those who will be interested in packaging to meet the product standard and food safety for domestic requirement and foreign markets," he said.

Before, the CBS in Solana was not visible enough to travelers plying the national road along Barangay Maguirig.

Aquino said that with all the improvements that are being made to turn it into an integrated and agri-tourism farm, the CBS could be easily noticed with a giant replica of a goat in front and the establishment of technology demonstration plots for crops, livestock and fisheries.

"We hope that part of the grand fiesta carnival will be the launching of CBS as agri-tourism site," Aquino said.

She said the fiesta carnival would also showcase integrated farming in small space requiring affordable capital.

"Likewise, interventions on various irrigation models, mechanization, credit and others will be presented to the farmers, local government units, private sector and other visitors," Aquino said.

With Agriculture Sec. Emmanuel Manny Piñol as guest of honor and speaker, the activity will include a competition in vegetable gardening whose participants are farms families from Solana town and students from Cagayan State University and elementary and high schools in the municipality.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Farm output growth slowed to 1% in 2018

PIÑOL

BY JED MACAPAGAL

AHEAD from the release of official figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said the farming sector grew by 1 percent in 2018, due to the effects of 13 weather disturbances that ravaged the country last year.

The preliminary estimate is slower than the 3.5 percent growth projection for the year.

But Piñol said agriculture will grow 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent this year as the Department of Agriculture (DA) steps up measures to mitigate the effects of typhoons.

"Philippine agriculture and fisheries hobbled, with a mere 1 percent growth in 2018 as a super typhoon and 12 more tropical storms battered the country almost every month of the year destroying 1.8 million metric tons (MT) of crops with an estimated value of P36 billion," Piñol said in a statement.

The figures were derived from the DA's bureaus and attached agencies including the National Food Authority and the Philippine Coconut Authority.

Except for poultry, sectors missed target production levels for the year.

"The 2018 agri-fisheries performance paled in comparison to the vigorous 3.9 percent growth posted by the sector in 2017, a year with fairly good climate and less typhoons," Piñol said.

He said weather disturbances occurred in January, February, June, July, August, September, October, November and December.

Piñol said rice production is projected to be 900,000 MT lower in 2018. That volume is equivalent to P20.7 billion.

With actual rice production estimated at 19.1 million MT against the projected 19.4 million MT in 2018, the gap is seen at 300,000. That does not include the crops devastated by the weather disturbances.

Piñol added corn also lost about P10 billion worth of production.

The DA earlier projected a growth of 3.5 percent for agriculture in 2018 slightly slower than the 3.9 percent expansion in 2017.

Piñol said this year, the DA will adopt measures that will mitigate the effects of tropical disturbances and climate change such as adjusting the planting calendar and shifting production to areas in the southern part of the country which are less vulnerable to typhoons.

The DA also vowed to: complete 13,000 kilometers of farm-to-market road network; cover 500,000 hectares for solar-powered irrigation projects over the next three years; establish post-harvest facilities to enhance productivity and lessen losses; invest in logistics and transport facilities by government and; put more focus in the Easy Access Credit Program.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DA chief Piñol assures assistance to N. Luzon vegetable growers

THE chief of the Department of Agriculture (DA) has vowed assistance to Northern Luzon farmers who incurred losses due to an oversupply of vegetables late December that drove retail prices below profitable levels.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said the DA would compensate all Cordillera farmers who were forced to dump their truckloads of produce due to low buying prices.

"I made this decision [last Wednesday] following confirmation by Cordillera agriculture officials that the reason behind the failure of the farmers to sell their produce was Tropical Depression Usman, which caused floods in the Bicol region," Piñol said in a Facebook post recently.

Piñol said DA regional directors reported to him that traders refused to purchase the farmers' produce as the floods in the Bicol region prevented them from shipping the crops to the Visayas.

Usman hit the Bicol region in end December, which caused the closure of the national highways, hence, prevented the transport of the vegetables, he added.

"Most of the farmers who lost their vegetables are beneficiaries of the Production Loan Easy Access credit program of the DA, which gives them up to P50,000 at an interest of 6 percent every year," he said.

"The DA, through the Agricultural Credit Policy Council, has allocated P100 million for the Cordillera vegetable farmers," he added.

Piñol said that the DA and the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. would start validating farmers who suffered losses and estimate their production losses for possible indemnities. The process may take two weeks before the disbursement of insurance payments, he added.

Piñol said viral articles circulating in Facebook blaming the DA for the failure of the farmers to sell their vegetables caught his attention.

He also cited an open letter by a farmer's daughter, who accused him of working against the interest of the farmers.

"I would like to assure our farmers that the administration of President Rody Duterte listens to the voices of our farmers and fishermen," Piñol said.

"Accusations that the DA is insensitive to the plight of the Cordillera vegetable farmers are baseless and prematurely hurled. As I have emphasized time and again, government is never perfect but this government will respond when the need arises," he added. ***Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas***

BusinessWorld
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Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 2/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Storm-lashed 2018 dampens farm output, growth falls to 1%

AGRICULTURE output rose 1% in 2018, dampened by storms that damaged farmland and fisheries, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Thursday.

"Philippine agriculture and fisheries were hobbled with a mere 1% growth in 2018 as a super typhoon and 12 more tropical storms battered the country almost every month of the year destroying 1.8 million metric tons of crops with an estimated value of P36 billion," Emmanuel F. Piñol Agriculture Secretary said in a Facebook post.

"A review of the performance of the sector during the Management Council (MANCOM) meeting yesterday in Tanza, Cavite showed that the Department of Agriculture (DA) missed most of its target production levels for the year, except for poultry which exceeded growth projections," Mr. Piñol added.

According to Mr. Piñol, rice production in 2018 amounted to 19.1 million metric tons (MT), missing the 19.4 million MT target by 1.54%. It also fell 170,000 MT from the year-earlier total.

Corn, meanwhile, lost about P10 billion worth of production, Mr. Piñol said.

"The 2018 Agri-Fisheries Performance paled in comparison to the vigorous 3.9% growth posted by the sector achieved by the Duterte Administration in 2017, a year with fairly good climate and fewer typhoons," Mr. Piñol said.

"In contrast, 2018 opened with Tropical Storm Agaton in January, Tropical Depression Basyang in February, Domeng in June, Henry, Inday and Josie in July, Karding in August, Super Typhoon Ompong in September, Rosita in October, Samuel in November and the year-ender Tropical Depression Usman towards the end of December," he added.

The MANCOM, meanwhile, identified five key areas of focus for funding in the agriculture sector to support a new growth outlook of 2.5% to 3.5%.

These are: 13,000 kilometers of farm-to-market roads, solar-powered irrigation projects (SPIP) covering 500,000 hectares over the next three years, post-harvest facilities to minimize losses and boost productivity; investments in logistics and transportation facilities especially for the movement of goods from the remote regions to urban centers, and greater focus on the Easy Access Credit Program.

"The MANCOM identified the key focus areas for 2019 and set a growth target of between 2.5% to 3.5% for the year," Mr. Piñol said.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) is scheduled to release its data for gross domestic product (GDP) growth for 2018 on Jan. 24. Farm data output for the year is usually published days prior to publishing of GDP data. — **Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio**

BusinessWorld
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Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 2/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DA to compensate Cordillera farmers for dumped crops

AGRICULTURE Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said that the Department of Agriculture (DA) will compensate farmers in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) who were forced to dispose of their vegetables due to oversupply and lack of means to transport the harvest to market.

"Cordillera farmers who were forced to dump or throw away truckloads of vegetables because there were no buyers will have to be compensated by the government," Mr. Piñol said in a Facebook post on Thursday.

"I made this decision tonight following confirmation by Cordillera Agriculture officials that the reason behind the failure of the farmers to sell their produce was Tropical Depression Usman which caused floods in the Bicol Region," Mr. Piñol added.

According to Mr. Piñol, traders were not able to buy the produce to transport to Bicol and the Visayas due to flooding brought by Usman.

Bicol is part of the overland supply route to the Visayas, connected by ferries.

"It was made clear that Tropical Depression Usman was the root cause. I made the decision to order the compensation of the farmers," Mr. Piñol said.

Prices of vegetables such as cabbage, carrots and potatoes dropped to as low as P5 per kilo at the trading post level due to oversupply.

An economics professor specializing in agriculture said that there should be agroprocessing facilities in the Cordillera region to absorb the produce of the farmers, as well as farm-to-market roads (FMR).

"Agroprocessing plants are needed in Benguet. The current practice is to process in Clark because it's an export processing zone and has good logistics," Marites M. Tiongco, Dean of the De La Salle University (DLSU) School of Economics (SoE), told *BusinessWorld* in a mobile message.

"The vegetable production of Benguet can be distributed to different outlets — the domestic, processing and export markets," according to Ms. Tiongco.

Ms. Tiongco also pushed for commodity contract trading to do away with middlemen.

"Commodity exchange center with cold storage facilities the solution, and efficient logistics,"

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) said it is planning to set up a commodity exchange, with discussions set for the coming month.

"It's among our plans. We will firm it up during our strategic planning next month. But it's still a plan as of now," SEC Chairman Emilio B. Aquino said in a text message.

Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) Dean of the School of Government Ronald U. Mendoza, meanwhile, said in a Facebook post that technocrats, and not politicians should hold key jobs in agriculture.

"Farmers need support to be better organized and equipped into competitive and well managed coops. There should also be safety nets available for shocks. And we should mitigate smuggling," Mr. Mendoza said in a text message.

University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) Center for Food and Agribusiness Executive Director Rolando T. Dy said that the oversupply was caused by supply chain problems with the region's access to urban markets breaking own.

"It's force majeure. It is related to supply chain infrastructure, [which] can be a rising problem," Mr. Dy said.

Asked what is lacking in the agriculture industry of the region, Mr. Dy replied, "connectivity to urban markets from CAR."

Mr. Piñol said that most of the farmers who lost their produce are beneficiaries of the DA's Production Loan Easy Access (PLEA) program wherein farmers can borrow up to P50,000 at 6% annual interest.

Another lending program is run by the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) which has allocated P100 million for Cordillera vegetable farmers. Some might have also borrowed funds from informal lenders, Mr. Piñol noted.

"Tomorrow, the DA and the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) will start the validation process which will involve the identification of farmers who suffered losses and the estimated value of the vegetables they threw away," Mr. Piñol said.

"The validation process could take two weeks, after which the release of the insurance payments will start," he added. — **Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio**

Balita

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 7

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Catbalogan modelo ng 'Pinas sa fish drying

ANG Catbalogan City sa Samar ang nakikita ng gobyerno bilang modelo ng bansa sa fish drying sa tulong ng newly-established common service facility para sa fishery products.

Ang magkakatuwang na proyekto ng Department of Agriculture (DA), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Department of Science and Technology, Department of Trade and Industry, at Samar provincial government ay inaasahang makatutulong sa 200 processors sa probinsiya.

"DA envisioned to make Catbalogan the model city for fish drying, which is up to international standards in food safety and value-added products accepted for export," ayon kay BFAR 8 (Eastern Visayas) Director Juan Albaladejo, sa isang panayam nitong Huwebes.

Ang P3.5-milyong pasilidad ay magkakaroon ng malilinis na silid para sa processing, malinis na supply ng fresh at marine water, at drying facilities na malinis sa kontaminasyon mula sa mga langaw, alikabok at mikrobyo.

"Making Catbalogan the hub of dried fish products will help sustain the livelihood of fishermen in the area and hopefully reduce poverty among its ranks," dagdag ni Albaladejo.

"With the facility provided to help dried fish makers, this will help the city to graduate from being a small-time cottage industry employing traditional techniques on drying fish to a more sophisticated enterprise acceptable to the global market," pahayag ni Samar Governor Sharee Ann Tan.

Nitong Enero 5, binisita ni Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol ang processing center, kasama si BFAR National Director Eduardo Gongona.

"The equipment will help the organization in augmenting the production, specifically for one-day-old drying of fish or commonly called 'labtingaw' or 'lamayo', which is a product that it is highly sought by Filipino communities abroad," ani Albaladejo.

Hiniling din ni Piñol sa BFAR at dried fish producers' groups na magtulungan sa business plan para makabili ng automatic fish drying equipment upang mapalago ang produksiyon ng dried fish.

PNA

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A13

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

FRAME

LOOMING SHORTAGE Chicken feet, a popular appetizer among people with a fondness for alcohol, remain in abundance at Commonwealth Market in Quezon City. The agriculture department, however, has warned of a chicken shortage due to low farmgate prices. —JAM STA ROSA

INQ

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A17

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Stop land conversion

COMMENTARY

JOEY C. PAPA

Rice is the staple food of most Filipinos. Life without rice is deprivation. Even the cheapest NFA (National Food Authority) rice can satisfy the hunger of a poor Filipino family. When the agriculture department advised that we should eat more corn for its nutrients and to avoid high blood sugar levels, that call was in vain. Many thought it was meant only to divert the issue of rice shortage, artificial or not. Rice has remained the "superstar" on the dining table.

Some years back, poor Filipinos queued for rice from Namarco (National Marketing Corporation) carts, and from the NFA. Every year, government officials would announce the urgency of importing rice from neighboring countries in Asia. But if Vietnam and Thailand can supply us tons of rice, why can't our country be rice sufficient? In a recent radio-TV show, the broadcasters discussed how the government of Papua New Guinea had hired several farmers from Mindanao to plant rice for its people, because our farmlands were getting scarce. What a shame.

Without a national land use law, land conversion has been rampant. Local government officials, with the concurrence of the national agencies tasked to "protect" agrarian reform beneficiaries, use zoning ordinances as bases for land conversion, and have the first and last word in the approval of an application for land conversion.

Prime agricultural lands have rapidly turned into subdivisions or malls and other commercial complexes; or are quarried and mined, while many Filipinos are scrambling for rice to eat.

A former Duterte administration official who witnessed the disaster in Itogon, Benguet, sadly stated that the mining/quarrying permit in Itogon would not have been approved because of the vulnerability of the area to landslides—had there been a land use law then. The former lawmaker who interviewed the former official lamented that discussions on the land use bill, in his time, were stalled in Congress.

In Region 3, a prime, irrigated rice land was converted into a huge business establishment. After about two years, the business was expanded with an annex structure, put up in another converted agricultural land just across the main establishment. Extensive areas of former rice lands in the Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) are now exclusive subdivisions for the monied, many of whom already have other residential properties, and commercial and industrial sites. A large part of Marilaque (Manila, Rizal, Laguna, Quezon), especially in the supposedly protected areas of Tanay, Montalban and Antipolo, Rizal, has also been converted into quarrying areas, or into resorts and subdivisions. Before the Marawi siege, several residents we met while we were there said that landslides and flooding in their place, which also affected their livelihoods, were due to denuded forests.

Communities in the countryside are often blamed for their being in at-risk areas. Forced to leave their homes and livelihoods to go to evacuation centers, some are left with no choice but to eventually and permanently abandon the places where they were born and raised.

They are not the culprits. The culprits are rather those who persist in land conversion, illegal logging, mining and quarrying, garbage dumping, the burning of organic waste, and the like. These extractive and destructive activities render the land unproductive and vulnerable to danger, and contribute to global warming and climate change. Extreme heat prevails in the summer, while rains also come at unprecedented volumes, leading to massive flooding. No longer are there distinct wet months as we used to know them.

The passage of the rice tariffication bill could cause a deluge of imported rice in the country. Instead of rice tariffication, land conversion must be put to a halt now, and a land use law enacted immediately. Tariffication will only further cause Filipino peasants to suffer, as land conversion will become more rampant while the country will end up 100-percent dependent on rice importation.

Only genuine agrarian reform and a national land use law will give meaning and substance to the "pro-poor" declarations of administrations past and present.

Joey C. Papa is the president of Bangon Kalikasan Movement (bangonkalikasan @yahoo.com).

The Manila Times

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Unlawful trading of meat products

DEAR PAO

PERSIDA ACOSTA

Dear PAO,

It has come to my knowledge that my co-inspector of meat products in our city is directly engaged in the selling of meat products. Does he violate any law for doing the same?

Karmina

Dear Karmina,

The law that addresses your query is Section 53 of *The Meat Inspection Code of the Philippines,* which states:

"Section 53. Unlawful Trading. - It shall be unlawful for any person employed by the NMIS or person employed by the local government unit for the purpose of meat inspection work, to engage directly or indirectly in the business of buying, selling and trading or otherwise negotiating purchases or sales of meat and meat products for his own account or as an employee of another person, firm or corporation."

The same law provides a penalty for violation of the same, viz:

"Section 56. Administrative Fines. — The Secretary, by way of regulation, shall issue a schedule of administrative fines for violations of any provisions of this Act.

"Section 57. Cease and Desist Order. — The Secretary is authorized to issue after proper notice and hearing which shall be summary in nature except in instances when the continued operation causes imminent danger to public health, a 'Cease and Desist Order' to any person, firm, or corporation engaged, in the business of slaughtering food animals, or preparing, freezing, packaging, storing or labeling any carcasses or parts or products of carcasses for use as human food, found to be in violation of any of the provisions of this Act, should the continued operation of said entity, pose risk to public health and endanger the animal population."

It is clear from the cited provision that it is unlawful for any person employed by the local government unit for the purpose of meat inspection work, to engage directly or indirectly in the business of buying, selling and trading or otherwise negotiating purchases or sales of meat and meat products, and the violator may be subjected to an administrative penalty.

We hope that we were able to answer your queries. This advice is based solely on the facts that you have narrated and our appreciation of the same. Our opinion may vary when other facts are changed or elaborated.

Editor's note: Dear PAO is a daily column of the Public Attorney's Office. Questions for chief Acosta may be sent to dearpao@manilatimes.net

The Manila Times

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Research center for Cordillera completed

THE Cordillera Region now has a research and development (R&D) and corn gene bank center that will help level up the region's agriculture sector.

The two-story Research and Development Multi-purpose Facility also houses a mini library showcasing various information and education materials on agriculture-related researches and initiatives conducted by the region including compendiums, encyclopedia, brochures and techno guides, among others.

"The facility is in addition to the existing R&D facilities that were supported by BAR (Bureau of Agricultural Research) through its Institutional Development Grant (IDG) program either on the rehabilitation or on the establishment of new building such as the Organic Agriculture R&D Center in the region," the Bureau of Agricultural Research said in a statement.

BAR Director Nicomedes Eleazar graced the inauguration of the Research and Development Multi-purpose Facility in December. It was established at the Department of Agriculture-Regional Field Office Cordillera Autonomous Region located at the Baguio Animal Breeding and Research Center Compound, Dontogan in Baguio City.

He encouraged all researchers in the region to package and submit quality project proposals to BAR across commodities, and for them to develop more and more technologies and products from the agriculture sector.

The IDG program of BAR aims to strengthen the institutional capacities of R&D and extension network members, so they can be more responsive to the delivery of services and technological interventions in the agri-fishery sector. **CONRAD M. CARINO**

Photo shows the Research and Development Multi-purpose Facility that will benefit the agriculture sector of the Cordillera Region. Inset shows Bureau of Agricultural Research Director Nicomedes Eleazar, urging researchers from the region to submit project proposals to them and develop technologies and products from the agriculture sector. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Manila Standard

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Swine flu update: NAIA seizes 216 kilos of processed meat

By Joel E. Zurbano and Vito Barcelo

GOVERNMENT agents confiscated more than 216 kilos of pork, beef and processed meat at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport carried by passengers who arrived from countries affected by African swine fever.

Customs agents and personnel of the Veterinary Quarantine confiscated a total of 216.8 kilos of check-in meat from China, Hong Kong and Japan from air travelers arriving at NAIA Terminals 1, 2 and 3.

Quarantine chief Enrico Miguel Capulong said the seized items include 55.5 kilos of poultry and poultry products and 75 kilos of pork and processed pork products from Chinese passengers, 69.3 kilos of beef and beef products from China and Japan, and 17 kilos of goat meat and 40 pieces of fresh eggs, also from China.

The seized meat and products were all concealed in their check-in luggage, but were seen when they went through X-ray machines.

Capulong said the seized meat and products were destroyed through burning "so that the virus or bacteria may not be spread."

Officials of the Bureau of Customs,

Next page

Swine flu...

From A1

Bureau of Animal Industry and members of the National African Swine Fever Task Force recently met to discuss the possible entry of pork and other meat products from AFS-affected countries, namely—China, Belgium, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia and Ukraine.

In September and October last year, cases of pork contamination were recorded in Korea and Japan through dumplings and hotdogs products.

According to the BAI, an outbreak of the virus can affect the 40 million plus live hogs or pigs in the Philippines and can destroy the P2-billion swine industry.

To safeguard against the epidemic, BAI personnel and Port of NAIA officials initiated more briefings and information dissemination to Customs NAIA frontliners of Terminals 1, 2 and 3 to strengthen the vigilance against ASF.

NAIA Customs collector Carmelita Talusan said they will coordinate closely with regulating agencies to secure the borders against entry and exit of prohibited, regulated goods to protect the swine industry.

"Safe meat products accompanied by import permits or the sanitary and phyto-sanitary import clearance are the ones qualified for release in ports," she said.

In Davao, Customs agents also confiscated various agricultural and meat products from passengers arriving at the Davao International Airport.

Davao Port district collector Romalino Valdez said the items confiscated include oranges, chili, spring onions, onions, ponkan, parsley, and meat—frozen pecking duck, chicken, pork, beef and processed meat. These were brought from China, Hong Kong, United States, Canada, China, Australia and Singapore.

The meat products from countries affected by the ASF were confiscated for proper disposal.

Valdez warned arriving passengers and importers to comply with the Customs laws and regulations by obtaining clearance and proper documentation for their goods to ensure the safety and welfare of the general public.

Manila Standard

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: B4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Red tide warning up in East Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources imposed a shellfish ban on two Eastern Visayas bays due to the recurrence of red tide phenomenon.

On Thursday, BFAR found the red tide algal bloom in Cancabato Bay in this city after a week-long laboratory analysis. Red tide phenomenon has been up in Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar since October 2018, according to a local advisory of the fisheries bureau.

"Pollution and high salinity triggered red tide recurrence in Cancabato Bay, but we expect the organisms will be flushed out soon due to strong current in the area," BFAR Regional Director Juan Albaladejo said in a mobile phone interview.

This is the third red tide recurrence after Super Typhoon "Yolanda" struck in Cancabato. The first only lasted three days and the second lasted three weeks, Albaladejo said.

"Usually, it is taking so long for Matarinao Bay because the area is enclosed. The longest recorded was in 2010 where it extended for a year. We need strong continuous rains and sustained wave action to flush out the red tide organism," he added.

The presence of red tide in both meat and water calls for prohibition of gathering, trading and consumption of shellfish from identified areas over the possibility of shellfish poisoning. The bay, however, has a good flushing action due to the strong current in the San Juanico Strait. **PNA**

Manila Standard

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

EDITORIAL

A new rice regime

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte is expected to sign into law the Rice Tariffication bill soon. This will usher in a new market regime and limit the government's role in procuring the commodity.

The bill essentially allows legitimate rice traders to import the commodity without permit from the National Food Authority, provided they secure a sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance from the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Plant Industry and pay the appropriate tariff to the Bureau of Customs.

The National Economic and Development Authority, this early, is upbeat about the bill set to be transmitted to Malacañang for President Duterte's signature. Economic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia says the bill will make rice affordable and accessible to Filipinos. Rice supply will also no longer be the sole responsibility of the NFA.

The measure amends the two-decade-old Republic Act No. 8178, or the Agricultural Tariffication Act of 1996, and replaces the quantitative restrictions on rice imports with tariff.

The NFA will now focus on ensuring sufficient buffer stocks to address emergency situations. While there is a need to periodically replenish the buffer stocks, NFA can still sell cheap rice but to specific markets, like those in far-flung areas that some private traders may not find profitable to serve.

The bill aims to liberalize rice imports to foster competition in the domestic market and eventually bring down prices. Lowering rice prices, in turn, will reduce the country's inflation rate after surging to a nine-year high of 6.7 percent in September and October.

The government, meanwhile, must ensure that the tariff or Customs collections from the rice imports of the private traders are well spent to alleviate the plight of farmers and raise their productivity.

The Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund from the tariff revenues proposed under the bill should assist the farmers, especially in the procurement of farm machinery, and provide the money for rice seed development, expanded credit and crop diversification.

The government should also set rice self-sufficiency as a goal. Food security is a priority and the Philippines cannot be importing rice indefinitely.

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Supermarkets sell low-priced sugar

BIG supermarket chains are leading the way in offering affordable sugar to consumers.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI yesterday said supermarkets run by SM and Robinsons are offering sugar within the yet to be approved suggested retail prices (SRP) proposed by the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

The SRP for refined sugar is P50 per kilo while P45 per kilo for brown sugar, as submitted for consideration by SRA to the DTI and the Department of Agriculture.

For retailers selling above these prices, the SRA will coordinate with the retailers to get information on their sources to determine the reason behind the high prices.

According to the SRA, as of January 5, the market price in Metro Manila of refined sugar is at a low of P50 per kilo and a high of P65 per kilo while the price of washed sugar is at a low of P44 per kilo and a high of P55 per kilo.

DTI meanwhile noted the benefit of sourcing directly from producers of agricultural products, citing the case of Commonwealth Market where prices of fresh produce have dipped to their most reasonable levels and where manufactured basic necessities and prime commodities are sold within suggested retail prices (SRPs) or even lower.

Cheaper. Refined sugar is sold at P55 per kilo and washed sugar at P55 per kilo in some supermarkets of SM and Robindons.

In its monitoring, the DTI said the decline in the prices of agricultural products such as pork, vegetables, and fish ranges from P5 to P50 kilogram.

Chicken, in particular, is sold at P100 per kilo which is P45 lower than the Jan. 9, 2019 published prevailing prices of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

In supermarkets, chicken is priced even lower at P90 to P99 per kilo, varying whether or not it is branded.

The Commonwealth Market sources directly from producers thus its very reasonable prices for both end-users and retailers.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A1 & A2

PART 1 of 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PIDS study: Mediocre farm performance to continue after tariffication

By Cai U. Ordinario
@caiordinario

THE agriculture sector will continue to have difficulties contributing to the expansion of the country's economy even after the rice import caps have been converted into tariffs, according to a study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).

In a study, titled "Scenarios for the Philippine Agri-Food System with and without Tariffication: Application of a CGE model with Endogenous Area Allocation," PIDS Senior Research Fellow Roehlano M. Briones used a new Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model for his estimates.

"The baseline scenario finds that growth patterns prevailing since the 2010s can be sustained within the SDG [Sustainable Development Goals] period assuming productivity trends in the industry and service sectors continue," the study read.

"Unfortunately, the scenario also implies that the mediocre growth performance of agriculture will likewise be sustained into the foreseeable future," it added.

Sans the conversion of the quantitative restriction (QR) on rice, Briones said GDP growth would average 6.12 percent. However, with tariffication, average GDP will improve by 0.05 percentage point and reach 6.17 percent between 2016 and 2030.

"Tariffication is disadvantageous to the palay sector across various measures, namely, area harvested, yield and production. Even agriculture as a whole is adversely affected, experiencing a further growth slowdown," Briones said.

"Overall growth of GDP, as well as household per capita expenditure, rises with greater openness to rice imports. Consistent with expectation, imports are larger with tariffication, leading to more

See "PIDS," A2

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PART 2 of 2

PIDS. . .

CONTINUED FROM A1

affordable consumer price of rice, and therefore greater rice demand," he added.

Briones used the new CGE model to estimate GDP growth, wages, crop area and crop yield, output and exports of agri-food sectors. The baseline scenario was estimated without rice tariffication and the other estimate is with rice tariffication.

Based on his estimates under the baseline scenario, growth will be fueled by the industry sector, which may expand anywhere between 6.5 and 7.5 percent annually, or an average of 7.07 percent in the 2016 to 2030 period.

Services is expected to take a backseat and grow at an average of 6.16 percent between 2016 and 2030. The agriculture sector, Briones said, is the "laggard basic sector," as it would expand by only 2-3 percent annually, or an average of 2.44 percent during the period.

In the tariffication scenario, the industry sector will contract by 0.2 percentage point, placing average growth to 7.05 percent in the 2016 to 2030 period.

Agriculture sector growth is also expected to take a hit as it could see a contraction of 1.24 percentage points. This will bring down agriculture growth to an average of 1.2 percent during the period.

However, the services sector could grow slightly faster by 0.23 percentage point, with expansion averaging around 6.29 percent between 2016 and 2030.

"The reason is likely due to higher purchasing power of households as rice gets cheaper due to lower import barriers," Briones said.

Baseline scenario

IN the baseline scenario, wages in the industry and services sectors would increase by 2.93 percent by 2029, from 1.94 percent in 2016.

Briones noted that the industry-service wage is 1.94 times higher than agricultural wage. Agriculture wages would rise by 1.52 percent by 2029, from 1 percent in 2016.

The estimates made by Briones showed that post-tarrification, wages in the industry and services sectors will grow faster than the baseline scenario by 1.8 percent.

However, he said the reverse trend occurs for agriculture wage under tariffication, as this could decline by 16.5 percent compared with the baseline.

"Given only slight improvement in output compared to a large deterioration in agricultural wage, it is not clear that household welfare has improved," Briones said.

Rice tariffication, according to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia, will enable consumers to source affordable rice from various sources and not just from the National Food Authority (NFA).

The rice tariffication bill amends the two-decade-old Republic Act 8178, otherwise known as the Agricultural Tariffication Act of 1996, and replaces the quantitative restriction on rice imports with tariff.

The bill, which was ratified by both chambers of Congress on November 28, is set to be transmitted to Malacañang for the President's signature.

Under the new rice importation regime, legitimate rice traders can now import rice sans NFA permits, provided they secure a sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance from the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Plant Industry and pay the appropriate tariff to the Bureau of Customs.

The proposed law also provides for the establishment of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund consisting of tariff revenues. A portion of the rice tariff revenues in excess of P10 billion will be used to provide direct financial assistance to rice farmers.

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 8

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Customs tightens meat watch

By Anthony Ching

A total of 115 kgs of meat and poultry products without sanitary & phytosanitary clearance have been seized by the Bureau of Customs-NAIA since Tuesday as it intensified its campaign against the possible entry of the African Swine Fever virus in the country.

The seized goods, brought in by both local and foreign passengers from various flights, have been turned over to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) Quarantine Division for proper disposal.

Customs-NAIA officials said they are closely coordinating with the BAI to safeguard aganst the epidemic which has affected 13 countries (China, Belgium, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia and Ukraine, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Moldova, South Africa and Zambia).

Meanwhile, a partnership meeting between the Customs -NAIA and DHL Express was held Wednesday, aimed at strengthening border security, increasing revenue collection and improving the systems of the Port for faster Customs clearance.

Customs NAIA District Collector Mimel Talusan said top DHL Express officials shared projects and innovations to assist the NAIA Customs in their reforms and in speeding-up customs clearance.

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 1 & 6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Collared over corals

While the superhero movie "Aquaman" is making waves in the box office with its spectacular underwater special effects and marine villains driving its ticket sales worldwide, a sinister trader in the Philippines is also making a killing from selling fascinating mementos coming from the DC Comics character's own water kingdom.

The house of Davy Ang in Tambo, Parañaque City is a

Turn to page 6

Collared over corals

From page 1

virtual counterpart of Aquaman's ocean realm with huge water tanks filled with live coral, starfish, seashells and other rare oceanic species harvested off the coast of Quezon and Bohol provinces. Ang is not an avid collector of the aquatic creatures, but rather he sells them to local and overseas buyers which is illegal.

Two months ago, no one, not even the police, knew about Ang's business. But someone tipped the authorities about it. In the last few weeks, agents from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) did a clandestine surveillance of Ang before setting up an entrapment.

During the buy-bust operation on Wednesday, 9 January, NBI, DENR and BFAR agents raided the compound where Ang's house is located and discovered the suspect's secret coral store. He was taken into NBI custody and is now facing charges of violations of Republic Acts 10654 and 8550 or the Philippine Fisheries Code.

Under the law, persons and corporations are banned from gathering, possessing, transporting, selling and exporting any corals, except for scientific purposes. BFAR took custody of Ang's aquatic possessions for inventory and eventual return to the sea.

As for the suspect, he may have his own aquarium, once convicted, with him inside it as an inmate.

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 7

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

'Red tide' alert up

By Kuhlin Ceslie Gacula

The Bureau of Fish and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) on Thursday issued a "red tide" warning on shellfishes after toxic organisms in the seawaters of Cancabato Bay in Tacloban were reported recently.

The BFAR said seawater samples collected were positive for paralytic food poisoning causing organisms.

"Based on laboratory examination conducted by the BFAR 8-Regional Marine Biotoxin Laboratory in Tacloban, seawater samples collected along Cancabato Bay in Tacloban City are positive for Pyrodinium bahamense," an advisory from BFAR stated.

Shellfishes from the area were confirmed contaminated by the toxic substance.

"To safeguard human lives while waiting for the result of shellfish samples sent to the Central Marine Biotoxin Laboratory in Manila, we are issuing this warning as a precautionary to the public to refrain from gathering, selling and eating all types of shellfish," the BFAR said.

Acetes – a small shrimp genus locally known as "*alamang* or *hipon*" from Concabato – is highly advised to be taken off the table.

The BFAR also clarified that fish, crab and shrimp can be consumed but all entrails must be removed before eating.

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 10

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Agri product prices most reasonable

The price of agricultural products sold in markets around Metro Manila were declared at its most reasonable on Thursday by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) announced on Thursday.

In addition, manufactured basic necessities and prime commodities were also declared closest or even lower than the suggested retail price (SRP), the trade agency said.

The decline in products such as pork, vegetables and fish in particular ranged from P5 to P50. Chicken is sold at P100 per kilo, lower by about P45 than the Philippine Statistics Agency's published prevailing prices on 9 January.

FARM products were sold at reasonable prices around Metro Manila. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Chicken is sold at lower prices in supermarkets. At Robinson's Supermarket, SM Supermarket and Puregold, unbranded and branded chicken is sold for a price range of P90 and P99 per kilo.

"The DTI is very pleased to see that prices of agricultural products are now at its most reasonable level where consumers are assured to get their money, and fair return of investment for the retailers," DTI Consumer Protection Group Undersecretary Ruth Castelo said.

According to the DTI, the Commonwealth market in particular sources directly from producers, hence its more reasonable price for consumers.

"Since Commonwealth Market removed the middle players from the supply chain, they are able to sell agricultural products at very low prices. Those retailers who do not have direct link to producers may source their products from Commonwealth market and sell these at the SRP level. This way, they sell at affordable prices to consumers while gaining reasonable profit," Castelo added.

SRP for sugar was down to P50 per kilo for refined sugar and P45 per kilo for brown sugar, as set by the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

"The DTI is pleased to see some major supermarkets such as Robinsons and SM already selling sugar at their set SRPs. But for those selling above these prices, the SRA will coordinate with the retailers to get information on their sources to determine the reason behind the high prices," the trade agency said. **AJ Bajo**

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

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PRESYO NG AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS BUMABA NA—DTI

NALAMAN ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) sa kanilang pagmo-monitor sa Commonwealth Market at iba't ibang supermarkets sa Quezon City, na bumaba na ng husto ang agricultural products sa resonableng antas habang ang manufactured basic necessities at pangunahing bilihin ay nakapako na sa Suggested Retail Prices (SRPs) o mas mababa.

Ang pagbagsak ng presyo ng produktong agrikultura tulad ng baboy, gulay, at isda ay nasa P5 hanggang P50. Ang manok na lamang ay ibinebenta sa P100 bawat kilo na P45 o mas mababa sa naitala noong Enero 9, 2019 ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Sa mga supermarket, ang manok ay nasa presyo ng P90 hanggang P99 bawat kilo, depende kung anong brand ng manok.

"The DTI is very pleased to see that prices of agricultural products are now at its most reasonable level where consumers are assured to get value for their money, and fair return of investment for the retailers," sabi ni DTI Consumer Protection Group (CPG) Undersecretary Ruth B. Castelo.

Dumidirekta ang Commonwealth Market ng kanilang pinagkukunan sa prodyuser kaya mababa ang presyo nila. Hinihimok ng DTI ang konsyumer na bumili ng agricultural products sa naturang bilihan. Sa kabilang banda, ang mga retailer ay puwedeng makinabang sa mababang presyo. Paliwanag ni Undersecretary Castelo, "Since Commonwealth Market removed the middle players from the supply chain, they are able to sell agricultural products at very low prices. Those retailers who do not have direct link to producers may source their products from Commonwealth Market and sell these at the SRP level. In this way, they sell at affordable prices to consumers while gaining reasonable profit."

Sa asukal naman, inanunsiyo ng Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) na ang kanilang panukalang SRP para sa puting asukal ay refined P50 bawat kilo habang P45 bawat kilo para sa brown sugar.

Natutuwa ang DTI na makita sa mga major supermarket tulad ng Robinsons at SM na nagbebenta ng asukal sa kanilang naka-set na SRPs. Pero para sa mga nagbebenta ng higit sa presyong ito ang SRA ay makikipagugnayan sa mga retailer para makakuha ng impormasyon sa kanilang sources para malaman ang rason ng mataas na presyo.

Nananawagan ang DTI sa mga konsyumer na ireport ang anumang may kaugnayan sa presyo at supply sa 1-384 (1-DTI) Consumer Care Hotline orConsumerCare@dti.gov.ph email.

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

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

STOCK NG NFA RICE SA SOCCSKSARGEN, ARMM SAPAT NA

GENERAL SANTOS CITY – Nakapag-deliver ng dagdag na 160,000 na sako ng imported ang National Food Authority (NFA) para madugtungan ang naka-standby na stocks sa apat na probinsiya sa Region 12 o ang Soccsksargen at ang Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Sinabi ni Dionisio Hectin Jr., NFA provincial manager ng siyudad at ng Sarangani, na ang dagdag na stocks ay para mapanatili ang presensiya ng rice sa iba't ibang pamilihan sa lugar.

Sinabi niya na ang nadeliver na stock ng bigas, na umaabot sa total na 8,000 metriko tonelada, ay nakalaan para sa mga probinsiya ng South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato at Maguindanao.

Makakukuha ang South Cotabato, Maguindanao at Sultan Kudarat ng 30,000 sako bawat isa habang ang North Cotabato ay makatatanggap ng 40,000 sako, sabi niya.

Sinabi ni Hectin na ang natitirang 30,000 ay itatago muna ng siyudad pero naka-standby para sa Soccsksargen at ARMM.

"The unloading of the stocks are ongoing. Once completed, these will be delivered to the concerned NFA provincial offices," pahayag niya sa isang panayam.

Sinabi ng opisyal na ang cargo vessel na nagdala ng stocks ng bigas ay dumating sa Makar Port noong Disyembre 30 pero ang pag-dock at pagdiskarga na naantala dahil sa kakulangan ng permit mula sa Bureau of Customs.

Sinabi niya na nangangailangan ang Philippine Ports Authority ng pag-isyu ng tamang permit bago mabigyan ang barko ng pagpaparadahan sa pier.

Sinabi pa ni Hectin na inaasahan nila ang delivery ng dagdag na stock ng bigas para sa siyudad at sa Sarangani Province sa susunod na rice shipment.

Siniguro niya na ang lugar ay may sapat na stock ng bigas hanggang sa susunod na shipment, na inaayos ng NFA central office.

Sinabi ng opisyal na ang kanilang kasalukuyang imbentaryo ay umaabot sa 53,000 sako, na puwedeng tumagal ng dalawang buwan base sa pangangailangan ng lugar.

Dagdag pa ni Hectin na kasalukuyan nilang pinanatili ang presensiya ng NFA rice sa merkadong lokal na may participation rate ng 7 porsiyento.

PNA

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

'Inflation for poorest households slows in November'

By CZERIZA VALENCIA

Prices of consumer goods rose at a slower pace for the poorest households in the country because of slower increases in the prices of food and utilities, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported yesterday.

The country's year-on-year inflation for the bottom 30 percent income households slowed down to 8.2 percent in November from 9.5 percent in September and October.

This tracks the deceleration of headline inflation to six percent in November from a peak of 6.7 percent in September and October.

In November, slowdowns in the annual mark-ups were seen in the indices of food, beverages and tobacco as well as fuel, light and water (FLW).

Growth in the food index at the national level eased to 8.3 percent in November 2018 for the income segment. This compares with 9.8 percent in October.

Specifically, slower growth was seen in the following food groups in November: rice, corn, fish, fruits and vegetables, meat and miscellaneous foods.

In the National Capital Region, inflation for the bottom income households continued to slow down to 6.2 percent in November from 6.9 in October as lower increases were seen in the heavily weighted food, beverages and tobacco index.

Specifically, slower price increases were seen for rice, dairy products, meat and miscellaneous foodstuff.

Inflation for the poorest households outside of the metro likewise slowed down to 8.3 percent in November from 9.5 percent in October as slower price increases were seen in food and utilities.

Specifically, slower increases were seen in the prices of the following food groups: rice, corn, fish, fruits and vegetables, meat and miscellaneous foodstuff.

Across the regions, Mimaropa registered the highest inflation for bottom 30 percent income households in November while the lowest headline rate of 4.4 percent was seen in the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao.

The Manila Times

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: B3

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Victorias Milling profit hits P81M in Sept-Nov

VICTORIAS Milling Co. Inc.'s net income surged by 76 percent to P81.08 million in the quarter ending November 2018 from P46.13 million in the same period last year on the back of increased profit from its operations.

In a financial report to the Philippine Stock Exchange, the listed sugar manufacturer said that profit more than doubled to P81.05 million in September-November from P38.89 million a year ago.

But revenues dipped by 20 percent to P1.30 billion in the period from P1.84 billion in 2017 on account of a 37-percent drop in sales of goods.

Service revenues soared by 273 percent to P171.09 million from last year's P45.84 million.

Goods sold and services rendered slid by 35 percent to P1.09 billion from P1.67 billion.

The company's total sugar inventory amounted to P895.30 million, the bulk of which was refined sugar valued at P690.31 million.

Its alcohol, ethanol and molasses inventory reached P18.98 million, P37.63 million and P46.24 million, respectively.

"As of Nov. 30, 2018, short-term borrowings consist of [an] unsecured loan facility availed from a bank for the group's working capital requirements," the firm said.

Its P450-million short-term borrowings have fixed interest rates between 6 percent and 6.25 percent, and are all payable over an average term of 90 days in lump sum.

The firm's long-term borrowings, which amounted to P1.13 billion, were made up of an unsecured loan facility to finance its parent company's power generation project.

Total assets, liabilities and equity stood at P10.02 billion, P3.57 billion and P6.45 billion respectively. **TYRONE JASPER C. PIAD**

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: A1 & A8

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Unfazed, exporters see 6% rebound from sluggish '18 growth

By Elijah Felice E. Rosales
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EXPORTERS are expecting to grow revenue to as high as 6 percent this year, as they look to rebound from a sluggish performance last year.

Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. (Philexport) President Sergio R. Ortiz-Luis Jr. told the BusinessMirror exporters are looking to rebound this year and expand revenue by 6 percent to as high as 9 percent. He argued this is highly plausible, given that exporters have already factored in the additional costs brought about by new taxes, inflation and the international trade conflict.

"We are quite certain that merchandise exports will be positive this 2019," Ortiz-Luis said.

"It will be at least 6 percent of growth to maybe a high target of 9 percent. We see no reason it will not happen, considering we have already factored the problems we have with the major markets, the trade war, domestic issues and the bad [performance] of our agriculture sector," he explained further.

"We see no reason it will not happen, considering we have already factored the problems we have with the major markets, the trade war, domestic issues and the bad [performance] of our agriculture sector."— Ortiz-Luis

Full-year export figures have yet to be released, but latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed exports from January to November 2018 slowed 0.9 percent to $62.76 billion, from $63.32 billion during the same period in 2017.

Electronic products remain to be the sector's strongest link.

See "Exporters," A8

Exporters. . .

Continued from A1

It expanded 4.6 percent to $34.87 billion, from $33.34 billion during the same period in 2017. Ortiz-Luis said the sector will continue to rely heavily on electronic exports this year in its bid to recover.

"As usual, we are still banking on electronics having the biggest [receipts]. We are hoping that they will resolve the issue on mining [because] we really feel that we should be gaining a lot of ground in the mining sector if issues there are resolved," he argued.

Nonetheless, the challenges brought about by the trade war between the United States and China linger, as well as global crude prices that Ortiz-Luis expects to be unstable given the uncertainty on international trade.

"What we cannot really see is the trade war and the fuel [prices globally, but] it seems it will stabilize soon. Yet, those are the only that are somewhat iffy to us, [but] other than that, we should have a good year," the Philexport chief said.

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Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 12/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

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NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION: QUEZON CITY

Meat, vegetable prices in QC lower than in other parts of Metro Manila

PRICES OF agricultural products at the Commonwealth Market and supermarkets in Quezon City are lower by as much as P50 compared to the average selling prices in other parts of Metro Manila, based on the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) monitoring. In a statement, DTI said its latest market price monitoring activity, conducted Thursday at the Commonwealth Market, found that prices of pork, vegetables, and fish products were lower by P5 to P50 compared to the Jan. 8 prevailing prices of these products in the National Capital Region (NCR). — **Janina C. Lim**

>> See full story on *https://goo.gl/5C4rgy*

BusinessWorld
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Date: JANUARY 11, 2016 Page: 4/S1

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Victorias profit rises 74% in Q1

VICTORIAS Milling Company, Inc. (VMC) grew its attributable profit by 74% in its first quarter ending November 2018, driven by higher sugar prices even as volumes of sugar sold declined.

In a regulatory filing, VMC said net income attributable to the parent reached P81.53 million from September to November 2018, versus P46.75 million posted in the same period a year ago. The company's fiscal year starts in September.

"This was mainly due to the increase in gross profit from high sugar prices during the quarter and the focus on selling products which have higher profit margin as compared to last year," the company said.

Prices of sugar went up by a fifth or 20%, helping VMC offset the decline in volumes sold, which otherwise led to a 30% drop in revenues to P1.3 billion.

"The decline in revenue... was only due to change in the product mix as less refined sugar volume were sold but tolling volume tripled compared to the same period last year," it said.

The lower revenues can also be attributed to the 66% decrease in alcohol revenues for the period.

Meanwhile, VMC benefited from the start of its ethanol operations, accounting for six percent of total revenues during the quarter.

VMC milled 0.9 million tons of cane for the first quarter of crop year 2018 to 2019, flat from the same period a year ago. About 30% of the canes came from district areas, while the rest were evenly taken from North, South, and Central Negros.

Raw sugar recovery dipped to 1.81 50-kilogram bag (LKG) per ton came milled, from 1.82 LKG in the same period last year. Total raw sugar production accordingly slumped by 5% to 1.6 million LKG.

Molasses production was steady at 39,000 metric tons, while refined sugar production fell to 1.2 million LKG.

The company noted that it secured a short-term loan worth P450 million during the quarter to finance its working capital requirements. It expects to repay the loan within the next quarter. Long-term debt meanwhile went down to P1.125 billion by end-November, after VMC paid quarterly amortization amounting to P375 million.

Incorporated in 1919, VMC's core business is to engage in integrated raw and refined sugar manufacturing, with sugar plant facilities located in Victorias City, Negros Occidental. The company has also diversified to ethanol and potable alcohol production.

Its operating subsidiaries include Victorias Foods Corporation; Victorias Agricultural Land Corporation; Canetown Development Corporation; Victorias Green Energy Corp. and Victorias Golf and Country Club, Inc.

VMC's market capitalization stood at P6.39 billion, based on its share price of P2.33 each last Jan. 2. — **Arra B. Francia**

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 7

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Agri products seized in Davao

By Raymart T. Lolo

Amid concerns about African Swine Fever (ASF), various agricultural products brought by passengers coming from banned and "high-risk" countries were confiscated by the Bureau of Customs (BoC) recently at the Davao International Airport.

In a bid to prevent the entry of the highly-contagious hog disease which could greatly affect the Philippine swine industry, government is implementing strict precautionary measures including confiscation of products brought from other countries.

According to the Bureau of Customs, items seized include oranges, chili, spring onions, onions, ponkan and parsley; meat products such as frozen pecking duck, chicken, pork, beef and processed meat brought from China, Hong Kong, United States, Canada, Australia and Singapore.

"Despite the passengers' failure to declare their parcels, Customs agents were able to identify the mis-declared items through x-ray," the BoC stated.

The confiscated items were then referred to the officers of the Bureau of Quarantine for inspection.

Meanwhile, meat products from countries affected by the ASF were also confiscated for proper disposal.

"The rest of the agricultural products did not have proper Sanitary & Phytosanitary Import Clearance as proof that the confiscated items do not carry diseases that can harm the public," the report stated.

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: JANUARY 11, 2019 Page: 9

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

13 Pinoy firms join WFFS 2018

The US market is a lucrative export market for the Philippines since it has many Filipinos who are looking for products from their home country

Thirteen Philippine food companies are set to exhibit this week at the 44th Winter Fancy Food Show (WFFS) at the Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco in the United States from 13 to 15 January this year.

Specialty food" refers to products of the highest grade, style or quality, derived from their uniqueness, origin, processing method and design.

Led by the Department of Trade and Industry, through the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (DTI-CITEM), the Philippine participation will exhibit a range of healthy, organic and premium food products.

"The FoodPhilippines pavilion in San Francisco will have a grand showcase of the Philippines' specialty food products targeted for export in the North American region as well as other neighboring regions," said DTI-CITEM Executive Director Pauline Suaco-Juan.

The WFFS is the US West Coast's largest specialty food and beverage event with an estimated 20,000 annual visitors and 1,500 exhibitors from across the US and 28 other countries.

"Specialty food" refers to products of the highest grade, style or quality, derived from their uniqueness, origin, processing method and design.

Exhibiting in WFFS for the first time are CJ Uniworld Corp. with its variety of banana chips; Filipinas Oro de Cacao

A VARIETY of coconut products from Grand Asia Integrated Natural Coco Products Corp. formed part of the food exhibition.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

market is a lucrative export market for the Philippines since it "has many Filipinos who are looking for products from their home country."

See also said Americans have been more health-conscious over the years with their fast-paced lifestyle which opens up a big opportunity for their fun and nutritious with its single-origin Auro Chocolate from Davao; Grand Asia Integrated Natural Coco Products Corporation with its processed coconut products under Gaincoco; Innovative Packaging Industry Corp. with its Oh So Healthy! fruit crisps.

The Philippine companies returning to the WFFS include Bethany Sales, Inc.; Century Pacific Food, Inc./Century Pacific North America; Islamic Da'Wah Council of the Philippines, Inc.; Magicmelt Foods, Inc., Pasciolco Agri Ventures; Prime Fruits International, Inc.; Profood International Corporation; SL Agritech Corporation and San Miguel Corporation.

"Backed with these firms, we are confident that this Philippine delegation will significantly boost the government's high-impact export strategy to widen our export reach in Western countries," said Suaco-Juan.

According to Almay See, general manager at Innovative Packaging Industry Corp., the US line of new guilt-free snacking treats made from 100 percent real fruits.

For this participation, Innovative Packaging Industry Corp. will be launching two new flavors, on their snack line to showcase in WFFS 2019. "We are excited to showcase our two new products in San Francisco along with our three other flavors, namely: Guava Purple Yam Banana, Mango Sweet Potato Banana, Purple Yam Banana Coconut," said See.

As of August 2018, the United States is the country's second largest export destination next to China, followed by Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority.

In 2017, the total food and agricultural exports to the US totaled $1.2 billion, according to the office of the United States Trade Representative.

Leading categories include tropical oils ($555 million), processed fruits and vegetables ($199 million), tree nuts ($109 million), raw beet and cane sugar ($105 million), and fruit and vegetable juices ($79 million).

The participation under FoodPhilippines is led by DTI-CITEM as part of the government's unified effort to promote the Philippines as a source of quality food products in the global market.

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: JANUARY 11 2019 Page: A6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Soybeans down; wheat, corn fall

SINGAPORE- Chicago soybean futures slid on Thursday, giving up some of last session's gains, although losses were limited on optimism the United States and China may be inching toward a trade deal, soothing fears of an all-out trade war.

Wheat eased after two sessions of gains while corn edged lower after gaining around half a percent on Wednesday.

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board Of Trade gave up 0.2 percent to trade at $9.22 a bushel, having firmed 0.6 percent on Wednesday.

Wheat dipped 0.1 percent to $5.19-3/4 a bushel, having closed up 0.4 percent on Wednesday, and corn slipped 0.2 percent to $3.81-1/4 a bushel, having gained 0.5 percent in the previous session.

"Beans are under a bit of pressure after gaining ground in the last session on hopes of China making further purchases," said Phin Ziebell, agribusiness economist at National Australia Bank.

"The market is keen to see Chinese purchases actually take place before any further gains."

China's commerce ministry said on Thursday trade talks with the United States this week were extensive and detailed, and established a foundation for the resolution of each other's concerns.

The three-day talks in Beijing that wrapped up on Wednesday were the first face-to-face negotiations since US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping met in Buenos Aires in December and agreed a 90-day truce in a trade war that has disrupted the flow of hundreds of billions of dollars of goods. -***Reuters***