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No derailment in implementing rice tariff — DA

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol has refuted a lawmaker’s claims that the Department of Agriculture is derailing the implementation of the rice tariffication law.

Piñol said there is no truth to the allegation of Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian that the DA is delaying the implementation of Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Import Liberalization Act recently signed by President Duterte.

“Contrary to the claim of Sen. Gatchalian, the DA is in fact facilitating the conduct of nationwide information campaign and consultations to explain to the rice industry stakeholders what the law is all about,” Piñol said.

This as Gatchalian warned Piñol not to delay the implementation of the law, which he had opposed when it was being deliberated in Congress.

“Secretary Piñol, please cooperate fully in implementing the law. He must work for the success of the law even if he’s against it,” Gatchalian said.

In defense, the agri chief said nationwide information campaign and consultations are already set for the whole week to address the fears and concerns of the rice industry stakeholders.

The consultations are needed in the formulation of the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) which are requirements before the law could be effective.

“How could the law be implemented without an IRR? Doing that would not only create chaos but also open us to lawsuits. This was precisely the reason why DA had to hastily organize the nationwide consultations because we do not like to run afoul with the law,” Piñol said.

“It has to be implemented effectively and we in government must ensure that there would be no problems encountered in its implementation,” he added.

The economic managers have set March 5 as the deadline for issuing the IRR, the same day the law takes effect.

However, the law actually provides for a maximum of 45 days after the law’s effectiveness or up to April 19 to complete the IRR.

Gatchalian already warned that he would scrutinize the IRR to be issued to make sure that it remains faithful to the intent of the law in ensuring stable rice supply and lower prices while supporting the local farmers as well as enhancing the country’s competitiveness in producing the staple.
BusinessMirror
A broader look at urban business

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Rice price crisis could hit PHL despite rollout of rice trade lib law

BY CAI U. ORDINARIO (@caioordinario)
& JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS (@jearcalas)

The implementation of the rice trade liberalization law will not necessarily make imports cheaper, as the projected hike in the demand for the staple could make it more expensive and lead to another price crisis, according to a local agronomist.

The Philippines cannot simply depend on imports, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said, as thinning rice supply will not be enough to meet the requirements of the world’s expanding population.

Additional pressure on thinning rice supply, University of the Philippines Los Baños Agriculture Economist Teodoro Mendoza said, could jack up international and domestic prices as the Philippines is one of the biggest rice importers.

Higher demand for rice in countries like Africa, India and China could further exert pressure on international prices and lead to volatility, Mendoza said.

“It has already happened in 2008 when we imported 2.5 million metric tons [MMT]. We were the world’s largest rice importer at that time. We also triggered the increase in rice prices which reached $1,000 per metric ton [MT],” he said.

“At that time, our exchange rate was at 47 to the dollar, but now, if rice prices will increase to $1,000 per MT, rice prices, including transportation costs, could reach about $65 per kilogram,” Mendoza added.

IBON Foundation Executive Director Sonny Africa told the BUSINESSMIRROR that, while it is hard to say that rice price crises could ensue after the law becomes effective, it could lead to supply volatility.

“Consumers are now even more vulnerable to price and supply shocks from foreign-exchange movements, unilateral decisions of a handful of major rice exporters, competition in tight global rice markets, and even rice trader exploitation,” Africa said.

Higher MAV

MENDOZA said the draft implementing rules and regulation (IRR) released by the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) on Tuesday, which indicated a possible increase in the minimum access volume (MAV), could be a sign that the government is already anticipating an increase in rice prices.

The draft IRR stated that the Neda, upon the recommendation of the National Food Authority Council (NFAC), could adjust the MAV. Under the law, the country’s MAV would return to its 2012 levels at 350,000 MT once the law.

Rice trade...
CONTINUED FROM A1

becomes effective. Currently, Mendoza noted that the MAV is at 850,000 MT. Adjusting the MAV means cheaper rice for consumers, which is crucial especially during the lean months of July and August.

“They are already anticipating that their base computation of $400 per ton would increase. It has already increased to $480 but by July or August, it could further increase to $700 per ton. If you will impose a 35-percent tariff, that will make rice more expensive,” Mendoza explained to the BUSINESSMIRROR.

“But more than that, if we experience a severe El Niño, farmers will not be able to plant in rain-fed areas and even irrigated areas because there could be a water shortage. Water in Metro Manila will be prioritized so the Angat Dam cannot release water for farms; the same thing will happen to the Pantabangan Dam in Pampanga,” he added.

Mendoza said the law will eventually discourage farmers from planting rice as prices will go down. He noted that when the President signed the law, the prices of rice already have fallen to around P15 to P17 per kilogram, from P20 per kg.

Once implemented, he said the law will displace some 10 million Filipinos working as farmers and farm hands and other workers in allied industries. This, Mendoza said, could cut rice self-sufficiency level to 70 percent from the current 93 percent.

A 70-percent sufficiency level, he said, translates to 3.5 MMT of rice imports to meet the country’s demand for rice. Currently, he said, rice consumption per capita stands at 114 kg.

Appeal to farmers

DURING the Northern Luzon cluster public consultation on the IRR of the Republic Act 11203 on February 26, Piñol appealed to farmers to not abandon their farms once the law takes effect.

“The fear that we will be flooded with imported rice, the moment we open the gates of our country, may be true for the short term,” he said.

“But if the purchases of importers exceed 3 MMT, the price of rice in the world market would shoot up. And imported rice could become more expensive,” Piñol added.

He said the volume of rice traded in the global market is “too thin.” He noted that global rice production is estimated at 800 MMT, of which only 40 MMT is exported or traded.

Of the 40 MMT, Piñol said about 37 MMT to 38 MMT is already committed to rice-importing countries, leaving at least 3 MMT for the additional purchases of any other interested country.

“The implementation of the law could send shocks to the local market, such as the decline in prices, due to the entry of imports. But that will not last,” he said.

“The Philippines is growing by at least 2 million annually and that’s a lot of mouths to feed. We cannot solely depend on the world market. Farmers need to continue planting rice,” he added.

The Department of Agriculture has already started planning for how they can help farmers become competitive,” he added.
Garlic can grow outside traditional areas: DA

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said a one-hectare demonstration farm to prove that garlic can be grown outside traditional production areas and planting season was put up in Batangas by a local entrepreneur and a group of experts from India.

Emmanuel Piñol, DA secretary, said the project, owned by veterinary company Vetmate, has “very encouraging results” with several garlic varieties in separate plots showing good harvest potentials.

“German Panghulan, who owns Vetmate, a veterinary company which is now branching out to garlic production, said the pioneering project in his farm in Banjo Laurel, Tanzaan City is being done with the help of experts from India,” Piñol said.

“To ensure the success of the demo farm, Vetmate used soil enhancers recommended by the Indian garlic experts and an efficient drip irrigation system,” he added.

Piñol said Panghulan’s demo farm has different varieties of garlic for different locations in the country and employed the help of Indian experts as the commodity is grown in almost all regions of India.

He also said the garlic demo farm is scheduled to be harvested by April.

“Garlic is one of the most heavily imported agricultural product by the Philippines, along with bulb onion. Bulb onion production, however, has increased dramatically over the last two years with the support of DA through the Easy Access Loan Program,” noted Piñol.

“The success of the Batangas garlic demonstration farm could greatly increase the production of garlic which is a vital ingredient in Filipino cuisine,” he added.

According to latest data available from the Philippine Statistics Authority, the Philippines produced 7,751.05 metric tons (MT) of garlic in 2017, 0.05 percent of which or only 4.10 MT were harvested from Batangas.

In 2017, the total land planted with garlic in the entire country was at 2,568.68 hectares, of which 0.04 percent of 1.25 hectares are in Batangas, the DA said.
Imported karne bumuhos sa merkado - Piñol

KINONTRA ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang nang-aansay na over importation ng mga meat product.

Ayon kay Agriculture Sec. Manny Piñol, walang over importation kundi may natatalo lamang na marked increase sa import ng meat products pero hindi umano dahil sabihin nito na hindi na rinatansiklik ng gobyerno ang kameng nanggagaling sa local hog industry.

Kasunod nito, nanawagan ang kalihim sa Simbahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) na huwag gamitin ang isyu para sa politikal nitong interes dahil bukas naman ang tanggapan ng DA sa mga diskusyon.

Pinayuhan din ni Piñol ang grupo na magbigay ng mga rekomendasyon para masolusyunan ang problema at huwag lang basta magbayad ng aldi.

(Riz Dominguez)
Agri group seeks Senate help vs African swine fever

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) is seeking the Senate's intervention on the dreaded African swine fever after it claimed that efforts from the Department of Agriculture remain inadequate.

In a letter sent to Sen. Cynthia Villar, Senate Committee on Agriculture chair, and Sen. Grace Poe, Senate Committee on Public Services chair, SINAG called on the lawmakers to urgently conduct a public hearing on ASF and the continued decrease in farmgate prices.

This after the ASF has crossed the ASEAN region, prompting the Philippines to further tighten its security by banning pork imports from neighboring Vietnam in efforts to protect the P200-billion local hog industry.

"The ASF outbreak has already reached Vietnam, making the country more susceptible to the ASF pandemic," SINAG chair Rosendo So said.

"And yet the quarantine and border control measures at our airports and seaports, and other contingency preparations supposedly being carried out by the DA remain inadequate," he said.

Earlier, SINAG urged the DA to ensure that travellers coming from Vietnam and other affected ASF countries undergo 100 percent checking in airports.

"The DA may be unaware of the devastating impact to the agriculture sector once the ASF spreads to the country. Or perhaps, that is the intention in order to justify more pork importation," said So.

Apart from ASF, the industry group is also urging lawmakers to look into the concerns of backyard farmers over the progressive decrease of farmgate price for hogs in the last six months.

"Imported pork are flooding the local market, some are being brazenly sold in wet markets. At no moment in our country's history have we been importing this much pork," said So.

Last year, the Philippines imported 392 million kilograms of pork and 311 million kilos of chicken, up 29 percent and 18 percent, respectively. A pork import ban is still in effect for 14 countries namely Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Moldova, South Africa, Zambia, Belgium, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, China and Japan.

Currently, there is a mandatory inspection, in coordination with other concerned agencies, of all vessels docking in Philippine ports with meat supplies and fishing boats returning from the West Philippine Sea because of reports of bartering of sea products with imported meat.

A close coordination by the DA-Bureau of Animal Industry with the Bureau of Customs at all international air and sea ports for the conduct of rigid inspection for the checked in and hand-carried luggages of all incoming passengers from ASF-affected countries is also implemented.

Authorities are likewise confiscating and destroying all pork products coming from ASF-affected countries within 24 hours after interception.
Block farming in sugar hikes yields

More sugar. Yield increased by about 60 percent applying the farming technique of consolidating small farms with an area of less than five hectares into a bigger but contiguous unit of at least 30 hectares.

A STUDY published by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) said the implementation of sugarcane block farming (SBF) has resulted in an increase of productivity of sugar.

The study said based on data collected from cooperatives that participated, yield increased to 60 to 70 metric tons (MT) per hectare (ha) during SBF from the previous 43 MT per ha that was recorded before the implementation of the farming technique.

SBF is the consolidation of the management of small farms with an area of less than five hectares into a bigger but contiguous unit of at least 30 hectares for purposes of improving farm productivity. Individual ownership is preserved.

However, PIDS' documentation revealed successful SBF arrangements should have all the elements of the supply chain, including capital, land, labor, farm machinery, irrigation, post-production facilities as well as an assured market with an optimal price.

The study also said government assistance should be extended to SBF participants while the policy environment should also be supportive of the program especially in the issuance of individual titles. This is because some farmers have yet to be issued with their certificate of land ownership awards until now.

Likewise, the study emphasized credit and access to inputs must further be improved as there is no assurance the Land Bank of the Philippines will still extend credit once the SBF is terminated.

PIDS' findings also said government can provide the necessary support as it does not have control on the prices of sugarcane, including the imposition of higher tariffs on sugar substitutes such as corn syrup.

The study noted capacity building of cooperatives should be sustained to strengthen managerial, financial, and marketing abilities of cooperatives' officers and staff in order to be capable of looking for other income-generating projects that are not dependent on the commodity.

SBF was first introduced in pilot farms in 2012 by the Sugar Regulatory Administration in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Agrarian Reform as 85 percent of all sugarcane farms in the country are in cuts of five hectares and below.
Program to Improve Rice Productivity and Mechanization launched at Villar SIPAG Farm School

(L-R) PhlRice Acting Executive Director Dr. Salilah Abdul, PhilMech Director IV Dr. Baldwin Jallorina, Agricultural Training Institute Director Alfredo Aloe, Senator Cynthia Villar, DAR Secretary Atty. John Castriciones and former DAR Undersecretary Rosalina Bistoyong about the benefits of the program to improve rice productivity and mechanization for agrarian reform beneficiary organizations.
Senator Cynthia Villar recently welcomed participants and government officials to the Villar Social Institute for Poverty Alleviation and Governance (Villar SIPAG) Farm School in Bacoor, Cavite for the launching of the program to improve rice productivity and mechanization for agrarian reform beneficiaries organization.

The program is being launched to prepare for the implementation of the law amending Republic Act (RA) No. 8178 or the Agricultural Tariffication Act of 1996, which replaces the quantitative restriction on rice with tariffs.

The program is a joint undertaking of Villar SIPAG, Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech), Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, said with the implementation of the Rice Tariffication law, more comprehensive training programs on farm mechanization and new technologies to better inbred seeds will be held to reach more farmers. Villar SIPAG farm school has started conducting trainings of this kind since last year.

"Importante talaga na maitaas ang produksyon natin ng bigas. Iyan ang pinapangako ko sa ating mga kababayan — mura at sapat na suplay ng pagkain. At kapag nag-mechanize at gumamit ng new technology, bababa rin ang production costs. It is important for us to raise the production of rice. That is my commitment to our fellow citizens — affordable and adequate supply of food. And if it is mechanized and we utilize new technology, production costs will also lower," Villar said.

The Nacionalista Party senator also said that this program will help remove the factors identified as barriers to farmer’s competitiveness and profitability such as the lack of mechanization and technical expertise, lack of financial literacy and the lack of access to cheap credit.

Present during the launch were TESDA Secretary Isidro Lapeña and DAR Secretary John Castriciones.

The participants include agrarian reform beneficiaries in different provinces and were grouped into seven clusters. These clusters will discuss with officials of DA, TESDA, and DAR the support needed by farm organizations to improve rice production, as well as their commitment for the success of the program.

Under the new law, the P10 billion Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (Rice Fund) composed of duties collected from imported rice will be created and will be spent for programs that will help farmers improve productivity, profitability, and competitiveness.

The Rice Fund will be allocated as follows: 50 percent will go to PhilMech to provide farmers with rice farm machineries and equipment; 30 percent will be released to PhilRice to be used for the development, propagation and promotion of inbred rice seeds to rice farmers and the organization of rice farmers into seed growers associations engaged in seed production and trade; 10 percent will be made available in the form of credit facility with minimal interest rates and with minimum collateral requirements to rice farmers and cooperatives to be managed by the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Development Bank of the Philippines; and 10 percent will be set aside to fund extension services by PhilMech, ATI, and TESDA for teaching skills on rice crop production, modern rice farming techniques, seed production, farm mechanization, and knowledge/technology transfer through farm schools nationwide.

Also under the law, direct financial assistance will be provided to rice farmers as compensation for the projected reduction or loss of farm income arising from the tariffication.

Further, the rice tariffication law earmarks a portion of the excess rice tariff revenues for the titling of agricultural lands, expanded crop insurance program on rice and the crop diversification program.
NANINIWALA si Senadora Grace Poe na kabite amin na si Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte na habambuhay na tayong aangkat ng bigas ay magagawa pating makabangon ang ating mga magasaka para makaturoon tayo ng rice sufficiency sa hinaharap.

Induhay ni Duterte na habambuhay nang aangkat ng bigas ang Pilipinas mula sa mga karatig-bansa sa mga nagsidlo sa 1st National Assembly ng Liga ng mga Berangay sa Pilipinas sa Pasay City karahasan.

Si pabaya ng mula sa Zamboanga City nitong Pebrero 26, idinin ni Poe na dapat panarili hin ang National Food Authority (NFA) na hibili ng produktong palay ng ating mga magasaka at dapat palakasin ang mekanisasyon sa pagasa saka na tinigahan sa Rice Clarification Law.

"Mayroon talagang dapat na safety nets, like NFA will remain there precisely to still buy from our farmers but this time, because of the money that the government can subsidize the farmers with, hopefully makakapag-kumpitensiya ang mga farmers natin sa mekanisasyon, yun ang tayo," ani Poe. (LG)
Total ban sa importasyon ng karne ng baboy ignitit

LINILING ng Agricultural Sector Alliance of the Phillipines na magagpatupad ang gobyerno ng "total ban" sa loob ng 3-6 na buwan sa importasyon ng karne ng baboy bunsod ng patuloy na paglakaw ng pinsala ng African Swine Fever na nag-alaga ng swine sa 15 bansa.

Sinabi ni AGAP President Nicanor "Nikki" Briones, maging sa maunlad na bansang Japan at Vietnam ay nakapasok sa rin ang gobyerno sa African Swine Fever.

Ayon kay Briones, kapag hindi iningil ng pamahalaan ang importasyon ng karne ng baboy ay malelegay sa peligro ang P200-bilyong "business industry" ng mga nag-alaga ng baboy sa bansa.

Sa isang media interview sa Quezon City, sinabi ni Briones, 95-percent ng mga karne ng baboy sa markado ay nagmumula sa lokal na mga nag-alaga sa baboy.

Naniniwag ang mga naman ni Briones na ang pagkain ng baboy na kontaminado ng African swine ay hindii nagaganap sa karatagan.

Mary Ann Santiago

Total ban sa importasyon ng karne ng baboy, hirit ng AGAP

Hiniling ng Agricultural Sector Alliance of the Philippines (AGAP) na magagpatupad ang gobyerno ng "total ban" sa loob ng 3-6 na buwan sa importasyon ng karne ng baboy bunsod ng patuloy na paglakaw ng pinsala ng African Swine Fever sa 15 bansa.

Si Nicanor "Nikki" Briones, isang presidenteng agricultura, naniniwag na ang importasyon ng karne ng baboy ay sasakay sa peligro ng mga negatibong COVID-19.

"Ang pag Invalidate ay isang malaking malaking malaking gastos," ayon ni Briones.

"Ang mga negatibong COVID-19 ay mas mahalagang magpapalit ng paglakaw ng karne ng baboy," ayon ni Briones.

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BATANGAS CITY

ISLA VERDE FARMERS NAKATANGGAP NG SOLAR-POWERED IRRIGATION SYSTEM

"Magagamit din ang solar energy na ito sa mga statayong waterworks projects dito," ani Balantac, at binigyan-din na ang irrigation system ay lalong makapagpalakas ng ka-nilang livelihood income at agricultural productivity.

Sinabi niya na ang pagpapagawa ng solar-powered irrigation system ay makapagbibigay benefisyo sa mga taga-isla, lalo na ang mga nagasaaka at mga manggagawa sa agrikultura na miyembro ng Association of San Agapito Farmers and Fisherfolk na siyang magpapatakbo at maging ang mga kagamitang na bacteria.

Dagdag pa ni Balantac na layon din ng DA solar-irrigation project na mabatay yad ang conservasion at tamaang paggamins ng soil and water resources para matulungan ang mga magsasaka na maibot ang pagpapatuloy ng produksyon at pagasa na kumikita.

Saranghal, ipinaliwanan ni Assistant City Agriculturist Flora Andal na ang solar-powered irri
gation system ay ipinapalabas sa publiko at ang mas maunang turang kababaihan.

Sinabi ni Andal na ang Office of the City Veterinary and Agricultural Services (OCVAS)-Crops Division ay pagawa rin ng series of trainings para sa mga residente ng San Agapito island tungkol sa organic vegetable production sa tatlong araw.

PNA
PH RICE COMPETITIVE
VS IMPORTS, SAYS NEDA

By Karl R. Ocampo
@kocampoINQ

More than half of the country’s rice producers are capable of competing with imported rice in terms of prices, while those who cannot may opt to plant special rice variants and develop a niche market.

This was Socioeconomic Planning Undersecretary Rosemary Edillon’s response to claims of industry groups that the deregulation of rice importation would displace thousands of local farmers.

The policy shift is expected to be implemented next month, following the approval of the Rice Import Liberalization Act by President Duterte.

“There are about 46 provinces that are competitive, meaning they can compete with imported rice in terms of price. That’s out of 76 or 78 rice-producing provinces, so more than half,” Edillon said in a phone interview.

“Not all farmers need a significant push for them to be very competitive. Some farmers even produce high-quality rice, in which case, they would compete not on the basis of price but on the basis of quality,” she added.

Edillon cited Nueva Ecija, Kalinga and Iloilo as some of the areas whose rice output could compete with imported rice.

In a roundtable discussion yesterday, industry groups said the cost of producing rice in the country was still higher than those in other countries. Even with the tariffs, imports would still be cheaper.

Teodorico Mendoza, a former professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños who sat at the Philippine Rice Research Institute’s board, said the annual subsidy set by the government for the farm sector would not be enough to modernize the rice industry.

Under the measure, a Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund was created to subsidize rice farmers with a yearly allocation of P10 billion.

Mendoza said the amount was only 2.5 percent of the sector’s contribution to the economy at P400 billion. He said to mechanize the industry, the government would need to shell out P3 billion.

However, Edillon said excess from the tariff revenue would be used to develop the sector. The Neda projected a yearly revenue of P28 billion from the law.

INQ
Crops wilt as drought ravages Cotabato town

State of calamity declared

KIDAPAWAN CITY — The municipal council of M'lang in Cotabato province placed the town under a state of calamity after 28 of its 37 villages were hit by the dry spell. M'lang Vice Mayor Joselito Piñol said farms in the affected villages were mainly rain-fed, while farmers in other areas relied on water drawn from an irrigation canal that had already dried up due to extreme heat starting early January.

Piñol also said the local government received reports that palay and corn planted in these areas had wilted due to high temperature while some farm animals in remote villages had suffered from heatstroke.

"I already instructed the disaster management officer to conduct validation in order to help our affected farmers," he said. Piñol also said the local government received reports that palay and corn planted in these areas had wilted due to high temperature while some farm animals in remote villages had suffered from heatstroke.

Piñol said placing M'lang under a state of calamity would allow officials to release the town’s calamity fund that would be used to assist farmers.

In a report to the council, Bernardo Tayong, head of the municipal disaster risk reduction and management office, said 3,500 farmers had lost their crops.

Tayong said palay and corn planted in 4,250 hectares in the town had no more chance of recovery. He said crop losses reached P16 million.

M'lang's remaining nine villages, which incurred less damage from the dry spell, also received assistance from the local government.

Piñol said they were giving fuel subsidy and water pumps to farmers whose crops still had a 70-percent chance of recovery.

He said the local government was also planning to distribute aid to at least 10,000 displaced farmworkers.
IN PANGASINAN, SOLDIERS GROW OWN FOOD THROUGH CAMP FARMING

By Gabriel Cardinoza
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MANAOAG, PANGASINAN — If everything goes according to plan, a water-strapped military camp here will soon be self-sufficient in vegetables.

Last week, thousands of seedlings of tomatoes, eggplants, green pepper, papaya and calamansi were planted in a 1,600-square-meter area inside Camp Lt. Tito Abat here, courtesy of Tarlac Heritage Foundation (THF), East-West Seed Co. and Corvill Agricom Inc.

Some 450 seedlings of pink trumpet trees were also planted around the facility.

“We are really fortunate to be selected as one of the recipients of the Hardin ng Lunas project by Tarlac Heritage Foundation,” said Brig. Gen. Henry Robinson, commanding general of the Army’s 702nd Infantry (Defender) Brigade. THF is founded by Dr. Isa Sunray and her mother, Isabel.

The foundation also launched a similar project at the Army’s 3rd Mechanized Infantry Battalion camp in San Jose town, Tarlac province.

Cropping cost

With the theme, “Food, Wood and Income,” the project aims to reach soldiers the latest organic farming techniques in areas with limited water supply.

Anthony Cortes, president of Corvill Agricom, who provides technical expertise to the project, said the garden could earn P400,000 to P500,000 per cropping.

“It’s only from that small area. If you expand that into a hectare, we’re talking serious money and we’re also talking serious produce for the community,” Cortes said.

“So, other than providing healthy food, the key is for the garden to be self-sufficient,” he said. As the garden becomes bigger and commercially viable, it will benefit not only the soldiers and the community but eventually, the environment, he said.

Army chief, Lt. Gen. Macario Alberto, said he would have the project replicated in other military camps. INQ
Mindoro drought costs P31M

By Krizara Tibus

The local disaster office of Occidental Mindoro on Wednesday said the nearly two-month dry spell has caused some P31 million worth of agricultural damage in the province.

Disaster office head Mario Mulingbayan said crops are drying up because of continued drought in the province.

"There has been no rain (in the province) since January and our crops are greatly being affected," Mulingbayan said.

He added the dry spell is affecting 11 towns, the worst hit of which were Calintaan, Sablayan, San Jose and Sta. Cruz.

"The local government is providing subsidy to farmers' fuel expenses for water pumps and wells," Mulingbayan said.

El Niño, an erratic weather phenomenon, is currently affecting the Philippines, meteorology bureau PAGASA said last week.

Dry spell and drought, both precursors of El Niño, were observed in several provinces in Luzon and Mindanao from September last year to mid-January this year.
New balanced fertilizer with micronutrients is very convenient to use

A new multi-nutrient fertilizer is making it more convenient for farmers, to fertilize their crops with a balanced formulation all year round. This is particularly useful to smallhold farmers who may not have the know-how to add the necessary micronutrients to the ordinary complete (14-14-14) fertilizer.

The multi-nutrient fertilizer, also dubbed All-in-One fertilizer, is Z-Fert fertilizer now distributed in the Philippines by Zetrtyl Chem Philippines headed by chemist-businessman Danton B. Pajarillaga.

Z-Fert contains the macro NPK nutrients plus the right amounts of micronutrients that include magnesium, calcium, sulfur, manganese, iron, boron, copper, zinc, molybdenum, silica, chlorine, humic and fulvic acids. All these elements are needed by plants for their growth and development the whole year round.

Because every useful element is contained in Z-Fert, the farmer does not have to mix by himself the different macro and micronutrients. Z-Fert contains bio-char or organic carbon which lasts for years in the soil, helping rehabilitate badly degraded soils due to excessive use of chemical fertilizers.

A balanced fertilizer like Z-Fert makes the plants more resistant to stresses like drought, flooding, strong winds, extreme temperatures and pests and diseases. Z-Fert, which comes in 25 and 50-kg packs, is very affordable.

BALANCED FERTILIZER – Danton Pajarillaga is the president of Zetrtyl Chem Philippines which distributes Z-Fert fertilizer that contains different micronutrients that are essential in the growth and productivity of various crops. It is a well-balanced fertilizer formulation that is very convenient for farmers to apply to their crops.
Cucumber growing has advantages

If you are a farmer looking for a crop that you can grow and harvest within a short time, take a second good look at cucumbers. Farmers in Majayjay and Liliw, Laguna, agree that cucumbers like the Jenjen variety from Ramgo Seeds can give a fast return to the grower. Victor Arvisu of Liliw swears that he loves Jenjen because it can be grown anytime of the year and the price is usually good, P30 to P40 a kilo, especially if there is no glut in the market. When there is an oversupply, the price may go down to as low as P10 a kilo but there is still some income to be made because the cost of production is low.

Farmers in different barangays in Majayjay–Gagatot, Bgy. Huging Rungia and Tuyay—all agree that Jenjen is a profitable variety to grow. Nestor Rondilla of Gagatot said that in 2019, he planted half a hectare to Jenjen and made a very good income. Once harvesting starts, picking the fruits is done every other day. He remembers that on the fourth picking, he harvested 1,000 kilos which he sold for P27 to P30 per kilo. At P27 a kilo, that was already P27,000. And harvesting does not require a lot of manpower. Actually, Rondilla said that one harvester can harvest a thousand kilos in one day.

In 45 days from the first harvest, Rondilla made a total of 22 harvests. Since harvest is every other day, the cash flow is pretty constant.

To maximize income from his land, Rondilla has come up with his system of growing his cucumber together with his tomatoes. One month after planting the tomatoes, he plants his cucumber between the tomatoes within the row, providing the same with a string or straw to guide the upward growth of the cucumber plant.

Harvesting is done every other day, and the productive life of Rondilla’s plants lasted for one and a half months or 45 days. That meant 22 harvests.

Rondilla has also come up with his system of growing his cucumber between his tomatoes. He said that one month after planting his tomatoes, he

the plants between the hills of tomato, providing his cucumber with straw to climb on. When the tomatoes are just starting to flower, the cucumber is already producing fruits.

Bonifacio Conseido, the barangay chairman of Brgy. Tuyay, said that he also loves Jenjen cucumber for more or less similar reasons as the other growers. He adds that there are very few rejects from Jenjen. In a recent harvest from a 7,500 sq.m. parcel, he got 700 kilos of good fruits and only 20 kilos of rejects. The rejects were still salable, only they had minor defects.

Conseido has also a system of intercropping his cucumber with ampalaya. After harvesting the cucumber, he said, the ampalaya will take its turn to bring in the cash.

It’s a happy farming for the cucumber growers in Liliw and Majayjay. They rotate their crops to avoid build up of diseases and pests in their farms.
Ang Probinsyano Party-list, kabado sa rice smuggling


Tinatayang bababa ang presyo ng bigas mulan sa lang lang piso hanggang pito piso kada kilo busnold ng bata. "Kinasalangangan ang pagtingin ang operasyon laban sa smuggling ng bigas upang mas maprotektahan ang mga magsasaka at maminili. Dapat na mas maging mahigpit at ang tugtug na sa ating mga ports of entry sa buong bansa," sabi pa ni Ronnie Ong na nominee ng AP-PL.

Naninilawa si Ong na kailangang makinabang ang mga consumers sa murang bigas subaliyung pat diting tiyakin ang proteksyon ng mga magsasaka.

Ayon kay Ong, kung mahahalal, siasiguraduhan at gagawing prayoridad ng AP-PL sa Kongreso ang tamang paggамit ng Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund para sa mga magsasaka.
MAHIGIT sa 400 supermarkets sa buong bansa ang nagbebenta ng murang bigas sa ilalim ng “Presyo Risonable Dapat” (PRD) program ng pamahalaan, ayon sa Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Batay sa report, ang nasa-bing mga supermarket ay nagbebenta ng imported na bigas mula sa Vietnam sa halagang P35 kada kilo. Sinabi ni Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez na makuasa pa ang mga sinoy ng mas mabang presyo kasunod na pag-aprubahan sa Rice Tariffication Law, na nagpapataw ng taripa kapali ng import limits sa bulil.

"As more of these importers will come in, chances are pwede pang humaba from P30 ro P32, depende sa magiging importation cost nila," wika ni Lopez.

Paliwanag ng kalihim, ang batas kalaunan ay mag-aalis na sa suggested retail price (SRP) sa bigas. "Pang dumami na ang P34, P35, you don’t need an SRP already. You remember, dati, wala talagang SRP sa rice but nang nagkaroon ng pagtaas sa presyo, we tried to put an SRP as a guide to many retailers," aniya.
NAGAKADANG taaasan ng gobyerno ang volume ng rice imports na magmumula sa non-ASEAN countries na maaaring pumasok sa Filipinas sa mas mahabang taripa.

Base sa ikalawang draft ng implementing rules and regulations (IRR) ng Rice Tarification Law, ang minimum access volume (MAV) para sa bigas ay itinatag sa 2012 level nitong sa 350,000 metric tons (MT) at inalim na rin sa commitment ng Filipinas sa World Trade Organization (WTO).

Subaliit siya pa rin sa National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Assistant Secretary Mercedes Sonibilla na sakaling magkaroon ng malaking demand sa mga bigas mula India, Pakistan at China, saka lamang nila tataasan ang MAV.

Nabatid na ang lahat na rekomendasyon para sa pagsasapi ng MAV ay nakakapagpalo sa sitwasyon sa mga pamahalaan.  

BENEDICT ABAYGAR JR.
AO to boost land use conversion

THE proposed administrative order (AO) for land use conversion applications is meant to streamline the tedious process the farmers have to undergo, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) said Tuesday.

The agency made the remarks as it slammed some individuals and groups with vested interests, who are circulating fake and misleading allegations in relation to the proposed DAR Administrative Order No. 1, Series of 2019 regarding the streamlining of the process for land use conversion applications.

"In compliance with the directives and timeline set by the President, DAR is awaiting the finalization of the Joint Memorandum Circular by an inter-agency committee, comprising of other executive departments and government offices who are involved in the Land Use Conversion process," DAR said in a statement.

"There is no basis for them to assail the said AO, considering that the same is not yet effective as law," it added.

The draft AO was uploaded to DAR’s internal memo system merely for vetting and review by other third level officials.

Article 2 of the New Civil Code of the Philippines provides that publication in any newspaper of general circulation is required for this regulation to take effect.

The Joint Memorandum Circular, due on the first week of March, will dictate the final draft of AO No.1 and will provide clear cut policies and a defined timeline for DAR and the other Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program implementing agencies to follow in the processing of land use conversion applications.

The timelines contained in the proposed AO is merely a reiteration of previous administrative orders defining the periods in the process for land use conversions applications.

"There is no truth to the erroneous and malicious allegations that the proposed AO is anti-farmer," the statement included.

The law, which covers the substantial requirements of conversion, is enshrined under Section 65 of Republic Act 6657, which protects agricultural lands from being capriciously and whimsically converted for commercial, industrial, or residential purposes.

Applications for land use conversion under this proposed AO will not mean automatic approval but will be evaluated in accordance with the unconditional requirements under Section 65 of Republic Act 6657, as amended.
SYDNEY. -- US wheat futures edged higher on Wednesday, rebounding from a 10-month low touched in the previous session, though gains were checked amid concerns over international demand for North American supplies.

Corn edged lower, while soybeans were unchanged.

Grain trading was delayed after US exchange operator CME Group said on Wednesday it had to halt all product trading on its CME Globex platform due to technical issues, it said via Twitter.

The most active wheat futures on the Chicago Board of Trade was up 0.5 percent at $4.70-1/2 a bushel by 0405 GMT after closing down 1 percent in the previous session when prices hit a low of $4.63-3/4 a bushel - the lowest since April 16.

Analysts said wheat remains under pressure from tepid demand for US supplies, confirmed the US Department of Agriculture's export inspections report earlier this week.

"Export inspections should be bouncing by now if the US is going to make inroads into its inventories," said Tobin Gorey, director of agricultural strategy, Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

Providing some support, the USDA said the condition of US winter wheat declined from late November to late February across much of the US Plains.

The most active corn futures were down 0.1 percent at $3.65-1/2 a bushel after closing down 1.1 percent on Tuesday.

The most active soybean futures were unchanged at $9.17-1/4 a bushel after closing down 0.9 percent in the previous session.

Soybeans drew support on Monday after US President Donald Trump said he may soon sign a deal with China, but offered few details.

The USDA confirmed on Tuesday sales of 120,000 tons of US soybeans to Mexico for shipment in the current and next marketing years. -- Reuters