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TAINTED PORK PRODUCTS SEIZED IN CLARK AIRPORT

SEVERAL canned pork meat products that were found positive of the African Swine Fever (ASF) were seized at the Clark International Airport, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Friday.

The "Sky Dragon" pork luncheon meat were seized from a Filipino worker in Hong Kong who arrived on March 25, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said in a statement.

"Kung nakalusot po ito at naipakain sa mga alagang baboy ang tira-tira maaring kumalat ang sakit sa ating mga babuyan at magiging sanhi ng pagkasira ng ating hog industry (if the leftovers were fed to pigs, the swine flu virus could have spread and that could lead to the death of our hog industry)," he added.

He said those caught bringing tainted meat face a hefty fine.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently ordered the immediate pullout of pork meat products imported from countries affected by the ASF. These include pork processed meat loaf, sausage and ham, among others.

The FDA also banned the importation, distribution and sale of processed pork meat products from 18 ASF-affected countries.

ASF is a highly contagious hemorrhagic disease of domestic and wild pigs.

The multiple outbreaks and rapid spread of ASF in China has led to the spread of the virus among Asian nations, including Hong Kong, North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia and Mongolia. Other countries affected by the ASF are Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine and Zambia.

To keep the Philippines ASF-free, the DA said it would install 20 x-ray machines in airports to check agricultural products, especially meat, brought in by passengers.

EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

Pilipino Star
NGAYON
Diyaryong disente ng masang intelihente

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Luncheon meat na inuwi ng OFW mula HK positibo sa swine virus

Kontaminado ng African Swine Fever (ASF) ang ilang mga lata ng luncheon meat na bitbit ng isang OFW na dumating sa ating bansa noong March 25 mula Hongkong.

Ito ang sinabi ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Sec. Manny Piñol sa kanyang post sa kanyang Facebook account kahapon.

Anya, batay sa resulta ng pagsusuri ni Dr. Rachel Azul ng DA-Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), ang mga kumpiskadong Sky Dragon pork luncheon meat mula sa 'di pinangalanang OFW ay may ASF virus makaraan itong suriin gamit ang ASF Taqman PCR Assay sa Animal Disease and Diagnostic and Reference Laboratory (ADDRL) ng ahensiya.

Nilinaw naman ni Piñol na sa kasalukuyan ay libre at ligtas ang mga alagaing baboy ng Pilipinas sa African swine fever infections.

Sa ngayon ipinagbabawal pa rin ng Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ang pagpasok sa bansa ng processed pork meat products mula sa Vietnam, Zambia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Mongolia, Moldova at Belgium.

Una nang ban na maipasok sa Pilipinas ang pork meat products mula sa China, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia at Ukraine dahil sa pagkakaroon ng ASF virus sa mga alagaing baboy sa naturang mga bansa.

Sinabi ni Piñol na oras na may nagtangkang magpasok ng mga banned items ay kukumpiskahin at pagmumultahin ang may-ari nito. *(Angie dela Cruz)*

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL TONIGHT
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Canned pork confiscated at Clark positive for ASF

By CORY MARTINEZ

AGRICULTURE Secretary Emmanuel Piñol yesterday revealed that the canned pork products confiscated at Clark International Airport last March 25 were found to be positive for African Swine Fever (ASF).

Piñol made the disclosure as he wanted to inform those who accused them of overreacting and complaining against the strict implementation of quarantine protocols that "the country is truly facing a big threat."

"Huwag na po tayong maging pilosopo at matigas ang ulo," Piñol stressed.

He further reminded those who will be caught bringing into the country canned pork products particularly those coming from countries affected by ASF, that they will be arrested and fined.

Piñol added that there is an existing ban of importing these canned pork products.

He advised the travelers to strictly comply with the quarantine protocols.

"Kung nakalusot po ito (referring to those confiscated products) at naipakain sa mga alagang baboy ang tira-tira maaring kumalat ang sakit sa ating mga babuyan at magiging sanhi ng pagkasira ng ating hog industry," Piñol added.

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

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Don't pawn lands, invest in Kapa, Du30 warns farmers

By GENALYN D. KABILING

Agrarian reform beneficiaries run the risk of getting punched by President Duterte if they pawn their lands and invest in a controversial religious group.

In his visit to General Santos City Thursday, the President has warned farmer beneficiaries against getting involved in the alleged investment scam by Kapa-Community Ministry International Inc.

The religious group, which faces closure over its alleged anomalous get-rich-quick scheme, is involved in large-scale estafa, according to the President.

"I would like to give you my advice. Sell that so you can have the capital to invest in Kapa. Sige. Sige have it pawned and tomorrow I will have you all summoned to line up here. You will each receive a punch from me, both men and women," he told the beneficiaries of the agrarian reform program in Bisaya.

Duterte said land reform beneficiaries should instead "stick to the land and plant" crops. He said the agricultural production would be their source of livelihood and income "even though it's just small."

"Anyway, (Agriculture) Secretary (Emmanuel) Piñol proposed about a new breed of rice with grains as large as a guava. I don't know where he got that from though. I wouldn't be surprised if you all ended up having diabetes," he said in jest.

He said the farmers could eventually sell their lands years down the road when it's worth more money.

"One day one hectare will be worth one million, just wait for it. Wait for a few years. Maybe after five years it will amount to 10 million. That is the time that you will sell it," he said.

"Take care of the money because your tribe will never again be able to hold a million pesos in your entire life," he added.

Duterte made the statement shortly after leading the ceremonial distribution of land titles to 13,585 agrarian reform beneficiaries.

The Certificates of Land Ownership Awards covered 24,000 hectares of lands in Region 12 (Socsargen or the South Cotabato, Sarangani, and General Santos City area).

In his speech, Duterte stood firmly behind the shutdown of Kapa, saying it was engaged in a fraudulent pyramiding scheme that pays off old investors with money collected from new investors. He found suspicious that Kapa offered hefty monthly returns of 30 percent.

"It is too good to be true. All the banks offer only three or four percent per annum. If they promise to return your investment or double your investment after one month, it's a scam," he said.

He said if the Kapa investment was true, he would have endorsed it to the public. But the group, he insisted, was engaged in swindling.

"Don't enter that because that is fraud, they don't have money. When the time comes that no one will invest in it anymore, the last persons who invested their money would be the victims," he said.

Duterte explained that he could be impeached from office if he does not enforce the law against estafa. "The problem is if I don't implement it, I will be impeached because I am unable to implement the law for the betterment of the majority," he said.

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Abante
UNA SA BALITA

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Luncheon meat na ASF positive nakumpiska sa Clark

NAGPOSITIBO sa African Swine Fever (ASF) ang ilang delatang luncheon meat na nasabat sa isang overseas Filipino worker (OFW) sa Clark International Airport kamakailan.

Kinumpirma ito ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Manny Piñol sa kanyang Facebook post.

Aniya, nagmula umano ang mga canned goods sa isang hindi kinilalang OFW na umuwi sa bansa mula sa Hong Kong noong Marso 25.

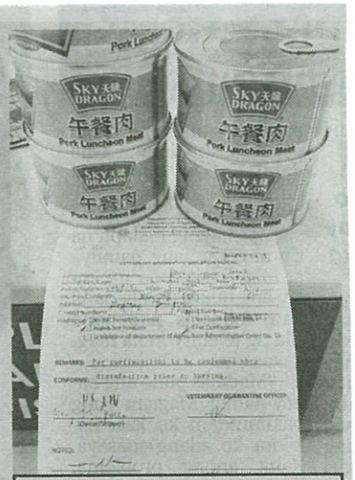
Sinabi naman ni Dr. Rachel Azul ng Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Animal Industry na isinagawa ang pagsusuri sa mga nasabat na delata gamit ang ASF Taqman PCR Assay sa Animal Disease and Diagnostic and Reference Laboratory.

Dagdag ni Azul, wala pang naiuulat na kaso ng tinamaan ng ASF sa bansa, ang pagkadiskubre din umano sa virus na nasa mga delata na nasabat sa airport ay hindi makapagpapabago sa status ng Pilipinas bilang ASF-free.

Babala naman ni Piñol, kung nakalusot ang mga naturang luncheon meat at naipakain sa mga alagang baboy ang tira-tira ay maaaring kumalat ang sakit sa mga babuyan sa bansa at magiging sanhi ng pagkasira ng hog industry.

"Doon po sa mga nagsasabing nag-oover react lang kami at nagrereklamo sa mga mahigpit na quarantine protocols, ito po ang patunay na meron talaga tayong kinakaharap na panganib," sabi pa ni Piñol.

Nanawagan pa ang kalihim na sumunod sa mga quarantine officer sa mga paliparan at huwag nang magdala ng mga delata at processed pork product sa bansa.



SA Facebook post ni Agriculture Secretary Manuel Piñol, ipinakita nito ang ma nasabat na delata na nagpositibo umano sa African Swine Flu.

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

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Nakumpiska sa OFW sa Clark Airport

CANNED MEAT POSITIBO SA SWINE FEVER

NAGPOSITIBO sa African swine fever (ASF) ang mga canned meat product na nakumpiska mula sa isang umuwing overseas Filipino worker (OFW) sa Clark Airport noong nakaraang Marso, ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Manny Piñol.

Tinukoy ang report ni Dr. Rachel Azul ng virology section ng Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), sinabi ni Piñol na nadiskubre ang ASF sa mga nakumpiskang canned goods na iniuwi mula sa Hong Kong ng isang OFW noong Marso 25, 2019 sa Clark International Airport sa Clarkfield, Pampanga.

"The Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) said the viral DNA was isolated in pork luncheon meat and was tested using the ASF Taqman PCR Asssay at the ADDRL (Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory)," sabi ni Piñol sa isang post sa Facebook.

Sa kabila ng pagkakatuklas sa virus sa mga nasamsam na canned meat products, sinabi ni Piñol na nananatiling ligtas sa ASF ang Filipinas.

"So far, no African swine fever infections have been reported in pigs in the country," aniya.

"The seizure is a warning for the industry and an acknowledgment of the catastrophic threat on our doorsteps."

"If introduced, ASF would have a significant impact on pig health and production and contribute to enormous economic losses," dagdag pa ni Piñol.

Inulit ni Piñol ang kanyang babala laban sa pagpapasok ng pork at pork products mula sa ASF-infected countries sa Filipinas.

"Kung nakalusot po ito at naipakain sa mga alagang baboy ang tira-tira, maaaring kumalat ang sakit sa ating mga babuyan at magiging sanhi ng pagkasira ng ating hog industry," aniya.

"Doon po sa mga nagsasabing nag-o-over react lang kami at nagrereklamo sa mga mahigpit na quarantine protocols, ito po ang patunay na mayroon talaga tayong kinakaharap na panganib. Huwag na po tayong maging pilosopo at matigas ang ulo. Sumunod po tayo sa mga quarantine officer sa mga airport. Bawal na po magpasok ng mga delata at processed pork products sa bansa."

Manila Standard

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Agriculture to deploy more X-ray machines

THE government has approved the utilization of the Quick Reaction Fund of the Agriculture Department for the emergency procurement of 20 units of X-ray machines that will be deployed in all international airports of the country to check agricultural products, especially meat brought in by passengers.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III endorsed the proposal, citing the need for the country to protect its borders from plant and animal diseases, notably the African Swine Fever, which is destroying the hog industry of many countries.

Dominguez also approved the installation of the meat and agri X-ray machines in customs areas in all airports to monitor all hand-carried and checked-in baggages of incoming passengers, especially those coming from ASF-affected countries.

The Philippine quarantine laws prohibit the entry of meat, fisheries and horticulture products, including planting materials, not covered by sanitary and phytosanitary permits issued by both the BAI and the Bureau of Plant Industry.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Seized canned meat from HK tested positive for ASF

The African swine fever (ASF) might slowly make its way to the country after confiscated meat products tested positive for the virus, prompting the government to further tighten its watch and avoid the spread of the disease to the billion-peso local hog industry.

A report by the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Animal Industry said the ASF viral gene has been detected in Sky Dragon pork luncheon meat that was brought by a returning resident from Hong Kong and was seized at the Clark International Airport.

Dr. Rachel Azul of the BAI- Virology Section said the viral DNA was isolated in the pork luncheon meat and was tested using the ASF Taqman PCR Assay at the Animal Disease and Diagnostic and Reference Laboratory.

Fortunately, no ASF infections have been reported in Philippine pigs to date.

"If these escaped and were fed to our pigs, it can be the cause of the disease and ruin our hog industry," Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said.

"To those who are saying that we are just overreacting and those complaining of strict quarantine protocols, this is the proof that we are really facing danger (of this disease)," he said.

The detection of the virus in seized products does not change the country's ASF-free status.

"The seizure is a warning for the industry and an acknowledgment of the catastrophic threat on our doorsteps. If introduced, ASF would have a significant impact on pig health and production and contribute to enormous economic losses," Azul said.

The BAI procedure is one of two validated polymerase chain reaction

Turn to B5

Seized... From B1

procedures described by the World Organization for Animal Health Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals.

It is the same protocol that was adopted in 2012 as the regional protocol for ASF detection and is used in at least 10 countries in Asia.

Amid the latest development, the department is instituting more stringent measures to avoid the entry of the virus.

Piñol said President Duterte has approved the utilization of the quick response fund (QRF) for the emergency procurement of 20 units of x-ray machines which will be established in all international airports of the country to check agricultural products, especially meat, brought in by passengers.

About P130 million from the QRF will be utilized for the immediate purchase of the equipment and the implementation of additional safeguards against the entry of agricultural products through the airports.

This after Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez endorsed the DA proposal, citing the need for the country to protect its borders from the disease.

"Sec. Dominguez also approved the installation of the meat and agri x-ray machines in the Customs area in all airports so that all hand carried and checked in baggages of incoming passengers, especially those coming from ASF-affected countries, could be checked," Piñol said.

Quarantine laws prohibit the entry of meat, fisheries and horticulture products, including planting materials, if these are not covered by sanitary and phytosanitary permits.

– Louise Maureen Simeon

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Agrilink 2019 to feature South Korean agricultural firms

Leading South Korean firms, through FitCoreaTrading Philippines, will be joining the country's premier international trade exhibition on agriculture, food, and aquaculture – Agrilink, Foodlink and Aqualink, slated from October 3 to 5 at the World Trade Center.

FitCorea is the local representative of the Korea Agricultural Machinery Industry Cooperative (KAMICO), a non-profit corporation making up farm machinery and equipment manufacturers in South Korea.

Agrilink 2019 will feature a South Korean pavilion showcasing the latest innovations in agriculture – from food, postharvest, manufacturing, processing, engineering, machinery and equipment, cooling, heating and energy solutions, and marketing to water supply.

FitCorea, for instance, will showcase their machineries used for plowing, cultivating, seeding, transplanting, harvesting, drying and milling. It also has postharvest equipment such as mills, dryers, rotators and power harrows for crops such as rice, corn, onion and sugarcane. It also supplies various machineries that include walking and riding transplanters and tractors, hydraulic rotavator for soil tilling, power seeder and weeder, combine harvester, and recirculating and multi-purpose dryers.

KAMICO, led by president Shin-gil Kim, also participates in South Korean government's development assistance and investment projects to the Philippines, through partnerships with the DA and other stakeholders. Among these are farm equipment and machinery assembly plants that will be constructed in a 50-hectare area in Batangas. The area will serve as a demonstration farm that will use locally fabricated and assembled farm machineries. It will also have training and research-and-development centers that will help improve the expertise of Filipino farmers and equipment operators.

Kim added that Agrilink's theme this year on climate change resilience is in line with FitCorea and KAMICO's commitment to help sustain the growth of Philippine agricultural industry. He also noted that sustainable farm mechanization technologies can help alleviate not only postharvest losses, which will provide more food to Filipinos' tables. These technologies can also help improve the efficiency of how natural resources and agricultural inputs are utilized, from soil conservation and irrigation, to use of inputs like fertilizers, which thus help in mitigating climate change's adverse impact.

The South Korean pavilion in Agrilink 2019 reflects the growing bilateral trade and investment in the country, totaling $13.7 million last year and placing South Korea as the country's fifth major trade partner. Investments from South Korea have so far figured up to $35.79 million, mainly in real estate and manufacturing. Philippine agricultural exports include corn silage and animal feedstock, fishery products and tropical fruits like banana. In fact, the Department of Agriculture (DA) recently signed a ₱28-billion agreement involving the export of various Philippine fruits to South Korean supermarkets.

Supported by the Department of Agriculture, its regional units and allied agencies, as well as co-organized by over 30 agribusiness and food organizations, Agrilink 2019 will feature local and international products and technologies, live animal and plant displays, as well as technical workshops and investment forums. For more information about Agrilink, contact FRLD at 09175888799, email frld.agrilink@gmail.com, or visit www.agrilink.org or facebook.com/agrilinkPH.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Asean to drive global wheat imports

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Southeast Asia is seen as the top wheat importing region for the first time amid a strong demand for the commodity in the Philippines and Indonesia.

Based on the latest report of the United States Department of Agriculture-Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA-FAS), the ASEAN will lead global wheat importation this year and next year as demand in the region continues to trend higher based on longer-term shifts in consumption from rice to wheat as diets diversify.

For one, the Philippines is expecting a record-high wheat importation at seven million metric tons amid continuous increasing consumption following smaller corn output.

Indonesia is seen sourcing some 12 million MT, becoming the world's second-leading importer after Egypt while Vietnam is expected to buy 4.3 million MT.

"Wheat imports for the Philippines have more than doubled over the last decade, with a large surge occurring this year boosted by reduced supplies of other grains as typhoons cut domestic corn and rice production," USDA said.

"With global wheat supplies projected to be more abundant, relatively lower prices are expected to provide further stimulus to demand for both food and feed uses. With bumper crops, supplies will likely feature prominently in fulfilling regional demand once again," it said.

Over the last 10 years, global wheat trade has grown significantly and there has been a gradual shift in the major regions that are importing wheat. Historically, the two regions driving global wheat demand were the Middle East and North Africa.

While those regions continue to demand large amounts of wheat, Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have seen major growth and are now significant forces in global wheat trade.

"All of these regions are consistent importers because production is insufficient to meet consumption. Southeast Asia is the most extreme example as domestic production is almost nonexistent, meeting less than one percent of demand requirements," USDA said.

There is no commercial wheat production in the Philippines and wheat is the main raw material for flour and feeds. The Philippines sources 95 percent of its wheat requirements from the US.

Meanwhile, global consumption has been raised this month based on larger crops in India, Russia and Ukraine.

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Romi SANTIAGO SKP
MANILA BULLETIN
JUNE 15, 2019

Our long wait for the rainy season

THE Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said early this week that the rainy season normally begins anytime between the middle of May and the middle of June. We are now in the middle of June and we are still waiting.

The water level in Angat Dam, principal source of Metro Manila's water supply, was down to 164.48 meters last June 1, way below the high-water level of 210 meters. We hope the water supply situation will not reach the stage that it did in the East Zone of Metro Manila last March when long lines of plastic water containers formed at a few roadside outlets and a swimming pool had to be drained so the water could used for urgent household needs.

Most farmers, who have no access to irrigation, will not start planting until the rains fall. This dependence on rain is said to be one of the reasons Philippine agriculture has not made much progress, along with low level of mechanization and use of modern farm practices.

In some towns and cities, showers now come erratically in some afternoons but not in others. The people thus continue to endure the heat but keep praying for the rains that will bring the temperature down and, more important, assure there will be no need for water rationing.

PAGASA could only announce this week that the rainy season is almost here. It noted that moisture-laden winds from the southwest had begun to reach Oriental and Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan. These are the islands of the country that are first reached by the southwest winds of "habagat."

PAGASA said the rainy season will officially begin when it rains five days in a row, and the water level as measured in three of five strategic locations does not fall below one millimeter. The sporadic rainfall that we have had so far does not qualify as marking the start of the season.

PAGASA also announced that it does not see any approaching storms, which usually come from the center of the Pacific Ocean in the east. These are normally feared as they bring strong winds along with strong rains causing great destruction such as "Yoling" in 1970. But in the middle of today's summer heat, many people would welcome any relief from the heat of our lingering summer season.

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Sweeteners mulled for 'Marawi' bonds

The Department of Finance (DOF) is considering several sweeteners to make the "Marawi" bonds attractive to investors and fund the large-scale infrastructure projects in the war-torn city in Mindanao.

In a statement, National Treasurer Rosalia V. de Leon said the national government is exploring several "structures" and features to make "Marawi" bonds appealing to both institutional investors and retail investors.

Among the features the treasurer proposes is for the bonds to become an alternative option for institutional investors in complying with the Agri-Agra Reform Credit Act or Republic Act No. 10000.

RA 10000 mandates banks to set aside a portion of their investible funds for loans to government priority programs for farmers, fisherfolk and other agriculture-based workers.

"In preparation for that, we've also been doing some features, including the Agri-Agra eligibility that we have secured to make the bonds more attractive. In fact, there are also some structures that we are also considering to make it more attractive to retail investors," De Leon said.

She, however, said the government would have to "calibrate" the amount of Marawi bonds that would be issued based on the financing requirements needed for the implementation of the rehabilitation program.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III said the government will issue the Marawi bonds once the ongoing Bangon Marawi Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Program (BMCRRP) moves to the next phase of the rehabilitation plan, which involves building large-scale infrastructure projects.

Dominguez also said the ongoing clearing operations in Marawi as well as the provision of housing and basic services such as water to its residents are currently being funded by allocations in the national budget, which are currently sufficient to fulfill such requirements.

"When we start getting into the bigger expenditures, then we will be issuing the Marawi bonds," Dominguez said at a recent press briefing. (CSL)

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AVANT GARDENER
YVETTE TAN

Farmer uses tarps left over from the elections to waterproof his vermicompost beds

It's been a few weeks since the midterm elections, yet, as with past elections, posters still cover walls and tarpaulins still hang from posts. A farm in Mangatarem, Pampanga, does not have this problem, because they've put tarpaulin posters leftover from the last election to good use as lining and cover for their vermiculture beds.

"Since there's so much tarps and people would just throw them or burn them, we use them for our vermicompost beds to at least reduce and recycle so that we don't have to buy new plastics to cover our vermibeds," says Raphael Teraoka Dacones of Teraoka Family Farm. "And surprisingly, it works. It's kind of waterproof, so even if we water the beds, it keeps the moisture intact."

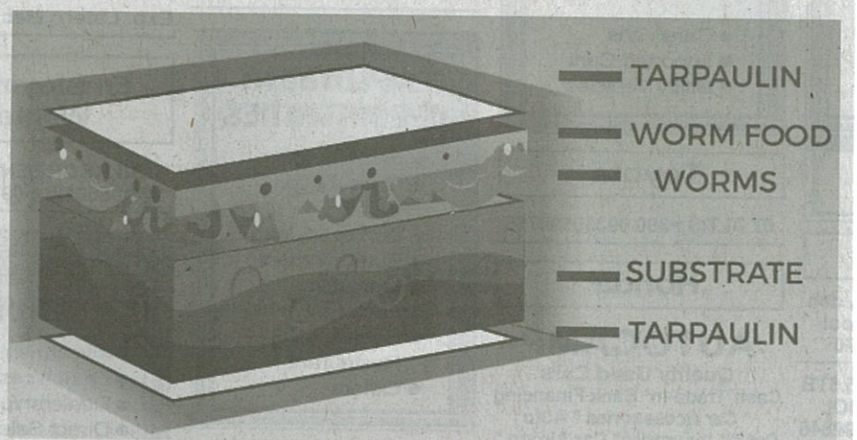
Vermiculture is using worms to create organic fertilizer. Worms, usually African nightcrawlers, are kept in a bed of soil and are fed rotting vegetables, kitchen scraps, and other organic matter. Their waste, called vermicast (aka worm poop), makes for nutrient-rich plant food. The worms have to be kept in pens where they won't escape, and they have to be housed in soil, or substrate that's of the right texture and moisture for them to thrive in.

The tarps are sewn or glued together before they're used to line the underside or cover the vermibeds. The vermibeds measure three feet by nine feet and are two hollow blocks thick. "We line (them with) tarpaulin. We put the substrate, we put the worms, we put their food, and then we cover them during the day just for them to eat," Dacones explains.

All the worms have to do is eat and poop. "We use a lot of green manure since that's one of the main sources of food," he says. Green manure are plants that are grown so that they can be used to further fertilize the soil.

The farm has about 20 vermibeds that contain hundreds of worms each, and is able to harvest around 300-500 kilos of vermicast every other week depending on how much the worms are fed. This is just enough for the farm's personal consumption. "We use it for our germination trays, our seedlings. It's mostly for nursery as a topper for our seedling trays because it's one of the best fertilizers that you could use, so that's what we use compared to regular composting," Dacones says.

Using tarpaulin that would have otherwise been thrown away helps prevent wastage and staves off the use of plastic. Plus, the worms won't care whose face is on it, as long as it helps keep them happy, healthy, and regular.



NEW USE - Election tarpaulins make great lining and cover for vermicompost beds.

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AGRI PLAIN TALK
ZAC B. SARIAN

Oldest Thai seed company is newest player in the PH

A new company that will distribute seeds of vegetables and other high-value crops was officially launched at the company's head office in Tarlac City and at Marriott Hotel in Clark Pampanga on June 10, 2019.

This is the Chia Tai Philippines, Inc. headed by Crisanto Alibuyog. It is the newest subsidiary of the oldest seed company in Thailand, the Chia Tai Company Ltd. which was established in 1921 in Bangkok. The launching was attended in full force by the mother company's CEO and directors, as well as Thai Ambassador to the Philippines Vasin Ruangprateepsaeng. Tarlac City Mayor Cristy Angeles and Vice Governor Carlito S. David led the local executives at the launch.

Earlier, on May 30, the company held a Field Day where some 30 promising hybrid varieties were showcased. The field day was attended by more than 150 farmers, agriculturists, government officials, seed distributors, and traders.

CRISANTO ALIBUYOG is the country manager of Chia Tai Philippines, Inc.

Actually, Alibuyog said, they had been field testing hundreds of varieties from Chia Tai Company in different parts of the country since 2016. Around 37 of the

FRUITFUL SITAO – This is the high-yielding White Star showcased by Chia Tai Philippines during its field day in its demo farm in Balibago, Tarlac City. It produces light green pods that are long and firm.

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most promising tropical varieties were showcased during the field day last May 30 at the Chia Tai Philippines research station in Balibago, Tarlac City.

Alibuyog is very excited about the excellent performance of the new varieties, which are mostly the pinakbet type grown under lowland conditions. He is very proud of their three varieties of bitter gourd, or ampalaya, which produce big fruits and also have very desirable characteristics.

The three ampalaya hybrids are Jade Empire, Green Arrow, and Green Spear. Jade Empire is an early maturing plant that produces big fruits, weighing 300 to 400 grams each or even bigger. It has very good fruit setting characteristics and has intermediate foliage cover.

Green Arrow, on the other hand, is a vigorous and strong hybrid that produces large and heavy fruits. It can be planted any time of the year being an all-season variety.

Green Spear produces long and glossy green fruits with very good fruit setting ability. It is also highly tolerant to the "Barako" disease.

The other varieties also performed well under Tarlac conditions despite the challenging weather conditions of very hot temperatures and El Niño phenomenon. The varieties included traditional varieties of sweet corn and a number of sweet waxy corn that come in white and colored varieties. Among them is Magenta, a waxy purple corn that is claimed to be rich in anthocyanin and with 25% sweetness. Other varieties are Sta. Maria purple, a bicolor which is early maturing at 63 to 65 days after planting; Sweet Ivory which produces big ears with sweet waxy kernels; and Sweet Nirvana which is an all-season variety that can be planted in both wet and dry seasons. It produces medium size ears prized for their sweetness and tolerance to diseases.

Random checking with the field day attendees revealed that they were impressed by the good stand of the crops and the quality of their fruits. Among the outstanding crops heavily laden with fruits was the White Star sitao or string bean with light green pods that are firm, and with long productive life. Watermelons and melons were also among the star performers at the field day. These include the watermelons like Predator, Terminator, Sweet Royale, Andromeda, Yellow Princess, and Black Raptor. The melons include Royal Gold Solar Sweet and Royal Honey Dew.

Also showcased during the field day were varieties of tomato, eggplant, patola, cucumber, gourd or upo, and pumpkin or squash. The pumpkin varieties are Maligat and Early Gold.

PROMISING AMPALAYA – Chia Tai Company Vice President Boonma Okman shows the big fruit of Jade Empire ampalaya during the grand launch at a hotel in Clark, Pampanga last June 10. The variety is high-yielding with good fruit setting.

BICOLOR SWEET WAXY CORN – This is the Sta. Maria Purple sweet waxy corn from Chia Tai Philippines. It is early maturing at 63 to 65 days after planting.

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BAYAN SA ZAMBO SUR NAGDAOS NG AGRO-TRADE FAIR

NAGBUKAS kamakailan ang bayan ng Dumalinao, Zamboanga del Sur, ng agro-trade fair kasabay ng kanilang selebrasyon ng ika-63 anibersaryo.

Sinabi ni Dumalinao Mayor Junaflor Cerilles na ang trade fair, na ginanap sa harapan ng town hall, ay nagpakita ng mga lokal na produkto na mabibili sa pinaka-abot-kayang halaga.

Ayon pa kay Cerilles, ang mga produkto na naka-display at ibinebenta ay organic tea, coffee, banana chips, at iba pang farm at fishery products.

"All these products are from our very own farmers and fisherfolk," dagdag ni Cerilles.

Nagbukas ang trade fair matapos na magtipon ang mga opisyal ng Dumalinao para sumabay sa pagdiriwang ng ika-121 Independence Day ng bansa.

Nakatakdang magdiwang ang bayan ng Dumalinao ng kanilang ika-63 founding anniversary sa Hunyo 26. Isang fourth-class na bayan, mayroon itong 30 barangay. Ang bayan ay nilikha sa pamamagitan ng kabutihan ng Republic Act 1593. **PNA**

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EDITORIAL

Industry wish granted

THE local tobacco manufacturing industry's hope for the government to "provide the appropriate safety nets for farmers, workers, and retailers whose livelihood would be impacted by this new round of tax increase" would be realized as this requirement is provided by the new law imposing higher taxes on cigarettes and other related products.

Industry leader Philip Morris Fortune Tobacco Corp. Inc. had earlier expressed its wish for social protection for all affected industry stakeholders in a statement.

"The Senate version is a positive step forward as it will enable smokers to switch to less harmful alternatives to cigarettes while generating additional revenues from previously untaxed e-vapor products," PMFTC Corporate Communications head Dave Gomez said.

Sen. Sonny Angara assured tobacco farmers they would continue to benefit from the incremental revenues from higher excise tax to be imposed on tobacco products starting next year.

Angara said the new tobacco excise tax bill approved by the Senate and the House of Representatives provides that up to 20 percent of the incremental revenues from the additional duties would go directly to 23 tobacco producing provinces to finance programs that would provide support for tobacco farmers and workers.

"Under the measure, 15 percent of excise tax on locally manufactured Virginia-type cigarettes but not exceeding P17 billion will go to Virginia tobacco-producing provinces, while 5 percent but not exceeding P4 billion will be allocated to burley and native tobacco producing provinces," he pointed out.

The lawmaker said the support for tobacco farmers can be in the form of inputs, trainings, safety nets, infrastructure, livelihood and agri-industrial projects.

Earlier, PMFTC lauded the Senate's decision to pass the bill increasing further the excise tax on tobacco products.

Gomez said passage of the bill is a step towards ensuring funds for the government's Universal Health Care program.

According to the National Tobacco Administration, at least three tobacco types are grown in 23 tobacco producing provinces in the Philippines. Virginia tobacco is grown in Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Abra and La Union.

Burley tobacco is grown in Pangasinan, La Union, Abra, Isabela, Cagayan, Tarlac and Occidental Mindoro; while the native or dark tobacco is grown in Pangasinan, La Union, Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Capiz, Iloilo, Cebu, Negros Oriental, Leyte, Zamboanga del Sur, Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, North Cotabato and Maguindanao.

The new tobacco tax measure will raise the excise tax for every cigarette pack from P35 to P60 for the next 4 years.

The starting rate of P45 will be implemented in 2020, followed by a series of annual P5 increases until the rate reaches P60 in 2023. Thereafter, the rate automatically increases by 5 percent.

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EDITORIAL

Napapatagal ang paghihintay natin sa tag-ulan

INIHAYAG ng Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) sa unang bahagi ng linggong ito na karaniwan nang nagsisimula ang tag-ulan sa kalagitnaan ng Mayo hanggang sa gitnang bahagi ng Hunyo. Nasa kalagitnaan na tayo ng Hunyo, at naghihintay pa rin tayo.

Ang tubig sa Angat Dam, ang pangunahing pinagkukuhanan ng supply ng mga taga-Metro Manila, ay sumadsad na sa 164.48 metro nitong Hunyo 1, malaki ang ibinaba mula sa high-water level na 210 metro. Umaasa tayong ang naghihingalong supply natin ng tubig ay hindi aabot sa punto gaya ng nangyari sa East Zone ng Metro Manila noong Marso, nang nagsulputan ang mahahabang pila ng mga balde at iba pang sisidlan ng tubig sa mga igiban, at isang swimming pool ang kinailangang sairin upang magamit ang tubig nito para sa matinding pangangailangan sa bahay.

Karamihan sa mga magsasaka, na walang biyaya ng irigasyon, ay hindi makapagtatanim hanggang hindi pa tag-ulan. Ang pagdepende sa ulan ay sinasabing isa sa mga dahilan kaya hindi umaalagwa ang agrikultura sa Pilipinas, kasama na ang kakaunting gumagamit ng makina, at ng modernong paraan ng pagsasaka.

Sa ilang bayan at siyudad, karaniwan na ngayon ang pag-uulan pagsapit ng hapon, pero hindi ito nangyayari sa ibang lugar. Kaya naman patuloy na tinitiis ng mga tao ang matinding alinsangan ng panahon, habang nananalangin na umulan upang maibsan ang init, at higit sa lahat, matiyak na hindi kakailanganing irasyon ang tubig.

Ang tanging nakumpirma lang ng PAGASA ngayong linggo ay malapit nang magsimula ang tag-ulan. Binanggit din ng ahensiya na nagsimula na ring umabot ang habagat sa Oriental at Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, at Palawan. Ito ang mga isla sa bansa na unang naaabot ng habagat.

Ayon sa PAGASA, opisyal na magsisimula ang tag-ulan kapag umulan nang magkakasunod na limang araw, at ang water level na nasukat sa tatlo sa limang estratehikong lokasyon ay hindi dapat na bababa sa isang milimetro. Ang malakas na pag-uulang naranasan natin sa nakalipas na mga araw ay hindi pa magkukumpirma na tag-ulan na nga sa bansa.

Inihayag din ng PAGASA na wala itong natutukoy na paparating na bagyo, na karaniwan nang namumuo sa sentro ng Dagat Pasipiko sa silangan. Normal nang pangambahan ito dahil nagbubunsod ito ng malakas na hangin at ulan at nagdudulot ng matinding pananalasa, gaya ng "Yoling" noong 1970. Subalit sa kalagitnaan ng matinding tag-init sa ngayon, marami ang matutuwa sa anumang ginhawang mararamdaman mula sa umiiral na maalinsangang panahon.

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Mga estratehiya vs climate change, tinutunan ng mga magsasaka sa Ilocos

PATULOY na hinahasa ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Ilocos Norte, sa pakikipagtulungan sa iba't ibang national government agencies at ang extension directorate ng state-run Mariano Marcos State University, ang mga magsasaka at tinuturuan sila ng mga praktikal na paraan upang mapanatili ang magandang ani sa mga lugar na madalas tamaan ng sakuna.

Kasunod ng pagsasanay sa Batac City kamakailan, na dinaluhan ng 40 magsasaka na nagrepresenta sa apat na samahan sa bayan ng Solsona, Marcos, Vintar, at Piddig, hinikayat ni MMSU president Dr. Shirley Agrupis ang mga magsasaka na i-adapt ang kasalukuyang mga hamon dulot ng climate change.

"You are the backbone of the economy. Without you, no one will feed the nation. I hope that you are ready to prevent if not mitigate the impact of climate change," sinabi ni Agrupis sa isang panayam nitong Miyerkules.

Sa pagtatayo ng Science and Technology Community-Based Farm (STCBF) on Climate Resilient Technologies, sinasanay ang mga magsasaka sa MMSU-University Training Center upang mapaunlad ang kanilang mga paraan sa pagtatanim sa buong probinsiya.

Pinagagamit ng mga tauhan ng MMSU extension directorate ang mga magsasaka ng carrageenan plant growth regulator at seed inoculants.

Napag-alaman na ang carrageenan plant growth regulator (CPGR) ay nakatutulong sa pagpapalago ng palay ng 25 porsiyento hanggang 30%.

Ang Carrageenan ay isang indigestible polysaccharide (carbohydrate) mula sa red seaweeds.

"My harvest increased when I applied organic fertilizer on my crops and the things I learned from the training. We hope that the government will not get tired of helping us," ayon sa cooperator mula sa Nueva Era.

PNA

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EDITORIAL

Our long wait for the rainy season

THE Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said early this week that the rainy season normally begins anytime between the middle of May and the middle of June. We are now in the middle of June and we are still waiting.

The water level in Angat Dam, principal source of Metro Manila's water supply, was down to 164.48 meters last June 1, way below the high-water level of 210 meters. We hope the water supply situation will not reach the stage that it did in the East Zone of Metro Manila last March when long lines of plastic water containers formed at a few roadside outlets and a swimming pool had to be drained so the water could used for urgent household needs.

Most farmers, who have no access to irrigation, will not start planting until the rains fall. This dependence on rain is said to be one of the reasons Philippine agriculture has not made much progress, along with low level of mechanization and use of modern farm practices.

In some towns and cities, showers now come erratically in some afternoons but not in others. The people thus continue to endure the heat but keep praying for the rains that will bring the temperature down and, more important, assure there will be no need for water rationing.

PAGASA could only announce this week that the rainy season is almost here. It noted that moisture-laden winds from the southwest had begun to reach Oriental and Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan. These are the islands of the country that are first reached by the southwest winds of "habagat."

PAGASA said the rainy season will officially begin when it rains five days in a row, and the water level as measured in three of five strategic locations does not fall below one millimeter. The sporadic rainfall that we have had so far does not qualify as marking the start of the season.

PAGASA also announced that it does not see any approaching storms, which usually come from the center of the Pacific Ocean in the east. These are normally feared as they bring strong winds along with strong rains causing great destruction such as "Yoling" in 1970. But in the middle of today's summer heat, many people would welcome any relief from the heat of our lingering summer season.