**CLIPPINGS FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019**

**A. SEC. EFP QUOTED**

**MANILA BULLETIN**
**Piñol says resignation buzz are just rumors**

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR**
**DA turns over solar power irrigation system in Sultan Kudarat**

**BUSINESS WORLD**
**Poultry market forces currently distorted by high prices**

**THE MANILA TIMES**
**Good idea leaves farmers high and dry**

**B. DA FAMILY**

**BUSINESS WORLD**
**PCCI renews call for 'market forces' to determine sugar price**

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**
**Rice prices continue downtrend in March**

**THE MANILA TIMES**
**BFAR maintains Q1 fish output estimate despite El Niño**

**BUSINESS MIRROR**
**Palace unfazed by legal challenge to rice trade lib**
**Editorial: Uncompetitive Philippine rice**
**'Allow farmers to monitor RCEF use'**
**'Govt has no money for P10-B rice fund'**

**C. AGRI-RELATED STORY**

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR**
**Int'l agencies commit to food sustainability**

**THE DAILY TRIBUNE**
**Exporters bag $45.53M from Japan food fair**

**MANILA STANDARD**
**Reg. 6 products take spotlight in Agri 'FIESTA'**

**PILIPINO MIRROR**
**PH tuna, tropical fruits itinampok sa pinakamalaking food event sa Japan**

**D. FOREIGN STORY**

***No stories***

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER
Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: 4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# Piñol says resignation buzz are just rumors

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol has denied the rumors he has resigned and that President Duterte wants him out of his Cabinet.

"While I was working in the field, rumor swirled that I have resigned following the 'he is all air' joke of President Rodrigo Duterte, referring to me, during an event in Palawan last week," Piñol said.

"I have not resigned and unless the President tells me he no longer needs my services, I will continue working," he maintained.

Piñol was referring to a news article that quoted Duterte as calling the Agriculture chief an "air head" and that his goal to make the Philippines self-sufficient in rice was just lip service.

He said that having known the President for almost 25 years, he has learned to understand his character.

"Sometimes, he would crack jokes which may sound offensive but to him, it's merely a kantiyaw [tease]," Piñol said.

"Still, if the President believes I have failed him and lets go of me as secretary of Agriculture I believe he will value our friendship and tell me of his plan rather than embarrass me in public," he said.

Piñol said he took Duterte's statement that the country will never be rice sufficient "as a challenge rather than a ridicule."

It was not the first time the President has downplay Piñol's rice self-sufficiency dream. In June last year, Duterte said the country will "never" be able to produce so much rice. Hence, the need to keep importing.

Piñol shrugged off the presidential putdown, and came up with a statement a few days later that the Philippines may actually still achieve the rice self-sufficient status in two years.

On Tuesday he stood by his claim. "I firmly believe that Filipino rice farmers with 4.9 million hectares, only 1.2 million of which are irrigated, could produce enough rice for the country if given support with more irrigation facilities, good seeds and fertilizer," Piñol said.

"In the time I have served as his Agriculture secretary, I can humbly say that while I may not have done so much as expected by some sectors, I have maintained a frugal life and resisted temptations. I am working and I will continue to serve the President and the Filipino farmers and fishermen," he said.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: B4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# DA turns over solar power irrigation system in Sultan Kudarat

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The government has constructed another unit of solar powered irrigation system in Sultan Kudarat as part of efforts to help ensure sufficient rice supply in the country.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said the DA has turned over the P5.3-million SPIS to Isulan in Sultan Kudarat.

The SPIS has a total service area of 60 hectares of rain fed rice land and has solar panels that can generate electricity enough to irrigate rice areas daily.

The unit was completed in three months.

With the SPIS, rice farmers can now plant three times a year, allowing them to save at least P100,000 per cropping on diesel fuel expenses.

Since DA started the SPIS in March 2017, it had provided funding for 169 units of SPIS nationwide.

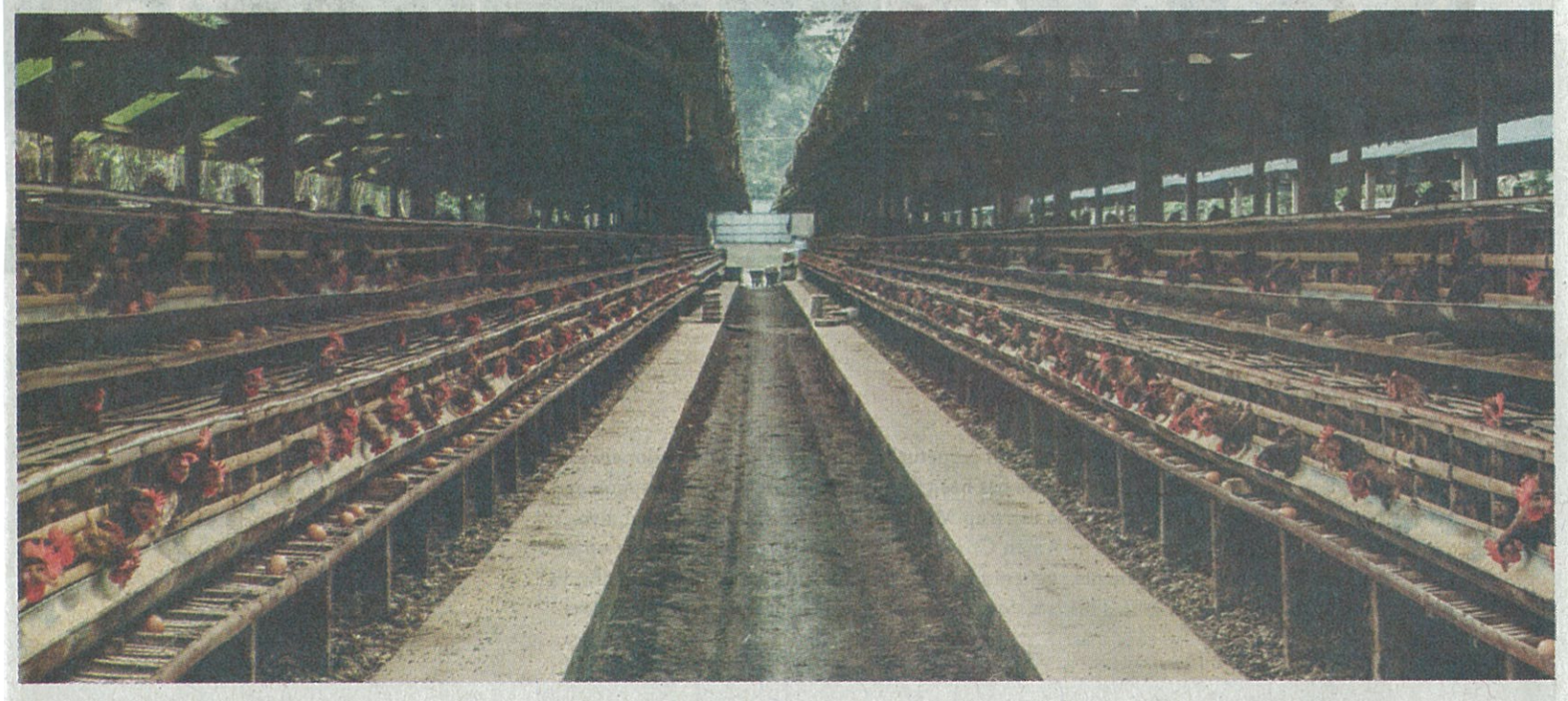
The SPIS, one of DA's flagship programs, aims to ensure sufficient rice supply in the coming years and could even result in surplus production in the country.

It is part of the 10 priority agenda which aims to increase rice production by providing the water needed by farmers to irrigate their farms and enable them to plant and harvest at least twice a year.

BusinessWorld
INCREASE YOUR BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE™

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: 4/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



# Poultry market forces currently distorted by high prices

POULTRY growers said potential investors in the sector should not be misled by high retail prices because farmgate prices are actually falling and competition in the sector is intensifying.

Elias Jose M. Inciong, United Broilers Raisers Association (UBRA) president, said Tuesday: "On the issue of investment, there is a need for a better data system so that all interested parties can decide rationally."

"Right now, many are misled by high retail prices," Mr. Inciong said.

UBRA has called for the abolition of the minimum access volume (MAV) on chicken in order to apply special safeguards (SSG) to protect the domestic poultry industry.

Falling farmgate prices emerged in late 2018 due to oversupply. Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said in January that the poultry industry should increase farmgate price by P10 weekly, a move flagged by the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC).

Mr. Inciong said "competition will be fierce" when asked if the oversupply situation is expected to improve.

"Intended production based on the breeders in place (is pointing to) an expansion. As to whether that increase in production will mean more profits is another matter," Mr. Inciong said.

According to UBRA's weekly farmgate price report of April 5, off-size chicken in Tarlac averaged P62 per kilogram (kg), while off-size chicken in Bulacan was P66.

Regular-size chicken was P64 per kg in Tarlac and P66 in Bulacan.

Prime-size chicken in Pampanga was at P73 per kg, P71 in Tarlac, P67 in Pangasinan, P66 in Bulacan, P77 to P79 in Rizal, P68 to P70 in Laguna, P68 to P71 in Batangas, and P68 to P72 in Cavite, he said. — **Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio**

The Manila Times

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: B1 & B2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# Good idea leaves farmers high and dry

ROUGH TRADE

**BEN KRITZ**

WHEN the idea was first hatched not long after Emmanuel Pinol's installation as Agriculture Secretary in the summer of 2016, it seemed like a deceptively simple solution to the age-old problem of insufficient irrigation for croplands: Rather than investing hundreds of billions in a few complex, large-scale irrigation systems that would take years to complete, invest mere tens of billions to build many environmentally friendly, relatively simple small systems that could deliver water to farms in a matter of months.

Unfortunately, as a very enlightening investigative report by *Mindanews* writer Keith Bacongco that appeared over the weekend revealed, two years after the project's inauguration, the farmers in Region 12 who were counting on the new systems to carry them through the El Nino-induced drought are officially victims of a calamity, their fields slowly baking into ruin as almost all of the irrigation units are non-functioning. Many apparently never will; the few that are working are only capable of irrigating a few hectares on occasion.

The Solar-powered Irrigation System (SPIS) is one version of an idea that bright minds at the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Science and Technology have been tinkering with for years: Local irrigation systems that operate with simple technology such as solar power, wind power or hydraulic rams do not require expensive diesel fuel (which can add P15,000 per hectare to production costs; and could reliably cover 50-100 hectares of rice, corn or vegetable crops. As designed, the SPIS consists of a solar panel array powering a 10-horsepower electric pump, which draws water from a nearby source – a stream, pond or an artificial reservoir – and with horizontal piping can irrigate between 40 to 100 hectares of rice fields.

Each SPIS unit costs between P5.5 million and P6.7 million, and the first one, which was supposed to cover 40 hectares was inaugurated by President Rodrigo Duterte himself in Manny Pinol's hometown of M'lang, North Cotabato in February

➤Kritz B2

PART 1 OF 2

The Manila Times

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: B1&B2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PART 2 OF 2

KRITZ FROM B1

# Good idea

2017. That was the beginning of a sort of pilot program that so far has built about a dozen SPIS units, all of them in Region 12; 10 have been built to service rice-growing areas in North Cotabato, and one for corn.

At the Food Security Summit in Iloilo City last October, President Duterte "committed P41 billion for the establishment of solar-powered irrigation systems in the Philippines in the next three years," according to a Philippine News Agency report at the time. For his part, DA chief Pinol has proposed a P44-billion program to provide 6,200 SPIS units across the country, covering about 500,000 hectares of farmland. The first phase of the plan, however, has been held up by the delay in implementing the 2019 national budget.

That is perhaps just as well, because the project so far has had anything but admirable results. The original unit in M'lang was reportedly used for only two cropping cycles, and was only able to effectively irrigate about half a hectare of rice fields, not the 50 hectares expected. Most of the others simply lack water, having been connected to streams or ponds gone dry in the drought. The *Mindanews* report described one that would be working, except that it was built during the rainy season, when its nearby river was at its highest level; with the onset of dry weather, the water level has dropped below the level of the pump's intake pipe. Other units have not been completed or have apparently been vandalized.

Thus, instead of the drought relief they had been led to believe they would have, farmers in Region 12 are struggling with a drought disaster. According to the most recent DA figures (as of March 22), 13,000 farms in the region have been affected by the drought, resulting in losses of about P389 million in rice, P286 million in corn and about P38 million in high-value crops.

How did an innovative and relatively simple solution completely fail? The fault appears to lie in poor management on the part of the DA, beginning with trying to apply a "one size fits all" system to areas with different characteristics. In the investigative report, complaints from farmers and local government officials about lack of consultation with people on the ground are universal; the implication is that had the DA worked more closely with stakeholders, many of the problems could be avoided. The dismal performance of the SPIS program also indicates a shortage of technical knowledge, on one hand, and insufficient testing of the system in actual use on the other.

For its part, the DA has only gone so far as to admit that SPIS has experienced "some growing pains." In any engineering endeavor, technical difficulties are to be expected; the DA's handling of the SPIS, however, suggests that it dismissed the possibility and promised something it couldn't realistically deliver.

One will hope that the DA has taken the appropriate lessons from the rather embarrassing results of its first foray into sustainable irrigation systems, and will apply them to improving the SPIS and similar projects. After all, a good idea is still a good idea, and if it has only been badly executed, it can still be saved.

*Email: ben.kritz@manilatimes.net*

BusinessWorld
INCREASE YOUR BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: 4/S1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

BW FILE PHOTO

**THE PCCI has been calling for the liberalization of sugar imports modeled on the opening up of the rice market.**

# PCCI renews call for 'market forces' to determine sugar price

THE Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) renewed its call for liberalizing the sugar importing process, saying that market forces need to determine prices amid protections for domestic producers and suspicions of market manipulation at the wholesale and distribution level.

"I believe the liberalization is required to allow market forces to dictate the price," PCCI Chairman George T. Barcelon said in a mobile message on Tuesday, after being asked for comment.

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said there is no reason for high sugar prices as warehouses are currently overflowing.

The PCCI has been calling for the liberalization of sugar imports modeled on the opening up of the rice market, defending the interests of the food and beverage industry which is a major user of the sweetener and passes on any high ingredient costs to consumers.

"If the supply is abundant I agree with SRA that there is no reason for prices to rise. But the fundamental factor of free sourcing is better for all players concerned," Mr. Barcelon said.

Asked if this might lead to sugar flooding the market, Mr. Barcelon replied, "*Maari* (It could)."

On Sunday, SRA Administrator Hermenegildo R. Serafica said that "sugar stock balance is at an all-time high of over 1.1 million metric tons (MT) that is 143% of last year's stock balance during the same period."

Mr. Serafica added: "Mill gate prices have been holding steady between P1,450-P1,550 for the past five months. In fact, this week's average mill gate price is at P1,454. This is already on the low side compared to sugar prices for the past five years."

"Those who are spreading rumors of sugar prices increasing are trying to manipulate the market so they can increase their profits at the expense of the consumers and producers," according to Mr. Serafica. — **Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio**

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: B1 & B3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

FOOD SECURITY

# RICE PRICES CONTINUE DOWNTREND IN MARCH

**By Karl R. Ocampo**
@kocampoINQ

Rice prices in the market continued to be on the downtrend since the start of the year, according to government data, and economic managers are expecting prices to decline even further now that the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the new rice law has been put in place.

As of the fourth week of March, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said the average retail price for regular- and well-milled rice were at P40.02 and P44.33 a kilo, respectively.

These were lower by 3.77 percent and 1.84 percent from the levels in January. Prices have yet to stop easing since.

With the release of the Rice Import Liberalization Law's IRR, the number of players participating in the rice trade is expected to rise and so is the volume of affordable rice in the market.

The IRR lays down the process by which would-be traders can import rice. The government is expecting about 2 million metric tons (MT) of rice to enter the country this year following the industry's deregulation.

Economic managers said the law could cut retail rice prices in half—lower than the subsidized rice provided by the National Food Authority (NFA) at P27 a kilo—and ease inflation by 0.5 to 0.7 percentage point.

While industry groups are cynical that the policy

B3

## RICE PRICES

FROM B1

would depress rice prices significantly, Socioeconomic Planning Undersecretary Rosemary Edillon said market conditions dictated that the influx of rice in the market would bring prices down.

As to consumers who currently rely on subsidized rice, NFA Acting Administrator Tomas Escarez said those who relied on NFA rice have until August before the agency's stocks run out.

The law's IRR does not mandate the agency to continue selling the staple. In cases of emergencies, it may provide NFA rice to affected areas provided that it would be coursed through local government units or the Department of Social Welfare and Development. INQ

The Manila Times

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: B2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# BFAR maintains Q1 fish output estimate despite El Niño

THE Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has maintained its growth projection in national fish production for the first quarter of the year, noting minimal losses from droughts and dry spells.

"We are still projecting a positive growth because the weak El Niño was favorable for the fisheries sector in the sense that there were more fishing days for our fishermen. Besides, the warm temperature did not reach to a level that could kill our fish, even those under the aquaculture farming," BFAR Director Eduardo Gongona told *The Manila Times*.

The BFAR earlier projected the country's fish production to increase by at least 2 percent in the January-to-March period, sustaining the 0.92 percent growth in the last quarter of 2018 which came from a -6 percent and -1 percent production growth in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Gongona said the impacts of El Niño to the country's fisheries sector would be 'very minimal'. "Our production of fish will likely increase given that there were no typhoons that basically hinder our fishermen to go fishing," he added.

He also attributed the projected hike in local production on the opening of fishing season for sardines in the waters off Zamboanga Peninsula in March, following a three-month fishing ban to allow the undisturbed reproduction of sardines. The fish sector is on peak season from March to September this year, he added.

Among the species expected to increase in production for the first three months of 2019 include *galunggong* (round scad), tilapia and *bangus* (milkfish), Gongona said.

Meanwhile, the official said BFAR's "Malinis at Masaganang Karagatan," the country's nationwide search for the most outstanding coastal community, will also help achieve the growth forecast.

"We are really intensifying our campaign against IUUF (illegal unreported and unregulated fishing) through MMK. With this program in place, we are able to ensure that not only we prevent illegal fishing but also promote sustainable fishing especially in our municipal waters," Gongona said.

If achieved, the projected 2 percent growth will be a reversal from the 3.03-percent contraction posted by the fisheries sector in the same period in 2018. **EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ**

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: A2

# Palace unfazed by legal challenge to rice trade lib

By Bernadette D. Nicolas @BNicolasBM

MALACAÑANG is unfazed by the prospect of a legal challenge to the new rice trade liberalization law before the Supreme Court, as it disputed claims that the government is "railroading" the reorganization of the National Food Authority (NFA).

"Any citizen or a group of citizens can file a petition in court. We do not interfere with the function of the Judiciary. The government studies any government action before it performs it."—Panelo

This, as tenured employees of NFA threatened to file a petition before the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the measure, which they believe could cause thousands of NFA workers to lose their jobs.

"Any citizen or a group of citizens can file a petition in court. We do not interfere with the function of the Judiciary. The government studies any government action before it performs it," Panelo said in a text message to the BusinessMirror, adding that it is "false" to claim that the national government is rushing things and wants to railroad everything.

Asked if the Palace is confident that the SC will rule in favor the legality of the measure, the Palace spokesman said: "As I said, we will leave that to the SC."

The BusinessMirror earlier reported that the NFA Employees Association (NFAEA) Central Office President Maximo M. Torda had said their group will file the petition by May.

Torda said the NFAEA will question the legislative history of the law, which started first as a rice tariffication bill, then evolved into a measure that affected government safeguards against imports and included the deregulation of the food agency.

Torda said NFAEA's upcoming Supreme Court case is only part of a series of legal challenges that will be made by various rice-industry stakeholders against the new law in the coming weeks.

Since Torda said no NFA employee could be displaced until June due to the election ban, this will give the NFA more time to discuss the reorganization and restructuring of the grains agency to fulfill its new mandate under the new law.

Torda cited the commissioning of an independent study that would outline the NFA's buffer-stocking role under the new trade regime as the basis for the agency's reorganization.

This, he said, would allow the NFA to determine how many workers will be displaced.

Torda said some 1,000 employees will be affected by the NFA reorganization mandated by the new law, higher than

PART 1 OF 2

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PART 2 OF 2

ernment officials.

The 400 NFA employees who may be displaced are from the industry services department and security services and investigation department, which are directly involved in the NFA's previous regulatory functions of licensing importers and retailers and monitoring the country's rice trade.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said the reorganization of the NFA will affect less than 500 employees. Neda Regional Development Office Assistant Secretary Mercedita A. Sombilla also earlier told the BUSINESSMIRROR that these employees are involved in the importation and licensing functions of the NFA.

The importation and licensing function of the NFA has been repealed under Republic Act 11203. Under the new law, the NFA's functions have been limited to buffer stocking.

Sombilla said the higher number cited by the NFA union was based on a survey of employees who wanted to avail themselves of the "retirement package" to be offered by the government. This means the number includes both the affected employees and those who want to leave NFA. The survey was done prior to the signing of the law's IRR.

Under the IRR, NFA employees will receive up to 1.5 times their monthly basic salaries (MBS), depending on their years of service.

Initially, Sombilla said this was not the computation offered by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). She said determining the compensation package was one of the reasons the IRR was not signed immediately after the law was passed.

Under Rule 3.4.1.2, the package of employees who are in their first 20 years of service will be equivalent to their MBS multiplied by their years of service.

However, those who have reached 20 years and one day to 30 years of employment will receive a package that is equivalent to 1.25 times their MBS for every year of service.

Those who stayed longer at 30 years and one day or more, will receive 1.5 times their MBS for every year of service.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
APR. 10, 2019 / PAGE: A6

editorial

# Uncompetitive Philippine rice

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

MORE than two decades after the Philippines put in place a nontariff measure aimed at protecting the rice sector, farmers planting the crop are still unable to compete with their counterparts in Southeast Asia. The cost of producing paddy rice in the Philippines is telling, as it is more expensive compared to Thailand and Vietnam. According to a book published in 2016—*Competitiveness of Philippine Rice in Asia*—the cost of producing paddy rice in irrigated areas was more expensive compared with Thailand and Vietnam. A kilogram of unmilled rice would cost Filipino farmers P12.41 to produce, nearly double the P6.53/kg recorded in Vietnam, according to the book published by the International Rice Research Institute, Philippine Rice Research Institute and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Twenty two years would have been enough to implement the necessary mechanisms to help farmers prepare for the day when the government would have to let go of the quantitative restriction on rice. But the hard decisions were not made; so the current administration is forced to play catch-up in terms of cushioning the impact of its removal on farmers and the industry. Unfortunately, the problems created by the complacency of past administrations cannot be remedied in just one year. And even then, the current administration lost the sense of urgency required to prepare farmers, busy as it is in managing inflation caused by high rice prices and plugging the production shortfall in the past two years.

The decision to allow the National Food Authority to continue buying unmilled local rice at P20.70/kg is a good move because it would at least give planters some shield from the storm created by the deluge of rice imports ***(See, "NFA to keep palay buying price at P20.70 a kilo, says DA chief," in the* BUSINESSMIRROR, *April 8, 2019).*** The rice trade liberalization law reduced the NFA's role to a mere buffer-stocking agency. Under the implementing rules and regulations (IRR), the NFA is required to have an inventory of 15 to 30 days worth of national consumption, which is anywhere from 465,000 metric tons to 930,000 MT.

But the NFA can no longer sell low-cost rice to the public. This means that the food agency can only buy as much as 930,000 MT from farmers this year, or nearly 5 percent of the target output of 20 million metric tons. Based on the BUSINESSMIRROR's computation using the average paddy production of 4 MT per hectare, this scheme would benefit some 233,000 small farm holders. But there are about 2 million other rice farmers who will be at the mercy of traders, particularly during harvest, when farm-gate prices usually decline.

Unfortunately for the other planters, the cost of producing rice has not gone down. And the magnitude of the losses they will incur will depend largely on how soon the government can roll out interventions to help them cope with the drop in farm-gate prices. Following the signing of the rice trade liberalization bill into law, the market reacted immediately as traders slashed their buying price for paddy in February. What complicated matters for farmers was that harvest has already started in some rice-producing areas.

Immediate attention must be accorded to interventions that will make rice farming competitive and profitable. This is not a simple task, and the government needs to act now if it wants to encourage farmers to continue planting rice. The government can look at what Vietnam did to boost rice production. Aside from providing subsidies to farmers, Hanoi also reduced input costs and poured money on farm infrastructure, irrigation projects, and research and development.

It would do well for the government to remember that rice accounts for about 15 percent of total agriculture output. This is because rice is the preferred crop of many farmers not only because it is the staple food of Filipinos but also because they can earn after three months. There is simply no incentive for farmers to shift to other long-gestating high-value crops because they need to pay their loans and they need to feed their families.

While it is true that the Philippines does not have something like the Mekong River that can irrigate vast tracts of land in Vietnam, the government cannot just rely on imports. Ensuring the country's food security is not the responsibility of other countries. It rests on the shoulders of its own planters and all concerned government officials, who should initiate the necessary changes in the country's agricultural policy.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
Date: APRIL 10, 2019 Page: A8

# 'Allow farmers to monitor RCEF use'

By Cai U. Ordinario
@caiordinario
& Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

FARMERS and other rice industry stakeholders have expressed concern over their removal in the committee that will oversee the implementation of the P10-billion fund under the new rice trade regime.

Raul Q. Montemayor, Federation of Free Farmers Inc. national manager, said the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the rice trade liberalization law excluded farmers and other stakeholders from the program steering committee (PSC).

The PSC is supposed to oversee and provide policy direction for the implementation of programs funded by the P10-billion Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

However, Montemayor said the IRR removed representatives from the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF) Food Staples Committee (FSC) and Agriculture and Fisheries Mechanization Committee (AFMC) as members of the PSC.

In the IRR drafts seen by the BusinessMirror, representatives from the two PCAF committees were part of the PSC. This was also pointed out by Montemayor.

Under the IRR, the PSC will be chaired by the agriculture secretary and cochaired by the socioeconomic planning secretary with the heads of the implementing agencies of the RCEF as its members.

"In previous versions, they had accepted our proposal to include representatives from the PCAF committees on food staples and on agri-mechanization in the PSC. I do not understand why they took it out," Montemayor told the BusinessMirror.

"If the law and the RCEF are supposed to assist farmers, what is the problem with farmers sharing their insights and observations in the PSC so that proper adjustments can be made in program implementation?" he added.

## Transparency

FORMER Agriculture Undersecretary for Policy and Planning Segfredo R. Serrano said the participation of rice farmers in the PSC is of "utmost importance" as they could provide guidance on how the RCEF should help them "survive and compete" under the new trade regime.

"It is of utmost importance because they will have a say in the support that is necessary for them to survive and compete," Serrano told the BusinessMirror. "It is also important that the process of decision-making and implementation be transparent to the public especially the farmers and the industry."

Serrano said the IRR could have accommodated the participation of farmers in the PSC even as "observers or resource persons."

"Farmers must have ownership of the disposition of the funds and that the program be isolated from politics and be truly for the real needs and welfare of the farmers," he added.

Serrano said the utilization plan of the RCEF should be reviewed by the PCAF and the National Agriculture and Fisheries Council to ensure transparency and provide "adequate comfort" to stakeholders.

## 'Not necessary'

THE National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said farmers' participation in monitoring the rice fund was no longer necessary; that's why this was not included in the IRR of the new law.

Farmers' groups, Neda Regional Development Office Assistant Secretary Mercedita A. Sombilla said, are already part of committees in the Department of Agriculture (DA) that will participate in the monitoring of the rice fund.

"They already have representation, whether the PCAF was stated in the IRR or not. That's what everybody is saying," Sombilla said. "The other reason is their leaders and members are already part of the various committees of the DA. So [this would be tantamount to] double counting. Even the DA agreed to that."

The IRR details the establishment of the RCEF and how P10 billion from the General Appropriations Act will be transferred directly to implementing agencies.

Similarly, the document also sets the guidelines on the allocation of the tariff revenues in excess of P10 billion. This will be tapped to provide direct financial assistance to rice farmers adversely affected by the new rice import regime

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: APRIL 10, 2019 Page: A1 & A4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PART 1 of 2

# 'Govt has no money for ₱10-B rice fund'

By Cai U. Ordinario @caiordinario
& Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas @jearcalas

FARMERS may have to wait until the third quarter at the earliest to benefit from a fund that will consist of tariffs from rice imports, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

"When the government was able to generate savings in 2018, the DBM set aside funds for the RCEF in the hope that the law will be passed. But the law was not passed but the funds were allocated. The DBM was acting in good faith, it just wasn't clear on the rice program."—Sombilla

Neda Regional Development Office Assistant Secretary Mercedita A. Sombilla told the BUSINESSMIRROR in an interview that currently, no funds are available for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

Sombilla said an allocation of P5 billion for the RCEF was made in 2018. However, when the rice trade liberalization bill was not passed last year, the funds were channeled instead to the National Rice Program.

"I told the DBM [Department of Budget and Management], 'so you still owe P10 billion in the RCEF not unless you'll be able to talk with DA [Department of Agriculture] to give back the funds,'" she said. "It [RCEF] will only have funds probably by the third quarter when government savings are already available." Sombilla said there was a debate over the P5-billion allocation made last year.

SEE "RICE FUND," A4

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
Date: APRIL 10, 2019 Page: A1 & A4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PART 2 of 2

# Rice fund. . .

CONTINUED FROM A1

She said she insisted that allocating the amount to the national rice program is not the same as putting up the RCEF.

The Neda official said the funds may have already been allocated to various regions as money intended for the national rice program. This is part of the reason she knew the funds did not go to the RCEF.

If the funds have been used, Sombilla said the DA would be forced to "make do with whatever funds they have in 2019." She admitted that at this point, she does not know how the DA will address the situation. "When the government was able to generate savings in 2018, the DBM set aside funds for the RCEF in the hope that the law will be passed. But the law was not passed but the funds were allocated. The DBM was acting in good faith, it just wasn't clear on the rice program," she said.

## New fund pool

THE national government is also mulling over the creation of a new fund pool that farmers can access and financed from interest payments from the rice fund, according to the Neda.

This is something that is being studied, Sombilla said, since the interest income and repayments from the credit to be obtained from farmers do not automatically accrue by the end of the year.

"We're still working on it, that's why we did not push the credit so much. The only thing that I really fought for in terms of credit was to make it [interest] very, very minimal. If it's possible, [the interest should be] even lower than ACPC [Agricultural Credit Policy Council] so that farmers can access it," Sombilla said.

Under the rice trade liberalization law, farmers and cooperatives may access a P1-billion expanded credit facility under the RCEF, a revolving fund. It will offer loans at preferential rates.

This is in lieu of the low access farmers and cooperatives have on agriculture credit offered by the banking sector. This despite a law that requires banks to allot a portion of their credit facilities to the agriculture sector.

## Farmers' dismay

The Federation of Free Farmers Inc. (FFF) expressed dismay over the apparent lack of source for the P10-billion RCEF.

FFF National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said the confusion among government officials over the P10-billion RCEF shows that "as early as now" they are "already shortchanging the farmers."

"If the P5 billion was for RCEF, how could [the DA] use the money when there were no implementing guidelines yet for the RCEF?" Montemayor told the BusinessMirror.

"If it was for other support programs, the [rice trade liberalization] law says RCEF will be over and above regular program budgets," he added.

Montemayor said the RCEF should not come from government savings as it is "over and above regular budgets."

"If they cannot even agree with each other, that's disappointing. And yet they kept telling farmers not to worry because there would be the RCEF to assist them," he said.

Montemayor, who is also the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries Food Staples Committee chairman, said the RCEF should be released immediately to cushion the anticipated detrimental impact of liberalization on the rice sector.

"Plus, the support programs will take time before they take firm root," he said.

"In fact, the RCEF should have been extended to farmers when the government decided already not to extend the quantitative restriction. They should have started early the adjustment program. Even if the money was made available now, it is arguably late already," he added.

Montemayor also noted that there is no "clear statement" under the IRR that the RCEF credit allocation would be a "revolving" fund. He explained that in previous IRR discussions, representatives of the DBM "maintained that any collection and interest earned from the credit fund will revert back to the general fund."

"This is because there is no explicit statement in the law regarding this, unlike in the law that created the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund," he said. "What will now stop the DBM from enforcing its own interpretation [of the law] in the future?" he added.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: C2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# Int'l agencies commit to food sustainability

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Various international agencies have committed to craft a framework that will focus on the sustainable management of rice-fish production systems in irrigated landscapes and wetlands in the Southeast Asian region.

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), WorldFish, and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) inked a five-year tripartite memorandum of understanding for cooperation on research for development initiatives.

This is in line with the plan for transformation in research programs to usher in a "food systems revolution" to tackle challenges related to sustainability, nutrition, genetics, socio-economics, and information and to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Under the MoU, IRRI, WorldFish and IWMI will co-develop and implement research for development activities to discover the impact of rice-fish production systems on environmental, socio-economic, and cultural values on land and waterways.

The projects will be developed based on themes which include constructed water bodies, rice-fish landscapes, climate resilience and water, trade-offs and foresight analysis, and ICT and big data.

"The agreement exemplifies a food systems approach to transforming the global rice sector. The combined global research expertise and influence in the core elements of diets such as rice and fish, as well as land and water systems make this strategic collaboration essential to a food systems revolution," IRRI director general Matthew Morell said.

WorldFish director general Gareth Johnstone said the multi-agency partnership provides a strategic push for wider research, promotion, and implementation of integrated rice-fish systems.

"The partnership helps create better synergies for leveraging our individual research expertise and network strengths to accelerate the sustainable supply of nutritious fish and rice into national, regional, and global food systems," Johnstone said.

IMWI's work on sustainable water and land use converges well with IRRI's work on landscape-level water management and environmental sustainability.

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

Date: APR. 10, 2019 Page: 12

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# Exporters bag $45.53M from Japan food fair

Japan stands as the country's largest export destination for fresh food and is the second largest market for processed food next to the United States in 2018

**By AJ Bajo**

Sixteen Philippine exporters generated over $45.53 million in sales from more than 300 buyers in a recent four-day food fair held in Chiba, Japan, about 254 percent higher than the delegation's target, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said.

"Our premier tuna, fresh and processed tropical fruit products and other organic products have piqued the interest of buyers and generated most of the sales in our recent participation in FOODEX Japan," DTI Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) executive director Pauline Suaco-Juan said.

"The results of our participation have significantly surpassed our initial target of $17.9 million."

Among the foods featured in the 44th FOODEX Japan include tropical foods banana, coconut, durian, papaya, pineapple and mango, as well as organic food such as cakes and confectionary, shrimps and crabs, and powdered juice drinks of other herbs grown locally.

"We had great success in this participation since we were able to hit sales that is more than two times our initial target with tuna and marine products from Century Pacific Food, Inc., Citra Mina Canning Corporation and Phil-Union Frozen Foods Inc. as our top sellers," Suaco-Juan said.

**The results of our participation have significantly surpassed our initial target of $17.9 million.**

"Japan's enormous potential also continues to inspire our food producers and manufacturers to come up with innovative products that suit the Japanese market," she added, noting that the trend revolves around organic, gluten-free and "100 percent pure" products.

The International Food and Beverage Exhibition, also known as FOODEX Japan, serves as a major gateway to the Japanese market. This year, 3,300 local and international exhibitors were present along with more than 80,000 buyers across the global food industry.

Japan stands as the country's largest export destination for fresh food and is the second largest market for processed food next to the United States in 2018. It is also the third largest economy globally which relies 50 percent on imports for food supply, DTI said.

Those who represented the Philippines in the fair held on 5 to 8 March were Agrinurture Inc.; Amley Food Corporation; Avante Agri-Products Philippines Inc.; Celebes Coconut Corp.; CJ Uniworld Corp.; Coconut Cures; Inc./Mindanao Pacific Coconut Coop. and Grand Asia Integrated Natural Coco Products Corp.

Manila Standard

Date: Apr. 10, 2019 Page: B4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# Reg. 6 products take spotlight in agri 'FIESTA'

**By Butch Gunio**

ROXAS CITY, Capiz—The Western Visayas Agriculture and Aquatic Resources Research and Development Consortium is hosting a three-day Farmers Encounters through the Science and Technology Agenda (FIESTA) featuring commodities in Region 6: native chicken Darag, muscovado sugar, mango, green mussel, and bamboo.

The event aims to showcase research and technologies developed by the consortium members in the fields of agriculture, aquatic, and natural resources.

Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic, and Natural Resources Research and Development Acting Executive Director Dr. Reynaldo V. Ebora led on Monday the opening program of the event.

It included science and technology business forums, technology matching, exhibits, Darag native chicken cooking contest and quiz bee, and poster-making contest at Capiz State University here.

In his keynote address, Ebora said: "FIESTA's main goal is to enhance interaction among technology generators, potential technology adopters, and the investors to facilitate the flow of technology and its use for greater economic benefit."

"We seek to inspire farmers and fisherfolk to elevate their economic livelihood from farm keepers to producers of products and services," he added.

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

Date: APRIL 10, 2019 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# PH TUNA, TROPICAL FRUITS ITINAMPOK SA PINAKAMALAKING FOOD EVENT SA JAPAN

**NAGING mataas ang demand ng Philippine tuna, tropical fruits at organic products sa Japan at iba pang international buyers sa ginawang partisipasyon ng bansa sa katatapos na ika-44 na edisyon ng FOODEX Japan noong nakaraang Marso 5-8 sa Makuhari Messe sa Chiba, Japan.**

Labing-anim na local companies ang sumali sa pangunguna ng Department of Trade and Industry, sa pamamagitan ng Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (DTI-CITEM). Para sa partisipasyon ngayong taon, nakakuha ang delegasyon ng Filipinas ng mahigit na US$45.53 milyon ng export sales mula sa 300 buyers.

"Our premier tuna, fresh and processed tropical fruit products, and other organic products have piqued the interest of buyers and generated most of the sales in our recent participation in FOODEX Japan," ani DTI-CITEM Executive Director Pauline Suaco-Juan. "The results of our participation have significantly surpassed our initial target of US$17.9 million."

Ang mga prutas na ipinakita sa Japan ay saging, niyog, durian, papaya, pinya at manga. Na-highlight din ang mga organic food, cakes at confectionary, hipon at alimango, gayundin ang powdered juice drinks ng ibang mga locally grown herbs.

"We had great success in this participation since we were able to hit sales that is more than two times our initial target with tuna and marine products from Century Pacific Food, Inc., Citra Mina Canning Corporation and Phil-Union Frozen Foods, Inc. as our top sellers," sabi ni Suaco-Juan.

Ang mga kompanyang sumali sa exhibit ay ang mga sumusunod: Agrinurture, Inc.; Amley Food Corporation; Avante Agri-Products Philippines, Inc.; Celebes Coconut Corp.; CJ Uniworld Corp.; Coconut Cures; Inc./ Mindanao Pacific Coconut Coop.; Grand Asia Integrated Natural Coco Products Corp; GSL Premium Food Export Corp.; Leonie Agri Corp.; Prime Fruits International, Inc.; Profood International Corp.; Seabest Food and Beverage Corp; and See's International Food Mfg. Corp.

Ang International Food and Beverage Exhibition, na lalong kilala bilang FOODEX Japan, ay isa sa pinakamalaking exhibition sa Asia na nakatuon sa pagkain at inumin sa buong Japan at sa buong mundo. Bilang isang major gateway sa merkado ng Japan, ang apat na araw na okasyon na ginanap ngayong taon ay sumalubong sa mahigit na 3,300 local at international exhibitors, gayundin sa 80,000 buyers mula sa food manufacturing, service, distribution, at trading sectors sa buong global food industry.

"Japan is one of the leading importers of Philippine fruits and other tropical products. It is home to a wide variety of food and drink, and its population loves to experiment with both flavors and forms," sabi ni Suaco-Juan.

***ANG TUNA** ay naging top seller ng Filipinas sa ginanap na FOODEX trade exhibit sa Japan kamakailan.*

"Our participation in FOODEX continues to strengthen our country's promotional and branding efforts in this vibrant and lucrative market. Japan's enormous potential also continues to inspire our food producers and manufacturers to come up with innovative products that suit the Japanese market," aniya.

Ayon kay Suaco-Juan, ang natural at malusog na pagkain ay siya pa ring major trend sa Japan tulad ng nakita sa Foodex Japan 2019. Ang mga produkto ay kalimitang mababa sa asukal, at ang iba ay may label na "organic," "gluten-free" at "100 percent pure."

"Buyers often ask the exhibitors if products are organic or inquire on the percentage of sugar added to the products and some even ask if they could lower down or even remove the sugar additive. With the growing international demand for all things healthy, local companies can explore these ideas to better cater to the health-conscious consumers," dagdag pa ni Suaco-Juan.

Ang Japan ang pinakamalaking export destination ng Filipinas para sa sariwang pagkain at pangalawa sa pinakamalaking merkado para sa processed food sunod sa United States noong 2018. Ito ang pangatlo sa pinakamalaking ekonomiya sa mundo na dumedepende sa 60 porsiyento ng import para sa kanilang food supply.

"We invite buyers and food enthusiasts with a keen interest in Philippine and other Asian products to taste more of these in the upcoming edition of IFEX Philippines where we will present the next big thing in oriental food and cuisine under the theme 'NXTFOOD Asia'," sabi ni Suaco-Juan.

Ang partisipasyon sa ilalim ng FoodPhilippines ay bahagi ng pagkakaisang pagsisikap ng bansa para maitaguyod ang Filipinas bilang source ng dekalidad na produkto ng pagkain sa pandaigdigang merkado.

Ang CITEM ay siyang organizer ng IFEX Philippines, na pinakamalaking export-oriented food show ng bansa na gaganapin sa Mayo 24-26. Ang IFEX Philippines 2019 ay magpapakita ng "NXTFOOD ASIA" kung saan ipakikita rin ang pinakahuling food innovations, trends at best practices sa Asian food industry.

Ang mga interesadong kompanya na gustong sumali sa IFEX Philippines ay puwedeng bumisita sa ifexphilippines.com