CLIPPINGS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2019

A. SEC. EFP QUOTED

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Dry spell brings farm losses to P2.8B

BUSINESS WORLD
Rice tariff law IRR could be ready next week
Russia seen as possible market, source of agricultural investment

MANILA BULLETIN
Farmers seek review of irrigation project in Cotabato, S. Kudarat
PAJ, SMC to honor top agri, environment writers today

THE MANILA TIMES
Agriculture deal inked by PH, Hungary
Belarus tractor firm eyes PH

BUSINESS MIRROR
PHL to expand bilateral trade with Hungary
From farm to household use: DA chief proposes 'workable' plan for efficient use of water supply
SoKor helps PHL address growth constraints

PILIPINO MIRROR
PH palalawakin ang agri exports sa Hungary

B. DA FAMILY

MANILA STANDARD
State of calamity in 18 El Niño areas

MANILA BULLETIN
P35-M fund for El Niño-hit C. Visayas areas
Tolentino, Mangudadatu vow agricultural reform
Editorial: PH agriculture needs greater consumer support
The Mama Sita Banana success story revealed

THE MANILA TIMES
FMR in Sarangani gets P57M allocation
'Crab Capital' boosts production
SSNM can increase corn yields
Achieving water security

BUSINESS MIRROR
El Niño farm damage doubles to P2.68B

BALITA
Editorial: Kinakailangan ng agrikultura ng Pilipinas ng mas malaking suporta ng consumer

TEMPO
Editorial: PH agriculture needs greater consumer support

PILIPINO MIRROR
Basura palit bigas: Itinutulak sa Kamara
P1.2-B Pinsala ng tagtuyot sa Region 2
Supermarket siniguro na mayroong NFA rice

C. **AGRI-RELATED STORY**

THE DAILY TRIBUNE
Rubber farmers see bright prospects

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Climate impacts seen to reduce rice yields

BUSINESS WORLD
#Nation at a glance: Agri sector damage from El Niño hits P2.6B

MANILA STANDARD
Agency to boost Bicol commodities

MANILA BULLETIN
Farmers adopt El Niño crops
Organic Ferilizer & Pesticide Made in PH click in Nigeria

THE MANILA TIMES
Palay farmgate price still falling
Searca assists upland Leyte women for agribusiness

BUSINESS MIRROR
Average palay price drops further after Duterte signs rice trade lib law

THE DAILY TRIBUNE
El Niño chalks P2.2-B damage

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL TONIGHT
El Niño agri damage to P2.7B

BANDERA
El Niño damage reaches P2.67B

TEMPO
P2-B crops lost to El Niño

BALITA
Mas malalang epekto ng El Niño sa Abril

PILIPINO MIRROR
Sinalanta ng tagtuyot: State of Calamity sa 9 na bayan sa Maguindanao
Presyo ng palay bumaba

D. **FOREIGN STORY**

No stories

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DRY SPELL BRINGS FARM LOSSES TO P2.8B

Rice and corn farmers have borne the brunt of El Niño, which started more than a month ago and is expected to intensify in April. Among the hardest-hit regions are Bicol and Soccsksargen, officials say.

By Karl R. Ocampo
@kocampoINQ

Damage to agriculture caused by El Niño rose to P2.86 billion just more than a month after it struck the country, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said on Wednesday.

The council said rice and corn farmers incurred the bulk of the losses.

Hardest hit were the regions of Soccsksargen and Bicol.

Officials have declared a state of calamity in the regions of Mimaropa, Zamboanga, Soccsksargen and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao due to the worsening dry spell.

Other regions severely affected by El Niño are Calabarzon, Western Visayas and Eastern Visayas.

The weather phenomenon will worsen next month, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

Pagasa said 61 percent of the country would likely experience drought while 31 percent would likely experience a dry spell—leaving only 8 percent of the country not vulnerable to El Niño.

This means the country will have to brace for warmer weather and less chances of rainfall as the year progresses.

Farmer leader Jhun Pascua of the National Movement for Food Sovereignty said some farmers in Mindanao were already forced to sell their livestock as grassy areas

A2

PART 1 OF 2

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PART 2 OF 2

El Niño: Farm losses reach ₱2.8B

FROM A1

for grazing had disappeared.

Crops planted in parched lands were left to wilt as farmers had no way of irrigating them.

No definite water sources

In Bulacan province, Raul Montemayor of the Federation of Free Farmers said rice growers could not shift to planting other crops even if they wanted to because they had no definite water sources to rely on.

"There's not enough government intervention, especially from the NIA (National Irrigation Administration). Farmers who only know how to plant rice have no other option but to wait [for the drought to end]," Montemayor said.

Pilipina Bermudez, manager of the NIA Public Information Office, said the agency had the capacity to help only 1.5 million farmers in irrigating their lands—or just 14 percent of the country's total agriculture workforce.

NIA focus

Asked whether the agency has the means to help areas that rely on rainwater for cultivating land, Bermudez said the NIA could only focus on areas where it had available irrigation systems.

Of the 3.9 million hectares of rice farms in the country, 1.2 million ha benefit from communal irrigation systems while 2.7 million ha rely on rainwater, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority.

El Niño "is not something we could prevent," Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said in an interview.

He said all the agriculture department could do "is to pick up the pieces afterward and provide interventions."

Piñol has been pushing for the construction of solar-powered irrigation systems (SPIS) all over the country to ensure the availability of water all-year round. But with limited funding, it is proceeding at a snail's pace.

Israeli loan

But just recently, the Department of Agriculture secured a long-term loan from the Israeli government to construct 6,200 units of SPIS for P44 billion. The units have the capacity to irrigate half a million hectares of farmlands.

"This is something we have long neglected and ignored: irrigation. We are repeating again and again that if we do not irrigate, if we do not conserve water or manage our water, we will suffer from this problem year after year," Piñol said.

For now, Aurelio Estrada of Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura said his group was encouraging farmers to avail themselves of government loans, insurance and other forms of financial assistance to withstand El Niño, which is expected to linger until the end of the year.

"There are so many areas affected by El Niño now, and we can just do so much. There needs to be a concerted effort between farmer groups and local government units to address the problem," Estrada said. INQ

BusinessWorld
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Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 2/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Rice tariff law IRR could be ready next week

THE National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said Wednesday that it targets to approve "next week" the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Rice Tariffication Act submitted by the National Food Authority (NFA) Council.

In a phone message to *BusinessWorld*, NEDA Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon said: "The intent is to have it approved next week."

The NFA Council submitted to NEDA the amended IRR on March 5, the first day of the law's implementation.

Asked about the changes made to the revised IRR, NEDA Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia said in a phone message: "Nothing substantive."

Mercedita A. Sombilla, NEDA Assistant Secretary, said in a phone message that the specific timeline was release by "Friday."

In a chance interview at the Palace, Finance Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Antonio Joselito Lambino II told *BusinessWorld*, when asked for an update about the IRR: *"Umiikot na* for signatures... (It's circulating for signature) It was approved in principle at the last NFA Council Meeting."

He also said he "hopes" that the IRR will be approved next week."

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol has said that the draft IRR has a provision that permits the continuous sale of rice by the NFA at prices to be determined by the NFA Council, provided that such sales do not cause the NFA to lose money.

In a phone interview on March 5, Ms. Edillon said the agency was going to "check the reasons for the policy, (and) if it supports the bottomline objective which is to improve the rice trading regime."

President Rodrigo R. Duterte signed into law the rice tariffication measure last month. The new law liberalizes the import process for rice while taking away the NFA's role in importing. — **Arjay L. Balinbin**

BusinessWorld
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Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 2/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Russia seen as possible market, source of agricultural investment

THE Philippines and Russia have discussed possible Russian investment in Mindanao and market access for Philippine produce, the Philippine Embassy in Moscow said in a statement Wednesday.

The Embassy said Ambassador to Russia Carlos D. Sorreta met with Director Maxim Markovich of Russian Agriculture Ministry's Department of International Cooperation on March 4 in Moscow.

Mr. Sorreta was quoted as saying that the two countries are "keen on intensifying agricultural cooperation in the particular context of the agreement that was signed during the visit of President Rodrigo R. Duterte in 2017."

"We also discussed possible Russian investment in agriculture in Mindanao and market access for Philippine agricultural products and fisheries products from Mindanao and other parts of the Philippines," he added.

The Ambassador also noted that the meeting with the Russian Ministry of Agriculture officials was in preparation for the working visit of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol to Moscow.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and its counterpart Russian ministry signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in 2017 after Mr. Duterte's visit. The MoU provides the framework for agriculture cooperation between the Philippines and Russia.

Mr. Sorreta also briefed Russia on the government's efforts to improve law and order in Mindanao.

Mr. Piñol has said that the DA is looking into the possibility of exporting coconut, banana, and shrimp to Russia. He added that the DA is organizing a trade mission to explore business opportunities in the "unexplored market of Russia and other member countries of the Russian Federation."

According to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Russia in 2017 was the Philippines' 29th-largest trading partner, 37th-largest export market, and 24th-largest source of imports. — **Camille A. Aguinaldo**

MAR. 28, 2019
PAGE: 11
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Farmers seek review of irrigation project in Cotabato, S. Kudarat

By **KEITH BACONGCO**

BAGUMBAYAN, Sultan Kudarat – A multi-million peso irrigation project that was supposed to address the scarcity of water supply in rice farms during the dry season may have failed to serve its purpose in three project areas.

Touted as the flagship project of the Department of Agriculture, Secretary Emmanuel Piñol firmly believed that his ₱19 million worth flagship Solar Power Irrigation System (SPIS) project will ease the irrigation supply problems during long dry spell.

However, officials of the three host villages are now appealing to President Rodrigo Duterte and Piñol to revisit the project and determine what went wrong.

No less than Piñol admitted on his Facebook page on March 17 that the two SPIS units in his home province of Cotabato were not working. He issued the statement after it was reported that the units have not served the farmers this dry spell.

Piñol confirmed that the SPIS unit in New Janiuay and in Manubuan are not working.

"We expected challenges because this is a new technology," the DA chief added. "The unit in Manubuan, Matalam was used for two cropping seasons until the creek dried up, while the unit in New Janiuay which was a proto-type is now undergoing corrective works because it did not operate according to standards."

Saying that these units were not useless, Piñol said that "drilling operations are now being done in one of these units to establish a new water source."

He further claimed that "water is expected to flow again within a month."

The SPIS unit in Barangay Biwang of this town, according to village officials, was reportedly tested but was never used since it was completed sometime in November last year.

Barangay Biwang Councilor Danilo Casa disclosed that the DA Region 12 has yet to formally turn over the ₱5-million SPIS unit to the community.

"Wala man kami ma-training kung ano pag operate, nahadlok man kami mag hilabot kay basi maguba. Ka mahal-mahal sina (We were not trained to operate and we are afraid to try it because we might broke that expensive unit)," Casa said in an interview.

Upon completion last November, the contractor performed a "flushing test" to show that the SPIS was working, he added.

Village officials in New Janiuay of Mlang, North Cotabato also lamented that the SPIS unit they received has failed to serve its purpose among 38 farmer-beneficiaries as El Niño hit their farmlands.

The officials said that the SPIS has never been used since it was inaugurated by no less than the President himself on February 3, 2017.

HELPLESS – Village councilor Rogelio Quintero shows a broken part of the P8-million Solar Powered Irrigation System (SPIS) in Barangay New Janiuay in Mlang, Cotabato which has not been working and has been unable to help farmers during this dry spell. (Keith Bacongco)

Thus, the barangay council has passed a resolution on March 11 urging Duterte to inspect the SPIS unit, said village chief Judy Palmares.

Palmares added that the farmers, who were supposed to benefit from the project, have complained why they cannot use the unit especially this dry spell. "Ginaasahan ni sang mga tao unta nga pag-abot sang El Niño, may patubig sila tani sa ila palayan (The farmers were hoping that the SPIS could irrigate their farms this El Niño)," the village chief lamented.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: B-6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PAJ, SMC to honor top agri, environment writers today

The country's best agriculture and environment journalists will be honored at the 2018 PAJ-SMC Binhi Awards for excellence in agricultural journalism, today, 7 pm, at the Makati Diamond Residences, Makati City.

Agriculture secretary Emmanuel 'Manny' F. Piñol will serve as the main guest and keynote speaker of the annual contest, sponsored by San Miguel Corporation, and attracted more than 100 contestants, according to newly-elected PAJ president Alfredo G. Gabot.

The DA chief will be joined at the presidential table by SMC President and Chief Operating Officer Ramon S. Ang, who will share an inspirational message, and former agriculture secretary Senen C. Bacani, who will speak as chairperson of the five-person board of judges.

This year's Binhi awardees will be led by the top three winners in the three major categories — agricultural journalist, environment journalist, and agribeat reporter of the year — who will each receive cash prizes ranging from ₱50,000 to ₱20,000, and respective trophies, said Gabot, who also previously served as president of the PAJ and the National Press Club of the Philippines.

The PAJ will also honor five of its colleagues for their respective lifetime achievements and excellence in agricultural journalism, namely: Rodolfo "Rudy" Fernandez (posthumous), of The Philippine Star and University of the Philippines Los Baños; Dr. Anselmo "Ka Elmo" Roque, of The Philippine Daily Inquirer and Central Luzon State University; Ramon Magsaysay Awardee Zac B.Sarian, Manila Bulletin agriculture section and Agriculture Magazine editor; former National Press Club president, Balita editor, former press undersecretary, and first Binhi awardee as agricultural journalist in Filipino Marcelo Lagmay; and former Philippine News Agency managing editor and PAJ founding director Joaquin "Jake" Espino.

Special awards will also be conferred on Henry Lim Bon Liong, president and CEO of SL Agritech Corp., and PAJ past president Roman Floresca.

The Manila Times

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: B2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture deal inked by PH, Hungary

THE Philippines has strengthened agricultural ties with Hungary to boost farm production by focusing on higher agricultural investment, particularly in farm mechanization.

This came after a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in agriculture was signed between the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary on Wednesday.

The MoU, which was signed by Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol and Minister of Agriculture of Hungary Istvan Nagy, seeks to promote the two countries' investment in agriculture, market access concerns and the proposed cooperation in the field of crop and livestock biotechnology research, food safety and agricultural mechanization.

During the bilateral meeting, Piñol recognized Hungary's advanced technologies for water purification.

"They have a formula of ensuring that water can be absorbed greatly by the soil. It's a pump they have invented. They have also shared with us the same problem they are suffering from right now, El Nino. Just like us they are also drafting solutions on how to combat such climate conditions," Piñol told reporters.

"I am happy that Hungary is also offering their technology on clean water," he added.

Nagy said Hungary's modern farm technologies were some of the well-known practices worldwide which enable unpurified and unclean water to produce drinking quality water in large capacities.

"We have developed technologies and techniques regarding irrigation as well as water management. We have highly progressed technology regarding water purification. We are more than happy to provide the Philippines and [its] government the technologies as well as the tools available," Nagy said.

Meanwhile, the Philippines' has also expressed interest to further diversify its exports to Hungary by exporting high value coconut products, fishery products, fresh mango, fishmeal, copra meal and seaweeds-based animal feeds, carrageenan and abaca.

Hungary, on the other hand, said it was planning to increase its export of poultry meat products to the Philippines. Furthermore, Nagy has invited Piñol to attend the Hungarian Agricultural and Food Industry Fair Exhibition on September 26 to 29 this year to introduce some of the Filipino products into the Hungarian public "so that the Hungarian market could also serve as a gate to the European market for the Philippines." **EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ**

The Manila Times

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Belarus tractor firm eyes PH

A BELARUS-based farm tractor company has expressed interest in putting up an assembly plant in the country and grow its agro-machinery partnerships in the Philippines, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said on Monday.

The potential for bilateral investment was discussed by a visiting Philippine delegation led by the Department of Agriculture (DA), who met with the officials of the Minsk Tractor Works, makers of the iconic Belarus farm tractor.

While Piñol noted that the agro-machinery partnership with Minsk Tractor Works could provide employment to Filipino engineers and skilled workers, the DA assured the Belarusians "ease of doing business without corruption" in the Philippines.

"Assured that the Duterte Administration has initiated a campaign to check corruption in government, especially in the procurement of equipment, machinery and supplies, Minsk Tractor Works officials said they will immediately send a delegation to the Philippines to scout for possible local distributors," Piñol said in a statement.

"The Minsk Tractor Works said opening up an assembly plant could make the company more competitive in the sale of their farm tractors," he added.

Founded in 1946, Minsk Tractor Works has turned into one of the largest manufacturers of agricultural machinery worldwide, employing more than 17,000 people.

Under President Rodrigo Duterte's administration, the Philippines is moving towards achieving maximum agricultural output through mechanization to boost food production amid a fast-growing population.

Piñol earlier said that the country lags behind in productivity from postharvest losses of about 16.4 percent of total production, observed mainly in harvesting and milling.

At present, the country's mechanization rate is at only 2.2 horsepower per hectare (hp/ha), significantly lower than Vietnam and Thailand's level that ranges between 4 to 7 hp/ha.

In June last year, Korean Agriculture Machinery Industry Cooperative also announced its plan to construct a facility in a 50-hectare location within Clark Airbase that would allow them to assemble tractors and fabricate implements and tools for farming sector.

The Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) is the leading institution for farm mechanization in the Philippines, as mandated by Republic Act 10601 or the "Agriculture and Fisheries Mechanization Act."

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

The agency has been encouraging Filipino farmers to embrace farm mechanization amid labor displacement issues. It said farm mechanization does not only lower production cost, but has attract younger people into the agriculture sector.

EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: B3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PHL to expand agricultural bilateral trade with Hungary

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

THE Philippines is eyeing to expand its shipments of farm products to Hungary as the government seeks to open more markets for local agricultural produce.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Hungarian government to improve bilateral agricultural trade between Manila and Budapest.

The MOU, according to Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol, would "reinforce the positive engagements between the DA and the Ministry of Agriculture" in expanding the trade of farm produce between the two countries.

Both parties agreed that there is a "big" potential for the improvement of trade in agriculture between the two countries, the DA said.

The Philippines seek to further diversify its exports to Hungary by shipping high value coconut products, fishery products, fresh mangoes, fishmeal, copra meal, seaweed-based animal feeds, carrageenan and abaca.

For its part, Hungary eyes to increase its export of poultry meat products to Manila.

Piñol said the DA would participate in the Hungarian Agri Expo in September after Hungarian Agriculture Minister István Nagy invited him to attend the event.

"I made a commitment to bring products, including our coconut oil, syrup, because we are promoting those," he said in a news briefing after the MOU signing on Wednesday.

"The Hungarian minister said that among the items that they need are fruits particularly our mangoes, pineapple, bananas," he added.

Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data showed that the country's agricultural exports to Hungary in 2018 declined by 9.09 percent to $1.85 million, from $2.035 million, recorded in 2017.

The country's farm exports to Hungary include unmanufactured tobacco, tuna and pineapple products, PSA data showed.

The data also showed that Hungary's exports of flour meals and pellets and meat offals for animal feed use to the Philippines expanded by 59.3 percent to $6.511 million, from $4.086 million in 2017.

In terms of volume, the country's imports of the raw material for animal feeds from Hungary rose by 87.94 percent to 21,347.790 metric tons, from 11,358.607 metric tons

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: B3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

From farm to household use: DA chief proposes 'workable' plan for efficient use of water supply

AGRICULTURE Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol has proposed that the water supply allocated for agriculture be diverted to Metro Manila at times that irrigation is not needed by farmers to avert crises in the area in the future.

Piñol said he has recommended during the Cabinet-level meeting on water last week to review how the country's water supply is being utilized among consumers, such as farmers and households.

Piñol added that the government could divert some of the water supply allocated to agriculture, specifically for irrigation, to Metro Manila users when farmers do not need it.

"We do not need water all-year round. What we need is the efficient use of our irrigation system," he said in an interview with reporters on Wednesday.

"The water in our big dams could be diverted to Metro Manila during times that our rice farmers do not need it," he added.

Piñol said he suggested the formulation of a "workable" plan on the efficient utilization of the country's water supply.

"This is something we have long neglected and ignored: irrigation. And we are repeating [it] again and again, that if we do not conserve and manage our water then we will suffer from this problem year after year," he said.

"Our proposal is that the water in our big dams, where we source our irrigation, could be diverted and used by household. We just need water for about twice a year. We just have to plan properly the use of our water resources," he added.

"President [Duterte's] position is correct: there should be greater focus on water management and conservation," he said.

The DA chief earlier said he is pushing for the passage of a law that allows the Department of Agriculture (DA) to build small reservoirs nationwide to improve the country's water system to avert future water crises.

"This is something we have long neglected and ignored: irrigation. And we are repeating [it] again and again, that if we do not conserve and manage our water then we will suffer from this problem year after year."
—Piñol

The measure was among the recommendations made by the DA at the Cabinet-level meeting on water last week, according to Piñol. The meeting was presided over by Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana.

At the meeting, Piñol said he made a presentation on the threat of a "looming water crisis" to the agriculture sector.

Piñol added that the country's water supply for agriculture has been declining over the past decades due to major reasons, including continued deforestation and absence of water conservation programs.

The delay in the implementation of irrigation systems and reliance of the farm sector to the traditional irrigation systems are also factors in the looming water crisis.

Piñol also said the frequency of El Niño—now occurring every two years—drains the country's water supply. ***Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas***

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: E3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

MISSION: PHL FEATURE–SOUTH KOREA

SoKor helps PHL address growth constraints

CONTINUED FROM A1

For many years now, the ROK, through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (Koica) and Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), has helped the Philippines address its development constraints.

As of December 2017, data from the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), showed that South Korea is regarded as the Philippines' sixth-largest source of Official Development Assistance (ODA).

It extended a total ODA of $570.60 million. This is composed of $480.74 million worth of concessional loans and $89.86 million worth of grants.

In 2017, the Philippines received a total ODA of $15.45 billion, consisting of $13.03 billion in loans and grants of $2.42 billion.

Project benefits

THE projects of the South Korean government were focused on agriculture and fisheries; climate change and disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM); health; education; and social justice projects.

Agriculture and fisheries projects funded by South Korea included the Panay Island Upland Sustainable Rural Development Project; Northern Iloilo Fishery Rehabilitation Development Project; and the Quirino Integrated Agricultural Development Project Phase II.

The Panay Island Upland Sustainable Rural Development Project benefited 2,026 households and 1,033 upland farmers through community development and the creation of income-generating projects in its first two phases of implementation.

These income-generating projects included crop production, livestock and poultry, farm machineries, postharvest facilities and capacity-building activities for farmers were provided.

The project's third and final phase is currently being implemented in 11 municipalities across Aklan, Antique, Capiz and Iloilo. It involves the establishment of agricultural marketing projects, access to agribusiness credit, construction of farm-to-market road and conduct of capacity building for upland farmers.

Another project, the Northern Iloilo Fishery Rehabilitation Development Project, is currently undergoing procurement for construction works. However, through the project, Koica would develop a port operation and maintenance plan in partnership with the Philippine Ports Authority. This plan would guide the provincial government of Iloilo and municipal government of Concepcion in ensuring the sustainability of the project.

The other project, the Quirino Integrated Agricultural Development Project Phase II, is being implemented in partnership with the province's local government.

It is currently completing implementation plans for the development of agroforestry, establishment of a cattle breeding center for livestock development and enhancement of value chain for rural development. These project components are expected to start in May.

"The project is expected to replicate the successful poverty reduction models of the first phase implemented from 2013-2016 and the provincial government of Quirino is gearing up to showcase Phase II as a global example/model for integrated rural development," the Korean government said.

The climate change and DRRM projects of the Korean government include Adapting to Climate Change Impacts through the Construction of Water Impounding Facilities in the Philippines, or the Pasa Small Reservoir Irrigation Project and Automation of Flood Early Warning System for Disaster Mitigation in Greater Metro Manila.

The Pasa Small Reservoir Irrigation System has been turned over to the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) in July 2018. The irrigation system, which is now operational, provides water to 322 hectares of farms. Reforestation activities in 153 hectares of forest lands were also completed to promote the sustainability of watershed resources.

Around 41 personnel from NIA and other related agencies have been sent to Korea to learn about watershed management as well as dam operation and maintenance. Various local workshops and trainings for farmer beneficiaries were also conducted to inform them of the project benefits and teach proper usage and care of the irrigation system.

The Automation of Flood Early Warning System for Disaster Mitigation in Greater Metro Manila, meanwhile, was turned over to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) last December.

The facility was fitted with Automatic Water Level Gauges (AWLG), Automatic Rain Gauges (ARG), Warning Post, CCTVs, Command Center with state-of-the-art equipment, and newly developed software that are now fully operational. These have improved the responsiveness to natural disasters and mitigated damages to residents in Tullahan and Pasig-Marikina River Basin.

"To ensure the sustainability of the project, Koica specifically designed a multiyear training on Automation of Flood Early Warning System in Korea for Pagasa personnel," the Korean government said.

PART 1 OF 3

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: E3

PART 2 OF 3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

"Flood drills were also conducted to train local residents. Pagasa also included the project in their annual budget to make sure that enough funds are allocated for its regular maintenance."

Various local workshops were conducted for local government units, other partner agencies that are mandated to address issues related to disaster risk reduction. The project also involved local residents to inform them of how the project is utilized to minimize casualties and property damages by securing forecast lead time.

Health and education

IN terms of health projects, the Korean government is financing the Interoperable Health Information System for Region 4A-Calabarzon; Integrated, Equity Focused Service Delivery for Accelerated Improvement of Maternal and Newborn Health; Rehabilitation and Strengthening of the Felipe Abrigo Memorial Hospital and the Guian Inter-local Health Zone; and Integrated Nutrition and Health Actions in the first 1,000 days. The Interoperable Health Information System for Region 4A-Calabarzon was turned over to Department of Health (DOH) last October. But efforts to improve and maximize project resources are being undertaken.

A special focus will be given in the province of Laguna as this province has the requisite infrastructure to maintain and sustain the system. However, expansion to other project areas will be done upon the discretion of the DOH.

Meanwhile, the Integrated, Equity Focused Service Delivery for Accelerated Improvement of Maternal and Newborn Health project officially ended in December.

The project has been deemed to be highly successful and has exceeded expectations, leading to a 63-percent decline in maternal deaths, and 45-percent decline in infant deaths in the 10 project sites.

To sustain and replicate the successes of the project, a three-pronged strategy has been used. The project interventions were rolled out through DOH Representatives and project successes were shared at the regional level to generate awareness about the approaches.

The World Health Organization (WHO), meanwhile, has developed a toolbox that consolidated the various tools developed to promote maternal and newborn health in the Davao Region.

The other project is the Rehabilitation and Strengthening of the Felipe Abrigo Memorial Hospital and the Guian Inter-local Health Zone.

Construction is expected to start within the year. Koica remains committed to finish the construction of a well-equipped hospital that is compliant with Philippine regulations.

Another project, the Integrated Nutrition and Health Actions in the first 1,000 days, aims to directly address malnutrition. Consultations with various stakeholders have been initiated and the Unicef is also preparing the survey that will provide the baseline data in project sites.

To ensure that the initiatives introduced through the project will be sustained, the Korean government is undertaking a careful selection of partners who have the means and inclination to continue project gains, building of strong relationship with stakeholders.

Risks are being identified; capture knowledge; demonstrate impact on subnational and national level; and influence policy-makers and institutionalizing change.

The education projects of ROK in the Philippines included the reconstruction and strengthening of the Visayas State University (VSU) Tolosa Campus which was turned over to the VSU last year and the Better Life for Out-of-School Girls to Fight against Poverty and Injustice in the Philippines.

The construction of two buildings in the VSU's Tolosa Campus includes equipment and other facilities such as school and dorm furniture are being maintained by the VSU Planning and Infrastructure Management Office and counterpart staff of Koica.

VSU also included the project in their annual budget to make sure that enough funds are allocated for its regular maintenance and for the prudent use of the facility such as power consumption and other utilities. An operations manual was also developed to make sure that rules within the building are properly implemented.

The other project is the Better Life for Out-of-School Girls to Fight against Poverty and Injustice in the Philippines which supports the development and implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines.

Through the project, the documents and learning materials for the ALS Curriculum in Parallel and Equivalent to K to 12 National

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: B3

PART 3 OF 3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

KOICA President Lee Mi-kyung (left) and Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol unveil the Panay Local Food Center, a component of the Panay Island Upland–Sustainable Rural Development Project in San Miguel, Iloilo. This was one of the initiatives submitted by the development-aid agency to the Mission: PHL as its entry for the Project of the Year. PNA/PERLA LENA

Curriculum has been revised and enhanced. This includes the Budget of Works, ALS Learners' Books and ALS Teachers' Guidebooks.

A series of workshop were also provided for the capacity building of ALS mobile teachers and coordinators. Around 12 Department of Education key officials and teachers were sent to Korea for an international workshop.

To set-up a platform of motivation for out-of-school girls, two capacity building programs for the ALS learners were conducted. The Girls Education Center will be constructed in Tacloban this year and is expected to be operational by 2020.

In terms of social justice, the Korean government financed the project titled, "Enhancing the Criminal Investigation Capability of the Philippine National Police (PNP)." It aimed to provide vehicles and forensic kits to the PNP.

To date, Koica has already turned-over 130 police vehicles and 120 forensic kits to the PNP. These equipment are currently operational and are being used by police officers in Metro Manila, Baguio, Angeles, Cebu and Davao.

Around 142 motorbikes are also scheduled to be delivered in the middle of this year. All of these would be operated and maintained by the PNP using funds from their regular budget and personnel from their existing manpower.

Koica also aims to ensure the sustainability of the project by enhancing the institutional capability of the PNP. Around 150 police officers would be sent to Korea to participate in various capacity-building programs.

The Korean government has conducted local trainings and workshops to improve the skills of more than 170 police officers.

Loans

ON top of these projects, the Philippines was also able to obtain a loan from the Korea Eximbank to expand the Puerto Princesa airport. The loan was used to improve and upgrade the Puerto Princesa Airport which is expected to see an influx of tourists.

The air traffic demand of Puerto Princesa Airport has increased with an average growth rate of more than 30 percent since 2010 for the sake of the famous Underground River which has been designated as one of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

"The purpose of this project is to improve the existing facilities of Puerto Princesa Airport by expanding its present capacity to meet the projected passenger and cargo demand, as well as to enhance the airport's aviation operation, service, security and safety standard in compliance with the international standards," documents read.

These projects are not the only ones to be financed by the Korean government. There are a number of big-ticket projects that are being discussed by the two countries and the focus will still be on addressing the Philippines' development constraints.

Indeed, the relationship that was built nearly 70 years ago in the battlefield continues and has made Korea and the Philippines brothers for life.

PILIPINO MIRROR
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Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 8

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PH PALALAWAKIN ANG AGRI EXPORTS SA HUNGARY

TARGET ng Filipinas na mapalawak ang shipments ng farm products nito sa Hungary.

Lumagda noong Miyerkoles ang Department of Agriculture (DA) ng memorandum of understanding (MOU) sa Hungarian government upang mapag-ibayo ang bilateral agricultural trade sa pagitan ng Manila at Budapest.

"The MOU would reinforce the positive engagements between the DA and the Ministry of Agriculture in expanding the trade of farm produce between the two countries," wika ni Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol.

Naniniwala ang parehong partido na may malaking potensiyal para sa pagpapabuti ng kalakalan sa agrikultura sa pagitan ng dalawang bansa.

Nais ng Filipinas na lalo pang ma-diversify ang exports nito sa Hungary sa pamamagitan ng pagpapadala ng high value coconut products, fishery products, fresh mangoes, fishmeal, copra meal, seaweed-based animal feeds, carrageenan at abaca.

Sa kanilang panig, daragdagan naman ng Hungary ang poultry meat products exports nito sa Maynila.

Ayon kay Piñol, makikibahagi ang DA sa Hungarian Agri Expo sa Setyembre makaraang imbitahan siya ni Hungarian Agriculture Minister István Nagy na dumalo sa event.

"I made a commitment to bring products including our coconut oil, syrup, because we are promoting those," anang kalihim sa isang news briefing matapos ang MOU signing.

"The Hungarian minister said that among the items that they need are fruits particularly our mangoes, pineapple, bananas," dagdag pa niya.

Sa datos ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), ang agricultural exports ng bansa sa Hungary noong 2018 ay bumaba ng 9.09 percent sa $1.85 million mula sa $2.035 million noong 2017.

Ang farm exports ng bansa sa Hungary ay kinabibilangan ng unmanufactured tobacco, tuna at pineapple products.

JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS

Manila Standard

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

State of calamity in 18 El Niño areas

NDRRMC: Losses hit ₱2.6b; cloud seeding pushed

PRELIMINARY damage wrought by El Niño, which placed 18 areas nationwide under a state of calamity, has hit P2.675 billion, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

In the Council's latest ledger released Wednesday, Region 12 suffered the most damage with an estimated cost of P808 million followed by Region 5 with P793.9 million.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Region 8, MIMAROPA, Region 6 and the CALABARZON also suffered great loss due to El Niño, although specific figures were not immediately available.

In related developments:

• The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System mulls over conducting cloud seeding over Angat Dam as El Niño whips Metro Manila and surrounding provinces.

Engineer Patrick Dizon of the MWSS on Wednesday said the office had written the Bureau of Soils and Water Management and the government-run weather bureau for cloud seeding activities over the dam.

During the weekly Kapihan sa Manila Bay news forum, Dizon recalled that

Next page

SOMEWHERE, DOWN THERE. Cousins Archie Baran and Angel Bataanon patiently search for root crops from a parched sweet potato farm in Barangay Kapatagan in Carcar, Cebu on Tuesday—among the many areas in the country that has been whipped by dry spell from the weather phenomenon El Niño. **Norman Cruz**

Manila Standard

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PART 2 OF 2

State...

From A1

cloud seeding operations to increase the Angat Dam's water level during 2015's El Niño cost around P3 million.

Cloud seeding is a type of weather modification that aims to induce precipitation by dispersing substances into the air.

Dizon said PAGASA, which would assess which clouds were seedable, recommended the series of operations to be done in May, when little rainfall was expected.

•The Cordillera Administrative Region has recorded a total damage of P1.2 billion worth of agricultural products as the municipality of Paracelis in Mountain Province declared a state of calamity due to El Niño.

"As of today, the estimated damage in the agricultural sector is at P1.2 billion, but it is still subject for validation," Department of Agriculture senior agriculturist Lito Mocati told the Philippine News Agency on Wednesday.

Most of the damage had been inflicted on high-value crops like corn, rice and vegetables.

• In North Cotabato, four hectares of fishponds have dried up due to El Niño which left thus far an estimated P2.2 billion in damage to agricultural crops.

Based on NDRRMC records, 16 provinces, towns and cities have already declared a state of calamity due to the dry spell since Feb. 11, with Datu Abdullah Sangki in Mindanao the latest to do so on March 13.

In Santo Niño town in South Cotabato, four hectares of fish farms have dried up since the National Irrigation Administration cut the water supply to the town due to scarcity.

Fish farmers said the town's fish production would surely suffer delay. Particularly affected, they said, was the production of tilapia, News To Go, beamed nationwide, reported Wednesday.

In Mountain Province, Mocati said that damage recorded for corn was more than P900 million; P380 million for rice; and more than P10 million for highland vegetables.

He said the provinces of Ifugao, Apayao and Abra had submitted their reports for their agricultural damage loss.

Mocati said they were currently coordinating with the Bureau of Soils and Water Management for the schedule of cloud seeding in the region.

Meanwhile, the municipal government of Paracelis in Mountain Province has declared the town under a state of calamity due to the extent of damage that the drought has caused.

"The Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council recommended the declaration of the entire municipality of Paracelis under a state of calamity due to dry spell," Councilor Djarma Rafael told PNA on Wednesday.

The resolution said that crops were already wilting due to the prevailing dry spell and has caused widespread damage in the agricultural sector.

"Not only with our agricultural products but also the prevailing dry spell has caused outbreak in our poultry, livestock and fishponds representing 70 percent in total damages in the agricultural sector of the municipality," she said.

She said the resolution for the declaration was approved during the regular session on March 26, which Mayor Avelino Amangyen also signed on the same day.

Paracelis, a second-class municipality, relies heavily on agriculture with majority of its products being corn. **PNA**

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 10

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

₱35-M fund for El Niño-hit C.Visayas areas

By **MINERVA BC NEWMAN**

CEBU CITY – The Department of Agriculture (DA) in Central Visayas is ready to mitigate the impact of El Nino to agriculture and fishery in the region with a standby fund allocation of P35 million, according to DA El Niño spokesman regional technical director Joel Elumba.

"Agriculture sector is very vulnerable to all weather changes, that is why we are always prepared to address impacts of calamities such as the El Niño to agriculture," Elumba said.

He said that as early as last year DA had briefed agriculture stakeholders on the effects of El Niño to crops, livestock and irrigation.

Included in DA's campaign are ways to optimize the use of non-vulnerable agricultural lands such as maximizing the use of water in areas near dams.

Another is the saving of production in vulnerable areas with existing crops. Elumba said it is necessary to save production by irrigating agricultural lands with crops that are yet to be harvested. "Cloud seeding operations maybe implemented," he said.

Cebu province has declared a state of calamity due to damage from El Niño. Elumba said the raw data from the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPA) were sent via SMS from the concerned Municipal Agriculture office and were consolidated by the OPA which was the basis for its declaration.

"These data are still subject for validation by the joint technical team of DA and OPA-Cebu. Once these are validated this will be disseminated to all concerned agencies including those concerned with farm insurance. These will also be the basis of DA's action and implementation of mitigating measures," Elumba told media during a forum Tuesday.

El Niño damage included 2.8 hectares of agricultural production in Balamban, 267 ha of corn and rice fields in Asturias, 50 ha of vegetables and corn products in Naga, 78 ha of farm produce in Mabinay, Negros Oriental and 20 ha of assorted crops in Siquijor.

"There are also reports of losses in the fishery sector with the Tilapia fingerlings. All these data are currently being validated and we continue to extend the necessary assistance to the farmers in Central Visayas, Elumba said.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Tolentino, Mangudadatu vow agricultural reform

By **BEN R. ROSARIO**

BACOLOD CITY – Hugpong ng Pagbabago senatorial bets former presidential political adviser Francis Tolentino and Rep. Zajid "Dong" Mangudadatu vowed to prioritize agricultural reform legislation and called for measures that would immediately address concerns aired by farmers and fishermen.

Interviewed here, Tolentino called for the stricter implementation of Republic Act 1000 or the Agricultural Credit Reform Act to swiftly open credit to farmers and fishermen that would give them a fighting chance against the effects of the El Niño weather phenomenon.

He said the agri-agra law is another source of fund that would be helpful in fighting off El Niño but it should be easily accessed by the agircultural sector.

Tolentino lamented that despite the trillions of pesos in available funds for agricultural credit, farmers and fishermen do not avail themselves of the fund because of the paperwork involved in applying for loans.

He backed efforts in Congress to amend the law in order to allow better access to borrowing, adding that loans should be made easily available due to adverse effects of El Niño.

On the other hand, Mangudadatu told reporters here that he will push for the creation of a separate government department that focuses on the development of the fishing and aquaculture industry and address plight of the fisherfolk in the country.

Mangudadatu, vice chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries Resources, said the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources should be transformed into a full government department so that the problems in the industry will be addressed faster and allow the industry to grow.

The Maguindanao solon noted that the move will strengthen further the Philippines position as the top fishing country in the Asia-Pacific region and has the highest marine diversity.

Mangudadatu grew up in a community of fisherfolk and has developed a sense to explore and to develop organic fish farming business. His initiative later expanded into 300 hectares of fish farms that served as a major supplier of fish products in Mindanao provinces.

Meanwhile, Tolentino called on local government units to declare a state of emergency as the dry spell affecting the country could trigger serious productivity problems that would run to trillions of pesos until September, 2019.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: 8

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PH agriculture needs greater consumer support

THE Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) has urged various national agencies and local government units to serve buko juice in their special events and seminars instead of soft drinks to help the country's coconut farmers who have been suffering because of falling copra prices around the world.

Speaking at the Summer Buko Fest last week at the PCA Regional Office in Palo, Leyte, PCA Eastern Visayas Manager Jeffrey delos Reyes said 3.5 million people in the region are dependent on the coconut industry. Since January last year, he said, the price of copra has shrunk by 60 percent—from P38 to P12 per kilo.

Officials are now exploring other opportunities for the coconut industry other than copra. "If one half of our population would drink buko juice every day, it will be a big help to our farmers," the PCA official said. "We are creating opportunities to augment their income and not be copra-dependent."

The coconut industry is part of Philippine agriculture, all of which is facing major problems today. In 2018, agriculture grew by only 0.9 percent and contributed only 0.1 percentage points to the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 6.2 percent for the entire year, according to then Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

The rice industry, in particular, has been down, contributing to the sharp rise in the inflation rate last year. Filipino farmers have not been able to produce enough rice for local consumption, so that the government had to import hundreds of thousands of tons of rice from Vietnam and Thailand.

The immediate government solution has been the Rice Tariffication Law, allowing unlimited importation of rice after payment of a 35 percent tariff, where before, importations had required special permits from the National Food Authority. There should now be sufficient rice for our consumers, but it is imported rice. Our farmers are still unable to produce the rice we need in sufficient quantities and at costs our people can afford.

Last February, Secretary Diokno said the Duterte administration is prioritizing the agriculture sector this year, with the allocation of greater resources and credit assistance to farmers in production and marketing.

The Philippine Coconut Authority's recent appeal for public support is in line with this overall effort to help Philippine agriculture. Filipinos should be able to buy and consume more Philippine rice, even if it costs a little more than the cheap imported kind. Similarly, Filipinos should be able to buy and consume more Philippine coconut products, such as buko juice, as the PCA officials are now pushing with the campaign they launched at the Summer Buko Fest last week.

The government is moving strongly to help Philippine agriculture. It will achieve greater success if Filipino consumers give their support.

PART 1 OF 2

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 8

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PART 2 OF 2

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: B-6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

AGRI PLAIN TALK
ZAC B. SARIAN

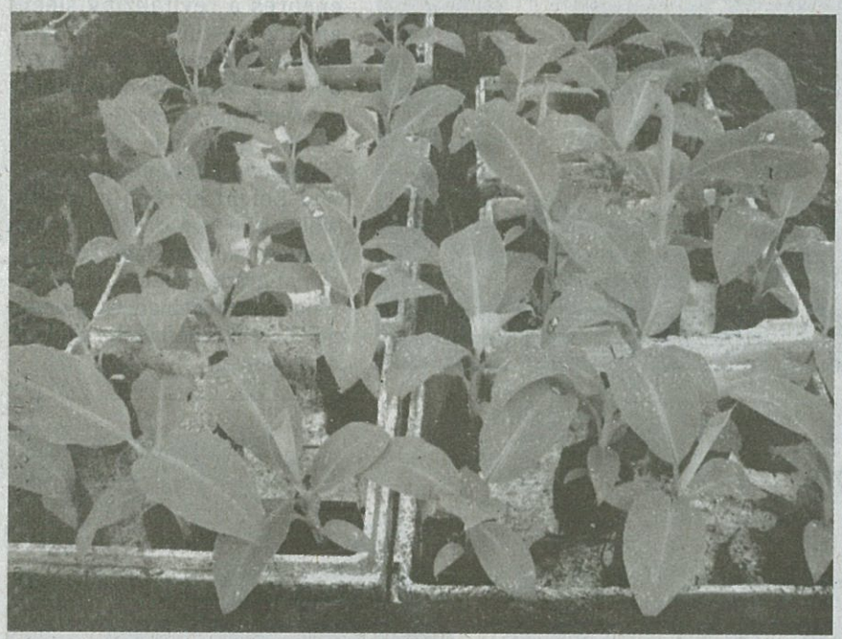
The Mama Sita Banana success story revealed

The Mama Sita banana is now well accepted by farmers, consumers for a number of good reasons. For farmers, it is well adapted to local growing conditions. It has a stocky trunk that makes it resistant to strong wind. It produces fruit a few months earlier than Saba variety. It has been observed to be resistant to diseases that now affect other varieties in the Philippines.

As a consumer, we personally like the taste of the ripe fruit. When it is fully ripe, the skin becomes very thin and the flesh is very sweet. We love the banana shake from ripe Mama Sita. Our friend, Dr. Ronaldo Sumaoang of Tarlac who planted a couple of hectares to this variety reports that local women micro-entrepreneurs buy his fruits for making banana-cue. Other people report that Mama Sita is good for making banana chips.

Mama Sita banana originally came from Thailand where it is known as Namwa-Tiey. It was brought into the country by the late Dr. Benito S. Vergara, then a retired IRRI scientist who volunteered as implementer of a research project that searched for varieties of fruit trees and spices that could be produced commercially in the Philippines for both the local and foreign markets. The project was initiated by Ramon Magsaysay Jr. who was then a senator in 2007.

For the sake of easier name recall, Dr. Vergara renamed the Thai banana



TISSUE-CULTURED MAMA SITA – These are tissue-cultured Mama Sita banana which will start flowering in about one year from planting or earlier. Tissue-cultured plants grow fast.

PART 1 OF 2

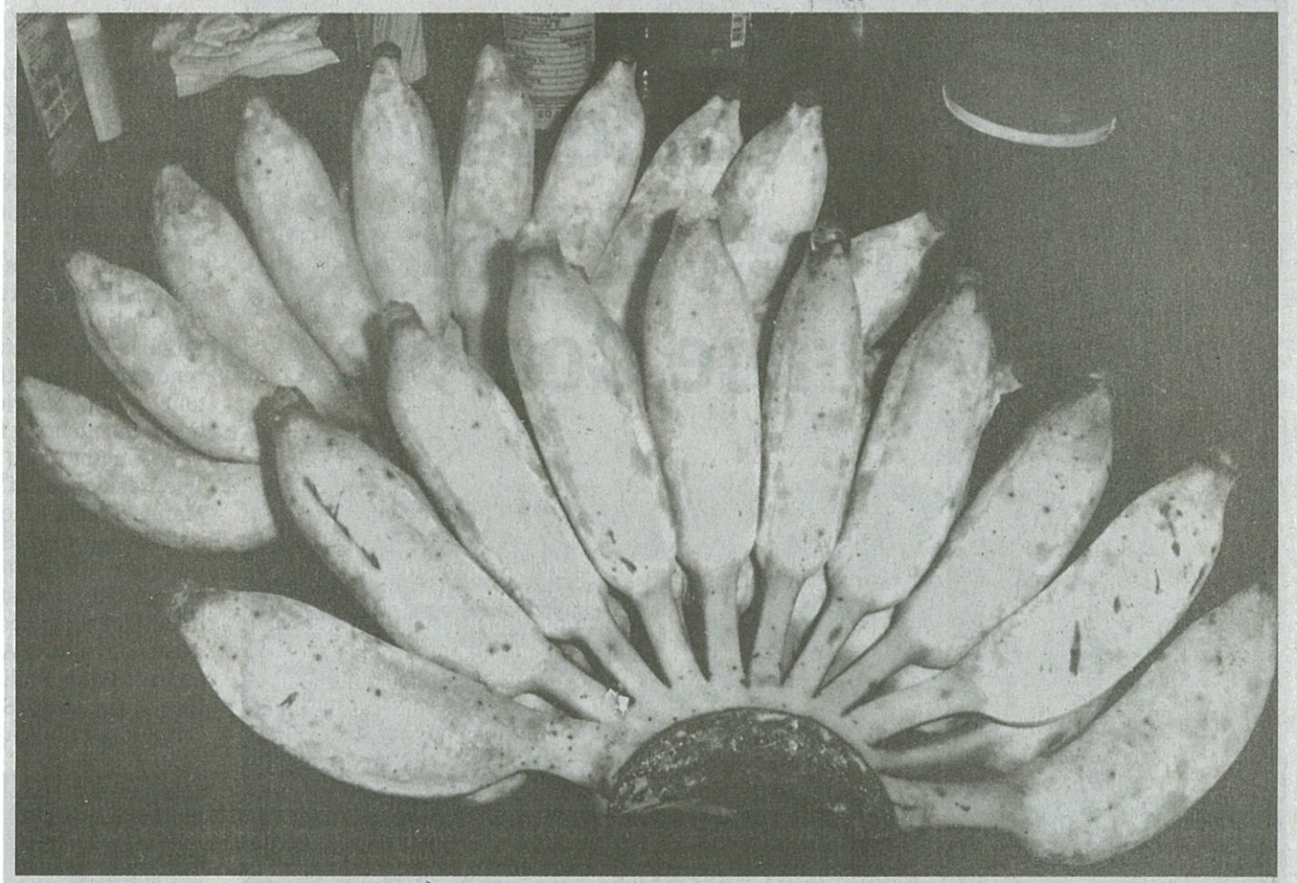
MAMA SITA SUCKERS – These are Mama Sita suckers which are also good for growing if tissue-cultured seedlings are not available. Producing suckers for sale can be a source of income in the farm.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: MAR. 28, 209 Page: B-6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PART 2 OF 2

Section Editor: ZAC B. SARIAN



RIPE MAMA SITA BANANA – These are ripe Mama Sita banana which tastes like a combination of latundan and saba. It is nice to eat as ripe fruit, made into fruit shake, banana cake and other preparations. The mature fruits are also highly suitable for making banana chips.

Mama Sita. Mama Sita is the mother of the chair of Mama Sita Foundation which provided funds for the project. The other funders are two government agencies through the help of Sen. Magsaysay. The two government agencies which gave ₱1 million each are the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development, and the Bureau of Agricultural Research of the Department of Agriculture.

Dr. Vergara got interested in the Namwan Tiey when he saw in 2007 a dwarf banana with a stocky pseudostem in the house of his former student at UP Los Baños. He asked permission to have the banana tissue-cultured in Bangkok so he could bring the seedlings to the Philippines ready for planting. In February 2008, Dr Vergara brought home 800 seedlings. There was not enough space for planting all the seedlings so many were left unplanted. Later, a new place was available and the 4-month-old seedlings were planted in the field. Nine months later, the bananas which were dwarf started to flower, four months earlier than the usual number of days it takes the Saba banana to bear flower.

After we featured Mama Sita in our column in Manila Bulletin, demand for planting materials surged, so Dr. Vergara had it tissue-cultured in Los Baños to meet the demand. Mama Sita had proven its worth. In July 2010, UPLB started a field trial of 18 banana cultivars. In that project, Mama Sita was not affected by Moko disease, bunchy top, and fusarium fungus while most others were affected. When Typhoon Bebeng hit southern Laguna in May 2011, most of the banana plants were destroyed by the typhoon. Fortunately, not a single plant of Mama Sita banana was down, according to Dr. Vergara in his terminal report of the research project.

We also have our personal experience about Mama Sita banana. It tends to be short-statured if the soil is clayey and not fertilized. The bunch is also rather short. However, when it is planted in rich loamy soil, it can grow tall and the bunch could be large and the individual fruits plump. The plant produces a lot of suckers and it can also be a source of income. Our first plant produced 12 suckers in the first year. The trick is to remove the suckers once they are 2.5 feet tall so that more suckers will develop.

We just have a few Mama Sita in our small farm because we grow so many other things. But up to now, we make money from selling the suckers. The fruits are for home consumption. I love to eat the fresh ripe fruit as well as the banana shake my cook makes. My daughter, on the other hand, makes banana cake out of Mama Sita fruits.

MYRNA MAGALONG who has a farm in Cavite is fascinated by the big bunch of Mama Sita banana at the Sarian Farm in Teresa, Rizal.

The Manila Times

Date: MAR. 20, 2019 Page: A7

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

FMR in Sarangani gets P57M allocation

ABOUT P57 million has been allocated for the opening of the Kanalo-Nomoh farm-to-market road (FMR) in Maasim town in Sarangani province.

Gov. Steve Chiongbian Solon said this was part of the P2.1-billion funded infrastructure projects in Sarangani under the Philippine Rural Development Program (PRDP).

Of this amount, around 68.9 percent or P1.4 billion was spent for road development, particularly concreting of FMRs in Sarangani.

Solon said opening of FMRs would help improve the marketing of farmers' products and promote agriculture potentials in the area.

He added that the opening and concreting of Sarangani roads started in 2015, and the concreting of 8 percent of the total 357 kilometers of provincial roads had already started, with about 42 percent finished.

Solon said Sarangani's investment plan from 2016 to 2021prioritized "major core roads that provide strong linkages and connectivity to the existing and potential economic development of the province such as agriculture, tourism, fishery, services, trade and industry."

Under the plan, it is projected that by 2022, the provincial government would have accomplished 75 percent of road concreting.

Funds for Sarangani's infrastructure projects were mostly sourced from the Department of the Interior and Local Government's Kalsada Program and Conditional Matching Grant to Provinces Program, the Department of Agriculture's Food Security Program, PRDP, and the Department of Health's Health Facilities Enhancement Program, with corresponding counterpart funds from the provincial government's Annual Investment Program.

Sarangani has constructed a total of 31 farm-to-market and provincial roads and four bridges.

Some of them are still in progress, with a total of P172 million implemented in 2015; P839 million in 2016; P519 million in 2017; and P568 million in 2018.

Other infrastructure projects implemented were 12 hospitals and one early childhood care center at a cost of P187 million.

Ongoing are the construction of water systems, flood and river control projects, multipurpose hall and the Sarangani Sports Complex inside the capitol compound, with a P200 million fund.

JERRY N. ADLAW

The Manila Times

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

'Crab Capital' boosts production

CALLED the crab capital of Cagayan province, the coastal town of Buguey, is one of the major aquaculture areas in Cagayan Valley (Region 2), with vast areas of brackishwater fishponds and a vibrant fish cage industry within the United Nations (UN)-recognized Buguey Lagoon.

According to the Municipal Agriculturist (MA) office, this town's fisheries industry recently had a major boost with the soft opening of the fish hatchery in the town.

Danilo Rumpon, MA officer, said that while fish farmers in the area still have to go to or order tilapia fingerlings from as far as Isabela province, the availability of fingerlings here could improve productivity and profitability of fish farmers by way of reduced transport costs and higher survival rate.

Rumpon said that with Buguey's extensive fishponds and fish cages within the lagoon, fish farmers could culture species of *siganids*, *bangus*, tilapia, *talakitok* and snapper. Also within the lagoon, oysters could thrive naturally.

Recognized by the UN in 1998, the 14-kilometer Buguey Lagoon is rich in aquatic resources, habitats of endemic species in the area, especially siganids, shrimps and shellfish as well as crabs and crablings. It was declared "a land of international importance" by the UN Educational, Scientific and Educational Council.

Rumpon said tilapia fingerlings were being given free at the moment from the Buguey Municipal Fish Hatchery (BMFH).

"We are still on the initial stages. The hatchery is soon to be fully operational as we are still on the process of procuring needed equipment," he said, adding that fingerlings would be sold and only part of total order would be subsidized.

A pet project of Mayor Lloyd Antiporda, the hatchery facility, located near the municipal town hall, has several covered and uncovered circular and rectangular tanks, storage room and staff house.

In 2016, the project was initially funded under the Bottom-Up Budgeting system with P1.75 million from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Region 2 office and P250,000 equity from the local government unit (LGU).

Rumpon said the LGU had continuously made investments for the project, enabling it to fully operate.

"In addition to the present saline tolerant tilapia, we will go into mudcrab hatchery later. In that case, the hatchery will become the very first mudcrab hatchery in the Cagayan Valley region," he said.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

The Manila Times

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

SSNM can increase corn yields

THE precise application of fertilizers to produce corn can almost double on-farm yields, according to results from a program implemented by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

More than 200 farmers, mostly corn farmers from Barangay San Vicente and neighboring barangays (villages), attended the "Farmers' Field Day on Community-based Participatory Action Research (CPAR) on Yellow Corn Using Site-Specific Nutrient Management (SSNM) Approach" in Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro on March 20, where they claimed they got as much as 7.9 tons per hectare (t/ha). The average corn yield in the barangay prior to utilizing SSNM was 4 t/ha.

Organized by DA-Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan), the field day aimed to showcase the impact of technologies generated from the CPAR project for the benefit of corn farmers in the region.

One of the major highlights of the activity were the testimonials of the farmer-cooperators, wherein they claimed that their yellow corn production increased from an average of 4 t/ha to 7.9 t/ha. They attributed the yield increase from the adoption of the SSNM best practices and the use of the Quick Guide for Fertilizing Hybrid Yellow Corn.

Louella Rowena Lorenzana, regional technical director for Research and Regulations of the Department of Agriculture-Mimaropa (Region 4A) (wearing blue blouse), leads corn farmers during the harvest festival" in Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro, on March 20. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CPAR Yellow Corn SSNM project is funded by the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), an agency under the DA.

"The SSNN is an approach which promotes the optimal use of fertilizers, existing nutrients from the soil, crop residue, manures and timely application of fertilizers," DA-Mimaropa said in a statement.

The BAR-Applied Communication Division in collaboration with PTV 4's *"Mag Agri-Tayo"* program, documented the field day.

SSNM was first utilized in rice farming with the aim of precisely utilizing inputs. The usual method of applying fertlizers is the "blanket" method, which can result in overuse of inputs.

"The SSNM approach does not specifically aim to reduce or increase fertilizer use. It aims to apply nutrients at optimal rates and times to achieve high yield and high efficiency of nutrient use by the rice crop, leading to high cash value of the harvest per unit of fertilizer invested," BAR said.

CONRAD M. CARIÑO

The Manila Times

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: B5

Achieving water security

(second of two parts)

WAYS OF THE OASIS

DR. WILLIAM DAR

WE never learn.

All the while we all knew that an El Niño episode was coming this year and what did we do in advance?

Almost nothing. Or absolutely nothing.

In contrast, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam as early as August last year issued a directive to rice farmers in the Mekong River Delta (MRD) to adjust their planting calendar to avoid the impact of salinity intrusion. The directive took into account climate-risk related maps and adaptation plans covering the provinces comprising the MRD.

The article "Vietnam adopts pre-emptive measures in the Mekong River Delta against El Niño" posted in the CGIAR portal stated that rice farmers in the MRD have made adjustments to their planting calendar, enabling them to avoid the adverse effects of the dry spell, including seawater intrusion.

"Based on the reports of the 13 provincial DARDs (Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development), areas planting earlier (November 2018) reached 802,702 hectares (from 174,538 ha in 2017) and a reduction in later planting (December to February) to 596,543 ha (from 1,226,961 ha). This covers more than 600,000 ha, which enable the farmers to avoid the adverse effects of salinity intrusion during winter-spring rice planting season being exacerbated by the ongoing El Niño," it stated.

Indeed, we never learn.

In 2015-2016, the country experienced one of the worst El Niño episodes that affected our agriculture sector severely. And we chose to wallow in amnesia.

Eventually, we pay the price.

Rice imports are set to arrive into the country as the Rice Tariffication Law has already been signed last month. And rice farming has the highest water requirement among crops. So, this is actually the worst time for smallholder rice farmers to be hit by El Niño, as they will be facing competition from imports from Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam.

I heard cloud seeding operations are in the offing. But when the rains from the cloud seeding operations arrive, where do we store the rainwater when our rainharvesting rate is an anemic 4 percent?

Worse, heavy downpour will easily wash away dried up top soil, affecting long-term crop productivity.

Now that another El Niño episode is here, let us start learning lessons anew and make sure we don't forget them. More importantly, we should try new and innovative solutions and technologies to help avoid water shortage not only during El Niño occurrences but also when water is scarce, like the dry seasons.

Also, there were a lot discussed during the National Water Summit (NWS) held on March 21 at the Novotel in Cubao, Quezon City. I was the one who delivered the situationer and solutions for Agriculture and Economics during the NWS, and I will discuss, among others, part of those in this second installment.

The way forward

Groundwater extraction remains a prevalent practice in many areas in the Philippines, which can be made sustainable if aquifers are recharged during the rainy season. Failure to recharge aquifers, which is hardly done in this country, can lead to saltwater intrusion that can make farming and inland fishery production impossible.

The areas in the country where groundwater extraction is practiced and saltwater intrusion is happening are Metro Manila and Bulacan, according to experts.

One good way to make our aquifers healthy anew is through artificial recharging, which is not rocket science. India is a country artificial recharging of aquifers is practiced with numerous systems/models in place that can be easily duplicated in the Philippines.

We edo not even need foreign help to develop artificial aquifer recharging systems, as local research institutions and state colleges and universities (SCUs) can take the lead. The most brilliant students of SCUs, particularly those that offer agriculture and related courses, can even be mobilized design artificial aquifer recharging systems for the local setting.

There is also a need to build more cascading water catchment ponds in areas that host the large dams to help promote more economic activities in the lowlands.

The prevalent practice today is to simply unload all the excess water from the dams and let them flow out to the seas, which results in almost zero economic benefits.

If there were cascading water catchment ponds or systems in place, the excess water could be impounded or stored to raise crops and fish and used to clean establishments, among others.

Flood control infrastructure should also be designed in a way to promote economic activities, or the excess water saved through encatchments or ponds, which also prevents the flooding of lowland areas especially farmlands.

But for dams to have water, we should invest in reforestation and watershed rehabilitation and desilting, so the capacity of the dams will reach 100 percent and have enough water for irrigation, household, industry and power generation. Illegal logging operations, which is usually followed by slash-and-burn (*kaingin*) farming, should be completely stopped.

As for irrigation, about 1.89 million ha are already covered under the National Irrigation System (NIS) of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA). But the NIS only functions at 40 percent from issues ranging from dilapidated structures to low water supply.

Another 1.24 million ha need to be placed under the NIS, and NIA cannot do it alone. So, it makes sense to invite the private sector to invest in national irrigation systems following the Build-Transfer mechanism. Solar-powered irrigation is OK, so as long as there is water supply in our rivers and remain functional during the dry season.

For small water impounding systems (SWIPs), the Bureau of Soils and Water Management should be given as much as P10 billion from the current P1 billion to establish such systems. SWIPs can also serve as water catchment systems linked to the big dams.

It is hard to write about all the solutions that were discussed during the NWS, but the presentation of the NEDA during the summit showed one thing — the country is already "water stressed."

Should we wait until our water resources run dry? As Benjamin Franklin said: "When the well is dry, we know the worth of water."

It is really time to learn lessons.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: A1 & A2

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

El Niño farm damage doubles to ₱2.68B

By Cai U. Ordinario @caiordinario

EL Niño has cost the agriculture sector an estimated P2.68 billion—double the earlier P1.3 billion reported by the Department of Agriculture—and forced 16 areas to declare a state of calamity, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said on Wednesday.

Based on the report, the largest damage was in rice, worth P1.45 billion or more than half of the total damage reported.

In terms of the affected regions, the hardest hit was Region 12 or Soccsksargen, where agriculture damage reached P808.67 billion.

"An estimated P2.68 billion worth of damages to agriculture were reported in Regions Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Region 5, Region 6, Region 8, Region 12, and BARMM [Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao]," NDRRMC said. "Figures are subject to verification and validation of the Department of Agriculture."

In response, the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) formulated a Roadmap for Addressing the Impact of El Niño (RAIN), similar to the one it created in 2015.

₱1.45B

Damage to rice from El Niño, accounting for more than half of total damage

The road map focused on measures that aim to mitigate the impact of El Niño in food security, energy security, health and safety.

"Under food security, it targets the issue of reduced food production together with increasing food

Continued on A2

Continued from A1

prices and decreased income of farmers and agricultural workers," the report stated.

The Department of Agriculture, for its part, has monitored and coordinated with its units and the NDRRMC as well as the Pagasa and the National Irrigation Administration.

The DA also released P18.3 million for cloud-seeding operations.

Further, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said it has allocated P1.2 billion in standby resources.

This is composed of P147.3 million in standby funds in the DSWD Central Office and Field Offices; around 390,294 family food packs worth P139 million; and around P929 million worth of other food and nonfood items.

Based on NDRRMC estimates, a total of 71,909 families or 359,545 Filipinos were affected by the El Niño in North Cotabato province.

Some 79,044 farmers and 103,247.865 hectares of land were affected in Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas and Eastern Visayas. The most number of affected farmers were in Bicol at 23,487, while the largest tract of land was affected in Soccsksargen at 32,867.145 hectares.

Balita

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: 6

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

EDITORIAL

Kinakailangan ng agrikultura ng Pilipinas ng mas malaking suporta ng consumer

HINIKAYAT ng Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) ang iba't ibang pambansang ahensya at mga lokal na pamahalaan na buko juice ang ihain sa kanilang mga espesyal na pagtitipon at mga seminar sa halip na softdrinks upang matulungan ang mga magniniyog sa bansa na nagdurusa dahil sa patuloy na pagbaba ng presyo ng mga kopras sa buong mundo.

Sa kanyang talumpati sa Summer Buko Fest nitong nakaraang linggo sa PCA Regional Office sa Palo, Leyte, sinabi ni PCA Eastern Visayas Manager Jeffrey delos Reyes na 3.5 milyong tao sa rehiyon ang nakadepende sa industriya ng niyog. Mula Enero ng nakaraang taon, aniya, bumagsak na ng 60 porsiyento ang presyo ng kopra – mula P38 patungong P12 kada kilo.

Pinag-aaralan ngayon ng mga opisyal ang iba pang oportunidad para sa industriya ng niyog maliban sa kopra. "If one half of our population would drink buko juice every day, it will be a big help to our farmers," pahayag ng PCA official. "We are creating opportunities to augment their income and not be a copras-dependent."

Ang industriya ng niyog ay bahagi ng agrikultura ng Pilipinas, na nahaharap ngayon sa malalaking problema. Noong 2018, nasa 0.9% lamang ang inilago ng agrikultura at nakapag-ambag lamang ng 0.1% sa pagkabuuang paglago ng Gross Domestic Product (GDP) na 6.2% para sa buong taon, ayon kay dating Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

Ang industriya ng bigas, partikular, ay bumaba, na nagdulot ng pagtaas sa inflation rate nitong nakaraang taon.Hindi sapat ang naaaning palay ng mga Pilipinong magsasaka para sa lokal na paggamit, kaya naman kinakailangan pang mag-angkat ng pamahalaan ng daang libong tonelada ng bigas mula sa Vietnam at Thailand.

Ang Rice Tariffication Law ang naging agarang solusyon ng pamahalaan, na nagpapahintulot ng walang limitasyong pag-angkat ng bigas matapos magbayad ng 35% taripa, na dati ay kinakailangan pa ng special permit mula sa National Food Authority. Dapat lamang na sapat na ngayon ang bigas para sa ating mga consumer, ngunit ito ay angkat na bigas. Hindi pa rin kinakaya ng ating mga magsasaka na maibigay ang ating kinakailangang sapat na dami ng bigas sa halagang abot-kaya ng masa.

Nitong Pebrero, sinabi ni Secretary Diokno na prayoridad ng administrasyong Duterte ang sektor ng agrikultura ngayong taon, sa alokasyon ng mas malaking pondo at tulong na pautang sa mga magsasaka sa produksiyon at pagbebenta.

Ang apela kamakailan ng Philippine Coconut Authority para sa suporta ng publiko ay nakaangkla sa pagkalahatang hakbang para matulungan ang agrikultura ng bansa. Dapat na bumili at gamitin ng mga Pilipino ang mas maraming bigas ng Pilipinas, kahit pa nga mas mahal ito sa murang angkat na klase. Kaalinsabay nito, dapat na bumili at gamitin ng mga Pilipino ng mas maraming produktong niyog ng Pilipinas, tulad ng buko juice, sa pagsusulong ngayon ng mga opisyal ng PCA sa kampanya kanilang inilunsad sa Summer Buko Fest nitong nakaraang linggo.

Kumikilos na ang pamahalaan upang matulungan ang agrikultura ng bansa. Mas magiging matagumpay ito kung bibigyan ito ng suporta ng mga Pilipino.

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

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 6

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

EDITORIAL

PH agriculture needs greater consumer support

THE Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) has urged various national agencies and local government units to serve buko juice in their special events and seminars instead of soft drinks to help the country's coconut farmers who have been suffering because of falling copra prices around the world.

Speaking at the Summer Buko Fest last week at the PCA Regional Office in Palo, Leyte, PCA Eastern Visayas Manager Jeffrey delos Reyes said 3.5 million people in the region are dependent on the coconut industry. Since January last year, he said, the price of copra has shrunk by 60 percent – from ₱38 to ₱12 per kilo.

Officials are now exploring other opportunities for the coconut industry other than copra. "If one half of our population would drink buko juice every day, it will be a big help to our farmers," the PCA official said. "We are creating opportunities to augment their income and not be copra-dependent."

The coconut industry is part of Philippine agriculture, all of which is facing major problems today. In 2018, agriculture grew by only 0.9 percent and contributed only 0.1 percentage points to the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 6.2 percent for the entire year, according to then Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

The rice industry, in particular, has been down, contributing to the sharp rise in the inflation rate last year. Filipino farmers have not been able to produce enough rice for local consumption, so that the government had to import hundreds of thousands of tons of rice from Vietnam and Thailand.

The immediate government solution has been the Rice Tariffication Law, allowing unlimited importation of rice after payment of a 35 percent tariff, where before, importations had required special permits from the National Food Authority. There should now be sufficient rice for our consumers, but it is imported rice. Our farmers are still unable to produce the rice we need in sufficient quantities and at costs our people can afford.

Last February, Secretary Diokno said the Duterte administration is prioritizing the agriculture sector this year, with the allocation of greater resources and credit assistance to farmers in production and marketing.

The Philippine Coconut Authority's recent appeal for public support is in line with this overall effort to help Philippine agriculture. Filipinos should be able to buy and consume more Philippine rice, even if it costs a little more than the cheap imported kind. Similarly, Filipinos should be able to buy and consume more Philippine coconut products, such as buko juice, as the PCA officials are now pushing with the campaign they launched at the Summer Buko Fest last week.

The government is moving strongly to help Philippine agriculture. It will achieve greater success if Filipino consumers give their support.

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

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 1 & 15

ISINUSULONG sa Kamara de Representantes ang panukala na pinaniniwalaang tutugon sa problema sa basura. **SUNDAN SA PAHINA 15**

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

BASURA PALIT BIGAS

Itinutulak sa Kamara

Mula sa pahina 1

Sa ilalim ng House Bill 9170 ni Deputy Minority Leader Harlin Neil Abayon, bibigyan ng insentibo ang mga taong maghihiwalay ng recyclable plastics at magdadala ng mga basura sa redemption centers.

Naniniwala si Abayon na makatutulong ito para maengganyo ang publiko na ipunin ang mga basura para sa proper disposal.

Sa ilalim ng panukala, ang bawat isang kilo ng non-hazardous at recyclable plastic wastes ay may katapat na isang kilong bigas o cash equivalent.

Samantala, ang isang kilo naman ng metallic non-hazardous waste ay may katumbas na dalawang kilo ng bigas o katapat na halaga sa pera.

Inaatasan ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Agriculture (DA) at Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) na hikayatin ang publiko, mga tahanan at mga asosasyon na gawin ang segregation ng mga basura sa kanilang mga lugar.

CONDE BATAC

PILIPINO MIRROR
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• SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

Date: MAR. 28, 2009 Page: 4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

P1.2-B PINSALA NG TAGTUYOT SA REGION 2

CAGAYAN – UMABOT na sa P2.1 billion ang pinsala ng tagtuyot na nararanasan ng mga magsasaka sa kanilang mga tanim na mais at palay sa buong Region 2.

Napag-alaman ng PILIPINO Mirror, na sa tanim na palay ay umaabot sa 48,394 hectares o katumbas ng P702 million na ang naitalang pinsala ng Department of Agriculture (DA) Region-2.

Ayon kay Regional Executive Director Narciso Edillo, nangunguna ang lalawigan ng Cagayan na apektado ng tagtuyot na tanim na palay na may lawak ng pinsala na 35,054 hectares.

Pangalawa ang Isabela na may 8,145 hectares, pangatlo naman ang Nueva Vizcaya na may 2,551 hectares at pang-apat naman ang lalawigan ng Quirino na may naitalang 1,743 hectares.

Ang lawak naman ng pinsala sa mga pananim na mais ay 66,963 hectares na may katumbas na mahigit P1.4 billion na maari pa umanong madagdagan pa ang bilang ng pinsala sa sandaling maisumite na sa pamunuan ng DA ang iba pang mga bayan sa rehiyon ang kanilang mga tanim na palay at mais na naapektuhan ng tagtuyot. Sinabi pa ni Regional Executive Director Narciso Edillo ng DA Region 2, sa sandaling maisumite na sa kanilang tanggapan ang lahat ng damage report sa epekto ng El Niño sa buong rehiyong dos, ay pasisimulan ng tangapan ng DA ang alokasyon ng pondo para sa seed subsidy upang maipamahagi na nila sa mga magsasaka na naapektuhan ng tagtuyot.

IRENE GONZALES

PILIPINO MIRROR
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• SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

SUPERMARKETS SINIGURO NA MAYROONG NFA RICE

NANGAKO ang Philippine Amalgamated Supermarkets Association (PAGASA) na sisiguruhin nila na ang subsidized rice mula sa National Food Authority (NFA) ay magiging laan sa mga supermarket sa buong bansa.

Ito ay dahil sa kompiyansa ang PAGASA na ang rice tariffication policy ng gobyerno ay magreresulta sa pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas sa merkado.

"We assure that cheap rice will be available in the market. Rice tariffication will also help achieve this," lahad ni PAGASA President Steven Cua sa isang panayam.

Inudyuka niya ang gobyerno na bilisan ang pag-isyu ng permit sa mga supermarket para sila ay makapagbenta ng NFA rice sa kanilang mga customer.

"Some of our member supermarkets are not selling subsidized rice because they need a permit from the NFA," sabi pa ni Cua.

Pumirma ang PAGASA ng memorandum of agreement (MOA) noong Setyembre sa Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) at NFA para payagan ang distribusyon at pagbebenta ng subsidized rice sa mga supermarket sa buong bansa.

Puwedeng bumili ang mga konsyumer ng hanggang dalawang bag o apat na kilo ng NFA rice sa mga participating supermarket sa halagang PHP 27 bawat kilo.

Bukod pa rito, sinabi ni Cua na makatutulong ang rice tariffication para masiguro ang malawak na availability ng abot-kayang bigas sa merkado para sa mga konsyumer.

"The rice prices will depend on the quality of supply that will be imported in the country," sabi niya.

Nauna nang siniguro ng National Economic and Development Authority(NEDA) na magiging laan pa rin ang subsidized NFA rice sa merkado hanggang sa katapusan ng taon habang ang mga konsyumer ay nakikinabang sa mas mababang imported rice sa pagpasa ng rice tariffication law.

May mandato ang NFA na siguruhin na sapat ang supply ng bigas sa bansa.

Pinirmahan ni President Rodrigo Duterte ang Republic Act No. 11203 noong Pebrero na nagpapalawak ng pag-angkat ng bigas sa bansa sa pamamagitan ng pag-aalis ng quantitative restrictions at pagpapalit dito ng tariffs. **PNA**

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 7

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Sunshine industry Experts believe rubber farmers would soon play a big role in the country's economy.

Rubber farmers see bright prospects

By Maya M. Padillo

Despite the downtrend in prices of cup lumps, rubber farmers in the province of North Cotabato continue to plant rubber and acquire seedlings from the office of the provincial agriculturist.

Gov. Emmylou "Lala" Talino-Mendoza said in her recent State of the Province Address that the farmers are optimistic that the rubber industry will make a rebound even as the provincial government is providing all the necessary support to them.

This, as about P1.4 million budded rubber seedlings were distributed to 2,390 farmers even as the province has expanded its area planted with rubber to 2,942.71 hectares.

The province has also conducted trainings on the establishment or rubber plantation and management.

"We have also distributed big bag rubber planting materials to 460 recipients covering 770 hectares, whereby if proper planting procedures are observed has only four years gestation period," Mendoza said.

The province has also conducted trainings on the establishment or rubber plantation and management.

Technical assistance on tapping and pest control were also given to 4,001 participants and distributed 2,800 tapping knives to rubber tappers/plantation owners.

The province also extended support to the rubber farmers in marketing through the establishment of 39 rubber trading centers in 11 municipalities to cushion the blow of low prices of rubber cup lumps.

"As much as P5 more than the prevailing market price is offered to our rubber farmers who sell their cup lumps to the trading centers. Last year alone they earned close to P40 million as incentive," Mendoza added.

"Although we cannot control natural or human induced calamities, we have a bankable pro-active and immediate reactive actions to help our farmers bounce back from any difficulty because our commitment to food security is unwavering," she said.

Apart from rubber, the province's oil palm project has also been well received by the farmers wherein a total of 524,969 oil palm seedlings were distributed to 1,720 beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, the province's coconut program has expanded plantation to 1,582.55 hectares in eight year.

It also distributed 158,255 coconut seedlings to 1,422 recipients, 22,750 bags of salt fertilizers to 7,963 recipients and conducted trainings on coconut production and management.

Mendoza said they are encouraging their farmers to also venture into cacao production wherein 559,302 cacao seedlings were distributed to 1,171 beneficiaries who were also given technical assistance.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: B6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Climate impacts seen to reduce rice yields

By **PIA LEE-BRAGO**

The impacts of climate change are expected to reduce yields and nutritional value of rice as temperatures rise, hitting farmers particularly hard in regions such as Southeast Asia, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said Tuesday.

Rice contributes to climate change, with methane emitted by flooded paddy fields responsible for 10 percent of total global methane emissions.

UNEP said "rice may be cheap, but production comes at a cost."

A single kilo of rice needs an average 2,500 liters of water to produce. Rice production uses over a third of the world's irrigation water.

"With rice production needing to grow by 25 percent over the next 25 years to meet projected future demand, it is clear something has to change in how we grow rice in order to limit climate change, conserve water and the environment, while at the same time providing farmers with improved, sustainable incomes," UNEP said, noting that this is where the Sustainable Rice Platform comes in.

The platform co-founded by UN Environment in partnership with the International Rice Research Institute and German development agency – Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – was set up in 2011 to connect governments, development partners, businesses, farmers and non-governmental organizations around the world to develop and implement proven solutions that benefit rice producers, consumers and the environment.

BusinessWorld
INCREASE YOUR BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 10/51

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

#NATION AT A GLANCE

Agri sector damage from El Niño hits P2.6B

AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE in six regions due to the prevailing weak El Niño phenomenon has reached P2.67 billion, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported on Wednesday. Hardest hit is Region 12, or SOCCSKSARGEN, which is composed of South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos City. The estimated amount of damage to rice, corn and other high-value crops per region is: SOCCSKSARGEN, P808.67 million; Bicol, P793.97 million; Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), P403.37 million; MIMAROPA (Mindoro-Marinduque-Romblon-Palawan), P192.51 million; Western Visayas, P76.4 million; and Calabarzon (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon), P12.79 million. The NDRRMC report also said the dry spell has affected some 103,247 hectares of land and 79,044 farmers. NDRRMC also noted that 16 provinces, towns, and cities have declared a state of calamity due to the dry spell. State weather bureau PAGASA announced last week that the El Niño phenomenon is expected to last until June. — **Vince Angelo C. Ferreras**

Manila Standard

Date: MAR. 28, 2009 Page: B4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Agency to boost Bicol commodities

By Butch Gunio

LOS BANOS, Laguna—The Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD) aims to upgrade production of primary commodities in Bicol region though science and technology researches.

In partnership with Bicol Consortium for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development production of three basic commodities namely coconut, sweet potato, and queen pineapple, in the region is being improved, said PCAARRD Applied Communication Division Director Marita Carlos in a presentation to newsmen here.

She said farmers recounted their success stories adopting the science and technology-based farming during the conduct of Farmers Encounters through the Science and Technology Agenda at Farmers Bounty Village, Camalig, Albay last month.

She cited the case of farmer Henry Regalario, a graduate of Marine Transportation, who chose to stay on the land to venture into farming of sweet potato. He is currently the president of the Libon Camote Growers Association with 400 active farmer-members in Albay.

Carlos said the farmer shared how he started supplying sweet potato to small-scale enterprises and then managed to produce for big businesses like Ayala Malls.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: 15

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Farmers adopt El Niño crops

By **LIEZLE BASA-INIGO**

ROSALES, Pangasinan — The Samahan ng Industriya ng Magsasaka continues to encourage rice farmers in this province to planting other crops that can withstand the dry spell.

While farmers in this province have so far been spared the ravaging effects of El Niño, Samahan Chairman Rosendo So advised them to choose their crops carefully.

Farmers in Pangasinan are better off because they have turned to planting crops which do not need much water like corn, garlic and mongo.

Areas that are growing garlic are Umingan, Alaminos, Malasiqui, Sta. Barbara, Pozorubio, Laoac, Urdaneta City, Rosales, Sta. Maria, Umingan, San Quintin, Balungao and Bayambang.

Weather experts warn that El Niño can cause drier and warmer conditions nationwide by April.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services (PAGASA) said 26 provinces could experience way-below normal rainfall and 57 provinces below-normal rainfall next month.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: MAR 28, 2009 Page: B-8

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Organic Fertilizer & Pesticide Made In PH Click In Nigeria

A Philippine-made organic fertilizer and an organic pesticide are clicking in Nigeria. These are the Natures Bio Organic Fertilizer and the Bionim Organic Pesticide developed by Natures Bio Organic Inc. based in Cebu City.

VIC CABRAL of Organic Bio Organic, Inc. shows one liter of his organic fertilizer which is exported to Nigeria. He also exports an organic pesticide, Bionim.

Vic Cabral who developed the organic products in 2005 said that in the past couple of years, he has shipped to the Nigerian importer no less than 10,000 liters of the two products. The feed back is that the two products have performed very well in increasing yields of peanut and wheat, two major crops in that country. He revealed that the importer is coming to the Philippines in April to make a new bulk order of the two products.

Cabral said that Natures Bio Organic Fertilizer is a combination of beneficial microorganisms, tuna fish extract, seaweed extract, vermi tea and molasses. On the other hand, Bionim Organic Pesticide is a combination of beneficial microbes, seaweed extract, neem leaves, kakawate, chilli, onion and garlic.

The Bio Organic Fertilizer works well in practically all crops, even bonsai. Newly gathered bonsai materials respond well to the application of the product. The recommended dosage is 10 ml or one tablespoon per liter of water. Application is best done in the late afternoon. It is also useful for seed germination. Bigger seeds like those of corn and squash may be soaked in a solution of the organic fertilizer overnight before planting.

Cabral said that the two products could be combined and sprayed on crops together. Best time to spray is late in the afternoon.

The two products are being sold nationwide by Harbest Agribusiness and Pacifica Agrivet.

The Manila Times

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: B2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Palay farmgate price still falling

THE average farmgate price of palay (unmilled rice) further dropped to P19.03 per kilo in the second week of March compared to week- and year-ago levels.

In its weekly update on palay, rice and corn prices, the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) said the latest quotation was 1.91 percent lower than the previous week's P19.40 per kilo. Likewise, it was lower by 6.39 percent from P20.33 per kilo in the same period in 2018.

On a weekly basis, PSA said the prices of well-milled and regular milled rice fell at the wholesale and retail trades. The average wholesale price of well-milled rice was at P40.79 per kilo, down 0.78 percent from the previous week's P41.11 per kilo. Year-on-year (yoy), however, the price was up by 0.37 percent.

At the retail, the average price declined by 0.07 percent to P44.42 per kilo a week ago but was up by 2.40 percent yoy.

For regular milled rice, the average wholesale price was P37.31 per kilo, down by 0.74-percent from the previous week's P37.59 per kilo. Yoy, however, it climbed 0.67 percent. Its retail price also fell by 0.49 percent to P40.40 per kilo from P40.60 per kilo a week earlier but was up by 1.89 percent from P39.65 per kilo a year ago.

Meanwhile, farmgate prices of yellow corngrain in the second week of March was up by 1.02 percent to P13.84 per kilo from P13.70 per kilo in the previous week. Yoy, it rose by one percent.

The equivalent price for white corngrain was at P14.94 per kilo, nearly one percent higher from P14.80 per kilo a week earlier, but was lower by 13.19 percent from the previous year's P17.21 per kilo.

During the second week of March, the wholesale price of yellow corngrain went down by 0.11 percent to P18.37 per kilo. It was also down by 7.60 percent from the previous year's P19.88 per kilo. Its retail price of P23.99 per kilo was also down by 1.72 percent from P24.41 per kilo a week ago but was up by 1.57 percent from P23.62 per kilo a year earlier.

For white corn grain, the average wholesale price was P21.38 per kilo, up 1.18 percent from a week earlier but was up by 4.96 percent from the previous year's P20.37 per kilo. The average retail rice of white corn grain was P28.52 per kilo, up by 0.71 percent from P28.32 per kilo a week earlier but was down by 4.68 percent from year-ago's P29.92 per kilo.

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The Manila Times

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: B5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Searca assists upland Leyte women for agribusiness

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

WOMEN from the upland communities of Inopacan town in Leyte province are now into banana and *takudo* (gabi) chips production and enterprise development, thanks to the efforts of the Philippine government-hosted Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca).

The Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) trained women from the upland communities of Inopacan town in Leyte province in making banana and *takudo* (gabi) chips. Lower photo shows the processing plant that Searca established for the project. SEARCA PHOTOS

The University of the Philippines Los Baños-based Searca, a treaty organization, has been helping women in Inopacan town to start a fruit and rootcrop chips processing enterprise through its Inclusive and Sustainable Agri-Cultural and Rural Development (Isard) action research project.

The Searca-funded Isard project facilitated chips production trainings, the construction of a chips processing plant, and microlending.

The project was led by Jose Bacusmo, Visayas State University (VSU) former president, and coordinated by Jose Medina of Searca and jointly implemented by VSU, the Visayas Consortium for Agriculture and Aquatic Resources Program and the Inopacan local government.

Bacusmo said the project provides assistance through participatory approaches in developing social enterprises focused on banana and three other commodities by linking farmer organizations with various institutions and entrepreneurs to do business.

In collaboration with the VSU Food Processing Center, Searca said the Hinabay Women Workers' Association was trained in processing banana chips, as well as takudo chips.

"The women's group added takudo, a rootcrop widely grown in the area, as another frying chip material because it is cheaper than banana," Bacusmo said.

Searca said the establishment of a chips processing plant in Inopacan was facilitated by the project with funding from the local government of Inopacan, enabling the women's group to train on-site with hands-on exercises that easily helped them start chips production right right away.

The Department of Science and Technology was tapped to provide a banana chip cutter and fryer to better equip the processing plant.

Meanwhile, the project is also working on improving the production of jackfruit and tilapia culture to contribute to household food security and environmental sustainability through an integrated coconut farming system.

Searca has embarked on upscaling effective models of Isard to strengthen the linkages among farmers, industry players and government institutions in achieving Isard outcomes of food and nutrition security and poverty alleviation.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Average palay price drops further after Duterte signs rice trade lib law

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

THE average farm-gate price of palay, or unmilled rice, continued to decline weeks after President Duterte signed into law a measure that opened up the local rice industry, according to the latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

PSA data showed that the farm-gate price of palay as of the second week of March fell by 3 percent or P0.60 to P19.30 per kilogram, from P19.63 per kg in the second week of February, when the rice trade liberalization law was signed by the President.

The average farm-gate price of unmilled rice has declined for the ninth straight week, according to figures from the PSA.

"The average farm-gate price of palay of P19.03 per kg dropped further during the week by 1.91 percent, from previous week's quotation of P19.40 per kilogram," the PSA said in its weekly report on palay and corn prices, published on Wednesday.

₱19.30 per kilogram

The average farm-gate price of unmilled rice as of the second week of March

"Similarly, it decreased further by 6.39 percent from the same period of previous year's level of P20.33 per kg," it added.

During the reference period of March 6 to 12, the PSA observed the highest farm-gate price of palay in Eastern Visayas at P26 per kg. The lowest was seen in Soccsksargen at P16.85 per kg.

The wholesale and retail prices of both well-milled rice (WMR) and regular-milled rice (RMR) declined on a weekly basis.

"From previous week's level of P41.11 per kg the average wholesale price of well-milled rice at P40.79 per kg was lower by 0.78 percent during the week," the PSA said.

"Likewise, the average retail price of well-milled rice at P44.42 per kg went down by 0.07 percent compared with previous week's level of P44.45 per kg," it added.

The wholesale price of RMR fell slightly to P37.31 per kg from the previous week's P37.59 per kg while its retail value declined to P40.40 per kg from P40.60 kg.

However, the prices of both varieties posted increments from their year-ago levels.

The wholesale price of WMR inched up by 0.37 percent from its previous level of P40.64 per kg while its retail price expanded by 2.4 percent from P43.38 per kg recorded in the same week of 2018.

"Meanwhile, [the wholesale price of RMR] rose by 0.67 percent from the same period of previous year's level of P37.06 per kg," the report read. "[The retail price of RMR] exhibited an increment of 1.89 percent from previous year's same week level of P39.65 per kg," it added.

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 7

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

El Niño chalks P2.2-B damage

By Michael Pingol

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) on Wednesday said the damage to agriculture in six regions as a result of El Niño has already reached P2.2 billion.

In a report, the disaster agency said the amount of damage to rice, corn and other high-value crops per region had already been amounting to hundreds of millions, with Soccsksargen suffering the most.

It was gathered Soccsksargen already lost P808.6 million while Bicol incurred P793.9 million in agricultural damage.

They were followed by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao with P403.3, Mimaropa, P192.5, Western Visayas, P76.3 and Calabarzon with P12.7 all in millions.

NDRRMC executive director Ricardo Jalad said the National Capital Region and Zamboanga Peninsula were also affected by the El Niño although they are yet to have actual assessment.

Based on NDRRMC records, 16 provinces, towns and cities have already been declared under the state of calamity due to the prolonged dry spell since 11 February.

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

" PEOPLE'S JOURNAL TONIGHT "
PAGE: 6

El Niño agri damage doubles to P2.7B

By CAROLYN BONQUIN

CNN Philippines -- Damage to agriculture caused by a prolonged dry spell across many parts of the country has doubled to 2.7 billion from last week, according to the National Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) report on yesterday.

The NDRRMC said the dry spell has affected 22 provinces and municipalities in Metro Manila, CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, SOCCSKSARGEN and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

As of March 19, the government's estimate of crop damage since the start of 2019 was at 1.3 billion, but the figure has since risen to 2.675 billion.

In North Cotabato alone, more than 71,900 families or more than 359,000 people are suffering from dry conditions.

A state of calamity has been declared in parts of MIMAROPA, Zamboanga Peninsula, CARAGA and BARMM.

Based on data from NDRRMC and the Department of Agriculture, the following areas are under a state of calamity: Alamada, Cotabato; M'lang, Cotabato; Pikit, Cotabato; Aleosan, Cotabato; Pagalungan, Maguindanao; San Jose, Occidental Mindoro; Zamboanga City; Magpet, Cotabato; Upi, Maguindanao; Rizal, Occidental Mindoro; Magpet, Cotabato; Occidental Mindoro; Arakan, Cotabato; Cotabato; Matalam, Cotabato; Wao, Lanao del Sur and Datu Abdullah Sangki, Maguindanao.

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Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: 1 & 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

El Niño damage reaches P2.67B

AGRICULTURAL damage caused by the dry spell brought about by the El Niño phenomenon has risen to more than P2.67 billion, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said.

The amount, reported Wednesday, was higher than the P2.28 billion made public three days ago.

A total of 79,044 farmers in MIMAROPA, Bicol, Western and Eastern Visayas, Central Mindanao, and the Bangsamoro au-

>>PAGE 2

>>PAGE 1: EL NIÑO DAMAGE

tonomous region have already been affected by the dry spell, along with more than 103,247 hectares of farmland in those regions, according to the NDRRMC.

Initial estimates placed the highest amount of damage to crops in Central Mindanao with more than P808 million, followed by Bicol with more than P793 million, and the Bansamoro with over P403 million.

Aside from farmers, the dry spell has also affected some 71,909 families or 359,545 persons in North Cotabato province, according to the NDRRMC.

Those include ordinary residents who may now have limited access to water or people who engage in other forms of livelihood that also depend on water, NDRRMC spokesman Edgar Posadas said.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) earlier said the ongoing "weak" El Niño may cause a prolonged dry spell and hotter temperatures in the coming months.

The phenomenon is expected to last until June. - John Roson

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

"TEMPO"
PAGE: 2

₱2-B crops lost to El Niño

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said that close to 72,000 families or 360,000 persons from North Cotabato have been affected by the drought in the country caused by the weak El Nino phenomenon.

NDRRMC Executive Director and Office of Civil Defense Administrator Undersecretary Ricardo B. Jalad said 71,909 families or 359,545 persons in 110 barangays in North Cotabato have been affected by the drought.

Regions 4-A, 4-B, 5, 6, 9, 12, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, and National Capital Region have also been affected by the dry spell caused by the El Niño.

Jalad said ₱2,675,003,599.28 in damage to crops were reported in Regions 4-A, 4-B, 5, 6, 12, and BARMM. However, he said the figure is still subject to validation and verification by the Department of Agriculture.

Region 12, according to Jalad, is the most affected region by the El Niño with ₱808,666,138.43 worth of damage to agriculture, followed by the Bicol region with ₱793, 973,458.81, and the BARMM which incurred ₱403,373,404.

The DA said 79,044 farmers have been affected by the drought in Region 4-B, 5, 6, 8, 12, and BARMM. **(Francis Wakefield)**

Balita

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: 6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Mas malalang epekto ng El Niño sa Abril

MAAARING magdulot ng mas tuyot at mainit na panahon ang pananalasa ng El Niño sa bansa ngayong Abril.

Ayon sa Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services (PAGASA) posible ang "way-below normal rainfall" 26 na probinsiya at "below-normal rainfall" sa 57 probinsiya sa susunod na buwan.

Inaasahan ding 51 probinsiya o 61 porsiyento ng bansa ang matinding masasalanta ng tagtuyot bago magtapos ang Abril ngayong taon habang nasa 32 probinsiya ang makararanas ng dry spell.

"April is when we see severe impacts in terms of meteorological drought," pahayag ni Analiza Solis, officer-in-charge ng PAGASA Climate Monitoring and Prediction Section.

Ipinaliwanag ni Solis ang tagtuyot na namamarka ng tatlong buwang way-below normal rainfall o limang magkakasunod na buwang ng below-normal rainfall.

Sa kabilang banda, ang dry spell ay maaaring dalawang buwang way-below normal rainfall o tatlong buwan ng below-normal rainfall.

Sa talakayan na ginanap kamakailan sa Quezon City, pinaalalahanan ni Solis ang publiko para sa mararanasang init lalo't sa pagtataya ng PAGASA mararanasan din sa susunod na buwan ang maximum temperature na 28.9 degree Celsius sa mga kabundukan ng Luzn hanggang 38.9°c sa mababang lugar ng Mindanao at 39.5 sa Hilagang Luzon.

"We'll likely have a prolonged dry season," aniya.

Ang maagang pagkawala ng northeast monsoon o 'amihan' ngayong taon at ang posibleng pagkaantala ng tag-ulan dahil sa El Nino ay nangangahulugang mahaharap ang bansa sa tagtuyot, ani Solis.

Inaasahan ng PAGASA na unti-unti nang huhupa ang tagtuyot pagpatak ng Mayo, bagamat "near-normal rainfall" pa rin ang mararanasan sa maraming bahagi ng Hilagang Luzon at Mindanao, ang possible itong maranasan ng Visayas at ibang bahagi ng Mindanao sa Hunyo.

PNA

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• SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

Date: MAR 28, 2019 Page: 9

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Sinalanta ng tagtuyot

STATE OF CALAMITY SA 9 NA BAYAN SA MAGUINDANAO

SIYAM na bayan sa Maguindanao na grabeng sinalanta ng tagtuyot ang nakatanggap ng tulong kasunod ng pagdedeklara ng state of calamity sa nasabing mga lugar.

Nabatid sa lokal na pamahalaan ng Maguindanao na posibleng madagdagan pa ang mga bayan na isasailalim sa state of calamity bunsod ng patuloy na pagtindi ng El Niño.

Pinag-aaralan na rin ng mga miyembro ng Sangguniang Panlalawigan na magdeklara ng state of calamity sa buong probinsiya.

Sa bayan ng Datu Montawal ay nanguna sina Mayor Datu Vicman Montawal at Vice Mayor Datu Otho Montawal sa pamamahagi ng tulong sa mga barangay na tinamaan ng sobrang init ng panahon o tagtuyot.

Nauna rito, nagdeklara ng state of calamity ang lokal na pamahalaan ng Datu Montawal para agad magamit ang calamity fund na paunang tulong sa mga magsasaka na labis na sinalanta ng tagtuyot ang mga pananim na mais, palay at gulay.

Nagsisikap naman si Gov. Esmael 'Toto' Mangudadatu na makapagbigay pa ng karagdagang tulong sa mga bayan sa Maguindanao na grabeng tinamaan ng El Niño.

BENEDICT ABAYGAR, JR.

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LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Date: MAR. 28, 2019 Page: 8

PRESYO NG PALAY BUMABA

P19.03/kilo na lang noong mid-March

BUMABA ang average farm gate price ng palay sa mid-March ng 3 percent magmula nang lagdaan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang batas na nagbubukas sa local rice industry sa mas maraming imports.

Ayon sa Philippine Statistics Authorirty (PSA), ang average farm gate price ng palay hanggang noong ikalawang linggo ng Marso ay bumaba ng P0.60 sa P19.03 kada kilo, mula sa P19.63 kada kilo na naitala sa ikalawang linggo ng Pebrero, nang lagdaan ang rice trade liberalization (RTL) law.

Sa datos ng PSA, ito ang ika-9 na sunod na linggo na bumagsak ang farm gate price ng palay magmula nang magumpisa ang taon.

"The average farmgate price of palay P19.03 per kilogram dropped further during the week by 1.91 percent from previous week's quotation of P19.40 per kilogram," pahayag ng PSA sa weekly report nito sa palay at corn prices, na nalathala noong Miyerkoles.

"Similarly, it decreased further by 6.39 percent from the same period of previous year's level of P20.33 per kilogram," dagdag pa ng ahensiya.

Sa reference period mula March 6 hanggang March 12, naitala ng PSA ang pinakamataas na farm gate price ng palay sa Eastern Visayas sa P26 kada kilo.

Naiposte naman ng state statistical agency ang pinakamababang farm gate price sa Soccsksargen sa P16.85 kada kilo.

Gayundin ay bumaba ang wholesale at retail prices ng well-milled rice (WMR) at regular-milled rice (RMR) sa weekly basis.

"From previous week's level of P41.11 per kilogram the average wholesale price of well-milled rice at P40.79 per kilogram was lower by 0.78 percent during the week," anang PSA.

"Likewise, the average retail price of well-milled rice at P44.42 per kilogram went down by 0.07 percent compared with previous week's level of P44.45 per kilogram," dagdag pa nito.

Ang wholesale price ng RMR ay bahagyang bumaba sa P37.31 kada kilo mula sa P37.59 kada kilo sa naunang linggo habang ang retail value nito ay bumagsak sa P40.40 kada kilo mula sa P40.60.

Gayunman, ang presyo ng dalawang varieties ay tumaas kumpara noong nakaraang taon.

Ang wholesale price ng WMR ay tumaas ng 0.37 percent mula sa P40.64 kada kilo noong nakaraang taon, habang retail price nito ay sumirit ng 2.4 percent mula sa P43.38 kada kilo na naitala sa kaparehong linggo noong 2018.

"Meanwhile, [wholesale price of RMR] rose by 0.67 percent from the same period of previosu year's level of P37.06 per kilogram," nakasaad pa sa report.

"[The retail price of RMR] exhibited an increment of 1.89 percent from previous year's same week level of P39.65 per kilogram," dagdag pa nito.

JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS