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#NATION AT A GLANCE:

IBP, fisherfolk groups ask high court to order gov't to enforce laws protecting West Philippine Sea

MEMBERS OF farmers and fisherfolks groups, together with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), have asked the Supreme Court (SC) to direct the government to enforce laws protecting the country's territories in the West Philippine Sea (WPS). In a petition for the issuance of Writ of Kalikasan, the Kalayaan Palawan Farmers, Fisherfolk Association, and the IBP said the government has refused to take legal action against violations of environmental laws committed specifically by Chinese at the Panatag Shoal (Scarborough Shoal), Ayungin Shoal (Second Thomas Shoal) and Panganiban Reef (Mischief Reef). Respondents in the case are Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol, Philippine Coast Guard Admiral Elson E. Hermogino, Philippine Navy Flag Officer-in-Command Robert A. Empredrad, and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources National Director Eduardo B. Gongona, among others. "Respondents have failed to perform their duties as mandated in the above-mentioned environmental laws and regulations. Petitioners have no other plain, speedy and adequate remedy as Petitioners are complaining of acts by the government agencies themselves who are supposed to be upholding Philippine environmental laws and protecting the environment and resources in Philippine territory," the petitioners said. They cited, among others, the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 which mandates the government to prosecute perpetrators of illegal acts. They also noted that the July 2016 international arbitral ruling won by the Philippines found that Chinese fishing vessels have been involved in harvesting threatened and endangered species in Panatag and Ayungin Shoals. It also found island-building activities led by China at the Panganiban Reef. They also said that in May 2013, two Chinese vessels accompanied by two Chinese Marine Surveillance ships were spotted near Ayungin Shoal gathering corals and clams and undertaking dredging activities. — **Vann Marlo M. Villegas**

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Agri dep't may limit pork, poultry imports amid overflowing cold storage

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said that it is looking to "rationalize" the importation program for both hog and poultry due to high levels of inventory in cold storage, beginning with a study to determine the market's capacity to absorb imports amid demands for greater protection for growers.

"The stakeholders and the DA have agreed to start a rationalization program for both the hog and poultry industry. It was agreed that right now there is a need to conduct a study on the absorptive capacity of the market in relation to supply. This was agreed upon because of the very volatile prices of both poultry and pork," Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol told reporters Monday.

He said there is a need to determine "for example, how much chicken should be produced at a certain period of the year. And then we will have to link up with the importers themselves *kasi pag hindi natin ginawa ito lahat sila masasaktan* [because if they do not follow the plan they will all be hurt]," Mr. Piñol said.

The decision was arrived at amid an the oversupply of pork beyond the capacity of the cold storage industry. He said hog raisers are demanding intervention because they cannot release pigs into the market because storage facilities cannot absorb more supply. A similar scenario is playing out with frozen poultry.

"There was an understanding that pending the rationalization of the industry, we may have to go slow on the issuance of new import permits given the fact that poultry in cold storage right now is about 27.805 million kilos. For pork it's 34.330 million kilos," which he said was equivalent to three months' supply.

"*Ang ating purpose ngayon ay ipa*-unload *muna natin sa mga* local hog raisers *'yung kanilang* [Our purpose now is to allow the local hog raisers to unload their] stocks and then slowly we will eat up into the stocks in cold storage and then we start with a rational supply system which will take into consideration demand and the absorptive capacity of the market," he said.

Mr. Piñol said the process will require setting up a database of all hog and poultry raisers to improve estimates of market demand.

"We will have to start reforming the system after the Holy Week. In fact I'm planning to engage a professional research group that will conduct the study on the market and the supply," he noted.

"We will have to sit down with the importers next week. I will meet with [them] by April 23, after the Holy Week, *para ma*determine *namin kung ano 'yung* [so we can determine what] volume *na hindi naman maapektuhan 'yung kanilang negosyo* [will not affect their business]," he said.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), in 2018, the farmgate price of hogs for slaughter rose 8.29% to P115.58 per kg, while the farmgate price of broiler chicken at commercial farms was P82.79, up 4.09%.

Meat imports surged 22.73% in 2018, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry, while poultry imports increased by 18.06%. — **Vincent Mariel P. Galang**

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A MAN tends to his banana stall in San Andres market in Manila in this 2018 file photo. Amid fears that Philippine bananas, which are popular in Japan, may miss out the so-called Golden Week owing to issues over chemical residues limit, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol assured the public that the DA can settle the matter with his counterparts very soon. ROY DOMINGO

Govt confident of hurdling Japan's banana testing rule

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) and local planters expressed confidence that Japan's concerns over the safety of Philippine bananas will soon be resolved as they have already undertaken the corrective measures prescribed by Tokyo.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol said he plans to fly to Tokyo next week to meet with the Japanese Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare and discuss Tokyo's concerns over pesticide residue in Philippine bananas.

Piñol said he will be joined by a technical group from the local banana sector which will back him up during a possible meeting with Japanese officials.

"I will lead the delegation there and settle all these issues once and for all," he told reporters in an interview on Monday.

Piñol said he was assured by Philippine Agriculture Attaché Samuel B. Animas that the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues raised by Japan could be settled immediately.

"We are not really worried about the Golden Week. There will be Philippine bananas during the Golden Week," he said.

"[Animas] told me that the Japanese government will not allow a shortage of bananas in their country because that will be bad for them," Piñol added.

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Banana. . .

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Banana exporters earlier warned that the tropical fruit may miss Japan's Golden Week this year, which stretches from April 27 to May 6, as Japanese shipment inspectors will not be available during the period.

Optimism

PILIPINO Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) Executive Director Stephen A. Antig said his group is also optimistic that the upcoming talks with Japanese officials would shelve the mandatory inspection of all shipments of Cavendish from the Philippines.

"Secretary Piñol is the highest-ranking agriculture official, so I believe the Japanese government will not only respect that but would also consider that the Philippines is sincere in addressing our issues," Antig told the BusinessMirror.

Antig also shared the sentiment of Piñol that Tokyo will not allow Philippine bananas to go missing from Japanese stores due to SPS concerns.

"We cannot afford to not have supply in Japan and I also believe that just like the Philippine government, the Japanese are also trying to resolve the issue at the soonest time possible," he said.

"I don't think the Japanese can afford to lose Philippine bananas in their supermarkets. And I think they will never make that happen also—that is how important bananas are for Japan," he added.

Antig said shipments to Japan have not been suspended but the release of Philippine bananas in Japanese markets has been delayed.

Tokyo tightened its food-safety rules on Philippine bananas after a local shipment in August was found to contain Fipronil insecticide beyond its maximum residue limit (MRL), or the allowable level deemed safe for human consumption.

Japan reduced its MRL on Fipronil from 0.01 parts per million to 0.005 ppm, which is still compliant with the Codex Alimentarius International Food Standards.

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D.A.: PHL MAY LIMIT MEAT IMPORTS AS GLUT SEEN TO HURT LOCAL RAISERS

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

THE Philippines may limit meat imports to ensure that supply will not exceed demand, as a glut could harm local hog and poultry raisers, the country's agriculture chief said.

This is part of the Department of Agriculture's (DA) rationalization program on the country's meat industry, which includes local producers and importers, according to Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel F. Piñol.

In a late afternoon interview on Monday, Piñol disclosed that the DA and local hog and poultry industry stakeholders have agreed to come up with a rationalization program to avert market-supply instability and erratic farm-gate prices.

The program includes a study on what will determine the local market's absorptive capacity in relation to total meat supply, he added.

The rationalization program was agreed upon by the government and stakeholders following erratic farm-gate prices for both poultry and pork in recent months.

The agriculture chief admitted anew that the lack of a sound data system has led to overproduction in some industries, such as poultry, as raisers did not have any proper guidance on the country's meat consumption requirement.

Poultry industry stakeholders, for one, have admitted that they overproduced in the past months—a matter that started the glut in end-2018 and which persists until today.

For one, the program, Piñol explained, will determine how much meat should be produced in certain periods in relation to market demand and imported volume so as not to lead to oversupply.

"If we do not do this, everyone will be hurt. With the volatility of the market, everybody will suffer," he said.

"We will have to make sure that there is a corresponding withdrawal from the cold storage and make sure that the volume of importation would not go beyond what the market could absorb as of the moment," he added.

'Go slow'

DUE to the pending rationalization program, Piñol announced that the DA's Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) may "go slow" on the issuance of new import permits until inventories in cold storages ease up.

"If we continue with the volume of importation right now, the market will certainly choke, and everybody will lose money," he said.

"It's not really stopping [importation], it's rationalizing importation," he added.

Citing National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) data, Piñol said there are about 27.805 million kilograms of chicken currently stored in cold storages and 34.33 million kilograms of pork, which is good for about three months.

"As of the moment, we will have to determine how much supply there is in the cold storage, and there is no point bringing in more stocks if the market is flooded already," Piñol said, when asked if the government would still process sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPS-IC).

Asked till when the DA-BAI's "go slow" process on issuing SPS-ICs would last, Piñol answered it depends on the volume of meat inventories.

"We will have to make sure that the oversupply now in the cold storage would be reduced, and the local hog raisers will be able to release their stocks [to earn money]," he added.

The rationalization of the meat industry could take place after Holy Week, Piñol said, as the DA engages a professional research group to undertake the study on the meat supply and demand situation.

Piñol said he will meet with meat importers and even processors next week to discuss the rationalization program and get their recommendations on the matter.

"[The rationalization program] will be a stakeholder-based decision. Nobody will be disadvantaged here; everybody will be involved in the decision-making," he said.

"Because I told them that, once and for all, let's fix this issue. [It cannot be that] every time prices fall, everyone would cry, blame and fight with each other," he added.

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Gov't goes slow on processing of meat import permits

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Philippines plans to slow down the processing of meat import permits amid the current oversupply which is affecting the local hog and poultry sectors.

In a meeting with local producers, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said stakeholders agreed to start a rationalization program amid the need to conduct a study on the absorptive capacity of the market in relation to supply.

"Pending the rationalization of the industry, we may have to go slow on the issuance of new import permits. If we continue with the volume of importation right now, the market will certainly choke and everybody will lose money," Piñol said.

Data showed that inventory in the cold storages right now have reached 27.8 million kilograms of chicken and 34.3 million kilos of pork, already good for about three months.

The current inventory is too much for the market to absorb which in turn, is affecting the drop in prices of local pork and chicken produce.

"We have to make sure there is a corresponding withdrawal from the cold storage and make sure that the volume of importation will not go beyond what the market can absorb," Piñol said.

"Local hog raisers should be able to release their stocks first because those in the cold storages can actually wait but our backyard hog raisers need to sell their produce at a certain period," he added.

Piñol said there is no need to bring in more stocks following the oversupply in the market.

"The stocks are really too much. Our producers are already crying because they can't release in the market because the cold storages are overflowing," he said.

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BUKO JUICE IS THE 2019 PALARO OFFICIAL ENERGY DRINK

COCONUT water locally known as buko juice will be the official energy drink of the Palarong Pambansa to be held in Davao City.

The 2019 Palaro themed "Shaping the Future through Sports" is slated from April 27 to May 4.

Education Secretary Leonor Briones approved the request of coconut farmers for buko juice to be the energy drink of the sports competition.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said the Department sent the endorsement letter to Briones to help the coconut farmers promote buko as a health drink.

"It's for a good cause," said Piñol who informed Briones that the DA will extend a P5-million loan as working capital of the coconut farmers so they could buy green coconuts to be sold at the venue.

Piñol made the commitment when Briones inquired if there is enough supply since there will be an estimated 20,000 participants and spectators during the week-long event.

Piñol also revealed that the coconut farmers are also requesting to designate coconut water as the official energy drink in the 30th Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) to be held in the country this year.

"The DA will provide funding for the coconut farmers groups and local entrepreneurs who will showcase coconut products in both the Palarong Pambansa and the SEA Games," Piñol said.

The 30th edition of the SEA Games will be held at the New Clark City in Pampanga, Manila, Subic, and BLT (Batangas, La Union, and Tagaytay) from Nov. 30 to Dec. 10.

Cory Martinez

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

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THE NFA is buying more rice from farmers to beef up its buffer stock. AFP

NFA focuses on buffer stocking

After breaking the million barrier in the first quarter, the National Food Authority (NFA) continues to buy more *palay* from farmers as harvest peaks this month.

Initial reports from NFA field offices show that NFA already procured a total of 1.86 million bags from January to April. Of that volume, 593,123 bags were bought in April (data as of 12 April), almost half of the 1.26 million bags NFA was able to procure in the first quarter of this year.

Our *palay* procurement activities will also continue for as long as there are palay farmers willing to sell to us.

Highest volume of *palay* procurement this month was reported from the NFA provincial offices in Occidental Mindoro (San Jose) 93,699 (bags); Isabela 79,020; Nueva Ecija — 72,420; Bulacan — 52,856; Mamburao — 31,907; Northwestern Cagayan — Apayao (Allacapan) — 23,629; Tarlac — 19,484; and North Cotabato — 17,896.

"We are hoping that this will continue as we fulfil our mandated level of buffer stock. Our *palay* procurement activities will also continue for as long as there are *palay* farmers willing to sell to us, to give them a fair price for their palay produce," NFA OIC-administrator Tomas Escarez said.

According to Escarez, the agency is now shifting its focus to more aggressive *palay* procurement after the signing of the Rice Tariffication Law or RA 11203 and the subsequent signing of its implementing rules and regulations (IRR).

"The IRR of the Rice Tariffication Law or RA 11203 has already been signed and the role of the NFA has been refocused to buffer stocking. Based on the IRR, the NFA must now adopt a policy of maintaining a buffer stock equivalent to 15 to 30 days of the country's national rice consumption, sourced from local farmers only. To be able to meet that, we have to buy around 15 million to 30 million bags of palay," Escarez said.

Escarez is positive the agency will be able to achieve its goal to procure sufficient *palay* volume for buffer stocking as this year's procurement is already much higher than in recent years. NFA is currently buying at an average of 73,233 bags per day.

"More farmers are selling to NFA because we have increased our effective buying price. The NFA started implementing an additional P3 per kilogram Buffer Stocking Incentive (BSI) last October 2018, in addition to the previous P0.20/kg drying, P0.20/kg delivery and P0.30/kg cooperative development incentive fee, increasing the agency's maximum buying price for palay from P17.40/kg for individual farmers and P17.70 for members of farmer cooperatives/organizations to P20.40/kg and P20.70 per kg, respectively," Escarez said. **MBA**

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2019 budget cut down to P3.66 trillion after veto

MALACAÑANG on Tuesday said the P95.3-billion allocations President Rodrigo R. Duterte vetoed in the original P3.757-trillion national budget for 2019 were found to be "unconstitutional."

"Those are the so called 'insertions,' 'riders,' they are not part of the program by the DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highways), hence, they violate the Constitution," Presidential Spokesperson Salvador S. Panelo said in a briefing, Tuesday.

Mr. Duterte on Monday signed the national budget into law as Republic Act No. 11260, or the "General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2019."

He partially vetoed the budget, cutting it to P3.662-trillion, including P95.3 billion under the DPWH budget which Mr. Panelo confirmed were among the post-ratification realignments.

Asked if the vetoed items were among the "last-minute" fund realignments made by the House of Representatives, Mr. Panelo replied "Correct, it is."

Among others, Mr. Duterte also directly vetoed some appropriations under the Department of Labor and Employment-National Labor Relations Commission, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Department of Trade and Industry.

The 2019 budget, which failed to secure year-end 2018 enactment, was transmitted to the Office of the President on March 26 after a row between the House of Representatives and the Senate over alleged realignments made after its ratification on Feb. 8.

Senator Panfilo M. Lacson, Senate Finance committee vice-chairman, said budget is now "pork-free" after the partial veto.

"I am confident the 2019 budget is now-pork free as the Senate leadership made sure that our LBRMO (Legislative Budget Research and Monitoring Office) had scrutinized enough before submitting to DBM (Department of Budget and Management) under (Acting) Sec. Janet (B.) Abuel the list of questionable items,"

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Senator Lacson said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The economic team in turn promised to go over the list, and more with a fine-toothed comb, including individual insertions made by some senators amounting to at least P20B[illion]."

House Appropriations committee Chairman Rolando G. Andaya, Jr. of Camarines Sur's 1st District, however, that insertions by some senators could still be "intact".

"It behooves the Senate to tell the people how much in their insertions were carried in the national budget, and how big is the bacon each senator is bringing home."

Sought for comment, Political Science Professor Marlon M. Villarin of the University of Sto. Tomas said the recent budget development might affect the President's rapport with members of the House of Representatives and some local officials.

"Socially, it won't affect President Duterte's priority projects because all are programmed well in the 2019 budget," Mr. Villarin said in a mobile phone message on Tuesday.

"But this will politically affect his relationship both with members of the House and some local gov't officials who already hoped the President will dispense what their districts need."

At the same time, "[t]his move by the PRRD doesn't mean he is siding with the Senate," Mr. Villarin said, using Mr. Duterte's initials.

"The Psresident is just being (politically and legally) consistent with his promise to the people that, under his watch, corruption such us illegal fund insertions in the national budget (as practiced by previous administrations) will never be tolerated." — **Charmaine A. Tadalan**

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WORKERS at a National Food Authority Quezon City warehouse.

PHILIPPINE STAR/MICHAEL VARCAS

NFA shores up inventory with domestic palay procurement of 1.26 million bags as of April 12

THE National Food Authority (NFA) said Tuesday that its purchases of palay, or unmilled rice, amounted to 593,123 bags during the month as of April 12, bringing its running total for the year to 1.26 million bags.

In a statement, the NFA, whose importing function was taken away by the Rice Tariffication Law, limiting it to the role of maintaining a buffer stock from domestic rice purchases, said including the last of its rice imports, the buffer stock now stands at 1.86 million bags.

"We are hoping that this will continue as we fulfill our mandated level of buffer stock. Our palay procurement activities will continue for as long as there are palay farmers willing to sell to us, to give them a fair price for their palay," Tomas R. Escarez, NFA officer-in-charge administrator said in the statement.

Procurement operations in the month to April 12 in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro generated 93,699 bags, while Isabela province supplied 79,020 bags; Nueva Ecija 72,420; Bulacan 52,856 bags; Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro 31,907 bags. The NFA's Northwestern Cagayan-Apayao (Allacapan) office procured 23,629; Tarlac province 19,484 bags; and North Cotabato 17,896 bags.

With the signing of the Rice Tariffication Law or Republic Act 11203 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), the NFA has been stepping up its domestic procurement to fulfill its mandate of maintaining the equivalent of 15-30 days of the country's rice consumption.

The law was enacted after inflation spiked in 2018, in part due to the depletion of the NFA's reserves. Poor families depend on subsidized NFA rice for access to the staple, and the lack of supply in NFA warehouses increased the pricing power of private dealers selling their grain at commercial rates.

"The IRR of the Rice tariffication Law or RA 11203 has been signed and the role of the NFA has been refocused to buffer stocking. Based on the IRR, the NFA must now adopt a policy of maintaining a buffer stock equivalent to 15-30 days of national rice consumption, sourced from local farmers only. To be able to meet that, we have to buy around 15M to 30M bags of palay," Mr. Escarez said.

The NFA recently increased its palay procurement target for 2019 to 14.46 million bags from 7.78 million bags. On the average, it is currently buying 73,233 bags per day.

"More farmers are selling to NFA because we have increased our effective buying price. The NFA started implementing an additional P3.00 per kilogram Buffer Stocking Incentive (BSI) in October, in addition to the previous P0.20/kg drying, P0.20/kg delivery, and P0.30/kg Cooperative Development Incentive Fee, increasing the agency's maximum buying price for palay from P17.40/kg for individual farmers and P17.70 for members of farmer cooperatives/organizations to P20.40/kg and P20.70 per kg, respectively," he said.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the average farmgate price of palay continued to fall to P18.87 per kilogram (/kg) as of April 5 from P18.96/kg in March. There are some areas where the grain sells for as little as P14/kg.

The farmgate price has been trending downwards since the law started moving towards full implementation, with a liberalized import policy expected to bring in more cheap foreign rice to compete with domestic grain. Prices have also fallen despite widespread damage to the standing crop caused by the El Niño dry spell.

As of April 2, El Niño damage, mainly to the rice and corn crops, was P5.05 billion, on lost volume of 276,568 metric tons (MT). The dry spell has affected 177,743 hectares of agricultural land and 164,672 farmers. Damage to the rice crop accounted for P2.69 billion of the total and lost volume of 125,590 MT, affecting 111.851 hectares and 108,845 farmers. — **Vincent Mariel P. Galang**

The Manila Times

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NFA adopts aggressive buffer stocking for *palay*

BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

THE National Food Authority (NFA) expects to procure sufficient *palay* (unmilled rice) from local farmers as it adopts more aggressive procurement as mandated by the rice tariffication law.

Under the liberalized rice trading scheme, the NFA will no longer be allowed to import rice as its role was confined to buffer-stocks management for emergencies and calamities via buying *palay* solely from local farmers.

"Based on the IRR (Implementing Rules and Regulations) [of the rice tariffication law], the NFA must now adopt a policy of maintaining a buffer stock equivalent to 15-30 days of the country's national rice consumption, sourced from local farmers only. To be able to meet that, we have to buy around 15-30 million bags of *palay*," NFA acting administrator Tomas Escarez said in a statement on Tuesday.

As harvest season peaks this month, the NFA is currently buying an average of 73,233 bags per day, Escarez said, noting that the agency's *palay* procurement was already much higher than in recent years.

NFA data said the agency procured a total of 1.86 million bags from January to April 12. Of that volume, 593,123 bags were bought in April alone, nearly half of the 1.26 million bags NFA procured in the first quarter of 2019.

Highest volume of *palay* procurement (in bags) this month were reported in Occidental Mindoro (San Jose), 93,699; Isabela, 79,020; Nueva Ecija, 72,420; Bulacan, 52,856; Mamburao, 31,907; Northwestern Cagayan-Apayao (Allacapan), 23,629; Tarlac, 19,484 and North Cotabato, 17,896.

"We are hoping this will continue as we fulfill our mandated level of buffer stock. Our *palay* procurement activities will also continue for as long as there are palay farmers willing to sell to us, to give them a fair price for their palay produce," Escarez said.

Escarez attributed the sharp increase in NFA's palay procurement on the agency's buffer stocking incentive (BSI) program which gives local farmers P3.70 incentive per kilo to the P17 per kilo buying price, or a total of P20.70 per kilo for clean and dry paddy rice.

Meanwhile, the average farmgate price of *palay* continues to fall, reaching P18.87 per kilo as of April 5, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data showed. *Palay* prices also fell to as low as P14 per kilo in some areas in the country.

"We are receiving complaints through our Citizens' Complaint Hotline regarding low price of *palay* in some areas. But we assure the farmers not to worry because NFA is always ready to buy their harvest at a very reasonable price," Escarez said.

Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Liberalization Law liberalizes the importation, export and trading of rice. It also lifts the quantitative import restriction on rice.

The law also stripped NFA's regulatory functions over the international and domestic trading of rice, such as the issuance of rice import permits, licensing and registration of grains businessmen, monitoring and inspection of rice business and facilities, and enforcement of grains trading rules and regulations, among others.

With the rice tariffication, the government said prices of the staple are expected to be cheaper by up to P7 per kilo.

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Livestock PHL 2019 set from June 26 to 28 at World Trade Center

THE country's premier livestock, feed milling and meat industries expo is slated to make its big comeback from June 26 to 28 at the World Trade Center in Pasay City.

Livestock Philippines 2019 Expo and Forum is the trade event that seeks to upgrade and strengthen the country's meat livestock industry with enhanced product quality and safety using state-of-the-art innovations in livestock nutrition, health and production, meat, animal feed ingredients, additives, and supplements and premixes. The trade fair will also showcase technologies in meat processing, packaging equipment and retails solutions in meat production.

"We remain fully committed to serve and work with the Philippines's feed, livestock, meat and allied sectors to ensure cost-effective and efficient value chains that are needed to provide safe and quality products, and improve international competitiveness," said Rose Chitanuwat, Asean Group Director of UBM Asia (Thailand) Co. Ltd.

A 2017 review of the Philippine Agri-Food Sector Study, commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs identified opportunities in virtually all segments, including priority value chains: dairy, poultry and livestock, and fisheries and aquaculture.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, livestock production logged in with P91.9 billion and a 7.4-percent growth, while poultry production amounted to P60.7 billion with a 1.7-percent uptick in the fourth quarter of 2018. The gross value of fisheries production reached P73.3 billion, a 9.8-percent growth from 2017's records for the same period.

THE Livestock Philippines 2019 Expo and Forum, now on its fifth iteration, will host more than 280 international and domestic exhibitors from the agricultural sector (including aquaculture), which will offer the latest technologies of the industry, as well as countless business opportunities to more than 12,000 delegates at the World Trade Center Metro Manila in Pasay City from June 25 to 28.

Supported by the Department of Agriculture and cohosted by the Bureau of Animal Industry and the National Meat Inspection Service, Livestock Philippines 2019 will feature industry experts in the field of animal nutrition, swine and poultry production, and a lot more, and thought leaders in livestock, feeds, meat and aquaculture who will present products and solutions in nutrition, health and disease management, and reproduction.

The show is expected to bring in over 280 exhibitors from 30 countries, namely, Denmark, The Netherlands, Thailand, Malaysia, Korea, Taiwan, China and international pavilions from across the globe. The event is also expected to attract over 12,000 delegates from local and international organizations, including integrators, veterinarians, farmers, feed millers, wholesalers, retailers, slaughterhouse operators, food processors, importers, distributors and other industry stakeholders.

Feeds Philippines Expo, PhilMeat 2019 and Aquaculture Philippines are also colocating this year's Livestock Philippines Expo and Forum as a one-stop shop—from livestock production and nutrition, processing, to packaging.

Livestock Philippines is organized by UBM Asia, a part of Informa Plc., a leading B2B information services group and the largest B2B Events organizer in the world.

For other details, including registration, contact Ms. Danah Castillo via phone at +63 2 581 1921 or via e-mail at *danah.francisco@ubm.com*.

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PH protests China's harvest of giant clams

FROM A1

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan, Julie M. Aurelio and Jhesset O. Enano
@Team_Inquirer

The Philippines will take legal action against China for illegally harvesting endangered giant clams and destroying fragile corals at Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, which Chinese forces seized in 2012 after a two-month standoff with the Philippine Navy, Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said on Tuesday.

Also on Tuesday, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) and a group of fishermen from Palawan and Zambales provinces asked the Supreme Court to order the government to prosecute foreign poachers and land reclamation contractors in the West Philippine Sea.

West Philippine Sea is the local name of the waters within the country's 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea.

Locsin said the legal office of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) was preparing its case against China for causing serious environmental damage to the shoal. (***See related story on A11***)

"We just caught them doing that recently, filed a diplomatic note, and will be taking legal action," Locsin said on Twitter.

In an interview with CNN Philippines on Tuesday, he said the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea had verified the destructive activities of Chinese vessels at Panatag.

"We protest this. We said this is illegal and in fact you (China) are also violating conventions on environmental protection for which we can take legal action," Locsin said. "They have basically destroyed breeding grounds."

Palace backing

Malacañang backed the DFA's protests.

"As far as we're concerned, that (Panatag Shoal) is ours. We will be objecting to any intrusion to our own territory," said presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

"If it's our territory, therefore, it is an affront to our territory and to our sovereignty," Panelo said.

In its petition, the IBP, the largest association of lawyers in the Philippines, criticized the government for failing or refusing to enforce the international arbitral court's ruling in 2016 that nullified China's claim to virtually the entire South China Sea while upholding Philippine sovereignty over the West Philippine Sea.

China has ignored the ruling.

The IBP said the Chinese were destroying the coral reefs, harvesting endangered giant clams, using explosives and cyanide to catch fish, and building artificial islands.

"Clearly, the damage is brought upon by lack of enforcement of Philippine environmental laws," it said.

It asked the high court to issue a writ of kalikasan and to order the heads of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine Navy, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippine National Police and Department of Justice to protect Panatag Shoal, Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal and Panganiban (Mischief) Reef.

New case for int'l court

A maritime law expert and an environmental group also urged the government to take legal action against Chinese fishermen who harvested the giant clams at Panatag.

The "outrageous" collection of the giant clams could be another case against Beijing that Manila could take to the Permanent Court of Arbitration, said Jay Batongbacal, director of the

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INTERCEPTED A Philippine Navy photo released in April 2012 by the Department of Foreign Affairs shows Filipino troops inspecting a Chinese fishing vessel loaded with giant clams after it was intercepted off Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal. The DFA on Tuesday said Chinese poachers were again caught engaging in destructive activities in the shoal recently, prompting Manila to send a diplomatic note to Beijing. —PHOTO COURTESY OF DFA

University of the Philippines Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea.

"This is nothing less than an environmental crime that is being perpetrated by China and its agencies," Batongbacal said in an interview with the Inquirer.

Aside from the possible arbitration case, he said the Philippine government might also request a provisional measure from the International Court of Justice to call on China to stop its destructive activity.

Batongbacal said the Philippines could call out China "for being a state sponsor of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing" and urge other countries to stop trading with the Asian powerhouse, particularly for fisheries and marine products.

Fisheries code violation

Rose-Liza Eisma-Osorio, managing trustee of Philippine Earth Justice Center, said the Chinese had violated the Philippine Fisheries Code, which prohibits fishing for or taking rare, threatened or endangered species.

Giant clams are listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, and are considered vulnerable species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature due to various threats, such as overfishing, pollution, climate change and poaching.

Batongbacal said the government should pursue the cases against the Chinese fishermen, as well as Chinese coast guards and demand that Beijing turn them over for prosecution.

"This is such a clear and blatant violation of our laws," he said. "It is an obvious slap in the face against us."

For two weeks now, the Philippines has been vocal about China's activities in the maritime territories claimed by the country.

'Swarm' around Pag-asa

Malacañang and the DFA have issued strongly worded statements against China for "swarming" the Philippine-occupied Pag-asa (Thitu) Island with nearly 300 Chinese vessels since January.

President Duterte himself has told China to "lay off" Pag-asa, the biggest of nine islands and shoals occupied by Filipinos in the South China Sea, saying that if the Chinese "touched" it, he would deploy troops on a "suicide mission" in response.

Locsin said he had filed a diplomatic protest for every incident reported by the West Philippine Sea task force and that the DFA invoked the international arbitral court's ruling each time.

He admitted that the DFA did not take it well when the arbitral victory was "downplayed."

Mr. Duterte has set aside the ruling in favor of enhancing ties with China, hoping that the Philippines would get more aid and investments from the economic giant. INQ

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STORY BY DONA Z. PAZZIBUGAN, JULIE M. AURELIO AND JHESSET O. ENANO

The Department of Foreign Affairs says it will take legal action against Beijing for the illegal collection of the endangered shells and destruction of corals at Panatag Shoal, a traditional Filipino fishing ground seized by Chinese forces in 2012. A4

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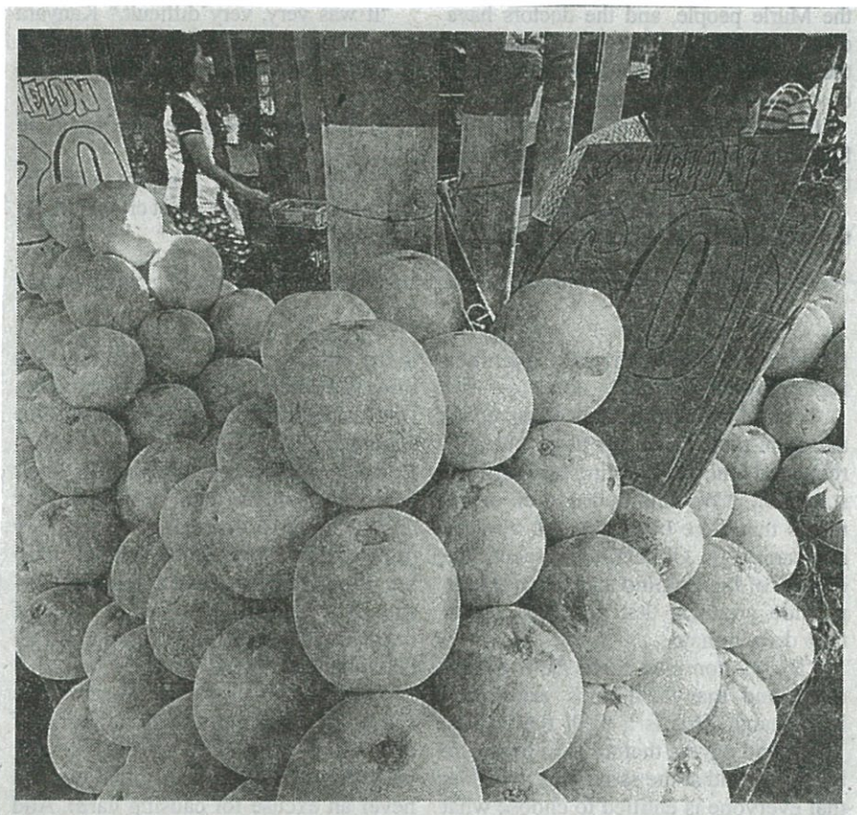

DEFERENTIAL CANTALOUPE. Also known as musk melon, or *murod* among some Ilocanos, the odd-looking but tasty melon, being arranged by a vendor, along 11th Avenue in Caloocan City, has nutritious benefits, with the US Department of Agriculture saying when it comes to beta carotene, cantaloupe knocks down other yellow-orange fruits out of the park. **Andrew Rabulan**

The Manila Times

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PSA lowers Q1 *palay*, corn output estimates

FIRST quarter *palay* (unmilled rice) and corn output estimates have been lowered by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), with revised figures going separate ways compared to the same period last year.

In an update released on Monday, the PSA said January-March *palay* production likely fell to 4.56 million metric tons (MMT) based on standing crops, lower than the January projection of 4.65 MMT and down from the 4.65 MMT seen a year earlier.

Corn output was estimated to have hit 2.51 MMT, also lower compared to January's 2.55 MMT but higher than last year's 2.46-MMT result.

The rice harvest area, meanwhile, likely contracted by 3.5 percent from 1.95 million hectares last year, the PSA added, but yields could have increased to 3.96 MT per hectare from the year-earlier 3.87 MT.

"Of the updated standing crop, 41.2 percent of 1,165.15 thousand hectares have been harvested," the agency said.

For corn, the harvest area also likely contracted to 707,000 hectares from 722,000 hectares last year while yields also improved to 3.54 MT per hectare from 3.43 MT previously.

"Around 453.30 thousand hectares or 63.9 percent of the updated standing crop have been harvested," the PSA said.

The bulk of the standing *palay* crop is in the vegetative stage while most of the standing corn crop is in the maturing stage, the agency noted.

Planting intentions for the quarter have yet to be fully realized, it added, with the proportions at 89.2 percent for *palay* and 76 percent for corn.

FROM A REPORT BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

PILIPINO MIRROR
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• SALAMIN NG KATOTOHANAN •

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ISABELA FISHPOND OWNERS NAG-REPORT NG FISH KILL DAHIL SA TAGTUYOT

NAKAAMBA ang pagkalugi ng tilapia fishpond owners sa naireport na fish kill at malamang na mawalan ng PHP200,000 halaga ng posibleng kita sa Ilagan, Isabela at sa tatlo pang bayan ng Isabela, ayon sa isang opisyal ng agriculture kamakailan.

Sinabi ni Angelo Naui, Isabela Provincial Agriculturist, na nakatatanggap na sila ng report na ang tagtuyot ay nakaapekto na sa 1.15 ektaryang fish ponds sa Ilagan City at sa mga bayan ng Cabagan, Cordon, at Quirino.

"We hope that the losses will be minimal for the fish cage and fish pond operators," pahayag ni Naui.

"The hot weather and low water level, both in fishpond and fish cage areas, speed up the decomposition process of organic matter and facilitate the release of harmful gases trapped in the pond or river bottom," paliwanag ni Emerson Tattao, aquaculturist of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources-Cagayan Valley sa dahilan ng fish kill.

"The high temperature followed by sudden downpour in the afternoon also causes a highly stressful condition which can lead to mortality. The same can also cause an 'overturn' -- a condition wherein cool and dense water rush to the bottom ,causing poorly oxygenated and turbid water to rise, causing instant death on stocks," dagdag niya.

Sinabi ng fish cage operator na si Leonarda Oblarte na natatakot sila na baka magpatuloy ang fish kill kapag nagpatuloy ang tagtuyot.

"We had been penniless and mired in loans due to our expenses in our fish cages. We pray that it will not last long," sabi niya. **PNA**

Malaya
Business Insight

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Wheat eases for 2nd day on US, Russia outlook

SINGAPORE. -- Chicago wheat futures slid for a second session on Tuesday, with prices under pressure from expectations of bumper production in Russia and the United States.

Corn edged down to ease from a 10-day high touched in the previous session, though losses were checked as the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) said planting was lagging market expectations.

The most-active wheat contract on the Chicago Board of Trade had slipped 0.1 percent to $4.59-1/4 a bushel by 0242 GMT, after closing 1 percent lower on Monday.

Corn was down 0.1 percent at $3.62-1/4 a bushel, while soybeans fell 0.1 percent to $8.97-3/4 a bushel.

"US winter wheat crops remain in largely good or better condition much as the market expected," said Tobin Gorey, director of agricultural strategy at Commonwealth Bank of Australia, in a note to clients.

"(There is) nothing in this to suggest that US inventories are being reduced, so the market remains bearish."

The USDA said 60 percent of the winter wheat crop is in good-to-excellent condition, compared with 31 percent a year ago.

Russia's SovEcon agriculture consultancy has raised its forecast for the country's wheat crop in 2019 to 83.4 million tons from 80 million tons because sowings are in good condition in the majority of Russia's regions, it said on Monday.

SovEcon has also raised its overall grain forecast to 129.1 million tons from 126.1 million tons, it said.

Corn prices were supported by wet weather delaying planting across the Midwest.

The USDA said 3 percent of the corn crop has been planted, below market expectations.

More rain is expected in the Delta region, eastern Plains and Midwest this week. Showers have already stalled planting in the Delta over the weekend, according to Radiant Solutions, a US weather firm.

Hopes for a positive outcome from US-China trade talks supported soybean prices.

US negotiators have tempered demands that China curb industrial subsidies as a condition for a trade deal after strong resistance from Beijing, according to two sources briefed on discussions, marking a retreat on a core US objective for the trade talks. - ***Reuters***

Bearish. Wheat dips on expectations of a bumper harvest in the northern hemisphere. - *(Photo Reuters)*