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DA: Enough food for everyone

By CORY MARTINEZ

THERE will be enough food supply while movement of agri-fishery products will not be hampered even as Metro Manila and the adjoining provinces of Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite, and Laguna have been placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) in view of the spike in COVID-19 cases in said areas.

Thus said Agriculture Secretary William Dar as he assures there is enough food for everyone.

Dar said the government will ensure the unhampered movement of farm and fishery products — including seeds, fertilizers, inputs, feeds, veterinary drugs and biologics, and other agri-fishery materials and equipment — in continued partnership with local government units (LGUs) through the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

"Further, we are set to dispatch 'Kadiwa on Wheels' that will bring surplus products from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao to Kadiwa outlets and major public markets in Metro Manila, including those for cold storage at the Food Terminal, Inc. (FTI) facilities in Taguig," Dar added.

To facilitate entry into the Greater Manila Area, Dar suggested that drivers and personnel of farm and fishery transport vehicles bring with them the required identification documents. While not required, it may help if they still have the "Food Lane" pass previously issued by the DA-RFO or DA-BFAR.

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No food shortage, Dar assures public

By Joel dela Torre

AGRICULTURE Secretary William Dar has assured the public especially those living in the so-called Metro Manila-plus bubble that the food supply is adequate.

The inter-agency task force has placed NCR and adjoining provinces Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite and Laguna under enhanced community quarantine starting yesterday until April 4 following the spike of COVID-19 cases in these areas.

According to Secretary Dar, the public need not worry because the government has prepared for this kind of situation.

Even in the Holy Week stretch he promised unhampered movement of food supply and agri-fishery products.

"Early on, we have instructed our DA and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) regional directors to sustain the continuous transport and delivery of their respective surplus production of vegetables, fishery and livestock products and other basic food commodities to Metro Manila and major urban consumption centers," he said.

Dar also ensured an unhampered movement of farm products including seeds, fertilizers, inputs, feeds, veterinary drugs and biologics.

"Further, we are set to dispatch 'Kadiwa on Wheels' that will bring surplus products from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao to Kadiwa outlets and major public markets in Metro Manila, including those for cold storage at the Food Terminal, Inc. (FTI) facilities in Taguig," Secretary Dar said.

To facilitate entry into the Greater Manila Area, the DA chief suggested that drivers and personnel of farm and fishery transport vehicles bring with them the required identification documents. While not required, it may help if they still have the "Food Lane" pass previously issued by the DA-RFO or DA-BFAR.

"We went through this similar situation last year when we were put under ECQ, and we see no reason why we cannot do the same or even perform better, next week and beyond," the DA chief stressed.

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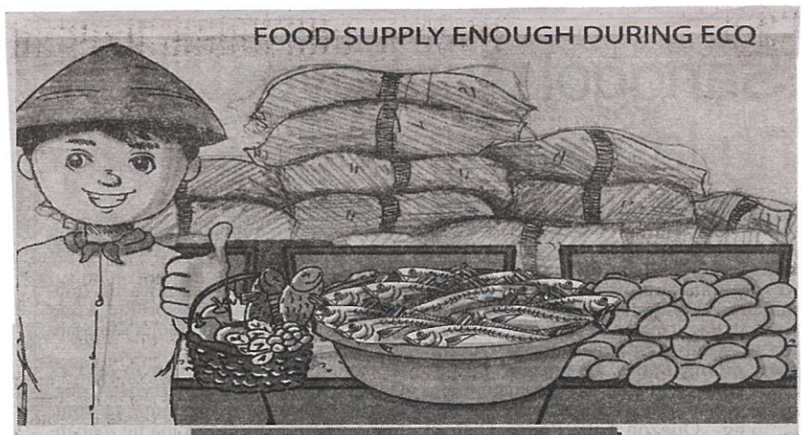

EDITORIAL

Enough food supply

WITH its decision to flood the public markets in Metropolitan Manila and four adjacent provinces with farm products, the government showed its determination to meet the food needs of people placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ).

Due to the alarming spike in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country, MM and the provinces of Bulacan, Rizal, Laguna and Cavite are now under the strictest quarantine status.

But Agriculture Secretary William H. Dar was quick to assure the people, particularly those in ECQ areas and other urban centers, that there's enough food supply in the country.

Yesterday, people across the globe, especially members of the Roman Catholic Church, including Filipinos, marked Palm Sunday, the first day of the Holy Week in the Christian calendar

"With the declaration of MM and four adjacent provinces...under ECQ from March 29 to April 4 (Holy Week), we assure fellow citizens that there is enough food for everyone," said Dar.

Dar had earlier ordered regional directors of DA and Bureau of Fishery and Aquatic Resources to sustain the delivery of basic food commodities to MM and major urban consumption centers.

This is of course in partnership with local government units (LGUs) through the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

The DA is also set to dispatch "Kadiwa on Wheels" that will bring surplus products from Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao to Kadiwa outlets and major public markets in MM.

Dar said that last year, Luzon went through a similar situation when it was placed under ECQ. "We see no reason why we cannot do the same or even perform better," he added.

In the view of many, what is needed is mutual understanding, smooth coordination and sustained partnership among all agri-fishery stakeholders and government authorities.

Oo nga naman!

THE DAILY tribune
Without fear or favor

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Livestock improvement in Nueva Ecija seen

BY JONAS REYES

CARRANGLAN, Nueva Ecija – The Philippine Carabao Center (PCC) and Central Luzon State University (CLSU), through its national bull farm located here, conducted trainings to local farmers on carabao artificial insemination that is seen to improve livestock production in the province of Nueva Ecija.

In a statement, the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) – who conducted a two-day field documentation – stressed that it will be a cost-effective way to raise carabao genetic make-up without buying new bulls to breed.

The two-day field documentation and interview that were held this March was spearheaded by the DA-PRDP and was conducted thru the Project Support Office (PSO) in cooperation with the Regional Project Coordination Office (RPCO 3).

Meantime, the agencies documented a subproject identified under the Provincial Commodity Investment Plan (PCIP).

Under the PCIP of Nueva Ecija, these artificial insemination trainings aim to impart sufficient knowledge to selected members of dairy cooperatives in breeding carabaos with semen collected from a superior bull for a higher rate of pregnancy and calf drop.

According to Supervising Officer Cristina Elliana, the PCIP is an effective platform that has been instrumental in recognizing the necessary mediations of local government units (LGU) and farmers that are funded by PRDP counterparts.

Elliana said that that there are seven priority commodities in Nueva Ecija – *ampalaya*; onion; goat; aromatic and pigmented rice; mango; tomato; carabao and carabao-based products.

"With this, carabao was among the eligible commodities funded by participating LGU," Elliana said.

The practice of artificial insemination in livestock is increasing to preserve the quality and rarity of breeds but because of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, the training are only given to a small group of participants, but are held in batches to provide training to almost all farmers in Nueva Ecija.

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Consumers, producers see losses due to hiked pork import volume

By MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR

President Rodrigo Duterte's recommendation to increase the Minimum Access Volume (MAV) for pork by 350,000 metric tons (MT) will result in losses on the part of consumers and local hog raisers, a group said.

In a statement, Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) Chair Rosendo So said "only a handful of privileged importers and those getting 'tongpats' [or kickback] will benefit from tariff reduction and MAV expansion".

Malacanang recently confirmed that Duterte, upon the proposal of the Department of Agriculture (DA), has recommended to Congress the increase in the MAV for pork by 350,000 MT, in addition to the current MAV of 54,210 MT for the year 2021.

Pork imports falling within the MAV are levied a lower tariff of 30 percent compared to pork imports outside the quota, which is slapped with 40 percent tariff.

"This is an inglorious moment for the agriculture sector when the DA, the very agency that is mandated to protect and support local agriculture is the chief architect of its destruction," So said.

"The timing of the letter reeks of cowardice. Congress has not been given the chance to deliberate on the matter since the DA knew it can never justify its proposal on a fair platform," he added.

He also pointed out that in all previous hearings in both the Senate and House of Representatives, the DA was not able to rebut any of the arguments raised by the stakeholders and official data coming from the Bureau of Customs (BoC) and Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The Senate, in fact, adopted a resolution requesting the President to reject the twin proposals of the DA to increase the MAV allocation on pork and reduce pork tariff.

To recall, the DA also wants pork imports under MAV to be slapped with further lower tariff from the current 30 percent up to 5 percent.

For pork imports outside MAV, its recommendation is for the tariff to be reduced from the current 40 percent up to 15 percent.

"No one is against importation; importer can import all they want in the current tariff structure and still profit from it," So said.

Bureau of Customs (BOC) record of declared price (landed cost) of importers on prime pork meat is averaging at a low import price of P81 per kilogram (/kg) from January 2020 to February 2021.

Still, the retail price of pork over the past weeks average at ₱350 to ₱400/kg.

"Importers are easily profiting between ₱200 to 250/kg at the current retail price," So said.

"We are hoping that our champions in the Senate and in the House of Representatives can respond within 15 days to the letter of the President," he added.

The DA is also not yet off the hook for the so-called tongpats scandal, which is allegedly happening at the DA wherein some of its officials get a kickback for every kilo of pork and chicken imported.

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NCR+ has enough food supply – DA

By ELLSON A. QUISMORIO

There is ample food supply within "NCR-plus", the Department of Agriculture (DA) assured the public Sunday, March 28 ahead of the implementation of strict lockdown protocols there.

"With the declaration of Metro Manila and four ad- ►5

NCR+ has... 1◄

jacent provinces – comprising the 'Greater Manila Area' or 'NCR-plus bubble' – under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), from March 29 to April 4, we assure fellow citizens that there is enough food for everyone as we observe the annual Christian Holy Week tradition," Agriculture Secretary William Dar said in a statement.

Specifically, the bubble is composed of the National Capital Region (NCR or Metro Manila), Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite, and Laguna.

"Early on, we have instructed our DA and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) regional directors to sustain the continuous transport and delivery of their respective surplus production of vegetables, fishery and livestock products and other basic food commodities to Metro Manila and major urban consumption centers," Dar said.

"We will also ensure the unhampered movement of farm and fishery products – including seeds, fertilizers, inputs, feeds, veterinary drugs and biologics, and other agri-fishery materials and equipment – in continued partnership with local government units (LGUs) through the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Philippine National Police (PNP)," he added.

Dar says that "Kadiwa on Wheels" will also bring surplus products from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao to Kadiwa outlets and major public markets in Metro Manila, including those for cold storage at the Food Terminal, Inc. (FTI) facilities in Taguig City.

To facilitate entry into the Greater Manila Area, the DA chief suggests that drivers and personnel of farm and fishery transport vehicles bring with them the required identification documents.

"While not required, it may help if they still have the 'Food Lane' pass previously issued by the DA-RFO or DA-BFAR," he said.

"We went through this similar situation last year when we were put under ECQ, and we see no reason why cannot do the same or even perform better, next week and beyond," Dar said.

"Once again, we need mutual understanding, smooth coordination and sustained partnership among all agri-fishery industry stakeholders, local chief executives, DILG, PNP, and barangay officials and staff," the DA chief concluded.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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SRA suspends sugar exports to US to boost local supply

By Karl R. Ocampo
@KAROcampo_

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) has issued a new sugar order, effective April 4, that would allocate the country's entire sugar production to the domestic market. This would forgo the volume intended to be exported to the United States.

SRA Administrator Hermenegildo Serafica told the Inquirer that the board has already approved the issuance of a new sugar order that would amend the existing sugar allocations to ensure that local supply would not be compromised by exports.

The SRA annually releases Sugar Order 1, which serves as the basis of the agency's policies for the rest of the crop year beginning in September. It specifies the volume of sugar to be imported and exported as well as the allocation for the domestic market based on projected production.

Low output

Under the order, sugar output was estimated to hit 2.19 million metric tons (MT), 7 percent of which is intended to be exported to the U.

As of end-February, however, production amounted to only 1.22 million MT, leaving a balance of 965,000 MT that might be too improbable to reach as the La Niña phenomenon is expected to persist until May.

Revised estimate

Moreover, the series of typhoons that hit major sugar-producing provinces Negros Occidental and Batangas dented the overall production for the crop year.

"Given the series of heavy rains and flooding in various sugarcane-producing areas brought by La Niña, SRA has revised its crop estimate, factoring in the lower sugar content of the canes as an effect of the rains," Serafica said.

"The SRA board is cognizant of this new crop estimate and the position of the stakeholders. Sugar order 1-A will be issued within the week," he added.

The Confederation of Sugar Producers, NSFP Sugar Workers, the federations of Panay and Luzon as well as SRA board member Emilio Yulo all requested to scrap the "A" allocation, or sugar intended for the United States.

"Let us ensure first that we have enough domestic supply," Yulo said. "It is unconscionable to export if, eventually, we are to import [sugar], which will again prompt the resurgence of calls to liberalize the industry." INQ

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Meat processors to cut production if price increase rejected

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

Some meat processors could be forced to cut production if the petition to increase prices of their processed and canned products amid rising costs of raw materials and tight supply is not approved by the government, an industry group said.

In a Viber message to **The STAR**, Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc. (PAMPI) vice president Jerome Ong confirmed that the group has submitted its request to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for a five to nine percent increase on its processed and canned meat loaf, luncheon meat and corned beef products.

"This is because of the scarcity of raw materials, particularly MDM (mechanically deboned meat) chicken and beef as well as tin cans and other packaging materials," Ong said, adding this is caused by the continued countrywide bans on major sources of MDM.

"Our production cost has already increased by 25 to 30 percent, yet we are only asking for a minimal adjustment, as we want to avoid additional burden to consumers," Ong said.

"We are really hoping that the DTI allows us to adjust," he said.

Ong said several PAMPI members have indicated that they have no choice but to cut back on production if the petition to increase the price is not approved, which will result in layoffs.

"Right now, some processors are reporting material shortages of 10-15 percent of what they need but this will just explode to much higher numbers when we all can no longer afford to buy materials – maybe as much as 50 percent shortage," Ong said.

With the ban on poultry imports from a number of countries due to outbreaks of the H5N8 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), Ong said that remaining countries that are open can only supply about 40 to 45 percent of the requirement of processors, as prices from these countries have already skyrocketed.

At present, poultry imports from the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands are temporarily banned from entering the country, comprising about 60 percent of local processors' MDM chicken supply.

On top of this, bans are also imposed on countries such as Denmark, France, Sweden, Russia, Poland and Czech Republic.

"Unemployment threat is directly proportionate to the reduction in production output, so if our output is reduced by 50 percent, manpower could be cut by 50 percent too," Ong said.

"That is no joke. If 100,000 of our workers are involved, that's a job loss of 50,000," he added.

Ong said the request for a minimal increase in the prices of their products will allow processors to give consumers more affordable options.

"Pork, chicken and fish have become too expensive for the masses, and processed meats provide them with an affordable option," Ong said.

"We want to continue doing that, but we need a little help, hence this request to the DTI for a minimal increase so that we can survive and continue to serve," he added.

Apart from the petition to increase prices of processed products, Ong said PAMPI has also submitted several proposals to the Department of Agriculture (DA) to reconsider countrywide bans and instead implement zonal bans, meaning bans are limited to zones within countries that have not eradicated bird flu.

"Discussions are ongoing, but we hope they can resolve the issue soon," Ong said.

The Meat Importers and Traders Association (MITA) earlier submitted similar proposals to the DA to implement zonal bans instead of imposing countrywide restrictions.

Agriculture groups, however, have opposed the proposal, saying it could add more problems to the local agriculture industry already plagued by African swine fever (ASF).

"We are against any lifting of ban on countries that have bird flu. We do not want another ASF outbreak in the making," Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) chairman Rosendo So told **The STAR** earlier.

"If you've seen what happened with ASF, if this happens to our local produce of chicken – because it's not only chicken that will be hit, even layer chickens, quail and ducks – this will be a wider problem if bird flu enters the country," So said in Filipino.

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TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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State of calamity vs ASF sought

By PAOLO ROMERO

Sen. Francis Pangilinan yesterday asked Malacañang to declare a state of calamity to help hog-raisers recover from the effects of African swine fever (ASF) and not allow imported pork to flood the market.

As this developed, Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the committee of the whole's inquiry into the alleged multibillion-peso corruption in pork import permits or "tongpats" would be conducted on April 6.

Pangilinan warned that the lockdown in Metro Manila and neighboring provinces could put more pressure on the food supply.

"The President was probably misinformed by his advisers. This act of raising the MAV will further weaken our local pork producers," Pangilinan said, referring to the minimum access volume or cap on imports.

President Duterte earlier asked Congress to increase the cap on pork imports purchased under lower tariffs to address supply shortage after millions of local hogs were culled due to ASF.

The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura denounced Duterte's recommendation to increase the MAV on pork imports.

"On behalf of our local hog-raisers, we are asking for a declaration of a state of calamity so that funds for indemnification and additional cash assistance may immediately be tapped for them," Pangilinan said.

On March 15, senators adopted Pangilinan's Senate Resolution 676, which urged the Department of Agriculture to "recommend to the President to declare a state of national calamity" due to the severe impact of the ASF on the hog industry.

The declaration would authorize the use of the national disaster risk reduction and management fund as well as the quick response fund to supplement efforts to contain and manage the ASF.

– With Catherine Talavera

The Manila Times

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DRONE FARMING BENEFITS TARLAC FARMERS

RICE farmers in Paniqui, Tarlac are beginning to reap the benefits of drone farming through a mechanized farming system developed by Bayer Crop Science (BCS) with a hectare yield of eight metric tons (MT) and reduced labor. Danny Tongol of BCS's Bayer Learning Center said the 8 MT yield in Paniqui is two times the average rice output of 4 MT per hectare, which could not have been achieved under usual practice. The Department of Agriculture is targeting to increase the rice yield per hectare national average to 6 MT. The pilot program in Barangay Sampot commenced on November 29 last year through the initiative of the provincial government of Tarlac and the office of Tarlac First District Representative Charlie Cojuangco.

JERRY HERNANDEZ

The Manila Times

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Farm machine distribution 99% complete

THE Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) on Monday said it has completed at least 99 percent of the bidding of P10-billion worth of farm machines covering 2019 and 2020 under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF)-Mechanization Program.

PHilMech Executive Director Baldwin Jallorina in a statement said the institution has so far procured 15,046 units of farm machines out of the 23,378 target units.

Of the total, 13,499 have been delivered and distributed to qualified farmer cooperatives and associations (FCAs).

Jallorina added that PHilMech will proceed with acquiring more farm machines worth P5 billion in April, which covers 2021.

The executive director also noted that its training of FCA members has reached the 57 provinces covered under the RCEF-Mechanization Program.

"We at PHilMech are also getting ready to perform a bigger role in helping revive the Philippine economy from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, by also changing the mindset and orientation of farmers, or for them to become more receptive to modern solutions like mechanization and skills upgrading," Jallorina said.

PHilMech has also intensified its information campaign and has launched a radio and a television program on farm mechanization, according to Jallorina. **FAYE ALMAZAN**

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PART 1 of 2

3-MONTH SHIPMENT DELAYS NEGATE BID TO HIKE MEAT IMPORTS

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

DELAYS in arrivals of food imports now stretch to as long as three months, as global shipping problems—a combination of several factors fueling a perfect storm—continue, industry leaders told the BusinessMirror.

The situation poses a huge threat to the government's plan to flood the market with "cheaper" imported pork.

The global container imbalance and lack of vessels have caused shipments of meat imports to arrive in about three to four months, which could derail the government's plan to bring in cheaper imported protein sources with its pork tariff reduction and minimum access volume (MAV) increase plans.

"We now are looking at three to four months of arrival. There's a lot of congestion caused by Covid-19 pandemic. It has created an imbalance in trade with containers going one way and the others returning without a back-load," Meat Importers and Traders Association (Mita) President Jesus C. Cham told the BusinessMirror.

Cham added that North America is also reeling from the impact of severe winters that have slowed down movement of people, trucks, and cargoes in the West.

Given the current situation, shipping costs have increased with importers only getting to know the additional charges when their shipments arrive in the country, Cham said.

"We will know only of the additional charges when the cargo arrives. And they are delayed. Upon arrival, we will see the destination charges," he said.

"The CIF cost of a headless pork carcass has gone up to $3 per kilogram from $1.5 per kilogram," he added.

Cham warned that given the delays in shipments, the government's plan to reduce pork tariffs to as low as 5 percent for in-quota volume and 15 percent for out-quota volume may not be maximized, with consumers not benefitting from such low tariffs.

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PART 2 of 2

3-MONTH SHIPMENT DELAYS NEGATE BID TO HIKE MEAT IMPORTS

CONTINUED FROM A10

For example, if President Duterte reduces the tariff in the following days, then only the shipments already in transit, including those imports by current minimum access volume (MAV) or quota holders, would benefit from the 5-percent tariffs.

"Only the pre-ordered will benefit but the new orders may not, since it takes us now at least three months for new orders," Cham explained.

"The uncertainty of the tariff reduction also plays a part in the ordering of the importers. If the importer doesn't feel confident that tariff will be reduced, then he will not order," he added.

Cham said the government should push through with the reduction of pork tariffs without waiting for the increase of the MAV, which is currently pending before Congress. He insisted that it is only through lower tariffs that imports could influence prevailing domestic retail prices of pork, which have gone up anew to P380 per kilogram level.

President Duterte can already issue an Executive Order modifying the tariffs on pork imports since Congress has gone on scheduled recess since Friday and won't be back till May 17.

The Cabinet-level Committee on Tariff and Related Matters earlier recommended to Duterte to reduce pork tariffs to 5 percent for in-quota and 15 percent for out-quota for three months, which would increase after to 10 percent for in-quota and 20 percent for out-quota for nine months. The Tariff Commission, based on the documents obtained by the BusinessMirror, earlier proposed a 10-percent in-quota tariff and 20-percent out-quota tariff for one year.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) earlier petitioned for the reduction of pork tariffs to 5 percent (in-quota) and 15 percent (out-quota) for six months. Afterwards the tariffs would increase to 10 percent (in-quota) and 20 percent (out-quota) for another six months before reverting to current tariff rates of 30 percent for MAV and 40 percent for outside MAV.

The BusinessMirror earlier reported that imports from Europe, United States and Canada, which are major pork import sources of the country, are delayed by two weeks to one month due to lack of containers and vessels. ***(Related story: https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/03/26/food-shortage-seen-on-global-supply-woes/)***

This is worsened by the congestion at transhipment points such as Singapore, Hong Kong and China, industry players told the BusinessMirror.

"We are facing shipping and logistics problems. For example in Europe, there are a lot of delays due to Covid-19 problems and challenges such as lockdowns. We are now encountering two weeks to a month delays in our arrivals," Royal Cargo Inc. (RCI) COO Jet B. Ambalada told the BusinessMirror.

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PhilMech: Lockdowns, manpower shortage hinder distribution of free farm machinery to farmers

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas @jearcalas

THE Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) said domestic lockdowns and lack of manpower caused delays in the distribution of free farm machinery to rice farmers.

At a virtual news briefing on Monday, PhilMech Executive Director Baldwin Jallorina Jr. explained that localized lockdowns and movement restrictions imposed by local government units have hampered their distribution of farm machinery to rice farmer's cooperatives and associations.

Jallorina pointed out there were instances last year that PhilMech employees were not allowed to enter the provinces to deliver the machinery despite national guidelines crafted by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) exempting them from any form of movement restriction.

"*Hindi makapasok sa* LGUs *kasi kanya-kanya silang* rules. *Nade*-delay. We have been coordinating with IATF and local rules are being relaxed, hopefully we can deliver all the [2019 and 2020 funded] farm machinery by end of April," he said. (We cannot enter the LGUs due to varying rules on mobility. Deliveries are delayed)

"Like Bohol *dati hindi kami makapasok*. As of yesterday, *nakapasok na po kami sa* Region 8 particularly in the province of Samar," he added. (For example Bohol, we cannot enter that province. As of yesterday also we have been able to enter Region 8 particularly the province of Samar)

Jallorina added that the situation is worsened by the limited number of manpower in domestic manufacturing facilities due to Covid-19-related measures, which caused delay in the production of farm machinery and equipment.

"According to the local manufacturers, their work force is still limited in their plants," he said.

Nonetheless, PhilMech assured farmer cooperatives and association beneficiaries that all the units funded by the 2019 and 2020 Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) would be distributed by end-April.

Jallorina said 15,810 units out of the total 15,918 target units for the 2019 and 2020 have already been procured. However, PhilMech, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, has only been able to distribute 8,702 various farm machinery and equipment to date, about 54 percent of the total target.

The BusinessMirror broke the story on Monday that PhilMech, as of March 21, was only able to deliver 50 percent of its machine distribution target using its 2019 and 2020 RCEF funds.

Under the six-year RCEF, which started in 2019, PhilMech shall receive half of the P10-billion total fund annually for free farm machinery distribution to rice farmers cooperatives and association.

Jallorina said about 155,000 rice farmers in 57 rice-producing provinces have benefited from their farm machinery distribution to date.

For 2021, PhilMech targets to distribute a total of 5,908 units of farm machinery to 1,600 identified farmer's cooperatives and associations, Jallorina said.

Of the target units, about 2,574 units would be land preparation equipment (4-wheel tractors, hand tractors, floating tillers) worth P1.7 billion while 2,028 units are post-harvest machinery (dryers, rice mills) worth P2.8 billion and the remaining P500 million would be used for 496 crop establishment equipment such as seeders and transplanters.

Jallorina said they will "do their best" to be able to procure and distribute the 2021 funded machinery before the year ends. Jallorina disclosed that they are also requesting to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) an advanced release of their 2022 RCEF funds in anticipation of the election ban.

In January, BusinessMirror published a Broader Look story on the challenges and future of the government's RCEF-backed farm machinery distribution tack ***(Related story: https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/01/07/mechanization-moves-agriculture-sector-slow-but-sure-to-modern-farming/).***

A 72-page DA paper reviewing the RTL law 18 months after its enactment explained that the mechanization component was delayed "due to the complicated and cumbersome procurement process as well as the need to address failures in the past on the provision of public funds for machinery."

PhilMech also saw delays in receiving its budget, curtailing its conduct of activities related to the RCEP mechanization component.

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Chinese ships remain in Julian Felipe Reef, defense chief says

By Rene Acosta
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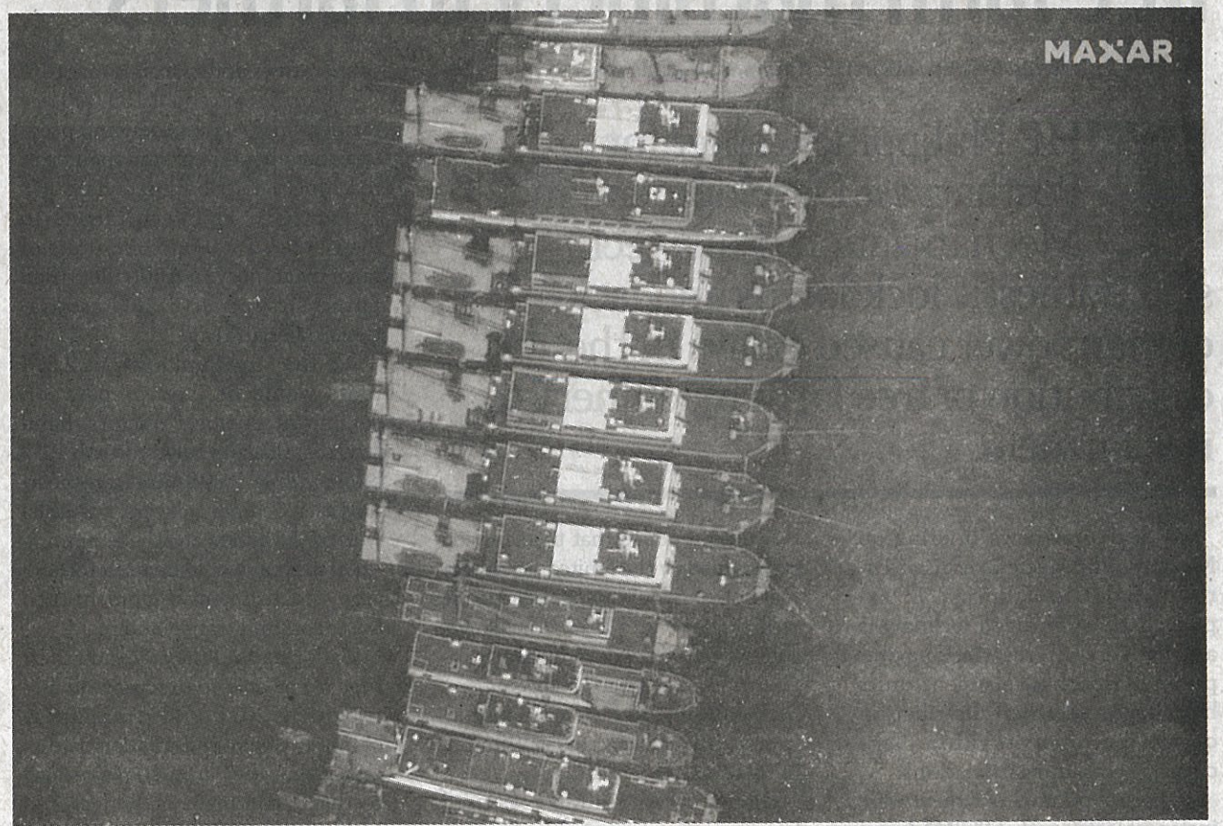
CHINESE ships moored in great numbers in the Julian Felipe Reef are trying to drive away Philippine military "sovereignty patrols" in the area, but their warnings are being ignored by the government, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said on Monday, even as he disclosed proposals to anchor a tanker ship inside the reef.

"There is no physical confrontation, but there are warnings, their warnings [say] 'do not come here.' We [replied], 'we are patrolling our area," the defense chief told CNN Philippines as he provided a glimpse of the latest situation inside the reef.

Lorenzana said the exchanges between the Chinese manning the maritime militia vessels and the Filipino patrols are "standard," saying these are regular occurrences every time the military conducts sovereignty run in the West Philippine Sea territory.



THIS satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows Chinese vessels anchored in Julian Felipe Reef, or the Whitsun Reef, located in the disputed South China Sea on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. The United States said Tuesday it's backing the Philippines in a new standoff with Beijing in the disputed South China Sea, where Manila has asked a Chinese fishing flotilla to leave a reef. China ignored the call, insisting it owns the offshore territory.

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The number of Chinese ships inside the reef, which, according to Lorenzana stretches to about 30 kilometers and measures 50 kilometers in width, has not considerably decreased, with about 183 vessels still remaining, although the number may have went down from the more than 220 ships that were spotted on March 7.

Lorenzana admitted the presence of the ships inside the reef and their purpose still remain a puzzle for the government, reiterating there is no reason for them to be there despite the Chinese government's claim that they were merely sheltering from bad weather.

"There must some reasons why they are there... the Chinese ambassador insists that these are fishing boats, and they are sheltering from turbulent seas or bad weather. Now, I, we know from experience that this period of the year, from January to May, the water is apparently calm," the defense chief said.

"There was [no] truth in the allegation of the Chinese that they are there to hide against the [harsh] elements of the sea. This [period] is also...fishing season there...[and] the water is calm," he added.

Lorenzana said they are intently monitoring the ships and an Air Force S-211 plane has also been sent for a regular patrol run over the reef, while the government is planning to send a vessel of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, hopefully by this week.

The government is also eyeing the deployment of a tanker ship inside the reef, but Lorenzana said this still remains a proposal from the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea and no action has been taken yet.

In mulling over the possibility of permanently berthing a tanker vessel in Julian Felipe Reef, the government is apparently attempting to replicate its move in the Ayungin Shoal where the BRP *Sierra Madre*, a derelict and partly submerged tanker vessel, has been permanently moored and is being used as an outpost for Marine soldiers in the area as a symbol of Philippine sovereignty.

The government, Lorenzana said, is very cautious in sending Navy ships, saying this will "militarize" the area, although the government maintains that Julian Felipe Reefs is within the country's maritime waters.

Lorenzana maintained that the Chinese ships should leave the area, a position that he said has been conveyed by no less than President Duterte to the Chinese ambassador to the Philippines, who, in turn, told the Commander in Chief that he would relay it to Duterte's Chinese counterpart.

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'Nagtataglay ng NPK'

Paggawa ng Malunggay Fertilizer

Ang Magsasakang REPORTER

ni MER LAYSON

Ngayon araw na ito ay ise-share ko sa inyo ang effective, simple at madaling paraan ng paggawa Fertilizer mula sa dahon at tangkay ng Malunggay na nagtataglay ng complete fertilizer na Nitrogen, Phosphuros at Potassium (NPK) na kailangan ng bawat halaman sa kanyang pagtubo, paglaki hanggang sumapit ang pamumulaklak at pamumunga.

Nagtataglay din ng Macro at Micro Nutrients ang Malunggay na isa sa pinakamasustansiyang gulay.

Ang mga sangkap sa paggawa ng Malunggay Fertilizer ay mga dahon at tanggkay ng Malunggay at tubig.

Sa isang bigkis na mga sanga ng Malunggay ay makakagawa ka ng dalawa hanggang tatlong litro ng fertilizer.

Ang paraan ng paggawa ay i-blender lang ang mga dahon at sanga ng Malunggay gamit ang 2-liters na tubig hanggang magkadurog-durog ang mga ito at kumatas.

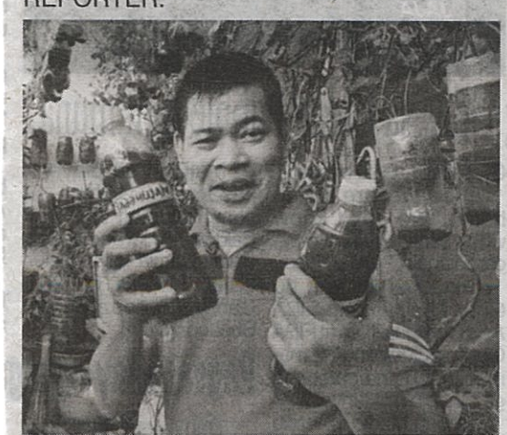
Pagkagawa ay pwede ng gamitin na pandilig at pang-spray sa mga halaman.

Ang gagamitin na pang-spray ay dapat salain muna, gamit ang katya at iba pang manipis na tela para hindi bumara sa gagamiting ispreyer.

Ang gagamitin naman na pandilig ay pwede ng idirekta sa gilid ng puno ng halaman.

Pwedeng isa hanggang dalawang beses kada isang linggo ang application ng Malunggay Fertilizer sa ating mga tanim na halaman.

Upang magkaroon po kayo ng "clear picture" sa paggawa ng Malunggay Fertilizer ay panoorin po ninyo ang video tutorial ko sa Youtube na ANG MAGSASAKANG REPORTER.



Ang Malunggay Fertilizer na ginawa ng Magsasakang Reporter para lumaking malusog at mamunga ng marami ang mga tanim na iba't ibang uri ng halaman.

Ang Malungay Fertilizer ay magsisilbing basal na pataba hanggang sumapit sa pamumulaklak at tuluyang mamunga ang isang halaman.

Ang Malunggay Fertilizer ay subok na subok ko na at matagal ko nang ginagamit sa aking mga tanim na Kalamansi, sili, talong, patola, upo, kamias, mangga, duhat, sampaloc, atis, bayabas at iba pang namumungang halaman.

Maganda rin sa palay, mais, soybeans at monggo ang Malunggay Fertilizer.

Kapag nasa sampung araw na mula sa pagkakalipat natin ng isang halaman ay maaari na itong diligan at ispreyan ng Malunggay Fertilizer.

Ang mga tanim na Kalamansi ng Magsakang Reporter na hitik na hitik sa bunga dahil sa Malunggay Fertilizer.

Nawa po ay nakapag-share ako ng kaalaman at impormasyon ngayong araw na ito tungkol sa paggawa ng Malunggay Fertilizer.

Para sa iba pang tips at sikreto sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman ay maaari kayong manood ng aking TV program na Masaganang Buhay tuwing Linggo, alas-7:00 hanggang alas-8:00 ng umaga sa OnePH Cignal TV, Channel 1 ng TV-5. Mapapakinggan din sa Radyo Singko 92.3 News FM.

Maaari rin kayong manood at mag-subscribe sa aking Youtube Channel na ANG MAGSASAKANG REPORTER.

Tuwing araw ng Martes naman ay regular ninyong mababasa ang aking kolum dito sa **Pilipino Star Ngayon (PSN)** ng Star Group of Publications.

Sa mga tanong at komento ay maaari ninyo akong i-text, huwag pong tawag ah, sa 09178675197. STAY SAFE, HAPPY FARMING, GOD BLESS US ALL.