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# BANANAS IN LIMBO

## Presence of chemical residue in excess of allowable limit imperils PHL's prime fruit export to Japan

BANANAS are loaded into the hold of a ferry boat in Cebu. HUGO MAES | DREAMSTIME.COM

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By Manuel T. Cayon

DAVAO CITY—The Japanese government has yet to receive a satisfactory assurance from the Department of Agriculture (DA) on how the latter intends to comply with the minimum residue limit (MRL) for banana exports after Tokyo red-flagged a shipment of the home-grown fruit last year allegedly found containing an excess amount of a certain chemical.

This was the latest information relayed by the Philippine embassy in Tokyo and the country's agriculture attaché in Japan. Japan reportedly "reacted strongly" to the presence of the insecticide called fipronil in the red-flagged shipment, the residue of which exceeded that of Japan's MRL.

Japan, meanwhile, has further reduced and tightened its MRL on fipronil, from 0.01 parts per million (ppm) to 0.005 ppm.

The incident happened in August last year, and while the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) said it appreciated the response of the DA "to mitigate further violation of Japan's MRL on fipronil and other active chemical ingredients, it baffles us why the issue has not been resolved yet after seven months since the first detection in August."

## Inaction?

A PBGEA letter sent to Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez on March 22 suspected that the DA "sat" on the documents required by Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Stephen A. Antig, PBGEA executive director, said Japan has required the 100-percent mandatory testing of Philippine bananas since the August incident, consequently delaying the release of the Philippine bananas to the markets in Japan.

Japan's health ministry has required the Philippine government, specifically the DA, to submit the protocol for export to Japan. The DA's Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) and the Plant Quarantine Services (PQS) were assigned to submit the protocol.

Antig said the protocol was already completed by the agencies and with the collaboration of the PBGEA "four weeks ago," or sometime in early March.

"At this point in time, we are kept in limbo due to the inaction of the DA," the PBGEA said in its letter to Dominguez.

On March 20, or two days before the PBGEA wrote Dominguez, the organization also wrote Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol enumerating the four comments of Japan's health ministry as to the issue of the nonsubmission of the protocol.

The PBGEA said the Japanese ministry has received the reports and results of the BPI's audit "on certain companies," but it said the ministry officials would like to have the "formatted report that

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# Bananas in limbo

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outlines the investigations of the violations and the countermeasures taken/to be taken by both the concerned exporters and the BPI."

It also noted the monitoring system for exporting bananas conducted by BPI, but it said the system "is unclear" to the ministry.

"They received the list of audited companies that are compliant exporters to Japan, but they have not received any report on the process how the companies were audited and selected to be on the list," PBGEA said.

"[Japan's] MHLW [Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare] seems to be confused on the multiple updated versions of the protocol presented to them. They want to receive the latest/final and the approved version of the protocol. MHLW would like to know the official contact person from the Philippine government," PBGEA said, enumerating Japan's ministry's concern.

Antig said the PBGEA has arranged for a study tour and discussion with different research and development and quality assurance officers of PBGEA's member companies with the ministry's officials.

"However, the reply of the MHLW was that although they appreciate the extra effort, they prefer not to entertain any meetings with the PBGEA until the Philippine government, particularly the Department of Agriculture, shows concrete steps to address the MRL problem, not only with the submission of a revised protocol for export of bananas to Japan, but with the verifiable preventive measures like laboratory tests in the Philippines," the PBGEA said.

## DA's reply

ON April 3, Acting BPI Director George Y. Culaste said the "answer to the latest comments of MHLW is ready for submission to the Japan Embassy in Manila."

He said his office already received 13 notifications from the Japanese ministry.

"Although most detections are not from PBGEA members, it is very difficult to convince the MHLW that the corrective measures are deemed sufficient to lift the 100-percent mandatory MRL testing." Culaste said the ministry has continued to raise questions on BPI's report.

"For this new banana export protocol, the reason for the several revisions is that we have been incorporating your comments and giving this due consideration," he added.

"It is with deep regret that you consider the BPI's efforts as lacking in assisting the industry in dealing with the issue. We are very much aware that it had been seven months since the first detection in August and yet this issue has not been resolved," he said.

Culaste said the BPI, Plant Product Safety Services Division and the National Plant Quarantine Services Division instituted corrective measures with the issuance of the new banana export protocol, which now incorporated food safety.

"However, our resources at BPI cannot meet up to the needs of the huge banana industry, hence, we rely heavily on monitoring and the premise that licensed exporters, packing facilities and registered growers are indeed compliant to the protocol," Culaste added.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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# Phl seeks easier entry of banana exports to Japan

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Philippines is asking the Japanese government to ease up on its protocols to expedite the access of local bananas to the neighboring Asian country.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said he would lobby to the Japanese government to lift stricter tests for chemical residue on Philippine banana exports.

This as the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association Inc. (PBGEA) has asked the Department of Agriculture to convince Japan that local banana exports comply with Japanese standards for the maximum residue level (MRL) for chemicals used as insecticides in banana plantations following the institution of new protocols and assessment process by the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

"I have talked with officials of PBGEA to assure them that I will personally handle efforts to resolve the issue," Piñol said.

PBGEA, the country's biggest banana companies, export 50 percent of their bananas to Japan.

The association sought DA's assistance in resolving Japan's implementation of 100 percent testing of Philippine banana exports in August 2018 following the discovery of some bananas from the Philippines that contained residues of Fipronil insecticides beyond the maximum limit imposed by Japanese food safety standards.

The BPI immediately instituted a stricter Philippine assessment process with new protocols and has sent the Japanese government a list of Philippine companies that it certifies to comply with the Japanese MRL standards.

In its letter to Piñol, PBGEA said it is concerned that the 100 percent testing requirement could hurt Philippine exports especially during the Golden Week holiday in Japan from April 28 to May 6 when limited or no cargo inspections are expected.

Piñol said he would present to Japanese officials the new protocols and assessment process implemented by the Philippine government and the banana exporters to assure them Filipino bananas comply with their food safety standards.

Philippine banana exports continued to increase in 2018 after joint government and industry efforts to improve banana production and stop the spread of the Panama disease, giving the Philippines back its reputation as the world's second largest banana exporter after Ecuador.

PILIPINO MIRROR
FILIPINO MIRROR MEDIA GROUP CORPORATION
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## Sa Q4 ng 2018

# PH FRUITS OUTPUT TUMAAS

**TUMAAS ang pineapple at mango production ng bansa sa fourth quarter ng 2018, ayon sa Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).**

Sa datos ng PSA, ang pineapple production mula Oktubre hanggang Disyembre ng nakaraang taon ay umangat ng one percent sa 706,046 metric tons (MT) mula sa 699,022 MT na naitala sa kahalintulad na panahon noong 2017.

Halos two-thirds o 64.2 percent ng total pineapple production ay nagmula sa Northern Mindanao, sumusunod ang Soccsksargen na may 30-percent share sa total pineapple production, habang nag-ambag ang Bicol Region ng 2.1 percent.

Samantala, naitala ang 0.5 percent na pagtaas sa mango production sa fourth quarter ng 2018, kung saan umabot ito sa 27,062 MT, mas mataas sa 27,049 MT noong 2017.

Ang Zamboanga Peninsula ang may pinakamalaking kontribusyon na 26 percent sa total mango production, kasunod ang Caraga at Northern Mindanao na may 24.1 percent at 15.4 percent, ayon sa pagkakasunod.

"The carabao variety, with 22,056 MT production during the period, contributed the largest share of 81.7 percent to the total mango production," ayon pa sa datos ng PSA.

Samantala, target ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang maliliit na banana farmers cooperatives at associations na mag-supply ng bahagi ng malaking market requirement para sa Cavendish bananas sa Eastern European (EEU) countries, partikular sa Russia.

Sa pakikipagpulong sa mga opisyal ng banana farmers cooperatives ng Compostela Valley sa Davao City, sinabi ni DA Secretary Emmanuel Piñol na ang merkado ng EEU ay may tinatayang 180-million consumers. **PNA**

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

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# PH hopes to supply Russia with bananas

DAVAO CITY – The Department of Agriculture (DA) is eyeing small banana farmers cooperatives and associations to supply part of the huge market requirements for Cavendish bananas in the Eastern European countries, especially Russia.

In a meeting with officials of banana farmers cooperatives of Compostela Valley in Davao City today, Agiruclture Secretary Manny Piñol emphasized that the EEU market has an estimated 180 million consumers.

Piñol said the market in the Russian Federation alone needs 150,000 boxes every week, according to an executive of the Magnit Supermatket, one of the biggest supermarket chains in Russia with 12,500 outlets.

A group of EEU investors intends to establish a 7,000-hectare banana farm in the Bangsamoro Area.

While waiting for the development of the area, however, the group will be buying from small independent farmers to initially supply the EEU requirements.

The Russian market alone has an annual expenditure of $5-B for tropical fruits, mainly bananas.

Ecuador monopolizes the Russian market even if the Philippines enjoys a distinct advantage of shorter shipping time.

The Philippines only set sights on the Russian and EEU market after President Duterte met with President Vladimir Putin in May 2017.

In the meeting yesterday in Davao City, small banana farmers were assured of DA support in consolidating their banana production to access the EEU market.

This would include a long-term marketing agreement which would assure them of a market with a fixed price for their produce.

The DA also assured the farmers of production support like Solar Irrigation facilities and fertilizers.

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# Remaking PH agriculture with contract growing and through CSR support to cooperatives

WHY NOT?
DR. EMIL Q. JAVIER

This column is directed to our business leaders and was encouraged by the very positive response of the private sector to the calls of the President to help rehabilitate Boracay and now Manila bay. Particularly inspiring was the pledge of Ramon Ang and San Miguel Corporation to spend ₱1 billion for the rehabilitation of Tullahan river.

The clean-up of Tullahan river will be much appreciated by the fortunate residents of Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela but you can imagine the multiplier impact for the rest of the country of such corporate concern if the same were directed to the improvement of the livelihood of poor farmers and fisherfolk.

Here's how it can be done:

A lot had been written about what had been amiss in Philippine agriculture and what need to be done. A thoughtful analysis will lead to the observation that the root cause is our small fragmented farm holdings which lack economies of scale to operate — from land preparation to culture, and all the way to postharvest handling, assembly, storage, processing and marketing.

> "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why... I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"
> – Robert Kennedy

We are always compared with our ASEAN neighbors, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, whose tropical growing conditions are very much similar to ours. Embarrassingly our crop productivity is consistently the lowest. The notable exceptions are bananas and pineapple which are grown in plantation scale. And in animals, broiler poultry production much of which are raised by small outgrowers in partnership with corporate integrators.

**The solution is obvious: In order to be competitive we should somehow operate our small farms into larger management units, given the constraints imposed by agrarian reform, and link them to the increasingly very competitive global food supply chains.** As formal participants in organized supply chains, the produce of the farmers will be aligned with the quality, quantity and time of delivery requirements of the market. Losses to the farmers will be minimal and the efficiency of the system will be ultimately reflected in better farm gate prices and higher farmers' incomes.

Short of reversing agrarian reform which is highly divisive and therefore unlikely to happen anytime soon, there are two ways forward: 1) enrolling small farmers as outgrowers with corporate integrators, and 2) re-engineering our moribund cooperatives and irrigators associations, but this time with corporate support.

**Broader adoption of contract growing as a business model**

Contract growing is a common business model in farming in both developed and developing countries. For small farmers the arrangement gives them ready access to credit, inputs and modern technologies which they have difficulty obtaining on their own. And, very importantly, they are assured of market prices designed to make them profitable, or else they will drop out. In study after study, and country after country, contract growers are known to be much better off than their independent, unorganized counterparts.

For the corporate integrators, they

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are assured of raw materials of the quality, quantity and time of delivery required by their business. And since the land, equipment and facilities belong to the farmers, their capital requirements are more manageable. And also the integrators are spared of land tenure and labor issues which in many situations are problematic.

In Thailand, they have contract growing for almost everything — livestock, dairy, poultry, fruits, vegetables, ornamentals, and even eucalyptus. Here at home the broilers, banana, pineapple, papaya and Virginia tobacco outgrowers programs are doing well.

**The challenge (and appeal) therefore is for our agribusiness sector, including and specially the supermarkets, to increasingly organize their supply chains with small farmers as direct partners. This makes good business sense, good for our economy, and should be of great help to small farmers to lift them out of poverty.**

*As for the government, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Finance should provide incentives to corporate integrators. The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the local governments on the other hand should assist in socially preparing the farmers and organizing them into producers' cooperatives. We have a Cooperatives Development Authority which is under the supervision of the Office of the President but its priority is regulatory rather than business development.*

**Corporate CSR support for cooperatives**

Not all businesses are engaged in agriculture but our corporate leaders can still help by incorporating support to farmers' cooperatives and irrigators associations in their respective corporate social responsibility (CSR) portfolios.

Rural cooperatives is a proven business approach in farming in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and most of Europe. We have been promoting rural cooperatives for as long as I can remember but unfortunately most of them have failed.

The most common reason for failure had been mismanagement, and sometimes outright graft, by the elected cooperative leaders and managers.

**This is where corporate intervention should prove useful. The corporate foundations can deploy business managers to advise, guide, train the coop officers and managers and link them to the markets.**

**Mechanization Service Providers Under the Rice Tariffication Act**

Following is a concrete illustration how the CSR approach to cooperative development can be made to work:

Our rice is not competitive with those coming from Vietnam and Thailand because of our high labor costs. Hence, the provision of ₱30 billion worth of farm machines for distribution to rice farmers under the Rice Tariffication Act.

*Thirty billion pesos is a lot of money to spend over a six-year period. However given the sad experiences of poorly maintained and wasting farm machines and equipment given away to cooperatives in past programs, it cannot be business as usual. There must be a better way of organizing the cooperatives to properly receive, operate and maintain the machines.* Operators must be trained to handle and maintain the equipment. Systems need to be in place such that operating business units are organized in the recipient cooperatives who will function as professional service providers to their members for a fee.

At an average capitalization of ₱10 million which are enough to purchase a couple of four-wheel tractors, 10–20 hand tractors, a mechanical rice transplanter and a grain combine, the program amount of ₱30 billion is good for the establishment nationwide of 3,000 such professional service providers.

The task of managing the ₱30 billion rice mechanization program has been entrusted with Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization in the DA. The agency has never handled this amount of money, was not organized for business and will be very likely overwhelmed. This is a great opportunity for the private sector to come forward and offer to help.

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*Dr. Emil Q. Javier is a Member of the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) and also Chair of the Coalition for Agriculture Modernization in the Philippines (CAMP).*

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# Capiz hosts Visayas launch of Filipino Food Month

THE National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Provincial Government of Capiz, led the Visayas leg of the first ever Filipino Food Month occurred on April 11 to 12 with multi-venue activities within the province.

The celebration of Filipino Food Month is in accordance with the Presidential Proclamation No. 469, signed in April 2018 it carries the theme "Ang Sarap: Piyesta ng Pagkaing Pilipino."

Filipino Food Month is a celebration to promote, preserve, and ensure the transmission of vast culinary traditions and treasures to future generations, and to support and appreciate various industries, farmers, and agricommunities which benefit therefrom.

The Filipino Food Month celebration in Visayas opened with Patubas (which means harvest) or farmers and fisherfolk day at the Villareal Stadium, Roxas City, Capiz, and competitions such as the PINAKA-Contest. Tiyangge was also part of the celebration featuring agricultural and aquamarine products sold by participating farmers and fishermen.

The formal launch highlighted the unveiling of Filipino Food Month logo, food offering, performances, and cooking competitions among local government units of Capiz. The main proponent of the Filipino Food Month and President of Philippine Culinary Heritage Movement, Chef Jam Melchor shared his views and thoughts on the Filipino food and its celebrations, and also conducted a cooking demonstration.

The Department of Tourism (DOT) also took part in the festivity with their series of food fairs which will happen in different cities and regions around the country including Baguio City, Quezon, and Iloilo.

For the whole month of April, expect multi-venue events all over the country. In Cavite, an exhibition titled Sinag: Tracing Emilio Aguinaldo's Palate is on view through the whole month of April at Sarmiento-Panlilio Room, Museo De la Salle, De la Salle University-Dasmariñas City.

Pista sa Guevarra's: Celebration of Filipino Food Flavors, Chef Roland and Jaq Laudico's own celebration at Guevarra's, San Juan City, runs until April 30.

Republic of Taste: A Gastronomic Journey in South Luzon with food historian Guillermo 'Ige' Ramos will also celebrate the Filipino Food Month from April 26 to 28 at the SM City Rosario, Cavite.

For the culminating activity, PCHM will hold a gala night titled "Ang Sarap! Philippine Food Festival Gala 2019" on April 30 at the Manila Hotel, with invited chefs and purveyors from all over the country.

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## Dahil sa tagtuyot

# PINSALA SA PANANIM SA GENSAN P12-M NA

**UMABOT na sa PhP12.4 milyon ang pinsalang dala ng El Niño phenomenon sa mga pananim sa General Santos City, na nakaapekto na rin sa ibang lugar nitong nagdaang linggo.**

Sinabi ni Elsie Villanueva, assistant head ng City Agriculture Office (CAO), kamakailan na ipinakita sa kanilang monitoring ang mga lugar na sakahan na naapektuhan ng tagtuyot ay umabot na sa mahigit na 300 ektarya.

Sinabi ni Villanueva na nairekord ng local government ang total damage ng PHP3.7 milyon para sa palay at mais, at PHP8.6 milyon para sa ibang high-value crops. Ang mga apektadong barangay ay ang San Jose, Upper Labay, Batomelong, Sinawal, Tinagacan at Olympog.

Sinabi niya ang tinamaan ng pinakamatinding pinsala ay ang Barangay San Jose, na nag-report ng total na 102 ektarya ng apektadong farmlands, karamihan ay natataniman ng saging na nakasasakop sa 32 magsasaka.

May ilang 23 ektarya ng mga napinsalang mga banana plantations sa lugar na kinokonsidera na sobrang napinsala dahil sa kakulangan ng irigasyon.

"Our field personnel are conducting weekly monitoring to properly determine the status of the affected farms and set immediate interventions," lahad ni Villanueva sa isang panayam.

Sinabi niya na ang halaga ng nairekord na pinsala ay nadagdagan dahil sa apektadong banana plantation, lalo na ang cardava at lacatan. Sinabi niya na may mga nai-report din na pinsala sa cacao plantations sa barangay Tinagacan at Olympog.

Sinabi pa ng opisyal na umaasa sila na ang pabugso-bugsong pag-ulan dala ng low-pressure area ng mga nakaraang araw ay magbibigay daan para sa ibang natitirang pananim na makabawi.

"If the rains will continue, even just moderate, some of our crops can benefit from it," sabi niya.

Gumagawa ang gobyernong lokal ng paraan para magkaroon ng seed assistance para sa mga apektadong palay at corn farmers, gayundin sa seedlings para sa damaged banana plantations, ani Villanueva, dagdag pa na sila ay nakikipagugnayan sa Department of Agriculture para sa ayuda sa ibang farm inputs. **PNA**

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## Labanan ang gutom at kahirapan:

# AGRIKULTURA, KANAYUNAN PAUNLARIN

**DAPAT pagtuunan ng kaukulang atensyon ng administrasyong Duterte ang pagsusulong sa kapakanan ng agrikultura at imprastraktura ng bansa kung seryoso ito sa layuning labanan ang matinding kahirapan partikular sa mga kanayunan.**

Ayon kay Senador Sonny Angara, mayorya ng pinakamahihirap na Filipino ay naninirahan sa mga lalawigan na ang tanging pinagkakakitaan ay maliliit na sakahan.

"Kailangang buhusan sila ng tulong ng gobyerno kung talagang sinsero ito na labanan kung 'di man tuluyang mabura ang kahirapan. Dapat ay gumawa na tayo ng kaukulang hakbang upang isalba ang mga kababayan natin sa mga kanayunan mula sa gutom at labis na kahirapan," ayon kay Angara, muling tumatakbong senador sa ilalim ng plataporma Alagang Angara.

Nakatakdang daluhan ngayon ng senador ang pulong ng Farmers and Fisherfolk Congress, isa sa mga aktibidad na kanyang pupuntahan sa Panaad sa Negros Festival ng Bacolod City.

Ani Angara, nangangailangan ng mas malaking budget ang agriculture sector upang mas mapalakas nito ang suporta para sa mga magsasaka, tulad ng mas maayos na sistema ng irigasyon, postharvest facilities at iba pang farm subsidies na makatutulong sa kanila sa produksyon ng sapat na pagkain para sa buong populasyon.

"Kailangang buhusan ng tulong at suporta ng pamahalaan ang mga nasa sektor ng agrikultura hindi lamang para masiguro ang sapat na suplay ng pagkain para sa lumalaki nating populasyon, kundi para na rin matulungan silang makaahon sa matinding kahirapan at kagutuman," anang senador.

Mababatid na ilang taon na ngayong nakatatanggap ng napakaliit na pondo ang Department of Agriculture (DA) na katumbas lamang ng 2 porsyento ng kabuuang pambansang budget.

Para sa mga taong 2017 at 2018, ang DA budget ay itinala lamang sa P45 bilyon at P55 bilyon ayon sa pagkakasunod. Ngayong taon, P49 bilyon lamang ang inilaang budget ng gobyerno sa ahensya mula sa kabuang P3.7 trilyong national budget na tanging lagda na lamang ni Pangulong Duterte ang kailangan para tuluyan itong maisabatas.

"Kung matutugunan ng pamahalaan ang mga pangangailangan ng mga magsasaka, makasisiguro tayong lalaki ang kanilang kita at magkakaroon tayo ng sapat na suplay ng pagkain," pagliliwanag ni Angara.

Aniya pa, malaki ang potensyal ng sektor ng agrikultura na makatulong sa paglikha ng maraming trabaho at sa pagpapalakas ng mga komunidad kung mabibigyan lamang ito ng sapat na pondo.

Base sa isinagawang survey ng Philippine Statistics Authority o PSA nitong Enero, 1.7 milyong trabaho ang nawala sa agrikultura at ang pangunahing dahilan na nakikita rito ng mga kinauukulan ay ang pagbagsak ng aktuwal na bilang ng mga empleyado sa pagbubukas ng taon.

Lumalabas sa naturang survey na bumaba ng 0.9 percent ang total registered employment nitong Enero o nangangahulugang 387,000 workers ang nawalan ng trabaho.

Naniniwala si Angara na dahil sa napakaliit na support services ng gobyerno sa mga magsasaka, mas lalong naghirap ang kanilang sektor, dahilan upang mas kaunting bilang lamang ang nagkakainteres na gawing propesyon ang pagsasaka.

Sa kasalukuyan, ayon sa PSA, 9.158 milyong indibidwal ang nasa empleyo ng agriculture sector na tumatanggap ng arawang sahod na P265.

Base naman sa mga record, sa paglipas ng mga taon, patuloy sa pagbaba ang kontribusyon ng agriculture sector sa pagpapalakas ng gross domestic product ng bansa.

Mula 1998 hanggang 2009, 13-14 porsyento lamang ang naiambag ng sektor sa GDP na tuluyang bumagsak sa 10 porsyento noong 2017. **VICKY CERVALES**

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# Albay under state of calamity due to El Niño

**By Sonny Sales**

**THE Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Albay declared the province under a state of calamity due to El Niño.**

The Department of Agriculture - Regional Office 5 placed the damage to crops and livestock at P872-million brought about by the dry spell in the province.

Dr. Cedric Daep, head of the Albay Public Safety, Emergency and Management Office (APSEMO), said the town of Daraga had the highest damage in rice, with a total of P51,000,000; followed by Legazpi City, with P25,211,666; while the least damage cost was recorded in Malilipot town.

The APSEMO coordinated with DA Region-5 based in Camarines Sur for immediate intervention to provide pumps, seeds, other agriculture supplies, and information campaign to ease the effects of the intense heat to Albay farmers.

In Jovellar town, the province's cattle-raising capital, livestock owners had started selling cattle due to reported deaths among cows and carabaos as a result of dwindling water supply in farming wells while hectares of grasslands have dried up affecting the food supply of cattle.

Jovellar municipal agriculturist Fernando Barcia instructed livestock raisers to adapt a "cut and carry" method of feeding local livestock, wherein raisers gather grass and vegetation and feed them to their cattle, instead of leaving the animals roam in drying grasslands.

The town's cattle raisers said this year's El Niño may be the worst, which had already cost mortality among local livestock.

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# SRA bares plots to manipulate sugar prices

**SUGAR Regulatory Administration (SRA) chief Hermenegildo Serafica said there are some sectors trying to manipulate the market by spreading rumors that may lead to higher retail prices of sugar.**

"There is no reason for sugar prices to go up since sugar stock balance is at an all-time high of over 1.1 million metric tons (MT) that is 143 percent of last year's stock balance during the same period," said Serafica in a statement.

Also, the mill gate prices of the commodity have been holding steady between P1,450 to P1,550 per 50-kilogram bag for the past five months.

"I have been going around inspecting sugar mills' warehouses and traders' warehouses and many of the imported sugar have not been used. In fact, over 133,500 MT of imported have not been withdrawn from the warehouses," said Serafica.

"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," he added.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) earlier said the agency will be monitoring the prices of sugar following reports that the prices of sugar went as high as P68 per kilo compared to the usual price range of P50 to P55.

"DTI continues to monitor sugar. We have included that in our list. And we insist that price of sugar should only be at P50, maximum at P55 per kilo," said DTI Undersecretary Ruth Castelo.

She said the agency will also be issuing notices of violation to retailers selling sugar above the allowed retail price.

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Agri-Talk

By ZAC B. SARIAN

**BITTERSWEET** Thailand's sweet tamarind

# WHY IS THAI SWEET TAMARIND NOT GROWN HERE COMMERCIALLY?

(Memoirs of an Agri Journalist)

That's one of the questions that the late **Ben S. Vergara**, a national scientist, once asked. That's right. The sweet tamarind from Thailand has been introduced in the Philippines for many years now. Filipinos love to eat the ripe sweet tamarind so there should be no problem about the market. Yet there's no locally grown fruit sold in the market.

Some local farmers, most of them hobbyists, have grown a few sweet tamarind trees in their backyards or farms that have borne fruit. We, however, don't know of any commercial grower in the Philippines who is selling his harvest in the market.

Years back, maybe more than 15 years ago, we remember receiving a press release stating that in no time farmers from Zambales will be making money from their harvest of sweet tamarind. Basis of the speculation was that thousands of grafted sweet tamarind were distributed free to the farmers in the province. Up to now, we have not seen or heard of a positive result.

Some hobbyists had bought grafted sweet tamarind from us. One time, the lady buyer approached us. She said that her tree bore a lot of fruits but they were thin, not like the full-bodied fruits from Bangkok. We were not surprised. She did not fertilize her tree at all. All she did was water and waited for it to bear fruit.

Dr. Vergara had his own idea why the Thai sweet tamarind is not grown commercially in the Philippines. He is quite positive the answer is that it is much easier to import than to grow the fruit in the Philippines.

We really don't know what happened to the grafted tamarind distributed to farmers in Zambales. We can only guess. Perhaps, the farmers regarded them as just like the ordinary tamarind. Maybe they planted them but did not do much in taking care of them. They just waited for them to bear fruit.

On hindsight, we can say that there is one fruit from Thailand that is now grown commercially though not really in the scale that they are producing it in Thailand. And what is that? It is what we popularly call Bangkok *santol*.

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# Farm tourism, a way out of poverty – Villar

By **VANNE ELAINE P. TERRAZOLA**

Senator Cynthia Villar on Friday vowed to continue promoting farm tourism and agri-enterpreneurship as she reiterated her belief that these would help alleviate poverty among the country's farmers and fisherfolks.

"I see farm tourism as a way out of poverty para sa mga (for the) farmers, farm workers, and fisherfolk. It will increase their income and give them other livelihood and business opportunities," Villar told some 60 graduates of the Training of Facilitators on Farm Business School (FBS) in a ceremony held at the Villar SIPAG Farm School in Bacoor, Cavite, Friday.

"Kaya itutuloy natin ang pagpaparami ng mga farm tourism camps at schools. Sisiguruhin natin na pati sa mga malalayong areas ay meron din, hindi lang sa mga tourist destinations na sikat na. Kailangan lahat ng mga lugar sa ating bansa ay mabenepisyohan (This is why we will continue to expand farm tourism camps and schools, not only in popular tourist destinations but also in far-flung areas. All areas in the country should benefit from the program)," Villar, a re-electionist senator, said.

Villa, who chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, expressed optimism for farm tourism and agriculture-related businesses in the country, especially with Republic Act 10816 mandating government participation in promoting and developing the sector.

RA 10816 or the "Farm Tourism Development Law," was signed into law in 2016.

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# Halal makers eye $58-B global market

By CZERIZA VALENCIA

**Local producers of halal-certified products stand to capture a substantial portion of the $58-billion global market for Shariah-compliant goods and services if they can deepen their integration in the global halal ecosystem and significantly contribute to the supply in this underserved market.**

The dynamic global halal market caters to the food and non-food needs of some 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide. The food market alone has a perceived market value of $58.3 billion by 2020 and $2.3 trillion by 2023 compared with $45.3 billion in 2016.

This may still be a conservative estimate as there is now a growing acceptance and appreciation for traditional halal products and emerging products and services worldwide.

These products are now valued beyond religious significance and are increasingly favored for high quality and hygiene standards that go into the transportation and manufacturing processes.

Malaysian and Philippine officials interviewed on the sidelines of the recently-concluded 16th Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) said the global market for halal-certified products and services continues to grow annually but the base of present suppliers still cannot fully meet the rising demand.

This year's expo, organized by Malaysia External Trade Development Corp. (MATRADE) and held from April 3 to 6 at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Center (MITEC), attracted more than 1,000 exhibitors from 44 countries as well 25,000 visitors.

Around 27 Philippine exporters of food and non-food halal-certified products showcased their products in the world's largest expo for halal goods. Three local importers, meanwhile, participated in the business matching activity held a day before the official opening of MIHAS.

For major exporters of halal products such as Malaysia, the Philippines is not yet a prime destination for selling their goods and services because of its small Muslim population.

Malaysian trade authorities, however, see several windows of opportunities in the Philippines. Its large population of more than 100 million people opens up opportunities for market education and consumption amid the newfound appreciation for halal products.

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More than a thousand exporters of halal products exhibited their products during the 16th MIHAS held in Kuala Lumpur from April 3 to April 6

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Malaysia's proximity to the Philippines and the government's push for the development of its own halal industry for export, meanwhile, can give way to business partnerships and technology exchange between Philippine and Malaysian companies.

"The Philippines is an optimistic market. It is a huge market because of the large population. So of course, our engagement with the Philippines is not only in the form of participation in exhibition," said Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz, deputy chief executive officer for exports acceleration at MATRADE.

"We even conducted specialized missions, we call it export exploration missions. We don't want to just sell, we want to collaborate, we want partnership. We also want to offer our technologies and our expertise. So our push is different," he added.

Malaysia is now embarking on an ambitious mission of becoming the center of a so-called Halal Silk Route that cuts through Asia, Africa and Europe.

This trade route is envisioned to have end-to-end logistics services, integrated halal value-added services, as well as competitive transportation costs and hassle-free documentation processes for halal goods.

"We have to acknowledge the fact that the supply of halal products is not enough to cater to the needs of 1.8 billion Muslims all over the world. The opportunity in halal is huge. We see more and more countries developing their respective halal industries. This is very encouraging," MATRADE chief executive officer Wan Latiff Wan Musa told reporters.

Whenever the word halal is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind, is food. The word hahal, itself means "permissible" and so halal food is food that is permitted under the Shariah (Islamic) Law.

For a product to be considered halal, it must not contain any component or raw material from animals considered haram or forbidden.

During the preparation,

**At least 27 exhibitors from the Philippines showcased their products during the world's biggest expo for halal products and services.**

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processing or manufacture of such products, it must be ensured that the tools and equipment used are not contaminated with ingredients considered haram.

The stringent requirement extends to the slaughter of animals and the preparation of meat. In essence, animals must be slaughtered swiftly and mercifully within the appropriate Islamic ritual.

This stringent consumption requirement extends to other consumer goods such as cosmetics, personal care, modest fashion and even pharmaceuticals.

With the globalization of the halal industry, this further extends to the importance placed on the transportation of halal products to ensure consistency of quality and compliance.

Philippine halal products now gaining more respectability.

Philippine trade officials present during the expo recognizes the fact that the Philippine halal industry is still in the development stage.

They noted, however, that products are now slowly gaining respectability in select export destinations, thanks largely to the government's push to regulate and improve the competitiveness of the industry though the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Act of 2016.

Under the law, the country created the Philippine National Standards for Halal which all local halal certifying bodies must abide by.

"Buyers are very interested especially now that we have this new halal law in the Philippines that will regulate halal products for exports. And so, in a way, we can say that they are now gaining trust in our halal industry," said Raison Arobinto, Senior Trade and Industry Development Specialist (STIDS) Halal Section, Export Marketing Bureau of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

" In the Philippine halal law, we have a five-year framework, and our goal for Philippine halal is to make it a respectable player in the global halal ecosystem," he said.

Most of the Philippine exhibitors in the expo are certified halal by the Islamic Da'wah Council of the Philippines (IDCP), one of the local certifiying bodies, which was recognized by Malaysia's sole halal certifying body, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM).

Most of the Philippine halal products exhibited in the 16th MIHAS were either specialty products or traditionally performing exports like coconut products, dried fruits, jams and jellies, biscuits, muscovado sugar, cosmetics, and personal care products or those that are unique to the Philippines.

Chol de la Paz, Senior Trade Industry Development Specialist, Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) of DTI, said while Philippine halal certification is recognized overseas, Philippine manufacturers would greatly benefit if they could also obtain certification from their destination countries.

"For instance, it is also important to have JAKIM certification because you will not have problems bringing your products to Malaysia. IDCP, for example, there are items that are not covered like cosmetics," she said. "JAKIM is widely known and is a pioneer in halal certification," De la Paz said.

De la Paz said other than goods, Philippine halal businesses can also explore possibilities in offering Muslim-friendly services.

"The slice we are getting from the global halal market is not substantial. This is partly because we are not a Muslim country. We don't have this much halal companies or halal-certified companies. We don't even have enough halal restaurants and halal facilities," she said.

"When halal buyers visit the Philippines that is the number one challenge. We cannot cater to their needs easily. They are limited. We have limited hotels and restaurants," she added.

## Challenges

For the chief executive of one of Malaysia's leading multinational ports, exporters of halal products are hampered by several issues such as logistics issues, difficulty obtaining financial support, lack of knowledge about halal definition and procedures, lack of price competitiveness, lack of familiarity with export markets, market misconception and acceptance, and bureaucratic red tape especially in Customs.

Northport chief executive officer Dato' Azman Shah Mohd Yusof, who recently visited the Philippines, said trade opportunities are vibrant in the country especially in the south, where the Muslim population is concentrated, but the value chain works against exporters.

"The trade opportunities are there but the value chain does not work for exporters, so we are working together with officials from the Philippines. It would be good to see the trade flow flowing. This is very possible," he said.

Sirajuddin Suhaimee, spokesperson of the halal hub division of JAKIM, said Malaysia's relationship with the Philippines in the halal business, has been constantly developing in the past 10 years, during which, it recognized several of its halal certifying bodies enabling more products to be sold in Malaysia.

JAKIM is Malaysia's sole certifying authority for halal products which has gained worldwide recognition for being among the best certifying authorities in the world because its stringent standards require the entire manufacturing to follow halal standards.

"We promote halal knowledge economy wherein we conduct capacity building programs. We do trainings. We can assist them how to be a good halal certifying body to serve the industry. The connection with certifying bodies in the Philippines is an ongoing process," said Sirajuddin.

He noted that based on the results of meetings with ASEAN working groups about the halal industry, Philippine exporters have the appropriate products for the global market as well as the risk appetite to expand the global presence of their products but are bound by financing constraints.

"One of the issues raised by one of the government agencies from the Philippines is how Malaysia can assist them in Islamic finance. They have the production and ingredients. They have the good things to share but they need to add value using Islamic finance in the Philippines," he said.

"And of course Malaysia offered to assist the Philippines in Islamic finance through mechanisms that we already have in place. Several banks are already in the Philippines to add value to islamic finance," he added.

Arsalaan Ahmed, spokesman of the Association of Islamic Banking and Financial Institution Malaysia, said while islamic finance is not a must for halal businesses, it can help small producers expand because the system has mechanisms that enable small firms to get financing at more beneficial terms.

It also boosts the appeal of itd products because it shows greater commitment on the part of the manufacturers to the halal way of life.

## Moving forward

MATRADE CEO Wan Latiff Wan Musa said it was encouraging sign that Philippine companies have been increasing their presence in the annual MIHAS.

"It is a good thing that the Philippines is now participating in a big way. You cannot ignore the potential of the halal market," he said.

Philippine halal products currently make their way to Malaysia, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.

Yusof said halal products are now prized for three main reasons: food traceability, purity and cleanliness.

This is the case for Filipino importer Anna-May Jamet, president and chief executive officer of Bubhanesh International Business Ventures, one of the Filipino firms that joined the business matching activity conducted before the opening of MIHAS.

Jamet's firm engages in importation, manufacturing, and distribution of food, personal care and home care products. Within the local industry, she is known as the supplier of SM Bonus home care products to SM Supermarkets.

"Halal is not about being Muslim anymore. It's about something that is clean and dependable. Consumers now, when they see the halal seal, say it's a class in itself," she said.

Jamet has been engaged with MATRADE for eight years now, regularly visiting Malaysia to explore opportunities for trade and partnerships.

In her last visit, she concluded talks with a honey manufacturer in Penang for the distribution in the country of 20-gram honey sachets that are easy to carry around and satisfies the recommended daily dietary allowance for honey.

She is also in talks with potential Malaysian partners for the manufacture of home care and food products.

"I think we are in that direction because of my association with MATRADE," she said.

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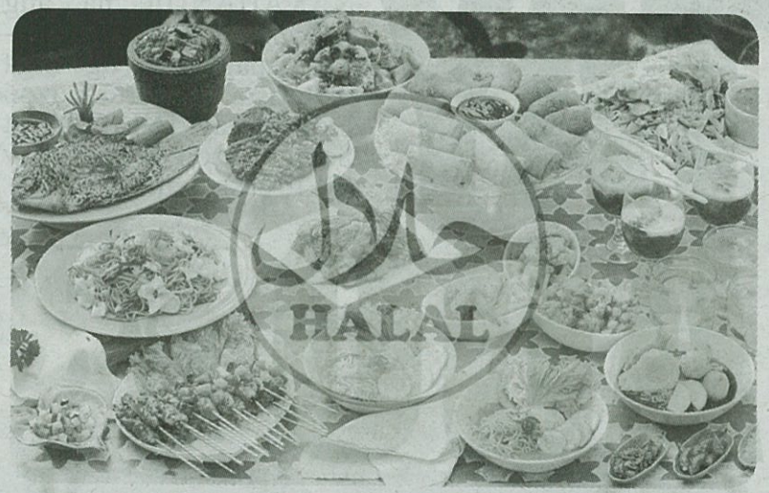
# PANIBAGONG MILYAHE SA PHILIPPINE HALAL INDUSTRY

**DINALA ng Department of Industry Trade Promotions ang Philippine Halal Industry sa mapa ng US$ 3.2 trillion world halal market.**

Sa kanyang mensahe sa katatapos na World Halal Conference (Abril 3-4, 2019) sa Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, nagpahayag si Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Undersecretary Abdulgani M. Macatoman sa nasabing komperensiya na ang Filipinas ay papasok sa isang malaking policy revitalization para makatulong sa the Philippine Halal Industry at maging isang big player sa merkado ng halal pagdating sa halal food, pharmaceuticals, tourism, at Islamic Finance.

Kaysa mahuli sa Fourth Industrial Revolution kung saan ang kapasidad ng tao ay napalalawak, sinabi niya na ang global halal industry ay dapat magsimula ng economic revolution para magamit ng husto ang benepisyo nito para sa magandang pagbabago ng pamumuhay ng mga tao. Sinabi pa niya na ang halal market ay hindi lamang para sa ilang 2 bilyong Muslims, na nasa one-fourth ng world population, kundi para sa lahat ng tao na nagnanais ng malusog na pagkain at ethical standards sa food consumption at business relationships.




Ang DTI Trade Promotions and Special Concerns Group, na pinamumunuan ni Usec Macatoman, ay nagnanais ng malakas na policy direction para sa pagkilala sa ibang bansa ng halal food products mula sa Filipinas sa pamamagitan ng malawakang pagkilala ng Philippine halal certification na may certifying bodies sa ibang Muslim countries. Sa kasalukuyan, sa siyam na certifying bodies na kinikilala ng Philippine Halal Board, tatlo lamang ang kinikilala sa Malaysia. Ang Gulf countries ay namimili pa rin kung alin ang tatanggaping halal foods, condiments, at pharmaceuticals na gawa sa Filipinas.

Dahil dito, kumuha si Usec Macatoman ng pangako mula sa Ministry of International Trade and Industry of Malaysia (MITI) para pag-ibayuhin ang halal trade sa pagitan ng Filipinas at Malaysia. Kasabay nito, magkahiwalay niyang kinumbinsi ang Halal Development Council of Malaysia na suportahan ang pagsisikap sa pagpapabuti ng pagtanggap ng halal foods mula sa Filipinas sa pagpapabuti rin ng local certification efforts sa bansa. Kasama ang MITI, kukumbinsihin nila ang JAKIM, ang central certification body ng Malaysia, na kilalanin ang iba pang certifying bodies mula sa Filipinas.

Nangangahulugan ito ng pagbibigay ng pagsasanay sa sertipikasyon at auditing procedures sa magiging certifying bodies sa bansa sa ilalim ng Philippine Halal Board para mas magkaroon ng pagkakaisa ang ating halal certification standards katulad ng sa Malaysia.

Isang malaking implikasyon ng international recognition ng halal certification mula sa Philippine certifiers ay hindi lamang sa halal food trade kundi maging sa turismo rin.

Para makuha ang Muslim tourists na dumarating sa Malaysia na isali ang Filipinas sa kanilang destinasyon, dapat din na ang Philippine restaurants, hotels at ibang tourism facilities sa bansa ay kumuha rin ng halal certification.

Dahil dito, magkakaroon ng DTI Second National Halal Industry Conference na gaganapin sa Clark ngayong Mayo 2-3 para mapalawak pa ang kaalaman sa halal certification of food and tourism facilities at masiguro na mas maraming darating na Muslim tourists sa nalalapit na Asian Games sa Disyembre ngayong taon.

Balita

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# NegOcc, mas patatatagin ang livestock, poultry industry

**PATULOY ang pagsasagawa ng pamahalaang panlalawigan ng Negros Occidental ng mga hakbangin na lalong magpapatatag sa livestock at poultry industry sa lalawigan.**

Sa pamamagitan ng taunang Livestock and Dairy Fair, na idinaos ngayong taon bilang bahagi ng 26th Panaad sa Negros Festival hanggang ngayong Linggo, ipinagmalaki ng Provincial Veterinary Office (PVO) ang sumisiglang animal raising industry sa lalawigan.

Inihayag ni Provincial Veterinarian Renante Decena nitong Biyernes na ngayong taon, isinusulong ng Negros Occidental ang pagbubuo ng black pig association.

Mas mababa ang gagastusin sa pagpapalaki ng black pig o baboy damo sa aspeto ng kulungan ng mga ito, pakain at pag-aalaga, ngunit malaki ang kikitain dito, aniya.

"We are highlighting black pig production in this year's fair. It can be a potential alternative for our raisers, given its huge market here in Negros," sabi pa niya.

Ayon pa kay Decena, nananatiling ang Negros Occidental ang nangungunang producer ng backyard swine sa bansa.

Sa pagbubukas ng fair nitong Lunes, sinabi ni Governor Alfredo Marañon Jr. na patuloy ang pagkilos ng provincial government upang mas mapaghusay ang genetics ng local stocks, lalo na ang baboy damo.

Ang pag-aalaga ng baboy ang pangalawang pinakamalaking isdustriya sa bansa, kasunod ng palay, anang gobernador.

Samantala, may kabuuang 18 katao, grupo at local government units (LGUs) sa Negros Occidental ang kinilala sa Provincial Veterinary Achievers Awards na ginanap sa Livestock and Dairy Fair Area ng Panaad Park and Stadium nitong Huwebes.

Kinilala ng PVO ang mga katuwang nito mula sa mga pampubliko at pribadong sektor, na nakapag-ambag sa pagyabong ng livestock at poultry industry sa lalawigan.

Pinarangalan sina Martin Samuel Manuel Torres at Placeda Lemana bilang mga Tatak Veterinarian awardees ngayong taon.

Kinilala naman ang PVO District Field Unit 6 bilang ang outstanding district field unit, at ang Bago City, bilang outstanding partner-LGU para sa Provincial Rabies Prevention and Control Program.

Si Lodilyn Pagunsan ay pinarangalan bilang outstanding livestock coordinator habang sina Ma. Chona Salas at Santiago Nietes bilang mga outstanding field monitoring officer on livestock dispersal and re-dispersal, at outstanding farm worker.

Tinanggap din ng Calvary Chapel Christian School ang parangal para sa outstanding academe on multiplier farm adaption and sustainability habang ang Manara Ata Tribal Council ay ginawaran ng parangal sa pagiging outstanding agency and organization on promoting livestock development.

Ang iba pang mga binigyang-pugay ay ang Alliance of Hog Raisers Association sa Negros Occidental bilang outstanding PVO organized association at Bulahan nga Nanay Association bilang outstanding women's association on livestock development.

Gayundin si Erwin Nicavera bilang outstanding partner on public information and advocacy award; Joenilo Mamaed, outstanding paravet; engineer Marilyn Manuel, outstanding partner on research and development; Mark Ezzer Ligan, outstanding young animal raiser; Timothy Gargantiel, outstanding agri-livestock technology advocate; Julieta Evelyn Aguillon, exemplary service awardee; at Alpha Grace Tupas, PVO employee of the year.

**PNA**