A. SEC. WDD QUOTED

MANILA STANDARD
Dreaded virus zaps pigs

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
DA confirms presence of African swine fever

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African Swine Fever outbreak confirmed

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BUSINESS MIRROR
A.S.F. Killed hogs in Bulacan, Rizal – D.A.
DA expands surveillance to areas with sick hogs

THE DAILY TRIBUNE
Swine flu reaches Luzon

THE MANILA TIMES
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MANILA BULLETIN
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Reason for optimism in agriculture (Part 1)

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Palace: Pork safe to consume despite pig deaths from ASF

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African Swine Fever kumpirmado

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ASF now in PH; 7,416 pigs culled

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON
Patay na baboy positibo sa ASF

TEMPO
Palace: Nothing to worry about ASF

BANDERA
Swine fever masa Pinas na- DA

TEMPO
Photo: Agriculture Secretary William Dar

PEOPLE’S JOURNAL
African Swine Fever now in PH
BALITA
DOH: African Swine Flu, ‘di banta sa kalusugan
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Sugar output declines in end-August as demand falls

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Shellfish Bulletin: Series of 2019 (September 09, 2019)
Rice tariffication law amendment sought

MANILA STANDARD
COA flags Philippine Coconut Authority

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Shellfish Bulletin: Series of 2019 (September 09, 2019)
Repeal of rice tariffication law sought

BUSINESS MIRROR
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Pernia, Dominguez see no inflation spike after ASF report

THE MANILA TIMES
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Pork safe to eat – Duque

BALITA
Mga magsasaka, umiyak

PEOPLE’S JOURNAL
NFA now ready to buy palay from farmers

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Villar: Turn cash subsidies to rice to help devastated farmers

ABANTE TONITE
Mga Ilocos farmer apektado ng imported rice

D. FOREIGN STORY

No stories
By Othel V. Campos, Macon Ramos-Araneta and MJ Blancaflor

THE Philippines on Monday confirmed its first cases of African swine fever, becoming the latest country hit by the disease that has killed pigs from Slovakia to China, pushing up pork prices worldwide.

Agriculture Secretary William Dar said the infected pigs were found in Bulacan and Rizal, and authorities have culled more than 7,000 pigs within a one-kilometer radius.

Dar said 14 of 20 samples sent to a UK laboratory tested positive for African swine fever, but it will take another week to confirm how virulent the strain is and whether it is similar to that of Vietnam and China.

The virus was first recorded in Rodriguez town in Rizal, 10 kilometers east of Manila. Other undisclosed areas are still being closely monitored for possible infection, he added.

"Today, we wish to announce the result of the confirmatory Polymerase Chain Reaction test [done in the United Kingdom]. It is African swine fever positive," Dar said.

There is no antidote or vaccine and the only known method to prevent the disease from spreading is a mass cull of affected livestock.

The virus is not harmful to humans but causes hemorrhagic fever in pigs that almost always ends in death.

He said the nation was not facing an epidemic and urged Filipinos to continue eating pork, which is a critical market and accounts for 60 percent of meat consumption in the country.

"We have never been in an epidemic, just to highlight that. We are responding to the increased number of deaths of pigs," Dar said.

"To date, we believe we have successfully managed the issue, as a misstep could erode the gains and competitiveness of the country's P260-billion swine industry that provides and sustains livelihood of millions of Filipino families, as roughly two-thirds or 65 percent of the industry is contributed by small backyard raisers," he added.

The Philippines is the world's 8th biggest pork producer by volume.

Authorities suspect the swine fever cases stemmed from backyard hog raisers who feed pigs swill, leftover food scraps from hotels and restaurants.

The Agriculture department added the virus could also be traced to smuggled frozen meat and returning overseas Filipino workers who brought back infected meat products.

In May, the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization said pork prices had begun to soar, rising by up to 50 percent both in China and on the Chicago futures exchange.

Dar said the Agriculture department had yet to receive reports of more hog deaths.

Dar, along with Health Secretary Francisco Duque and other DA and DOH officials, hog stakeholders, and members of the private sector earlier shared a meal to show the public that it was safe to eat pork.

"As long as the hogs passed through the proper process of slaughtering and preparation, the public should not fear eating pork," Dar said.

"We want to alyay the fears of the public by saying that, as long as pork is bought from reliable sources and it is cooked thoroughly, pork is safe to eat," Duque added.

Before slaughtering, a hog is validated and assessed by a veterinarian, who then issues a medical certificate. Once slaughtered, the meats are stamped with a seal from the National Meat Inspection Service, assuring that it passed the food safety measures imposed by the government, Dar said.

Strict quarantine and monitoring protocols would remain in place to protect hog farms in other parts of the country, Dar said.

The DA also suspended the ground operations in Rizal province and focused on cleaning and disinfecting operations.

The Palace said the government has taken measures to ensure public safety. According to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), ASF is a severe and highly contagious viral disease among domestic and wild pigs.

It is commonly introduced into a herd after the feeding on uncooked or undercooked contaminated pork products which are then ingested by the pig.

The virus is then spread between pigs by direct contact with an infected pig, or ingestion of contaminated material (such as food waste, feed, or garbage). It can also be transmitted by contaminated fomites or ticks or blood-sucking insects.

Pigs infected with the ASF virus experience high fever, depression, loss of appetite, redness of ears, abdomen, and legs, vomiting, and diarrhea that may lead to death.

Because ASF can spread easily, hog raisers are advised not to feed raw or undercooked pork products such as swill, garbage or waste to pigs.

Senator Francis Pangilinan urged communities, including piggy owners, to be vigilant and immediately report signs of the disease.

"We hope that no more pigs will be culled, and if absolutely needed, it must be done in the humane way and in a manner that would not expose people to the disease," Pangilinan said.

Pangilinan, who was food security secretary when an infected ornamental plant started the cocolisap infestation in 2014, said border controls must work to keep contaminated pork or pork products away. With AFP, PNA
Manila Standard

China
156 ASF outbreaks in 32 provinces
First confirmed ASF case on 19 February 2019
4.5 million pigs culled

Vietnam
Outbreaks in 63 provinces
First confirmed ASF case on 3 August 2018
1.17 million pigs culled

Laos
94 outbreaks in 15 provinces
First confirmed ASF case on 20 June 2019
25,000 pigs culled

Myanmar
First confirmed case on 1 August 2019

Sources:
United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, AFP

African swine fever (ASF) is a fatal animal disease affecting pigs and wild boars with up to 100% case fatality rate.

Cambodia
Outbreaks in five provinces
First confirmed ASF case on 2 April 2019

9 September 2019
The Philippines confirms first cases of African swine fever in Bulacan and Rizal provinces. 7,000 pigs culled
DA confirms presence of African swine fever

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday said 14 out of 20 blood samples of pigs from the provinces of Rizal and Bulacan sent to a laboratory in the United Kingdom have tested positive for African Swine Fever (ASF).

Agriculture Secretary William Dar said they are still waiting for another set of laboratory results which will identify the strain and virulence of ASF that hit the country.

"The latest feedback from the ground in Rizal and Bulacan is that there's no more disease as results are already negative on areas affected earlier by the swine disease," Dar told reporters in a briefing.

He said that so far, a total of 7,416 pigs have been depopulated in areas including San Jose, Macabud, San Isidro, San Rafael, Mashap and Cupang, Anitoque in Rizal, as well as in Guiguinto, Bulacan.

Of the total number of pigs depopulated, 7,223 are from the Rizal province alone.

He added the DA remains on high alert as they are checking out reports of increased pig deaths in more Laizon provinces that he declined to identify pending the leg work that needs to be completed in the areas.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III allayed public fears over the possible health threats of the ASF.

"We want to reiterate to the public that ASF is not a threat to human health," said Duque.

But while it does not pose threats to humans, Duque advised the public to cook pork products thoroughly as an added precautionary measure.

"As long as pork is bought from reliable sources and it is cooked thoroughly, pork is safe to eat," Duque said.

In addition, the health department said pig handlers may also employ additional safety measures against the spread of the ASF.

"Preventive measures for pig handlers may include handwashing when they get home from a farm or market; and cleaning of shoes, or tires of vehicles used in the pig farm," said Duque.

African Swine Fever is a severe and highly contagious viral disease among domestic and wild pigs, with symptoms including high fever, depression, loss of appetite, redness of ears, abdomen, and legs, vomiting, and diarrhea that may lead to death.

The virus spread among pigs by direct contact with an infected pig; ingestion of contaminated material (such as food waste, feed, or garbage); or by contaminated fomites or ticks or blood-sucking insects.

It is not fatal to human beings but is a big threat to the inventory of more than 12 million hogs with a value of P260 billion as it still has no known cure.

As early as September last year, the DA has asked the Bureau of Customs to heighten alert on imported pork products, mandating quarantine officers in ports of entry in the country to review their protocols, including the installation of foot baths and the monitoring of all meat products being brought into the country by tourists.

Dar said the DA has initially provided a P3,000 indemnity per culled hog to help affected raisers to start over, apart from a livelihood assistance in the form of free piglets to small backyard raisers.

Dar reminded hog raisers that swill feeding is still not encouraged pending the conduct of an examination if it was the main carrier of the ASF virus in the Philippines, noting that various food wastes are collected and recycled from different hotels and establishments.

"During the last Cabinet meeting, we presented the issue to the Cabinet and one of the basic recommendations is to do an interdepartmental task force. A national task force on swine disease will be created where DA will be the chair and joined by the Department of Transportation, Department of Finance, Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of National Defense, among others," Dar also said.

In the same briefing, Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura chairman, Rosendo So assured that despite the confirmation of ASF's existence in the country, it will not affect the prices of pork products.

He said ramp up in pork sales is not expected until October, adding that farmgate price is now at P120 to P125 per kg and P108 to P115 per kg for backyard raised pigs.

Economic managers said the presence of ASF in the country will not have a significant impact on inflation.

National Economic and Development Authority Secretary Ernesto Pellas said: "It will not have a significant impact. Inflation is not going to spike for sure."

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said that while the ASF confirmation is a "concern", "there are substitutes to pork such as poultry, beef and fish" which the public can consume.

"It's a concern but there are substitutes to pork such as poultry, beef and fish. I am sure the DTT (Department of Trade and Industry) and DA are on top of this," Dominguez said.

With Gerard Navaldo and Angela Celis
African Swine Fever outbreak confirmed

By Vincent Mariel P. Galang
Reporter

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture (DA) on Monday confirmed the first outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in the Philippines, adding that quarantine measures have been tightened to prevent the spread of the virus.

"We received late last week the result of the Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. We submitted 20 samples... and the result that we received is that 14 samples are positive with African Swine Fever," Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said in a press conference on Monday, adding that more tests are needed to determine virulence of the strain. AFFECTED AREAS ARE IN GUIGUINTO, BULACAN AS WELL AS IN RODRIGUEZ AND ANTIPOLO IN RIZAL WHERE 7,416 HOGS HAVE SO FAR BEEN CULLED SINCE AUG. 18 AS A PREVENTIVE MEASURE PRIOR TO YESTERDAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT. Mr. Dar said subsequent tests have shown that these areas have been cleared of the disease, although the department is now checking more incident reports.

"We have never been in an epidemic state. We are responding to increased number of deaths of pigs," he said, referring to the unusually high number of pig deaths in backyard farms in Rizal province just south of Metro Manila that had alerted authorities to a possible outbreak.

Mr. Dar said the department suspects widespread use of swill — leftovers especially from hotels — had caused the outbreak.

The World Organization for Animal Health has said there is no vaccine for the virus, although both the DA and the Health department have said it is harmless to humans.

"We want to allay the fears of the public by saying that, as long as pork is bought from reliable sources and it is cooked thoroughly, pork is safe to eat," Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III said in a statement on Monday.

"We want to reiterate to the public that ASF is not a threat to human health."

Latest government data put the country's swine stock at 12.7 million heads — consisting of 3 million pigs in backyard farms and 4.7 million in commercial farms — as of July 1.

Philippine Statistics Authority data showed that growth of hog production which has the second-biggest contribution to total value of farm output after rice at more than a tenth — picked up in volume terms to 2.42% last year from 1.49% in 2017, though these were still slower than 2015's 4.33% and 2016's 5.25%.

The government has so far banned pork and pork-based products from Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Laos, Latvia, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine, Vietnam and Zambia.

Edwin Chen, president of the Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines, Inc., said in a mobile phone message: "Leaders of the hog industry are united with DA in ensuring safe and ample supply of... pork in the upcoming Christmas season."

Strict biosecurity measures are also being enforced in the backyard and commercial farms.

National Federation of Hog Farmers, Inc. Chairman and President Chester Warren Y. Tan downplayed the situation, noting by phone: "Ang culling naman rutro na maayos ito. Kaya ng total population so hindi sya makaapag kapeko. Kaya syang pumunta ng commercial industry. Whatever 'yang sinasabi nating virus na mayroon toyo... hindi naman syo makakapagkapeko.'"(Pigs killed were just a small percentage of total population, so this situation will not affect the entire industry. Commercial hog raisers can plug the gap left by backyard raisers. So whatever this disease is not affecting us.)"

Samahang Industriya ng Aghrikultura Rosendo O. So, who is a member of the crisis management team formed by DA together with the private sector, told reporters after the press conference that the 7,416 culled hogs were just 0.06% of the 12.7 million nation-wide supply.

At the same time, he cited the need to educate consumers that pork in the market is fit for human consumption.

While authorities are also watching any effect on the corn sector, which supplies feed partly to livestock, PhilMaize Federation, Inc. President Roger V. Navarro said members of his group are not alarmed by the current situation since they also provide feed for poultry, as well as supply for industrial and human consumption.

"Sa ngayon scare lang talaga ito, wala talagang translation... kasi hindi naman labat ng corn is going to hogs... (This is just a scare for now, there is no big effect on our industry... because not all of corn output goes to hogs)," Mr. Navarro said. — with Reuters
Gov’t confirms 1st cases of African swine fever

By CATHARINE TALAVERA

The recent hog deaths in Bulacan and Rizal were caused by African swine fever (ASF) virus, as confirmed by laboratory results from the United Kingdom, the Department of Agriculture (DA) announced yesterday.

In a press conference, Agriculture Secretary William Dar said 14 out of 20 blood samples sent to the OIE (World Organization for Animal Health) reference laboratory in England were positive for ASF.

Dar said these were results only of the Polymerase Chain Reaction test. He emphasized they have yet to receive the results of the viral isolation test that will reveal the virulence of the ASF strain.

He said a total of 7,416 pigs have been depopulated in the affected areas of San Jose, Macabud, San Isidro, San Rafael and Mascap, all in Rodriguez, Rizal; Cupang in Antipolo, and Guiguinto in Bulacan.

Dar said the DA is verifying reports of possible ASF cases in other areas, but declined to identify these areas.

When asked how the virus could have been carried to farms, the DA suggests it may have been through food scraps from hotels and restaurants, or by pork products brought home by overseas Filipino workers.

Volatile Bacinang, provincial veterinarian of Bulacan, claimed that one of the blood samples that tested positive for ASF was taken from a dead hog in the town of Guiguinto.

Last Sept. 9, Bulacan Gov. Daniel Fernando ordered Bacinang to investigate the mysterious deaths of several hogs in Malolos city and the towns of San Miguel and Guiguinto.

Blood samples of the dead animals were sent to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) for analysis to determine the cause of death.

As this developed, Bacinang said the provincial veterinary office has been conducting strict monitoring and surveillance on the swine industry in Bulacan where blood samples are taken from different piggeries to be analyzed by the BAI, while backyard raisers are advised to stop feeding their swine with “kaping baboy” or swill, which is food scraps mixed with water.

Meanwhile, Mac Dormiendo, external relations officer for Luzon of San Miguel Purefoods Co. Inc. issued a public statement assuring the public that their products are not affected by ASF and are safe to eat.

San Miguel Foods (SMF), the food division of San Miguel Food and Beverage that carries popular meat brands Purefoods and Monterey, claimed their farms and facilities follow strict animal health and biosecurity protocols.

“We also secure the required permits from the Bureau of Animal Industry and the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) before any of our products are distributed,” Dormiendo said in the statement.

While ASF does not pose any danger to humans, it is very infectious to pigs and can spread easily from one farm to another if not properly managed.

Dar assured the public that the DA is on top of the situation and is implementing measures to address the issue.

He said the DA, through its Crisis Management Task Force for Swine, is enforcing the 1-7-10 protocol to manage, contain and control suspected swine disease.

Additionally, the DA has also issued three administrative orders to address the issue, such as guidelines in securing a certificate of farm disease-free status in outbreak areas, which enables owners to get the needed certification from the BAI declaring that their farms are disease-free.

Administrative orders on the revised guidelines on the local movement of swine, pork, pork products, and pork byproducts outside of disease outbreak areas, as well as veterinary quarantine movement protocols during animal disease outbreaks or emergencies, were also issued.

Dar said a national task force for swine disease, to be headed by the DA, would also be created in a bid to quarantine the disease.

Malacañang expressed confidence that the DA will handle the situation effectively.

“Just like any other sudden foreign disease that affects the swine industry, the DA will undertake the measures necessary to secure the public for their safety,” presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a press briefing.

The agriculture secretary said the DA will strengthen collaboration with industry stakeholders, LGUs and other partners to protect the local animal population against emerging diseases, and ensure safe meat products for Filipinos.

— With Ramon Efren Lazaro, Michelle Zoleta, Alexi Romero, Sheila Crisostomo
Crying over rice

This urge to amend or abolish the tariffication law may affect our compliance with the requirements of the World Trade Organization, resulting possibly in the diminution of their coconut and other agricultural exports in the world market. The removal of the WTO Quantitative Restriction, the Philippines’ international commitment for 22 years, can no longer be extended until we have not come up with a program to make our farmers competitive and have failed in doing so.

The tariff law puts in a tax of 35% to the landed cost of imported rice. It then goes to the funds to buy seeds and tractors to help farmers increase their yields and be more efficient so that their cost of production will be the same as that of foreign farmers. With the 35% additional tax, the foreign rice will now be higher in price when sold to the customer, making our rice cheaper or competitive.

The issue is just muddled with farmer leaders shouting to high heavens for the tariffication law to be suspended, and that the regulatory functions of the NFA be returned to it. This could not be done anymore even as some farmer leaders claim they know their international commitments and economies.

What propelled these leaders to appear in Senate hearings and air their complaint: the fear of losing benefits they get from the NFA.

Without a doubt these farmer leaders want to draw the public’s attention to the vested interest of the principal author of the law whose family is in real estate development. But then, who is the real estate developer that will build houses in flooded rice areas, except warehouses that will just fill up the rice lands to one meter higher, and build shopping malls? There may be some doing all these, but certainly, no housing company in its right mind will sell housing in flooded areas.

The bigger problem here is that the farmer leaders supposedly acting in the interest of our farmers do not really represent the sentiments of the farmers, who are the silent majority. What these avowed leaders should be asking is for the creation of certain conditions that benefit the real farmers who hard enough to live comfortably. These include removing the condition that they (the farmers) should be accredited by the DA for them to be enrolled in the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Program (RCEP); they must be provided with their own rice mills complete with farm machineries; that the NFA commits to buy a percentage of what they can produce for buffer stocking; that in addition to free irrigation, they should be given free electricity to irrigate their rain-fed farms with electric-driven shallow well pumps – a process rightfully called “electrification.”

There is now a farmer’s federation that has prepared for rice liberalization as early as 10 years ago. With a grant in aid from the DA they were able to dry run a foodbank to sell directly to the commonwealth market, and organized seedbanks with a network of warehouses in Pangasinan and Zambales that are bird and rat free for the World Food Program as a market. This is KMMP (Kapispasin mg Magasasak, Mangingisda at Manggagawa ng Pilipinas) headed by V.L. Sonny Domingo as permanent chairman.

In addition, KMMP has developed a climate resistant integrated farming system where they plant and harvest everyday covered with crop insurance for risk management and enrolling 1,000 farms for members that can produce 30 tons of rice husk to run their own power plant for agro-industrialization.

Domingo, however, said that until now they have not yet obtained any assistance from the government which requires funds to purchase their own rice mill complex for value adding and irrigate their rain-fed farms with renewable energy they call “electrification” and operate their own common service facilities managed by licensed agriculturists and professional managers.

They are being incorporated with a wealth-sharing scheme with the farmers owning majority of the stocks shares for the use of their farms for production and a 30% share of the total produce for the use of their children or relatives to manage their own farms with a monthly salary. If the farmers choose to sell their one-hectare farm that is enrolled, their stock shares will be bought by the project amounting to no less than P1 per hectare at a minimum.

Several investors offered them funds to export their produce to Africa and the Middle East but PMMMP has refused the offer, hoping that the government will assist them to produce rice for the local market. They claim that they could irrigate as much as 100,000 hectares immediately given the funds at only half the government cost of irrigating rice farms complete with support services such as will assist them in their factory pools and food processing facilities.

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Impact of swine fever on inflation seen minimal

By Daxim L. Lucas
@daxINQ

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Date: Sept. 10, 2019  Page: B1

The Duterte administration’s top economic manager on Monday expressed concern that the outbreak of the African swine fever in the Philippines could potentially push prices higher in the country, but stressed that any broader inflationary impact would be tempered by the availability of meat alternatives.

In a message to reporters, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III acknowledged that the government’s confirmation of the presence of the virus—which is not known to pose a health risk to humans—was “a concern.”

“But there are substitutes to pork such as poultry, beef and fish,” he said.

The outbreak will adversely impact the Philippines’ P260-billion hog industry, but is unlikely to cause a spike in the country’s consumer price index that, though heavily weighted in favor of food items, gives only a small percentage to pork.

According to data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, fresh, chilled or frozen meat—which includes pork, poultry and beef—account for only 4.8 percent of the economy’s inflation basket. In contrast, rice accounts for 9.6 percent of total inflation across the economy, based on the government statistics office’s 2012 price base.

Other traditionally volatile CPI components are fresh, chilled or frozen fish (4.3 percent), vegetables cultivated for their fruit (0.9 percent), vegetables cultivated for their roots (0.6 percent), corn (0.6 percent), and petroleum and fuels (2 percent).

On Monday, Agriculture Secretary William Dar said dead pigs found in some backyard farms in the Philippines tested positive for African swine fever based on the results of laboratory tests of local samples analyzed in the United Kingdom.

The Agriculture department estimated the total Philippine swine population at 12.7 million head, of which eight million pigs are raised in rural backyards while 4.7 million are from commercial farms.

To date, the country has banned pork and pork-based products from Belgium, Bulgaria, China, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Laos, Moldova, Mongolia, North Korea, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine, Vietnam and Zambia.

This latest development has yet to affect the outlook of monetary authorities, which are still on an easing mode after tightening money supply substantially last year in response to an inflationary spike, caused primarily by high rice and fuel prices, aggravated by a tax hike.

In fact, the policy-making body of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas believed that prices of basic goods and services would remain benign for the rest of this year and next, and possibly even more so in 2021.

The biggest inflationary threat that monetary planners fear right now are potential increases in the cost of electricity or transportation as well as the looming hike in taxes for alcohol.

The latest inflation rate stands at 1.7 percent for August, the lowest in nearly three years.

INQ
DA: African swine fever in PH; pork safe

ASSURANCE  Agriculture Secretary William Dar (left photo) breaks the news on African swine fever in the Philippines, which has prompted the culling of pigs in affected farms outside Metro Manila. —NIÑO JESUS ORBETA/INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

The Department of Agriculture has confirmed the presence of African swine fever in the Philippines, but assured the public that there was no epidemic and pork products remained safe for consumption.
The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday confirmed the presence of African swine fever in the Philippines, but assured the public there was no epidemic and vouched for the safety of pork products in the country.

At a press conference at the DA Agriculture Secretary William Dar said “we received late last week the result of what we call the polymerase chain reaction test. We submitted actually 20 [blood] samples to the United Kingdom laboratory, and the result that we received is that out of the 20 samples, 14 are positive. Fourteen samples are positive with the Asian swine fever.”

Dar was referring to the UK-based Pirbright Institute, which according to www.wrirdfm.org is designated as the World Reference Laboratory for Poot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and as a reference laboratory for FMD by the World Organization for Animal Health.

A second analysis called the viral isolation test is pending at the said laboratory. That test will determine how virulent the strain is in the country.

“If the strain here in the Philippines is highly virulent or not, it will also spell what are the measures we need to put in place,” Dar said at a later press briefing in Malacañang.

There is no antidote or vaccine against African swine fever and the only known method to prevent the disease from spreading is a mass cull of affected livestock.

The virus causes haemorrhagic fever in pigs that almost always ends in death, but it is not harmful to humans.

**Boodle fight with Duque**

Dar sought to assure the public that “for local pork, we are telling everyone that it is safe. Let us patronize our products.”

“We have never been in an epidemic, just to highlight that,” he said. “We are responding to the increased number of deaths of pigs.”

To prove that locally sold pork was safe to eat, Dar and Health Secretary Francisco Duque III took part in a "boodle fight"—military lingo for soldiers and officers sharing a meal and eating with their bare hands—with the rice and pork viands served on banana leaves.

Dar said that a hog marked for slaughter is first assessed by a veterinarian, who will issue a medical certificate if the animal is found free of the disease. The meat, once it has passed the government’s food safety measures, is then given a seal of approval by the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS).

“If it has the NMIS seal, it means the pig was not sick when it was slaughtered, so the meat is safe,” the agriculture chief said.

**Cases across Asia**

The Philippines is the world’s 8th biggest pork producer by volume, with pork accounting for 60 percent of meat consumption in the country. The country’s swine industry is estimated at P260 billion ($5 billion), according to DA data.

African swine fever has ravaged pig herds in Asia, with hard-hit China and Vietnam culling millions of pigs. China is home to half the world’s pig population. In Vietnam alone, the virus has caused the deaths...
of more than 4 million pigs. The disease has also been reported in Mongolia, Cambodia, Laos and North Korea.

Authorities suspected that the swine fever cases in the Philippines stemmed from pigs being fed swill, leftover food scraps from hotels and restaurants. "We have to emphasize, however, that hog raisers should not be using swill feeding anymore. It is banned. We will request our partner local government units to monitor this," Dar said.

Dar also acknowledged the threat posed by the smuggling of food products, adding that "if there is anyone from the Department of Agriculture involved, tell us, and we will deal with them in the strongest terms.

"It would be hard to contain the disease without everyone's participation. Consumers need to avoid buying processed pork products from ASF (African swine fever)-affected countries. Swine farmers need to follow proper procedures before and after slaughter."

**Steps taken in provinces**

More than 7,400 pigs were culled from affected farms in Antipolo City and Rodriguez town, Rizal province, and in Guiguinto town in Bulacan province, according to Dar, who also said farmers were given P3,000 each as financial assistance to recover from their livestock's depopulation.

Dar also said other areas in Luzon were being monitored, but declined to mention those areas to "allow government to do its work first."

Rizal Gov. Rebeca Ynares has issued an order directing local officials to monitor the transport of pork products in and out of the province.

In Legazpi City, checkpoints would be set up as a contingency measure on the entry of livestock and meat products.

Director Salvador Diputado of the DA's Central Visayas office said local governments in the region had observed security protocols to ensure that Central Visayas would not be affected by the disease.

In Mindanao, Esteban Co Jr. of the South Cotabato Swine Producers Association has asked the government to prohibit backyard growers from feeding their pigs swill.

The DA's Northern Mindanao office said on Monday it had activated its multisectoral task force to deal with the possible spread of the disease.

**Effect on demand**

Rosendo So, chair of the Samahang Industriya ng Magasaka, said he did not see the demand for pork and pork products waning, nor their prices dropping.

"If you look at other countries affected by ASF, their prices are actually going up. What we should be worried about is that there might be less supply of pork," So said.

Rep. Arnel Cabatbat of Magasaka said in a statement: "We advise our consumers to only buy meat that [has] been inspected and certified by the National Meat Inspection Service."

At the Palace, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said "there is no need to worry considering that the DA secretary has not cautioned us not to avoid or not to eat, or to avoid. There's no directive yet."
A.S.F. KILLED HOGS IN BULACAN, RIZAL—D.A.

By Samuel P. Medenilla
Email: samuel_medenilla@gmail.com
& Claudeth Mocon-Ciriaco
Correspondent

The Department of Health (DOH) on Monday said local pork is safe for human consumption after the Department of Agriculture (DA) confirmed that the tropical African swine fever (ASF) killed hundreds of pigs in Bulacan and Rizal.

Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar told reporters in a press briefing that out of the 10 blood samples taken from infected hogs which were sent to the United Kingdom for testing, 14 came up positive for ASF.

Dar said the government is still verifying if the ASF strain which struck local hog farmers is similar to that, which decimated hog populations in Vietnam and China.

The DA conducted the tests after it received reports last month that an animal disease, which it did not initially identify, is killing hogs in Bulacan and Rizal.

Following the national laboratory’s release of results, the DA launched quarantine and depopulation measures in the two provinces.

As of September 9, Dar said the DA has not received reports of additional hog deaths in Bulacan and Rizal.

However, the agriculture chief said quarantine and monitoring protocols will remain in place for now to protect hog farms in other parts of the country.

ASF... CONTINUED FROM A1:

The World Health Organization (WHO) said the ASF is a highly-contagious hemorrhagic hog disease caused by the DNA virus of the Asfarviridae family. The virus causes loss of appetite, high fever, hemorrhage and death among pigs in 2 to 10 days. "ASF is not a threat to human health," Duque stressed, as he encouraged the public to support measures rolled out by the DA.

DA’s competence
MALACAÑANG also allayed fears over the consumption of pork products following the DA’s confirmation that it was ASF that struck hog farms in Bulacan and Rizal.

"I think there is no need to worry considering that the DA is sure of the situation," said Presidential Spokesman and Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador S. Panelo in a Palace briefing.

"We are confident that we have made the right steps. The DA is taking all the necessary measures to ensure the safety of the public," Panelo said.

"ASF is not a threat to human health, but it can affect the swine industry, so we are taking all necessary measures to prevent its spread," he added. With a report by Bernadette D. Nicolas

AGRICULTURE Secretary William Dar eats a piece of bacon at Monday morning’s pork-eating ritual by agriculture officials to prove that pork and pork-based products are safe to eat. KHOY LACOA
DA expands surveillance to areas with sick hogs

By Samuel P. Medenilla • @sam_medenilla

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday said it is currently monitoring other areas aside from those with confirmed cases of the dreaded African swine fever (ASF).

Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said areas with confirmed ASF cases are the following barangays in Rodriguez, San Isidro, San Jose, San Rafael, Macabud and Macap, Rizal.

Dar said ASF cases were also found in Cupang, Antipolo and Guiguinto, Bulacan.

The agriculture chief said the DA also got reports of hogs getting sick in other areas, which he refused to identify.

"[Government] has to be very honest always. There are incident reports in other areas, but again, as what we have done for Rizal and Guiguinto, please let [government] do its work first," Dar told reporters in a press briefing in Quezon City.

He said the ASF may have spread from Rodriguez, Rizal to other areas through the infected swill taken from the dumpsite which was then fed to backyard-raised hogs.

The DA also said it is looking into the transport of some hogs from areas under quarantine to other parts of the country.

Dar said the ASF virus may have been introduced in local farms via waste from hotels and restaurants, smuggled meat, and by overseas Filipino workers who bought pork products from ASF-affected countries.

Protocols

The agriculture chief stressed, however, that the outbreak of ASF has not reached epidemic proportions.

"[The government] is responding to an increased number of deaths of pigs. The '1-7-10' protocol is now in place, even in the new areas that I mentioned," Dar said.

Under the '1-7-10' principle, authorities will put up a control zone, quarantine zone and surveillance zone within the 1-kilometer, 7-km and 10-km radius of the suspected infected farm.

The government culled a total of 7,416 hogs were ASF cases were confirmed.

"Our latest feedback from the ground, particularly from the affected areas, is that there are no more new outbreaks. These areas have tested negative for the swine disease," Dar said.

Dar attributed this to the "orchestrated management" of the disease by concerned government agencies and the private sector.

Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) officer-in-charge (OIC) Director Ronnie Domingo said it will still take at least another month before hog raising could resume in the depopulated areas. Dar said ASF usually lives for 19 days.

"Since it has been raining recently, the virus may survive longer due to the cool environment," Domingo said.

Impact on trade

FOLLOWING the confirmation of the presence of ASF in the Philippines, the DA said other countries may ban the importation of local pork.

"If a country says it will no longer accept pork products from the Philippines, then we cannot do anything about it," Domingo said.

The BAI chief said, however, that these countries may still be convinced to accept local pork products if it deems government efforts to contain ASF sufficient.

"This is the reason government documented laboratory testing [from the United Kingdom] and [ASF] surveillance in the regions," Domingo added.

The Philippines is not a net meat-exporting country, according to the BAI chief.
Swine flu reaches Luzon

By Maria Romero

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary William Dar on Monday confirmed the cause of death of thousands of pigs in Rizal and Bulacan was due to the African swine fever (ASF). The confirmation came after weeks of tests on tissue samples taken from the affected animals.

"We received late last week the laboratory test results from the African swine fever (ASF). The confirmation came after weeks of tests on tissue samples taken from the affected animals." Dar said.

The blood samples were tested at the World Reference Laboratory in Pirbright, England, which is also the OIE Reference Laboratory for ASF.

Dar said 7,416 pigs have been culled so far.

He disclosed that affected areas include Barangays San Jose, Macabud, San Isidro, San Rafael and Mascapon in Rodriguez and Cupang in Antipolo, Rizal and Guluguinto in Bulacan.

"While it is conclusive that it is positive with ASF, how virulent that virus has we yet to understand. We are still waiting on whether the virus affecting the hog areas in the country is weak or virulent," Dar disclosed.

The second test, which is expected to be out in a week, will show the intensity of the virus affecting the pigs.

"We are not in an epidemic stage yet. We have yet to see how fast the virus can spread," he added.

The Agriculture chief said 7,416 pigs have been culled so far. These include all affected hogs, as well as those which have not been affected but are located within the one-kilometer radius of the affected facilities.

Of these numbers, 7,223 were from Rizal and 193 from Bulacan. Currently, the DA is verifying reports of possible ASF cases in other areas, but declined to disclose the sites.

"As I've said, we are already almost in the fourth week and the latest feedback from the ground, particularly from the Rizal and Bulacan provinces, there's no more disease," Dar confirmed.

Areas affected earlier by the swine disease is now negative of the virus.

No need to panic

Upon receipt of reports about the increased swine deaths from backyard farms, the DA immediately opened a probe to manage the probable disease outbreak beginning 19 August.

According to Dar, the DA has successfully managed the issue, noting that a misstep could erode the gains and competitiveness of the country’s P260 billion swine industry that provides and sustains the livelihood of millions of Filipino families.

The Bureau of the Animal Industry said the swine industry is one of the major contributors to agricultural growth in the country, making up 16 percent of the sector’s gross earnings.

"We commend our Crisis Management Team on Swine for overseeing the vigorous implementation of appropriate measures to effectively manage, contain and control the situation, as well as provide timely and accurate information for all stakeholders and the general public," Dar said.

According to the DA chief, there is no need to panic despite the confirmation of the ASF because the agency remains "on top of the situation."

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia already said the possibility of the deadly swine disease spreading out across Asia is among the threats to inflation this year.

Meanwhile, Samahanang Industriya ng Magagaskara chair Rosendo So told reporters that the public should not worry about pork supply.

"In ASF-affected countries like China and Hong Kong, the prices of pork have even gone up. In the Philippines, the public should not worry about supply even with the Christmas season coming. Our only worry is if the disease spreads," So said.

He added that pork prices have not moved much at P120 to P125 per kilogram.

We are not in an epidemic stage yet. We have yet to see how fast the virus can spread.

Dar said the ASF virus could have been spread to local farms by food scraps from hotels and restaurants or through Filipinos who brought in pork products from countries affected by the disease.

According to the National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. (NHFPI), swill feeding is a common practice among backyard hog raisers.

The federation said backyard hog raisers, which accounts for two-thirds or 65 percent of hog production in the country, are more likely to practice swill feeding.

The NHFPI also noted that the slow pace in the growth of the swine industry is caused by the high production cost brought about by pricey feeds and medication.

In 2018, the DA already banned feeding hogs with wastes from malls, hotels, restaurants and airlines as a protocol.
Still Safe

Although the virus has reached Philippine livestock, Dar said pork being sold in the market is safe to eat. He reassured that all hogs were inspected before being slaughtered, and are marked with a seal from the National Meat Inspection Service before being sold in markets.

The Agriculture chief ate pork together with Health Secretary Francisco Duque III and hog industry stakeholders on Monday morning to prove his claim.

To maintain meat and its products are safe for human consumption, Dar said the DA has already issued three administrative orders, including guidelines in securing certificates of farm disease-free status in outbreak areas.

The DA has also revised guidelines on the local movement of swine outside outbreak areas and veterinary quarantine movement protocol during animal disease emergencies.

Meanwhile, Dar said one DA employee is currently under investigation over reports that he could have allowed the entry of hot meat from China.

The Philippine is now the latest Asian country affected by the viral swine disease. Outbreaks of ASF have already been reported in China, Vietnam and Myanmar, resulting in millions of pigs being culled.
DA confirms swine fever in local hogs

BY EIRENE JAIREE GOMEZ

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday confirmed that African swine fever (ASF) has reached the Philippines, the ninth country in Asia hit by the highly infectious hog disease.

Agriculture Secretary William Dar said 14 out of the 20 pig blood samples sent for a laboratory test in the United Kingdom tested positive for ASF.

The infected pigs were found in Rodriguez and Antipolo in Rizal province and Guiguinto town in Bulacan.

Dar said quarantine and monitoring
DA confirms swine fever from A1

Protocols would remain in place to protect the country’s P260-billion hog industry.

"We have never been in an epidemic, just to highlight that. We are responding to the increased number of deaths of pigs," Dar said.

“We continue to monitor, even beyond the 10-kilometer radius. So far, so good. No incidents," he added.

So far, 7,416 hogs had been culled, Dar said.

The Agriculture chief stressed that the 1.7-10 protocol will remain in place to prevent the highly infectious disease from spreading.

This means all hogs under a 1-kilometer radius from the affected area will be culled, those within a 7-kilometer radius will be under surveillance, while the 10-kilometer radius will be declared food security area.

The department is waiting for the result of another test to determine the severity of the virus.

Dar said the Department of Budget provided his agency P82 million. Part of the money will be used to help hog raisers. For each culled pig, the government will pay P3,000.

"On top of that... bibigian po natin sila ng baka para makasimula sila util sa raising (we will give them piglets so that they can start raising hogs again)," he added.

Dar reminded backyard hog raisers to refrain from swill feeding, or giving food scraps to pigs.

Industry groups assured the public that pork sold in the market was safe for human consumption.

To prove that pork meat is not a threat to human health, officials of the departments of Agriculture and Health, and hog stakeholders ate pork during a boodle fight.

Dar said as long as the hogs passed through the proper process of slaughtering and preparation, the public should not fear eating pork.

"Before slaughtering, a hog is validated and assessed by a veterinarian, who then issues a medical certificate. Once slaughtered, the meats are stamped with a seal from the National Meat Inspection Service, assuring that it has passed the food safety measures imposed by the government," he explained.

The industry groups also said the country had 12 million hogs in its inventory.

Rosendo So, president of the Samahan Industriya ng Agrikultura, said the country had ample pork supply.

"We don’t need to import...Our only worry is if the virus will spread, which will decrease the population of hogs," So added.

ASF is a highly contagious hemorrhagic disease of domestic and wild pigs of all ages. There are no effective preventive vaccines or cure, and the mortality rate is as high as 100 percent.

The ASF virus, however, does not pose a health risk to humans, according to World Organization for Animal Health.

The disease had also infected hogs in Russia, China, Mongolia, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Other countries affected by the ASF include Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, South Africa and Zambia.

Malacañang on Monday assured the public that there was no cause to worry.

Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said the Agriculture department had undertaken all measures to secure public safety.

"I think there is no need to worry, considering that the DA secretary has not cautioned us to avoid or not to eat pork. I am sure the DA secretary is competent enough to handle the problem," he added.

Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said the ASF might lessen demand for pork, but its overall impact on inflation would be negligible.

"The demand for pork may be affected, so that would prevent the spike in prices," Lopez said.

The Trade chief gave assurances that the country has enough supply of chicken.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia said inflation might still fall below 3.2 percent despite the ASF.

"Chicken is okay. People are able to substitute chicken for pork. Inflation is not going to spike for sure," Pernia added.

WITH CATHERINE VALENTE AND ANNA LEAH GONZALES
African swine flu in PH confirmed

But pork remains safe for human consumption. DA and DOH assure

The Department of Agriculture (DA) confirmed on Monday the first cases of African swine fever (ASF) in the Philippines, but was quick to assure the public that pork in the country remains safe for human consumption.

The ASF, a serious viral disease, was confirmed as the cause of swine deaths in Rizal, Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said.

Dar said 14 out of the 20 blood samples of dead pigs from some backyard farms in Rizal tested positive for ASF virus based on laboratory tests conducted in the United Kingdom.

"Out of the 20 blood samples, 14 are positive with African swine fever," Dar said, adding, "we continue to monitor, even beyond the 10-kilometer radius. So far, so good. No incidents."

Despite the confirmed ASF cases, Dar assured that pork was safe to eat as long as the hogs passed through the proper process of slaughtering and preparation as approved by the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS).

"The public should not fear eating pork," Dar was quoted as saying in a DA press statement, which was also echoed by Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque.

To prove that pork and processed pork meats were safe to humans, Dar and Duque, along with other agriculture and health officials, as well as hog stakeholders, and members of the private sector on Monday held a boodle fight of different pork dishes at the DA headquarters in Quezon City.

Duque also explained that local meat does not impose a threat to human health, reiterating that as long as meat was prepared and cooked properly, it is safe for human consumption.

"I think there is no need to worry considering the DA secretary has not cautioned us not to avoid or not to eat, or to avoid," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

Dar said the Philippines is not facing an epidemic and urged Filipinos to continue eating pork, which is a critical market and accounts for 60 percent of meat consumption in the country.

The Philippines is the world's 8th biggest pork producer by volume and its swine industry is estimated at P260 billion ($35 billion), according to the Agriculture department.

While the ASF cases were confirmed in Rizal, Dar said the province is now considered "cleared" of the disease following the culling of pigs last month that were within the one-kilometer radius of the affected areas.

In August, an unusual number of pig deaths in backyard farms in unidentified areas in Rizal sparked speculations that the animals have been afflicted with ASF, a highly contagious disease for pigs for which there is no cure and no vaccine.

Dar, however, maintained that importation of pork and pork-based products from more than a dozen countries, including Vietnam, Laos, Hong Kong, and China, was banned in the Philippines.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III, meanwhile, said that the confirmed ASF case in the country is "a concern" that could affect the rate of increase in consumer prices.

"It's a concern," Dominguez told reporters when asked if the government's economic team is looking at ASF as a possible risk to inflation, which already slowed down to 1.7 percent last month.

But President Duterte's chief economic manager said "there are substitutes to pork such as poultry, beef, and fish."

The Agriculture department already issued three administrative orders to avoid the spread of the ASF virus.

These include the guidelines in securing certificate of farm disease-free status in disease outbreak areas, revised guidelines on the local movement of swine, pork products and pork by-products outside disease outbreak areas, and veterinary quarantine movement protocol during animal disease outbreaks and emergencies.

"For swine raisers, we wish to remind them to enhance their biosecurity measures, promptly report any unusual animal mortalities in their respective farms, and avoid swill feeding," the DA said.

"For consumers, we advise them to remain vigilant when buying meat and meat products, and always look for the NMIS' seal as a guarantee," it added.
African swine fever causes high fever, loss of appetite, hemorrhages, and death among domestic and wild pigs that also threatens the Philippines' more than P230-billion hog industry. (With reports from Argyll B. Gedulos, Reuters, and AFP)

SAFE TO EAT – Agriculture Secretary William Dar (left) and Health Secretary Francisco Duque (middle) hold up lechon they shared in a ‘boodle fight’ held at the Department of Agriculture (DA) office Monday, to show that pork is safe to eat even after it was found that 14 of 20 blood samples of pigs tested positive for the African swine fever virus. (EPA)
Use P28-B rice subsidy under 4Ps to buy rice from local farmers, Villar urges DSWD

By VANNE ELAINE P. TERRAZOLA

Senator Cynthia Villar on Monday urged the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to revisit proposals to tap the government’s conditional cash transfer (CCT) program to help local farmers cope with the liberalization of rice importation.

“DSWD can help ease difficulties as we transition to the ‘tariffed’ rice importation regime by using its P28-billion rice subsidy under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) to buy rice from local farmers,” Villar, chair of the Senate Committee on Food and Agriculture, said.

Villar made the appeal in the wake of the complaints of local rice farmers about the dwindling farm gate prices of palay due to the enactment of the Republic Act. (RA) No. 11203, the Rice Tariffication Law.

Villar noted that the plan to tap the DSWD’s 4Ps has been raised last year, wherein local farmers would produce rice for 4Ps beneficiaries in their community.

Rice was supposed to be made available in the Bigasan ng Bayan of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to do away with transport costs.

But the plan was shelved due to “logistical requirements,” she recalled.

“Take another look at this proposal so that local farmers would have a market for their rice produce, Villar appealed.

“I hope, given our situation now, our government will be more receptive to this proposal as we wait for the full benefits of the rice tariffication law to be felt by the local industry,” she added.

Under the 4Ps, beneficiaries are entitled to a 20-kilo rice subsidy per month but were given cash instead of rice. The government provides P600 per month per household beneficiary.

Last week, Agriculture Secretary William Dar said the government is already finalizing the conversion of cash subsidy into rice. A memorandum of agreement is expected to be signed between the DA and the DSWD.

Aside from the DSWD, the National Food Authority was also urged to buy unmilled rice from local farmers.

The Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) recently reported that farm gate prices of palay dropped to an average of P8 to P10 per kilogram, which was below the production cost of P12/kg.

At the continuation of the Senate food and agriculture’s oversight hearing on the implementation of the rice tarifficration law last September 3, Villar insisted that the buying price for palay has been P17/kg for several years.

She said it was “too much to ask” that palay farm gate prices be raised to P21/kg as she warned that this would hurt consumers in the long run.

RA 11203, which took effect in March this year, replaced the quantitative restriction on the importation of rice with tariffs.

Villar, sponsor of the law in the Senate, reiterated that the tariff collection would be used to fund the P10-billion Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) allocated for programs to help local rice farmers.
Reasons for optimism in agriculture
(Part 1)

Over the last three years, despite my natural optimistic mood, I could not see the light at the end of the dark tunnel in agriculture. Agricultural productivity was going from bad to worse. There were unclear directions and no one seemed to be in charge. Thanks to a dialogue that a group of concerned local officials and business people had with the new Secretary of Agriculture on a rainy Sunday afternoon last August 25, I foresee a brighter future for this most important sector of the Philippine economy in the last three years of the Duterte Administration. Secretary William Dar fits to a T his role as the champion of agricultural development and, therefore, of combating mass poverty which would never be eradicated in this country unless we achieve rural and agricultural progress. He fully understands agriculture because of his very comprehensive academic training and wide experience in this field, not only in the Philippines but all over Asia. He also has the quality of a good leader who listens to all stakeholders before taking a decision.

He is taking the bull by the horns in the two sectors that are under serious threat in the immediate future: the hog industry that is facing a crisis in several provinces of Southern Luzon because of the African hog disease and the rice industry because of the impending large fall in prices to the farmer come harvest time in September. He has his sights on the medium-term, as every good leader, but knows that there is no medium term if the short-term problems facing rice and the hog industry will not be successfully addressed. It was impressive the way he literally worked twenty four seven, calling governors of provinces in the middle of night about nipping in the bud false news circulating about cases of the swine disease. He was also quick to move in those confirmed cases of the outbreak of the disease, requiring immediate culling of pigs in the areas affected without delay. As regards the palay price problem, he has appealed to the governors of the top rice producing provinces to help in subsidizing the farm gate prices with LGU funds and for those provinces, like Batangas, which are not major rice producers, to help by putting up warehouses or food terminals and then partner with private traders to purchase the palay this coming harvest time in September at prices competitive with imports and store them as buffer stocks to be sold during the lean months when market prices are higher. Batangas is especially positioned to help because of its planned food terminal to be located in one of the largest seaports of Luzon, the gateway to Visayas and Mindanao.

Secretary Dar takes the very enlightened view that the Philippines does not have to aim at self-sufficiency in rice because it does not have the competitive advantage of producing rice at the very low costs of countries like Vietnam and Thailand that have practically unlimited sources of water, a very necessary ingredient for the production of palay. Like what Malaysian officials decided decades ago, we should have fixed a certain level of self-sufficiency, say 80 percent or so, and decided to import the rest from our more productive neighbors. We could then have helped rice farmers to use part of their land for high-value crops like fruits, vegetables, livestock and tree crops. It is not too late to follow this more enlightened policy (as we have done through the tariffication of rice imports), especially because of the significant increase in the demand for high-value crops, not only in the Philippines, but all over the Asian region. It is well known that countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam are exporting billions of dollars of fruits, vegetables and other high-value food products to other Asian countries, especially China. The Philippines can significantly add to its success in the export of bananas and pineapples by diversifying its agricultural exports to such products as coffee, cacao, coconut water, coconut milk, mangoes, durian, avocado and a host of other high-value products. As most countries in the Asian region transition from low-income to high-middle income status, there will be an exponential increase in the demand for these high-value food products. (To be continued)

For comments, my email address is bernardo.villegas@uap.asia
Palace: Pork safe to consume despite pig deaths from ASF

MALACAÑANG yesterday said pork is safe to eat despite the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) confirmation that African swine fever caused the deaths of several pigs in areas near Metro Manila.

Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo gave the assurance after he was told during a news conference that ASF has not caused the deaths of chickens or ducks.

Panelo said the objective of the pig deaths was to show thatASF is not a threat as long as it is purchased from trusted meat vendors.

DUQUE said pork is safe to consume as long as it is purchased from trusted meat vendors.

ARMS DAY is said to be the day that ASF was introduced to the Philippines.

NAGPA-boodle fight against ASF

NAGPA-LECHON at nagpa-boodle fight ang Department of Agriculture (DA) kahapon nang inauntya ng mga baboy sa Rizal.

Sinamahan ni Health Secretary Francisco Duque III si Agriculture Secretary William Dar para ipagdulhan sa publiko na iliglas kainin ang baboy dahil hindi nakakahawa ang ASF sa tao.

"Rest assured that the DA is on top of the situation," sabi ng kagawaran.

Sa kasa-lukayan, pinagtibay ng DA ang mga baboy sa Rizal at inauntya ng mga baboy sa Rizal at inauntya ng mga baboy sa Rizal.

Para sa mga consumer, sinabing ang mga baboy sa Rizal ay safe to eat.

"Although the disease does not pose any hazard or risk to humans, it is very infectious among pigs and can easily spread from one farm to another if not properly managed," sabi ng DA.

Nagpapalit ng DA ang mga baboy sa Rizal.

"The Department of Agriculture will take care of that. I am sure the secretary is competent enough to handle the problem. We have to wait for the D.A. secretary exactly kung is it safe, which part of the area is safe, and then the reasonable thing to do is do whatever the official will tell us," ani Panelo.

Kagayaan, aniyang bang mga sakit na nakapagsakto sa swine industry, sinabi ni Panelo na gagawin ng DA ang laban ng mga baboy para matiyak ang kaligasan ng publiko.

"Just like any other sudden foreign disease that affects the swine industry, the D.A. will undertake all the measures necessary to secure the public for their safety. That's our job," dagdag pa ni Panelo.

"The reasonable thing to do is to avoid it. But I'm sure the D.A. will be issuing circulars relative to that. We have to wait for the circulars or information coming from the D.A. to tell us exactly what we have to do," sabi ni Panelo.

(Eileen Mencio/Aileen Taliping)
The serious viral disease African Swine Fever was confirmed as the cause of death of pigs in two provinces, the Department of Agriculture announced yesterday.

Despite this, the DA assured the public that pork is still safe for human consumption.

Agriculture Secretary William Dar said that 14 of the 20 blood samples of dead pigs from some backyard farms in Rizal and Bulacan were tested positive with ASF virus based on the laboratory tests conducted in the United Kingdom.

"Out of the 20 blood samples, 14 are positive with African Swine Fever," Dar said, adding, "we continue to monitor, even beyond the 10-kilometer radius. So far, so good. No incidents."

Despite the confirmed ASF case, the first outbreak of the disease detected in the Philippines, Dar assured that pork was safe to eat as long as the hogs passed through the proper process of slaughtering and preparation approved by the National Meat Inspection Service.

The Agriculture chief also added that Rizal and Bulacan were now considered "clear" of the disease following the culling of 7,416 pigs last month that were between the one-kilometer radius of the affected areas.

"The public should not fear eating pork," Dar said, which was also echoed by Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque.

To prove that pork and processed pork meat were safe to humans, Dar, Duque, other Agriculture and Health officials, as well as hog stakeholders and members of the private sector took part in the culling of different pork dishes in a boilie fight at the DA headquarters in Quezon City.

Duque explained that local meat does not impose a threat to human health, reiterating that as long as meat was prepared and cooked properly, it was safe for human consumption.

Last August, an unusual number of pig deaths in backyard farms in various areas in Rizal and Bulacan sparked speculations that the animals have been afflicted with ASF, a highly contagious and disease for pigs for which there is no cure and no vaccine.

Dar maintained that importation of pork and pork-based products from more than a dozen countries, including Vietnam, Laos, Hong Kong, and China, is banned in the Philippines.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III said that the confirmed ASF outbreak in the country was "a concern" that could affect the rate of increase in consumer prices.

"It's a concern," Dominguez said when asked if the government's economic team is looking at ASF as a possible risk to inflation which was already down to 1.7 percent last month.

But President Duterte's chief economic manager said "there are substitutes to pork such as poultry, beef, and fish."

(Chino Leyco)

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Patay na baboy positibo sa ASF

Nasa Pilipinas na ang nakamaratay na sakit sa mga alegaang baboy na African Swine Fever (ASF).

Ito ay makanalang maging positibo sa ASF ang blood samples ng isang namatay na baboy sa Rizal, na ipinadala ng Department of Agriculture (DA) sa United Kingdom.

Sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary William Dar sa isang pulung-balitaan na, sa 20 blood samples ng mga namatay na baboy mula Rizal at Bulacan na ipinadala sa naturang bansa, 14 dito ay positibo sa ASF.

Sinabi ni Dar na hindi hinintay na namatay na alegaang baboy ng resulta ng isang laboratory test mula UK para malaaman kung ganoon ka-viral ang dumaong virus sa mga baboy na naging sanihi ng ASF.

Gayunman, tiniyak ni Dar na nakontrol na ang virus bago pa ito kumalat sa ibang mga lugar.

Naniniwala namang Malacañang na wali lang dapat itag-sali ng mga publico sa pagkain ng baboy kahit hinumipirma ng DA na positibo sa African Swine Fever (ASF) ang ipinadala nilang sample sa mga namatay na baboy sa backyard piggeries sa ettong barangay sa Rizal.

Sinabi ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo sa media briefing na Malacañang na ang pangunguna ning Agriculture Secretary William Dar at Health Secretary Francisco Duque III sa boilie fight kahapon umaga ay patunay napamamaraan ng dumaong virus ay positibo sa ASF.

Sinad na rin ni Duque na hindi mapanganib sa katutuli ng African Swine Fever pero kailangan lamang tutuing mayubang ang baboy upang ligtas na ka inan.

Paliwanag ng DOH, ang baboy na infected ng ASF virus ay nakaranas ng mataas na lagnat, depression, loss of appetite, panumula ng tenga, ilaw, binhi, pag susuka at diarrhea na maaaring lumalagpas sa pagkamatay. Sa nakaraan, wala pang vacina para sa treatment ng ASF. (Angie dela Cruz, Rudy Andal at Dons Franche)
Palace: Nothing to worry about ASF

Malacañang said yesterday there is nothing to worry about the presence of the African Swine Fever in the country until the Department of Agriculture says otherwise.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo made the statement after the DA confirmed that blood samples from the swine deaths reported in Rizal and Bulacan which were sent to United Kingdom tested positive for ASF.

Panelo said that there is nothing to worry about.

"I think there is no need to worry, considering the DA Secretary has not cautioned us not to avoid or not to eat, or to avoid," he said.

Panelo also said there is no need to tell the DA to be transparent about the presence of the disease because it knows its job.

There is no need for a directive to be transparent. All agencies of the government and departments are expected to be transparent on their activities, he said.

"Now with respect to that, I'm sure the DA knew only of the affected areas at the time that they released the report. I saw the DA Secretary earlier this morning and confirming that disease is African Swine Fever," he added.

The Palace official expressed confidence that Agriculture Secretary William Dar is already undertaking measures to address the situation.

"I'm sure the DA is already doing something about it," he said.

"Just like any other sudden foreign disease that affects the swine industry, the DA will undertake all the measures necessary to secure the public for their safety. That's Standard Operating Procedure," he added. (Angyll Geduoces)

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Pero baboy ligtas pa kainin
Swine fever nasa Pinas na —DA

NAKAPASOK na ang African Swine Fever (ASF) sa bansa matapos ibigay ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na sa 14 sa 20 blood samples mula sa mga nagkasakit na baboy mula sa mga lokal na pig- gery at kinalaunan ay namatay, ang nasasali sa ASF.

Ayon sa DA, ipinalada ang mga blood sample sa United Kingdom.

"We received last week the laboratory test results coming from the United Kingdom on this test called polymerase chain reaction test. And 20 blood samples have been sent. And out of the 20 blood samples, 14 are positive with African Swine Fever," sabi ni Agri.

Dar.

Umaabot sa 7,416 baboy ang pinatay, na karamihan ay nagmula sa Rizal at Bulacan.

Kabilang sa mga pinakaspektadong lugar ang Rizal, particular ang Rodriguez at Antipolo at Guiguinto, Bulacan.

Taniyak naman ng Malacañang na ligtas pa rin kumain ng karne ng baboy sakabila ng kum- piramisyon na nakapassok na ang ASF sa bansa.

"There is no need to worry, considering that the DA Secretary has not cautioned us not to avoid—or not to eat or to avoid," sabi ni Presidential Spokesperson at Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo sa
AGRICULTURE Secretary William Dar (third from left) and Health Secretary Francisco Duque III (fourth from left) partake in pork dishes served for a group meal aimed at promoting the safety of the local swine industry in Quezon City. (EPA)
AFRICAN SWINE FEVER NOW IN PH

The Philippines yesterday reported its first cases of African swine fever, becoming the latest country hit by the disease that has killed pigs from Slovakia to China, pushing up pork prices worldwide.

The virus is not harmful to humans but causes hemorrhagic fever in pigs that almost always ends in death. There is no antitoxin or vaccine and the only known method to prevent the disease from spreading is a mass cull of affected livestock.

Infected pigs were found in two towns near the Philippine capital Manila and authorities have culled more than 7,000 pigs within a one-kilometre (0.6-mile) radius, said Agriculture Secretary William Dar.

He said the nation was not facing an epidemic and urged Filipinos to continue eating pork, which is a critical market and accounts for 60 per cent of meat consumption in the Philippines.

The Asian country is the world’s 8th biggest pork producer by volume and its swine industry is estimated at P260 billion ($5 billion), according to the agriculture department.

Dar said 14 of 20 samples sent to a UK laboratory tested positive for African swine fever, but it will take another week to confirm how virulent the strain is.

The virus was first recorded in Rodriguez town, Rizal. Other undisclosed areas are still being closely monitored for possible infection, he added.

"We have never been in an epidemic, just to highlight that. We are responding to the increased number of deaths of pigs," Dar said.

Authorities suspect the swine fever cases stemmed from backyard hog raisers who feed pigs "swill", left-over food scraps from hotels and restaurants.

The agriculture department added the virus could also be traced to smuggled frozen meat and returning overseas Filipino workers who brought back infected meat products.

In May the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organization said pork prices had "begun to soar", rising by up to 50 per cent both in China and on the Chicago futures exchange.

**Safe to eat**

DA Secretary Dar and Health chief Francisco Duque assured the public that pork and pork products are still safe to eat.

Dar and Duque made the assurance after sampling different pork dishes at a boodle fight shared by DA and DOH officials, hog stakeholders and members of the private sector.

Dar stressed that as long as the hogs passed through the proper process of slaughtering and preparation, the public should not fear eating pork.

He added that before slaughtering, a hog is validated and assessed by a veterinarian, who issues a medical certificate.

"Once slaughtered, the meats are stamped with a seal from the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS), assuring that it has passed the food safety measures imposed by the government," Dar added.

For his part, Duque declared that local meat does not pose a threat to human health and as long as it is prepared and cooked properly, it is safe for human consumption.

However, consumers were advised to remain vigilant when buying meat and meat products and always look for the "NMIS" seal as a guarantee of uncontaminated pork.

AFP, Cory Martinez
DOH: African Swine Flu, ‘di banta sa kalusugan

Nina Mary Ann Santiago at Beth Camia

Pinawili kahapon ni Health Secretary Francisco Duque III ang pagpamba ng publiko at nilinaw na walang banta sa kalusugan ng tao ang African Swine Flu fever, sa tatamata sa mga alagang baboy.

Nainitito, sinabi namang ni Duque na wala namang dapat ipagpamba ang publiko dahil kung ang baboy ay binili sa lokal ay magiging kalatwalaan ito dahil ni ni niatong mahabang ang litas ng namamahay nang karne ng baboy.

"We want to reassure the fears of the public by saying that, as long as pork is bought from reliable sources and it is cooked thoroughly, pork is safe to eat," saad Duque.


Kumalat ito ng tao sa mga baboy ang magalingan ang ngayon ng mga na ng direct contact na infected na baboy o nakakaing ng contaminated na karne nito.

Nabatid na ang mga baboy na infected ng ASF ay nakakain ng mga baboy na nagamit ng kontamina ng karne nito, ipinagpadal sa pag-asa ng lipunan, at lalong ipinagpadal sa sitwasyon ng mga malalakad na kaalaman, na tandaan ang pagsasalubong ng mga baboy sa karne nito.

Nagpapahayag na ang mga baboy na infected ng ASF ay nakakain ng kontamina ng karne nito, at lalong ipinagpadal sa pagsasalubong ng mga baboy sa karne nito.
Solon wants bigger budget for DA

By Jester P. Manalastas

In a bid to contain African Swine Fever (ASF), a House leader is calling for the restoration of the budget cut of the Department of Agriculture.

Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture Quezon Rep. Mark Enverga said P71.8 billion budget cut for 2020 could be utilized to address the problem.

The DA has confirmed that hog deaths in local piggeries were due to ASF.

Enverga also called for an inquiry into the implementation of the Food Safety Act of 2013 to determine loopholes that may have resulted in the entry to the country of possible carriers of the ASF.

The DA originally proposed a P33.3 billion budget for 2020 but this was slashed to P71.8 billion by the Department of Budget and Management.

"What is important to note is that the budget for livestock for FY 2020 tasked to deal with the ASF has dropped by 20 percent," Enverga said.

The agriculture committee is strongly proposing to the House appropriations committee to augment the DA budget by at least P10 billion, but the amount will have to be shared to carry out its programs for various agricultural fields, including the fight against ASF.

Enverga stressed that "lrium Dar’s confirmation that ASF was the cause of the hog deaths in Rizal should be enough reason for immediate action by government."

"Most immediate action that Congress should take would be to ensure that the budgetary needs of agriculture department should be augmented to enable them to be responsive to probable needs and to protect the local hograising industry," he added.

The lawmaker also urged local government units to start filling up positions for veterinarians to help prevent the ASF from spreading.

In addition, Ang Magalang Partylist Rep. Arnel Cabatbat expressed support to Enverga’s call for additional DA budget "to ensure that our consumers and hog raisers are properly protected."

"We also trust that the private sector will not take advantage of the situation and keep the prices of pork within the suggested retail prices for our consumers," Cabatbat said in a press statement.
TULUYAN nang kinumpirma ni Agriculture Secretary William Dar na 14 sa 20 blood samples ng mga namatay na baboy ay nagpositibo sa sakit na African Swine Fever (ASF).

Sa idto ng press conference sa Quezon City, sinabi ni Dar na ang mga naturang blood sample ay ipinalalab sa bansang United Kingdom para isailalim sa pagsusuri. Napag-alaman na patuloy pa rin hinahintay ng ahensya ang iba pang resulta mula sa isa pang laboratory test upang malaman kung gaano kadalas ang naturang virus.

Kasunod nito, igniti ng DA na napigilan na ang pagkalat ng nasabing sakit sa kanilang pinakaliling pagususuri. Nauna rito, nagkaproblema ng mataas na bilang ng pagkamatay ng mga alagang baboy sa Rodriguez, Rizal. Samantala, nagpasara ng isaang boodle fight ang mga opisyales ng DA at Department of Health (DOH) upang patunayang ligtas ang mga pagkain ng karne ng baboy sa bansa.

Mas lalo namang pinaigting ang DA ang pagpapatupad ng quarantine checkpoints at iba pang hakbang mapos na nagpositibo sa ASF virus ang mga pinag-alalang blood sample mula sa mga namatay na baboy sa Rodriguez, Rizal.

Ito ay sa kabila ng nauna nang iginiit ng DA na ligtas mula sa nasabing virus. Ayon kay Dar, kahit naalaga ng mga alagang baboy sa Rizal ay ipinalalab sa ilalim ng regulasyon. Mayroon pa rin mga nananatiling problema sa kaalaman ng mga mapanawang ang pagkalat ng virus.

Ayon kay Dar, kahit naalaga ng mga alagang baboy sa Rizal ay ipinalalab sa ilalim ng regulasyon. Mayroon pa rin mga nananatiling problema sa kaalaman ng mga mapanawang ang pagkalat ng virus.
Para magka-interes ang mga kabataan sa industriya

AGRIKULTURA PALAGUIN

APAT palaguan ang agrikultura para maging kay ang mga kabataan na pag-aralan ito, ayon kay Agriculture Secretary William Dar.

Aviya, kaharing makita ang mga kabataan na kumikita ang mga masabak para mahikayat silang suruli sa 'reinvention' ng naturang industriya.

Anang kalihim, mas magandang rin kung gagamit ng teknolohiya sa pagasaaka.

"Yung mga apps sa agriculture, mga grown technology, mechanized farming, alahat ng ito ito iy muka-enejano sa mga kabataan na buralik sa karayuhan," ani Dar.

Iminungkahi niya sa Kamara ang pagpapatayo at pagpapalibad ng agri-entrepreneurship fund sa bansa.

"Sinabi ko sa House of Representatives, magiging tayo ng agri-entrepreneurship firm for the younger generation para mayroon na silang capital: zero interest, pay-

able in 5 years," arrya.

Sinagot din ni Dar ang hunaing ng mga negosyo-

ante sa General Santos City hinggil sa iisang ng mahi-

nap na puguhin ng tusa sa lalawigan.

Ayon sa mga negosyante, papalayo na nang pa-

palayo ang mga tusa at umabot na ang mga ito sa

Indonesia at Papua New Guinea.

Depensa ni Dar, hindi tumutigil sa ibang lugar ang mga tusa at pagdoy ang pagdoy ng mga ito hanggang sa makakita sila ng higit na lugar kung

saan puwede maging maging.

Sa kabila nito, hingi kay ang kalihim ang mga commercial fisher na magagawa ng rebreeding.

"We have encouraged the commercial fishers

na mag-rebreed sila sa open sea para mas marani

silang maha-harvest doon, kaysa 'yung mga mahihint

na barko na hindi malasakutigal sa open sea,'" ani Dar.

DWIZ 882
NILINAW ni Health Secretary Francisco Duque III na walang dapat na ipangamba ang publiko sa African swine flu (ASF), na tumatama sa mga alagang baboy dahil wala naman itong banta sa kalusugan ng tao.

SUNDAN SA PAHINA 15

MULA SA PASHINA 16

Ang pahayag ay ginawa ni Duque matapos na kumpirmahin niyang Lunes ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na 14 sa 20 sample ng dugo ng baboy na ainarita nila ay positibo sa ASF.

Ayon Duque, walang dapat na itakot ang publiko lalo na kung ang karme ng baboy ay binili sa kilala at mapagkakatiwalaang tindahan at nitoong mabuti.

"We want to allay the fears of the public by saying that, as long as pork is bought from reliable sources and it is cooked thoroughly, pork is safe to eat," anang kalihim.


Madalas rin umano itong maipasa kayang pinapayuhan ang mga hog raiser na huwag mapakain ng hindi gaahong luto na pakain sa mga baboy at dapat na ihiway lalay ang mga may sakit sa baboy mula sa ibang alaga.

Dapat din umano, ugalin na maghugas ng kanyang pagkakaling sa farm o palengke at bigasan ang sapatos, o gu-pang ng sasakyang kung galing sa pig farm.

"We want to reiterate to the public that ASF is not a threat to human health," dagdag pa ni Duque. ANA ROSARIO HERNANDEZ

PUBLIKO PINAKALMA NG PALASYO

WALANG dapat na ikabahala ang publiko sa pagposistbo ng mga kaso ng African swine fever (ASF) sa mga baboy sa bansa.

Ayon kay Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo, may ginagawa ang Department of Agriculture para maabot ang kalagayan ng publiko.

"I think there is no need to worry considering that the DA secretary has not cautioned us not to avoid or not to eat, or to avoid," wika ni Panelo.

Tiwala si Panelo na competent si Agriculture Secretary William Dar na maratuyunan ang sitwasyon.

"Just like any other sudden foreign disease that affects the swine industry, the DA will undertake the measures necessary to secure the public for the safety. That's SOP (standard operating procedure)," giit ni Panelo.

Aminado si Panelo na ang pinakaresonante bleng gawin sa ngayon ay ilisan muna ang pagkain ng babyo tulad ng kan- yang ginagawang pag-iwas sa pagkain ng baboy.

"Well, I am avoiding it but this morning I ate. But we have to wait for the circulars or information to be coming from the DA to tell us exactly what we have to do. Those who are in the eating business which is a daily habit for all of us," dagdag pa ni Panelo.

EVELYN QUIROZ
PCA distribution of P131M coco-farm inputs lacked proper documentation

BY PETER TABINGO

THE Commission on Audit has raised issues on the Philippine Coconut Authority’s (PCA) distribution of P86.652 million worth of fertilizers and P45.195 million worth of cacao and oil palm seedlings for their lack of proper documentation.

In the 2018 audit of the PCA, auditors questioned whether legitimate beneficiaries received the farm inputs intended to them as they noted that procedures and requirements under the Small Holder Oil Palm Development Program (SOPDP), the Kasaganaan sa Niyugan at Kaunlaran ng Bayan (KAANIB) Enterprise Development Projects (KEDP), and the Paracutaryo Coconut Planting Program (CPP) were not complied with.

The programs were aimed at empowering small coconut farmers and farmers’ groups by extending government assistance and establishing linkage with market and oil millers.

"There was no assurance that the delivered agricultural inputs in the total amount of P45,195 million were distributed to the bona fide program beneficiaries. Also, the disbursement for the supply of palm oil seedlings... were not supported with the Masterlist of Approved Farmer-Participants who have Actually Planted the Palm Oil Seedlings (MAPPAPOS)," the audit team said.

The SOPDP requires that PCA agriculturists register prospective program participants in coordination with barangay and municipal officials while under the PCPP, the participation of palm oil mills and existing cooperatives are likewise encouraged.

Among the documents required for evaluation of participants’ qualification are original certificate of title, transfer certificates of title, certificate of land transfer, tax declarations, title, homestead patent, letter of consent from the landowner, certificate of stewardship and/or certificate of ancestral domain title.

However, validation of supporting documents under the PCPP incentives for supposed beneficiaries in PCA Region 8 (P447,300) and Region 13 (P18.69 million) showed that the farmers participated were included in the master list even if no proofs of identity and land ownership were submitted.

In Regional Office 1-4B, auditors noted the lack of documents to support validation of eligibility by supposed farmers under the SOPDP who received oil palm seedlings amounting to P3.328 million.

"The absence of such documents cast doubt on the eligibility of the farmers who received the benefits," the COA warned.

Also lacking master lists of beneficiaries are the distribution of 763,903 cacao seedlings by PCA Region 8 under the Kasaganaan sa Niyugan at Kaunlaran ng Bayan (KAANIB) Enterprise Development Projects (KEDP), Coconut Cacao Development Project (CGDP) worth P220.691 million; and 6,400 bags of fertilizers valued at P2.037 million under the Coconut Fertilization Project (CFP).

"The absence of (masterlists) would not ensure that the recipients of the procured/delivered agricultural inputs are bona fide/eligible beneficiaries. Thus, the intended outcome of the projects of increasing oil palm production and increasing farmers’ income might not be attained," the COA said.

The Commission said the PCA should require Provincial Coconut Development Managers (PDCMs) and Coconut Development Officer (CDOs) to strictly comply with project guidelines noting that non-submission of complete supporting documents is a violation of Presidential Decree No. 1445 or the Government Auditing Code of the Philippines.

PCA officials informed the COA that PCA Regional Offices 1 to 4B has completed the MAPPAPOS forms as of February 26, 2019 for submission to the audit team while the rest are taking steps to comply.

A separate transaction involving the P235.508 million distribution of multi-nutrient fertilizer (MNF) and agricultural grade salt fertilizer (AGSF) for farmers under the Salt Fertilization Project was also flagged for insufficient documents.

Auditors reported non-submission of inspection and acceptance reports (IARs) and delivery receipts (DRs) that were supposed to prove proper delivery.

Also missing are acknowledgement receipt and certificate of distribution and application of salt fertilizer (ARCDASF) that is required to establish actual distribution.

"There was no assurance that the delivered fertilizers were distributed to farmer participants. Moreover, this is contrary to Section 4(6) of PD No. 1445 that requires claims against government funds be supported with complete documentation," the COA said.

Under the memorandum of agreement (MOA) signed between the PCA and the Philippine International Trading Corp (PITC) in 2014, the latter was designated to supply and deliver MNF and AGSF in the total amount of P433M transferred in 2015.
Sugar output declines in end-August as demand falls

PHILIPPINE sugar production fell by 0.47% at the end of the crop year in August as demand fell, according to the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

Sugar output fell to 2.073 million metric tons (MMT), down from 2.083 MMT in the previous year, the agency said in a statement. This was also lower than the estimated production of 2.225 MMT for the crop year.

The output was equivalent to 41.478 million 50-kilo bags, compared with 41.672 million bags a year earlier.

Demand for raw sugar declined by 17.9% to 1.988 MMT, the SRA said. Total sugarcane milled dropped by 8.8% year on year to 21.767 MMT. Refined sugar output fell by 10.7% year on year to 827,187.85 MT.

Retail prices were stable at P45 to P50 a kilo, but were lower than prices of P55 to P64 a year earlier.

For crop year 2019, raw sugar production was expected to fall by 5% to 2.096 MMT, considering factors such as weather conditions and changes in hectarage of planted sugarcane, as well as farmers shifting to other crops. — Vincent Mariel P. Galang

RETAIL PRICES for sugar were stable at P45 to P50 a kilo, and lower than prices a year earlier.
Republic of the Philippines
Department of Agriculture

BUREAU OF FISHERIES AND AQUATIC RESOURCES
3rd Floor, PCA Building, Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. Nos. 929 - 9597, 929-8047

Shellfish Bulletin No. 16
Series of 2019
09 September 2019

Based on the latest laboratory results of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and Local Government Units (LGUs), shellfishes collected at Puerto Princesa Bay, Puerto Princesa City in Palawan; coastal waters of Bautista and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; Tröng-Irong, San Pedro, and Silangge Bays in Western Samar; Can-Canabo Bay, Tacloban City in Leyte are still positive for paralytic shellfish poison that is beyond the regulatory limit.

All types of shellfish and Acetes sp. or asemang gathered from the areas shown above are NOT SAFE for human consumption. Fish, squid, shrimp and crab are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking.

The following areas continue to be FREE from toxic red tides: coastal waters of Cavite, Las Piñas, Parañaque, Navotas, Bulacan and Batangas (Mariveles, Limay, Ortigas, Pateros, Malolos, Obando, Abucay and Samal) in Manila Bay; coastal waters of Bolinao, Anda, Alaminos, Bual and Wawa, Bani in Pangasinan; coastal waters of Pamplona; Masinloc Bay in Zambales; coastal waters of Hilario, Mandan and Pancer in Masbate; Japac Lagoon, Matnog and Sonsonag Bay in Sorsogon; Honda Bay in Puerto Princesa City and coastal waters of Inner Malampaya Sound, Tadlay in Palawan; coastal waters of Gigantes Island, Corte in Jolo; coastal waters of Pilar, Panay, President Roxas and Roxas City in Capiz; Seplar Bay (Ivissen and Sapian in Capiz); Hanibangkus and Canilaluc, Batan in Aklan); Altavas, Badin and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aklan; coastal waters of E.B. Magalona, Talisay City, Baley, Baley City, Bacolod City, Hinigaran and Victorias City in Negros Occidental; Tambobo and Sit Bates, Siaton and Bales Bay, Bais City in Negros Oriental; coastal waters of Daran Island and Villarreal Bay in Western Samar; Hatawao Bay in Eastern Samar; coastal waters of Leyte, Calubian, Carigara and San Pedro Bays in Leyte; coastal waters of Biliran Province; Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur; Tantangan Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay; Mabaling Bay in Zamboanga del Norte and Hulugan Occidental; Tagohos Lagoon, Benoni, Mahinog in Camiguin Island; Balins and Pulau Bays, Mati in Davao Oriental; coastal waters of Santa Maria in Davao Occidental; and Hinatuan and Bais Bays in Surigao del Sur. Moreover, Camagnoc and Maguindara Bays in Western Samar; and Lianga Bay in Surigao del Sur are now free of the toxic red tides.

EDUARDO B. GONZON
Undersecretary for Fisheries, DA/Director, BFAR

P.S. September 15, 2019
Rice tariffication law amendment sought

By JESS DIAZ

The opposition Liberal Party (LP) yesterday called for the amendment of the Rice Tariffication Law to help farmers amid falling prices of palay while retail prices of rice remain high.

Quezon City Rep. Jose Christopher Belmonte, who is LP secretary general, said he and his party-mates in the House of Representatives would push for the adoption of a resolution that would help the government explore more sources of funds for direct cash transfers for farmers.

He said the resolution was filed in the Senate on Thursday by their party president, Sen. Francis Pangilinan.

Belmonte said the resolution seeks the amendment of the law to allow the use of up to P13 billion as immediate assistance to rice farmers.

The two chambers of Congress have to adopt the resolution for it to have the effect of a law.

Another LP lawmaker, Josephine Sato of rice-producing Mindoro Occidental, said her constituents have been complaining of record low palay prices of P7 per kilo.

"We need to move quickly to help our farmers who are in a dire situation. They are gearing up for the worst harvest season in the history of palay production this September and October and we should be able to assist them in their most difficult time," she said.

Other congressmen called for the inclusion of rice farmers in the government's Pantawid Pamilyang Filipino Program or 4Ps.

Deputy Speaker Mikee Romero of 1-Pacman party-list said at the P7 buying price, a rice farmer loses P3 for every kilo he harvests since his production cost is P12.

"They will not be able to pay for the loans they have obtained mostly from loan sharks. If they borrowed funds from banks, these lenders should restructure their loans and should give them relief in the form of discounts. They should even condone some payments," he said.

Romero called on the Department of Agriculture (DA) to expedite the grant of soft loans under the P10-billion rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF).

He added that other forms of RCEF assistance such as farm inputs and machineries would take time to materialize, as these would still have to go through the tedious procurement process.

Another House leader, Deputuy Speaker Mujiv Hataban of Basilan, said the subsidy under 4Ps should be in addition to whatever assistance farmers would get from the DA.

**Rice for 4Ps beneficiaries**

Sen. Cynthia Villar has asked the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to implement a proposal raised last year to provide rice to 4Ps beneficiaries.

Villar, chairperson of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, said the government should buy rice from local farmers in providing the staple to beneficiaries of the cash transfer program.

"The DSWD can help ease difficulties as we transition to the 'tariffied' rice importation regime by using its P28 billion rice subsidy under the 4Ps to buy rice from local farmers," she said.

Aside from health and education grants, 4Ps beneficiaries are entitled to a 20-kilo rice subsidy per month but were given cash instead of rice.

"Last year, the proposal was shelved because of logistical requirements. But I want them to take another look at this especially now that we're finding ways to help our farmers get through the transition phase of the rice tariffication law even if it's difficult," Villar said.

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With Paolo Romero, Rhodina Villanueva, Artemio Dumlao
COA flags Philippine Coconut Authority

By Rio N. Araja

THE Commission on Audit has flagged the Philippine Coconut Authority for the distribution of P86.652 million worth of fertilizers, and P45.195 million worth of cacao and oil palm seedlings due to lack of proper documentation.

In a 2018 audit, state auditors questioned if legitimate beneficiaries had received the farm inputs for them since procedures and requirements under the small holder oil palm development program (SOPDP), Kasaguman sa Niyagan at Kaunanang ng Bayan (KAANIB) Enterprise Development Projects (KEDP) intercropping, and Participatory Coconut Planting Program (PCPP) were not complied with.

The programs were designed to empower small coconut farmers and farmers' groups through the extension of government aid and establishment of linkage with the market and oil millers.

"There was no assurance that the delivered agricultural inputs in the total amount of P45.195 million were distributed to the bona fide program beneficiaries.

Also, the disbursement for the supply of palm oil seedlings ...were not supported with the master list of approved farmer-participants who have actually planted the palm oil seedlings [MAPPAPOS]," the report read.

The SOPDP required that PCA agriculturists would register prospective program participants in coordination with barangay and municipal officials, while under the PCPP, the participation of palm oil mills and existing cooperatives were encouraged.

Among the documents required for evaluation of participants qualification were the original certificate of title, transfer certificates of title, certificate of land transfer, tax declarations, torrens title, homestead patent, letter of consent from the landowner, certificate of stewardship and/or certificate of ancestral domain title.
Based on the latest laboratory results of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and Local Government Units (LGUs), shellfishes collected at Puerto Princessa Bay, Puerto Princesa City in Palawan; Coastal waters of Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; Irong-Irong, San Pedro, and Silanga Bays in Western Samar; Canabato Bay, Tacloban City in Leyte are still positive for paralytic shellfish poison that is beyond the regulatory limit.

All types of shellfish and Acestes sp. or alamang gathered from the areas shown above are NOT SAFE for human consumption. Fish, squids, shrimps and crabs are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking.

The following areas continue to be FREE from toxic red tides: coastal waters of Cavite, Las Piñas, Parañaque, Navotas, Bulakan and Batangon (Mariveles, Limay, Orion, Pilar, Balanga, Orani, Abucay and Samal) in Manila Bay; coastal waters of Bolinao, Anda, Alaminos, Suai and Wawa; Bani in Pangasinan; coastal waters of Pampanga; Masinloc Bay in Zambales; coastal waters of Milagros, Mandaluyong and Placer in Masbate; Jagsi Lagoon; Matnog and Sorsogon Bay in Sorsogon; Honda Bay in Puerto Princesa City and coastal waters off inner Malampaya Sound, Taytay in Palawan; coastal waters of Gigantes Islands, Carlos in Iloilo; coastal waters of Pilar, Panay, President Roxas and Roxas City in Capiz; Sapian Bay (Ivisan and Sapian in Capiz; Mamburao and Calinog), Batan Island, Aklan; Alitagtag, Batan and New Washington in Batan Island, Aklan; coastal waters of E.B. Magalonga, Talisay City, Silay City, Bacolod City, Hinigaran and Victorias City in Negros Occidental; Tambobato and Sib Island Bays, Siaton and Balabac Bay, Balabac City in Palawan; coastal waters of Daram Island and Villalrea Bay in Western Samar; Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar; coastal waters of Leyte, Caloocan, Canjilar and San Pedro Bays in Leyte; coastal waters of Biliran Province; Dumanuglas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur-Tamana Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay; Murcia Lagos Bay in Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental; Taguines Lagoon, Benoni, Mahinog in Camiguin Island; Balite and Pujada Bays, Malit in Davao Oriental; coastal waters of Santa Maria in Davao Occidental and Hinatuan and Bislig Bays in Surigao del Sur. Moreover, Camiguin and Maquila Bays in Western Samar; and Lianga Bay in Surigao del Sur are now free of the toxic red tides.

EDUARDO B. GONZONA
Undersecretary for Fisheries, DA/Director, BFAR
Repeal of rice tariffication law sought

By DJ Yap
@deejayapiq

Calls are mounting at the House of Representatives for the amendment or the outright repeal of the law that liberalized rice importation, which has been blamed for the plummeting prices of palay or unhusked rice to the detriment of local farmers.

Occidental Mindoro Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato and Quezon City Rep. Jose Christopher Belmonte expressed their intent to file a joint resolution to amend Republic Act No. 11203, or the rice tariffication law, which led to the unimpeded importation of rice with corresponding tariffs.

"We need to move quickly to help our farmers who are in a dire situation," Sato said in a statement.

’Worst harvest season’
"They are gearing up for the worst harvest season in the history of palay production this September and October and we should be able to assist them in their most difficult time," she added.

Belmonte said he and his colleagues in the Liberal Party would push for the measure to help the executive department explore more sources of funding for direct cash transfers for farmers to "help save them."

The Makabayan bloc, on the other hand, said the plight of local farmers necessitated more drastic action, particularly the repeal of the law.

"The signs of the times reaffirm the need to repeal a measure that has ensured immense profit for rice traders, has starved our farmers and their families, and has wreaked havoc to our local rice industry," the group said.

The Makabayan bloc includes Representatives Ferdinand Gaite, Carlos Zarate, Eufemia Cullamat, Arlene Brosas, France Castro and Sarah Diago.

Prices of palay plummet
"The rice tariffication law was one of the measures eyed by the country’s economic managers to help address soaring inflation by allowing the public access to cheap rice.

To protect the agricultural sector, the bill created the P3 billion Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund to help local farmers improve their productivity and competitiveness.

Critics, however, said the law had failed to address the sudden and sharp plunge in the price of palay in many parts of the country.

Sato confirmed reports that the prices of palay had plummeted to P7 to P8.

On Thursday, Sen. Francis Pangilinan filed a joint resolution in the Senate to amend the rice tariffication law and to grant P33 billion in immediate cash assistance to rice farmers.

The Makabayan lawmakers said rice liberalization had visibly produced "disastrous impacts" on farmers, millers and consumers.

"As of the second week of August, retail prices of regular and well-milled rice remain high at P38.38 per kilo and P42.71 per kilo, respectively, despite massive importation of cheap rice," the group said. INQ
Villar asks DSWD to source 4Ps rice subsidy from local farmers

SEN. Cynthia A. Villar has asked the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to revisit a proposal raised last year to provide rice to the beneficiaries of the government’s conditional cash transfer (CCT) program and buy rice from local farmers.

Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, said “DSWD can help ease difficulties as we transition to the ‘tariffied’ rice importation regime by using its P28-billion rice subsidy under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) to buy rice from local farmers.”

Aside from health and education grants, 4Ps household-beneficiaries are entitled to a 20-kilo rice subsidy per month but were given cash instead of rice.

“Last year, this proposal was shelved because of logistical requirements. But I want them to take another look at this lalo na ngayon at naghahanap tayo ng paraan para matulungan ang mga magasaka na maitawid sila sa transition phase ng rice tariffication law [especially now in this crucial period that we are looking for ways to help our farmers in this transition phase]. Siguro kahit mahirap, gawin na natin kung to ang makakatulong sa kanila [no matter how difficult it may be, let’s find ways to help them],” Villar said.

The Nacionalista Party senator said if the proposal pushes through, local farmers will now have a market for their rice produce and will be cushioned by the effects of the entry of cheaper rice imports.

“I hope, given our situation now, our government will be more receptive of this proposal as we wait for the full benefits of the rice tariffication law to be felt by the local industry,” Villar said.

Republic Act 11203, which took effect in March this year, replaced the quantitative restriction on the importation of rice with tariffs, which is collected to fund the P10-billion Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

Among the benefits local farmers will get from the full and proper implementation of the law is increased productivity and incomes through farm mechanization, production of inbred seeds, access to cheap credit and improved skills.

Last year, a plan was devised where local farmers will produce rice for 4Ps beneficiaries in their community. Rice will be available from the Bigasan ng Bayan, which the Department of Agriculture will open within the area, doing away with transport costs.

Villar has been advocating for a CCT program tied up with agriculture like what is being done in Thailand.
Pernia, Dominguez see no inflation spike after ASF report

BY CAI U. ORDINARIO
@caiiordinario

THE President's economic team downplayed on Monday the potential impact of the African swine fever (ASF) on inflation.

In separate interviews, Socio-economic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia and Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III said inflation will not spike just merely upon the declaration of ASF in some hog farms.

Pernia said chicken can be a good substitute for pork and this will ensure that households are able to afford meat at this time.

“It's [ASF] a concern but there are substitutes to pork such as poultry, beef and fish,” Dominguez told reporters.

“Inflation is not going to spike for sure,” Pernia stressed.

Local economists such as UnionBank Chief Economist Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion told BUSINESSMIRROR that initially, consumers are expected to switch their consumption to other meat products like chicken, beef and seafood.

However, this is just temporary and pork prices are expected to rise further as the holiday season approaches. This is expected to slow down the decline in the inflation rate.

For his part, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) Economist Michael L. Rifico said there could be an uptick in pork prices due to supply constraints. This could lead to higher inflation in the coming months, especially since meat food products account for about 6.25 percent of the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

“…the government through its nonmonetary measures since early 2018 to increase imports of food items such as pork from countries that are still free from ASF such as the US, which is a major source of pork imports for the country especially in view of the US-China trade war that could lead to some diversion and increase of US pork exports to the Philippines, could help increase local supply of pork and lower pork prices, in an effort to better manage inflation,” Rifico said in an e-mail to the BUSINESSMIRROR.

In terms of full-year inflation, Pernia said, the increase in commodity prices may be lower than 3.2 percent in 2019, despite the ASF and expected spike in holiday spending.

Asuncion and Rifico agreed. Asuncion said inflation is still expected to settle at 2.8 percent for 2019 and 2.4 percent for 2020.
Sugar supply declines further in end-August

THE country’s supply of raw and refined sugar dropped further as of end-August this year amid falling demand for the sweetener, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said.

In its report, “Sugar Supply and Demand Situation,” SRA said national supply of raw sugar totaled 2.234 million metric tons (MMT) as of August 31, down 13.46 percent from 2.581 million MMT a year ago.

Of the total, 160,153 MMT were from sugar milled while local production accounted for the remaining 2.073 million MMT.

Demand for raw sugar fell by 17.88 percent to 1.988 million in terms of 50-kilogram bags compared to 2.421 million bags a year ago.

Similarly, refined sugar supply reached 966,628 MMT, down 21.44 percent from last year’s 1.230 million MTT. This was composed of 827,187 MMT local production and 139,440 MMT milled output.

In terms of 50-kilogram bags, total refined sugar supply was 19.332 million bags, down from 24.608 million bags in the same period in 2018.

EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ
Western Samar, Surigao now red-tide free

THE Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has lifted the red tide alert in two bays in Western Samar and Surigao del Sur.

In shellfish advisory 16, series of 2019 released on Monday, BFAR declared that Camhatutay and Maqueda Bays in Western Samar and Lianga Bay in Surigao del Sur are free of the toxic red tide.

With this development, the harvesting, transporting and selling of tabong or mussels, iukan, talaba or oysters and bahong from the bays are now allowed. Harvested shellfish are also now safe for human consumption provided that these are fresh and cleaned thoroughly before cooking.

In the same bulletin, the bureau said shellfishes collected at Puerto Princesa Bay in Palawan; coastal waters of Dasys and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; Irong-Irong, San Pedro and Silanga in Western Samar; and Cangabato Bay in Tacloban City, Leyte were still positive for paralytic shellfish poison beyond the regulatory limit.

Red tide is a phenomenon caused by an explosive growth and accumulation of certain microscropic algae, predominantly dinoflagellates, in coastal waters. It could lead to poisoning, worse death. Symptoms are rapid that these can be felt within 12 hours.

EIRENE JAIREE GOMEZ
Pork safe to eat – Duque

The Department of Health on Monday gave assurances that pork is safe to eat since the African swine fever (ASF) poses no threat to humans.

It said ASF is a severe and highly contagious viral disease that affects only domestic and wild pigs.

"We want to allay the fears of the public by saying that, as long as pork is bought from reliable source and it is cooked thoroughly, pork is safe to eat," Health Secretary Francisco Duque 3rd said in a statement.

Duque advised those handling pigs to wash their hands and clean their shoes to prevent the spread of the virus. He also urged the public to support the measures implemented by the Department of Agriculture and to work closely with concerned agencies.

The Agriculture department has given assurances that it will implement measures to curb the spread of the swine flu virus.

EVA CASALJAY
Mga magsasaka, umiikak

PARA matutulungan ang libilibong magsasaka na labis na naging kartuhan ng Rice Tarrification Law (RTL) dahil sa pagbabahing magsasaka na labis na hindi naman tama sa isang bansa. Iniutos ni Pres. Rodrigo Roa Duterte sa Department of Agriculture (DA) sa pamamagitan ng National Food Authority (NFA) na bilhin ang mga aning palay ng mga magsasaka.


Sa amin sa Bulacan na kung saang nanayapa kong Tatang ay maayos na lalaki, maaaring halimbawa, sinusumbong at initeresaktulon sa akin ng mga karahasan na hindi naman tama sa isang bansa. Iniutos ni Pres. Rodrigo Roa Duterte sa Department of Agriculture (DA) sa pamamagitan ng National Food Authority (NFA) na bilhin ang mga aning palay ng mga magsasaka.


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Inamin ni Delta Rosa, dating PNP Chief, na lumagda siya sa release orders ng may 120 heinous crime convicts nang siya ang BuCor director general mula noong Abril hanggang Oktubre 2018. Sabi ni Spox Panelo: "Tungkol kay Senator dela Rosa, kilangan ang imbestigasyon sa ano mang sirkumstansiya kung bakit siya lumagda sa release papers. Ito ay case-to-case basis."
NFA now ready to buy palay from farmers

DAGUPAN CITY - The National Food Authority (NFA) Western Pangasinan is now ready to buy palay this first harvest season. Provincial manager Ramon Cuaresma of NFA-Western Pangasinan said this is in support of the administration's thrust to give the farmers a ready market for their produce.

"It also seeks to realize a better profit margin particularly when the ex-farm price of palay is very much lower than the government price," Cuaresma said.

NFA has been buying clean and dry palay at the price of P17 per kilo plus P0.20/kg drying incentive; P0.20-P0.50/kg delivery incentive depending on the distance of the farm to the collecting point or NFA warehouse; P0.30/kg Cooperative Development Incentive Fund for Farmers' Organizations/Associations/ Cooperatives; and P3/kg Buffer Stocking Incentive (BSI).

"The Agency has added the BSI to intensify palay procurement operations and encourage individual farmers, farmers' cooperatives/associations to deliver palay to the NFA," he added.

Cuaresma said farmers' organizations and individual farmers may deliver their palay produce to the following warehouses: Alaminos GID Warehouse in Bgy. Pandayan, Alaminos City; Mangatarem GID Warehouse in Bgy. Umangan, Mangatarem; Ferrer Warehouse in Bgy. Mariboc, Lingayen; and Unique Warehouse in Bgy. Malabog, Mangaldan.

He assured the public that all its rice stocks stored in strategically-located warehouses in Western Pangasinan are maintained in good condition at all times and ready for release for any emergencies.

He said the NFA-Western Pangasinan will maintain a safe and sufficient buffer stock for its consumers and will continue to support the farmers through continuous buying of their palay produce.

Christian Supnad
Bilhin sa local farmers – Villar

RICE SUBSIDY SA 4Ps

HINILING ni Senatora Cynthia Villar sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) na repasuhin ang panukala noong nakaraang taon na magbibigay ng bigas sa beneficiaries ng conditional cash transfer (CCT) program ng pamahalaan na bibilhin sa mga lokal na magsasaka.

"DSWD can help ease difficulties as we transition to the 'tariffed' rice importation regime by using its P28 billion rice subsidy under the Pantawid Pamilyang Filipino Program (4Ps) to buy rice from local farmers," ayon kay Villar, chairperson ng Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food.

Bakod sa health at education grants, tatagpap din ang 4Ps household-beneficiaries ng 20-kilo rice subsidy kada buwan. Subalit ang mga ito ay binigyan ng cash sa halip ng bigas.

"Last year, this proposal was shelved because of logistical requirements. But I want them to take another look at this lalo na ngayon at maghaharap tayo ng parang para matulungan ang mga magsasaka na maitawid ala sa transition phase ng rice tariffication law. Siguro kahit mahirap, gawin na rin ito kung ito ang makakatulong sa kanila," ayon kay Villar.

Siibhi ng senadora, kung natuyo ang panukala ito, meron na sarang merkado ang mga lokal na magsasaka para sa kanilang bigas.

"I hope, given our situation now, our government will be more receptive of this proposal as we wait for the full benefits of the rice tariffication law to be felt by the local industry," sabi pa ni Villar.

Pinalitan ng Republic Act 11203, na naging epektibo noong Marso ng taong ito, ang quantitative restriction sa importasyon ng bigas na kilohektarahan ng tarpa para podolam ang P10 billion Rice CompetitivenessEnhancement Fund (RCEF).

"In Thailand, they require 6 million school children to drink 200 ml of milk every day, which brought up their dairy industry," amito ni Villar.

Unaasa si Villar na tutukan ng DSWD ang potensyal na beneficiyo nila sa mga magsasaka sa kabila ng logistical difficulties. VICKY CERVALES
COMMUNITY FARMING SA CAR ISINULONG NG DA

ISINULONG ng Department of Agriculture (DA) Cordillera ang isang estratehiya para sa promosyon ng "community farming" sa Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

Ipinatupad ng ahen-sya ang tinatawag na New Thinking in Agriculture strategy para sa efficient, effective, consolidated, mechanization at modern farming strategies sa small family farms sa naturang rehiyon.

Nabatid na puntiya ng DA ang mga pamilya na ginawa para lamang may masaka.

Naniniwala ang ka-gawaran na ang family farms ay masaring maging commercial farms at pangagalingan ng maraming supply ng pagkain kung ang mga magarsaka ay bubuo ng kooperatiba.

BENEDICT ABAYGAR, JR.
Villar: Turn cash subsidies to rice to help devastated farmers

BY VINCE NONATO

CONVERT to rice supply a portion of the cash subsidies being given to beneficiaries of the government’s Pantawid Pamilyang Filipino Program (4Ps) to help farmers affected by the lifting of import restrictions, Sen. Cynthia Villar said yesterday.

Villar, chairperson of the Senate agriculture and food committee, said the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) should revisit the proposal it pitched last year to convert part of the cash subsidy to actual rice support to help local farmers.

“DSWD can help ease difficulties as we transition to the ‘tariffed’ rice importation regime by using its P28-billion rice subsidy under the Pantawid Pamilyang Filipino Program (4Ps) to buy rice from local farmers,” Villar said.

“I hope, given our situation now, our government will be more receptive of this proposal as we wait for the full benefits of the rice tariffication law to be felt by the local industry,” she added.

Under the 4Ps scheme, the subsidy for 20 kilograms of rice, which is given on top of health and education grants, is given in the form of cash because of the difficulty in distributing the actual grain.

Farmers have expressed dismay over the enactment of Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication law, because this caused farmland prices of palay, or unhusked rice, to plummet to as low as P7 per kilogram, below the P12 production cost.

Villar was the principal sponsor of the Senate bill that eventually became the rice tariffication law, which took effect last March.

RA 11203 liberalized the importation, exportation, and trading of rice and lifted quantitative import restrictions or quotas that limited the amount of imported commodities to protect the domestic agriculture sector.

The quotas were replaced with a system of import duties, revenue from which will be the source of an Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund to modernize the local industry to keep up with the expected deluge of cheaper imported rice.
Mga Ilocos Farmer apektado ng imported rice

Plano diumano ng ilang magsasaka sa Bataan, Ilocos Norte na huminto na sa pagbabasa sa bukid dahil sa pagbaba ng presyo ng palay na epektong Rice Tariffication Law.

Ayon kay Bataan Sangguniang Bayan Member Jonathan Sagario, nakabahala na ang mga magsasaka sa kanilang bayan sa epektong pagbababa ng presyo ng palay.

Ipinilit na ni Sagario na malaking problema sa mga magsasaka na hindi mabenta ang kanilang mga utang na layunin na ginamit sa pagtatanim ng palay.

Ayon pa kay Sagario, plano ng mga magsasaka na mag-alaga na ang sila ng mga farm animal kaya'y magtanim ng palay ngunit sinabi nito na hindi rin to sapat para sa kabuhayan ng mga magsasaka.

Ingatlunan ni Sagario na maganda rin ang Rice Tariffication Law dahil diro na matapad ng mga magsasaka sa kanilang mga utang na layunin na ginamit sa pagtatanim ng palay.

Dagdag pa niya sa implementasyon ng ang maging batas na magbabalan sa mga mayapang goyberno at mga programang makinabang ang mga magsasaka. (Allan Bergonia)