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# Organic farmers offered low-cost certification

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it launched a quality assurance system offering low-cost certification for small farmers and fisherfolk to make their organic products more marketable.

Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), a feature of Republic Act (RA) 11511, which amended RA 10068 or the Organic Agriculture Act, is intended to open doors to more agriculturists seeking to maintain a sustainable and environment-friendly organic operation.

"The PGS will significantly reduce the cost of maintaining organic certification and actively involve our small farmers and fisherfolk with like-minded stakeholders and advocates of organic agriculture by maintaining the integrity of organic products available in the market," Mr. Dar said in a statement.

According to the DA, the system certifies producers as active practitioners of organic agriculture, and serves as an alternative to third-party certification.

It added that the PGS was developed by organic agriculture practitioners and encourages social networking and knowledge exchange.

"The new system also directly contributes to the farm consolidation (objective) of the DA and will increase the local availability of certified organic products of small and medium farmers... (freeing up) large-scale organic producers (to) shift to export markets," Mr. Dar said.

"We need to ensure that small organic farmers and fisherfolk are not passive participants. We need to actively engage them in the implementation and give due recognition to their experience and expertise," he added.

President Rodrigo R. Duterte signed RA 11511 on Dec. 23 with the intent of improving the national organic agriculture program and encourage the consumption of organic products with an educational awareness initiative for consumers.

Aside from the creation of the PGS, the law also created the National Organic Agriculture Program — National Program Coordinating Office to manage the implementation of the program and serve as the planning and administrative secretariat of the National Organic Agriculture Board. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

PEOPLES JOURNAL
Tonight

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# PAL flies okra to Korea

**PHILIPPINE AirLines said it carried 1,800 kilograms of 'okra' as cargo shipment via a Manila to Incheon flight - PR8648 yesterday (June 6), considered to be a milestone for the Philippine agribusiness sector.**

PAL spokesperson Ma. Cielo Villaluna said the cargo flight reflects the business opportunities that new markets, like Korea, are currently giving the farming and export sectors. Okra traffic used to be exported to Japan and now, the Philippines has expanded exportation to Korea.

To celebrate the expanded exportation of okra, a send-off ceremony was held at the PAL International Cargo Terminal attended by Secretary of Agriculture William Dar, Secretary of Trade and Industry Ramon Lopez and other agencies and organizations such as the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bureau of Plant Industry, Philippine Okra Producers and Exporters Association. They witnessed the acceptance and cargo-loading of 1,800 kilograms of the okra shipment.

Meanwhile, Villaluna said PAL will be the official carrier of the country's representative to the prestigious 2021 IMG Junior World Golf Championship to be held from July 12-16, 2021 at Torrey Pines Golf Course in San Diego, California.

Kiara Therese Montelbon will represent the country in the prestigious tourney in the 15-18 y/o girls category. In 2019, she emerged Top 7 in the 13-year-old Division of the US Kids Golf Teen World Championship.

She has been invited to join the 2021 US Kids Golf Teen World Championship to be held this July in Pinehurst, NC, USA.

Born and raised in Cagayan de Oro, Montelbon started training at the age of ten.

**Itchie G. Cabayan**

Daily Tribune
WITHOUT FEAR ▾ WITHOUT FAVOR

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# Cebu eyes hog export ban lift

**The DA chief commended the provincial government of Cebu and the entire Central Visayas as the region remains free of any confirmed African swine fever cases**

BY RICO OSMEÑA
*@tribunephl_rico*

The provincial government of Cebu is announced recently that it is considering lifting the ban on live hog exports following reports that the province has a surplus on pork products.

Cebu Governor Gwendolyn Garcia said that they are mulling to remove the pork export ban and she has already consulted Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary William Dar on the proposed move.

"Two or three months ago, the prices of pork were not stabilized so it skyrocketed," Garcia said. "We have to cut sending off of live hogs but right now, I believe we have enough supply to send out live hogs."

To recall, the Cebu governor issued Executive Order (EO) 8 on 29 January 2021 which prohibited the export of live hogs raised in farms and backyards in the province for six months.

The EO took effect on 1 February 2021 which was seen as one of the stringent measures the province has done to protect its P11-billion hog industry.

"We have been very strict with our ports entry which helped us. We cannot face two pandemics at the same time. It's difficult enough to be facing the coronavirus disease pandemic," said Garcia.

In Cebu Province alone, there are 150,000 families dependent on hog raising.

Meantime, Central Visayas Pork Producers Cooperative president Jonathan Young disclosed that Cebu has now surplus and export may be allowed.

"We have surplus, that's what I know, although I don't have actual stats yet," Young said.

Previously, Dar and DA regional director Atty. Salvador Diputado has requested the provincial government to raise the production of pork and supply of pigs to address the supply deficit in the country.

Garcia heeded the DA's request since hog supply in Cebu has started to stabilize.

"I hope Cebu would increase its production level so that the excess here can be brought to Manila," Dar said.

The DA chief also commended the provincial government of Cebu and the entire Central Visayas as the region remains free of any confirmed African swine fever (ASF) cases.

"If properly done and if there will be tighter biosecurity measures, I believe we can defeat ASF," Dar said. "There are already ASF vaccines that are on the trial stages which are being developed by the United States, and I see it as an opportunity since if the vaccines are proven effective, we will have a nationwide vaccination program for hogs."

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# Govt aims to reduce organic certification cost

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has launched the participatory guarantee system (PGS), a key feature of the amended Organic Agriculture Act that seeks to reduce the costs of organic certification, allowing small farmers to access such accreditation.

"Made possible by the support of our legislators, RA [Republic Act] 11511 opened opportunities for our small farmers and fisherfolk who want a sustainable and environment-friendly organic practice through PGS," Agriculture Secretary William Dar said during the recent launching of the PGS.

Under RA 11511 or the amended Organic Agriculture Act, PGS refers to a locally focused quality assurance system, which is developed and practiced by people actually engaged in organic agriculture.

The PGS, which is built on a foundation of trust, social network and knowledge exchange, serves as an alternative to third-party certification that certifies actual and active organic agriculture practitioners.

"The PGS will significantly reduce the cost of maintaining organic certification and actively involve our small farmers and fisherfolk with like-minded stakeholders and advocates of organic agriculture by maintaining the integrity of organic products available in the market," Dar said.

Dar said the implementation of the PGS would also contribute to the DA's farm consolidation program and will increase the availability of certified organic products of small and medium farmers in the domestic market. With this, large-scale organic producers can now shift to export markets, Dar added.

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairperson Cynthia A. Villar said the PGS would help in making organic agriculture in the country a "competitive and sustainable industry."

"I encourage all the stakeholders present today to continue your efforts and work hand in hand with us and the DA in advancing the national organic agriculture program and making organic agriculture in the Philippines as a

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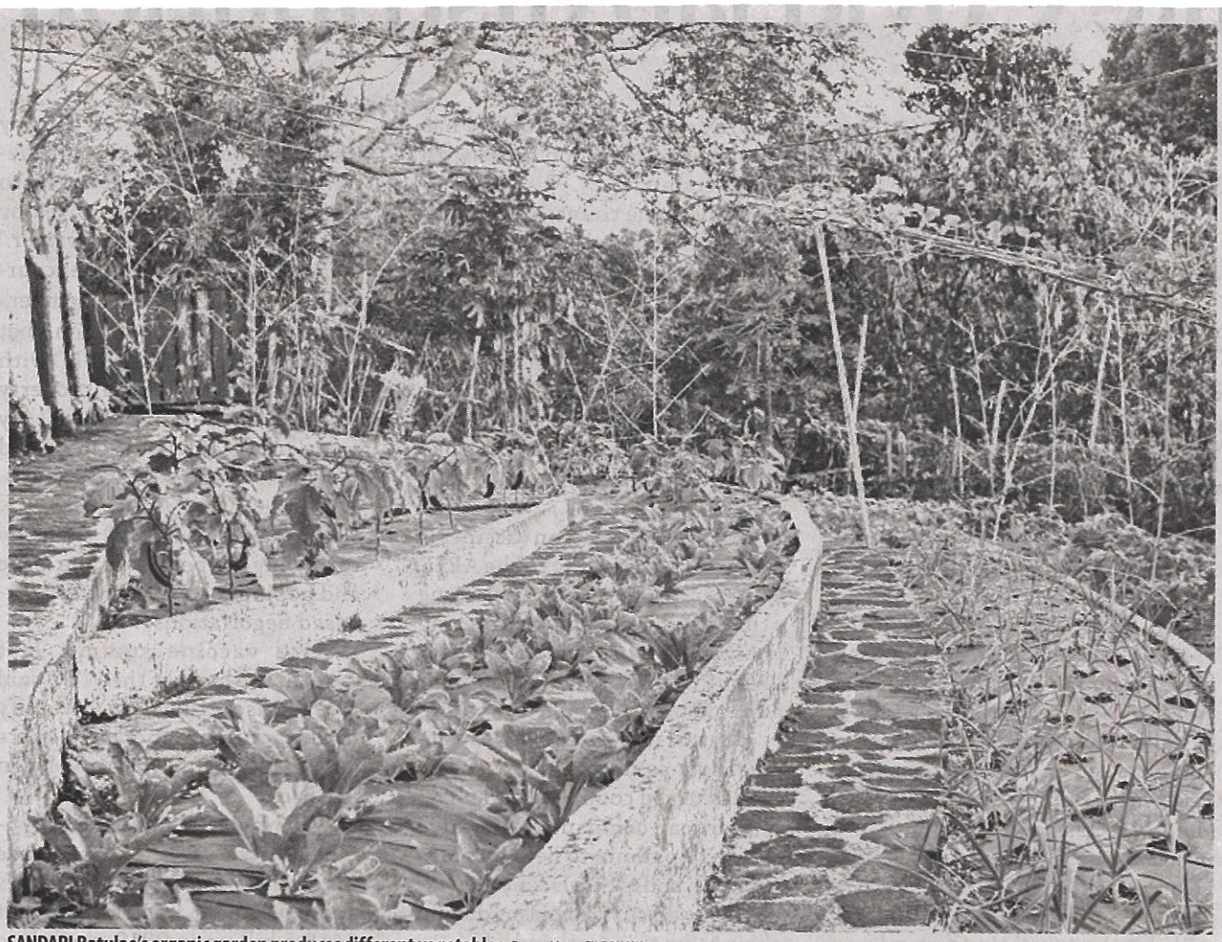

SANDARI Batulao's organic garden produces different vegetables. BUSINESSMIRROR FILE PHOTO

competitive and sustainable industry," Villar, the principal author of RA 11511, said.

Government agencies that are part of the National Organic Agriculture Board has pledged support to the PGS system including Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Department of Science and Technology, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Health , Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Agrarian Reform, and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

Organic stakeholders including the Local Chief Executives League of Organic Agriculture Municipalities, Cities and Provinces of the Philippines, PGS Pilipinas, and International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) also expressed support for the PGS.

"We need to ensure that small organic farmers and fisherfolk are not passive participants. We need to actively engage them in the implementation and give due recognition to their experience and expertise," Dar said.

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# Bohol farmers get P388-M agri projects, machines from govt

FARMERS in Bohol received P388 million worth of interventions, including agri-fishery projects, farm inputs and equipment as well as indemnity checks, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

The DA said it turned over the interventions to farmers as well as P25 million worth of support for livestock development and P44 million for soil management initiative and small water impounding project last June 4.

Other interventions provided to the beneficiaries were P5.6 million worth of fishery enhancement projects and a P17-million coconut livelihood program.

"The Philippine Rural Development Project awarded a total of P2.9 million to upgrade the province's dairy production, while a total of P40.2 million indemnity checks were distributed under the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp.," it said.

"The DA Regional Field Office in Central Visayas also awarded livelihood projects, as well as extension and support services courtesy of its banner programs amounting to P45 million."

The DA said farmers' cooperatives and associations from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd district of Bohol received P209 million worth of farm machines from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

"RCEF's mechanization program aims to provide access to appropriate production and postproduction mechanization technologies to ultimately increase production and income of Filipino rice growers," Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said in a statement.

Bohol also became the second province to pilot the implementation of the DA's Province-led Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Systems, according to the DA.

Dar assured Bohol's local government officials that the DA will continue to "provide support and assistance to uplift the local agri-fishery sector, and improve gains and income of the farmers and fishers."

Before Bohol, the DA distributed P30.52 million worth of interventions to various farmers' associations and local government units in the province of Cebu last June 3.

"The DA through its regional field office in Central Visayas awarded projects under its High Value Crops Development Program and Corn Program totaling more than P28 million. These include a monolithic dome storage and packing facility project turned over to the Malaguete LGU, which amounts to P20 million," it said. ***Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas***

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# Local firm ships okra to S. Korea via flag carrier

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By Recto L. Mercene
@rectomercene

A LOCAL company on Sunday shipped 1,800 kilograms of okra to Incheon in South Korea via flag carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL).

PAL said the cargo flight is a milestone for the Philippine agri-business sector. "It reflects the business opportunities that new markets—like Korea—are currently giving the farming and export sectors."

Okra used to be exported to Japan and now, the exporter, Hi-Las Marketing Corp. and Jet Farm Fresh Produce, has made inroads into the Korean vegetable market.

To celebrate the expansion of okra exports, a send-off ceremony was held Sunday at the PAL International Cargo Terminal.

Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar and Trade Secretary Ramon M. Lopez and other agencies and organizations, such as the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), Philippine Okra Producers and Exporters Association (POPEA), were present to witness the acceptance and cargo-loading of the okra shipment.

The flag carrier thanked the exporter for choosing Philippine Airlines as its 'cargo' airline-partner.

The government of Korea announced the completion of the ruling process for the Philippine okra market access to Korea through an official notification from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) on May 6, according to Agriculture Attaché Aleli Maghirang in a report to Dar.

Dar said exports of fresh, green okra pods will be sourced initially from Tarlac province, where DA-BPI accredited farms and packing houses are located. Currently, there are four Philippine okra exporters, namely: Jelfarm Fresh Produce Enterprise; Greenstar Produce, Philippines Inc.; AAMC Foods Corp.; and Hi-Las Marketing Corp. All are members of POPEA.

In Korea, Maghirang said okra is not as "mainstream" as radish, cabbage, cucumber, potato, and sprouts, which are parts of many Korean dishes. Some Koreans eat okra as "banchan" (side dish), including "okra muchim" (seasoned) or "okra kimchi" (pickled/fermented).

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FIRST OKRA EXPORT TO SEOUL – Department of Agriculture Secretary William Dar and Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon Lopez (right and 2nd from right) hold boxes of okra that form part of the 1,800 kilos shipped to South Korea via Philippine Airlines Flight PR8648 during a send-off ceremony at the PAL International Cargo Terminal, June 6, 2021. Also in photo are Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Strategic Communications Noel O. Reyes and Roberto Amores, director of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Agriculture and Fishery Committee and president of the Philippine Okra Exporters and Producers Association. (Photo courtesy of PAL CorpCom)

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# DA launches guarantee system for organic practice

By MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has launched the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), a key feature in the Republic Act (RA) No. 11511 that provides guarantees for organic practices.

"Made possible by the support of our legislators, RA 11511 opened opportunities for our small farmers and fisherfolk who want a sustainable and environment-friendly organic practice through PGS," Agriculture Secretary William Dar said. RA 11511 amended the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 or RA 10068.

As defined in the new act, the PGS refers to a locally focused quality assurance system, which is developed and practiced by people actually engaged in organic agriculture.

Built on a foundation of trust, social network and knowledge exchange, the system is used to certify producers and farmers as actual and active organic agriculture practitioners and serve as an alternative to third-party certification.

"The PGS will significantly reduce the cost of maintaining organic certification and actively involve our small farmers and fisherfolk with like-minded stakeholders and advocates of organic agriculture by maintaining the integrity of organic products available in the market," Dar said.

He added that the new system also directly contributes to the farm consolidation thrust of DA and will increase the local availability of certified organic products of small and medium farmers. Thus, large-scale organic producers could shift to export markets.

During the launch of PGS, officials and representatives of the National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP), Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), and member agencies of the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB) also presented the Philippine Guaranteed Organic Mark for organic products.

"I encourage all the stakeholders present today to continue your efforts and work hand in hand with us and the DA in advancing the national organic agriculture program and making organic agriculture in the Philippines as a competitive and sustainable industry," Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairperson Senator Cynthia Villar said.

Meanwhile, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Secretary Isidro Lapeña, Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Secretary Fortunato dela Peña, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Assistant Secretary Roosque Calacat, and representatives of the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) pledged their commitment as NOAB member agencies.

"We need to ensure that small organic farmers and fisherfolk are not passive participants. We need to actively engage them in the implementation and give due recognition to their experience and expertise," Dar said.

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# Farm mechanization training brought to countryside via radio

THE Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) said it has commissioned radio programs to prepare farmers for the mechanization of rice cultivation, including post-harvest processing.

PhilMech said over the weekend that 11,682 farmer-beneficiaries affiliated with 892 cooperatives and associations are enrolled in the "Radyo Eskwela" program, created to support the mechanization component of the P10-billion Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), which was created by Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law.

It added that enrollees go through six modules, with three to four lessons per module, on topics such as farm mechanization principles and machinery know-how.

Baldwin G. Jallorina, PhilMech executive director, said the program aims to help farmers who have received machinery to use and maintain their units effectively.

"There is a need to further educate and train farmers using various avenues like radio and social media to complement hands-on training," Mr. Jallorina said.

"Eventually, those who finish the series can influence more farmers to be open... about farm mechanization," he added.

According to PhilMech, the lessons are simultaneously aired in Tagalog, Hiligaynon, Cebuano, Waray, Chavacano, Bicolano, and Iloco by radio anchors and PhilMech technical experts in the field.

The radio program airs 5 a.m. to 6 a.m. every Wednesday and Saturday across 27 AM stations and six FM stations of the Radio Mindanao Network. Farmers can also access the program via its Facebook page and YouTube channel.

"Those who are not from the farmers' cooperatives and associations can also listen to Radyo Eskwela by accessing its online platform," PhilMech said. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

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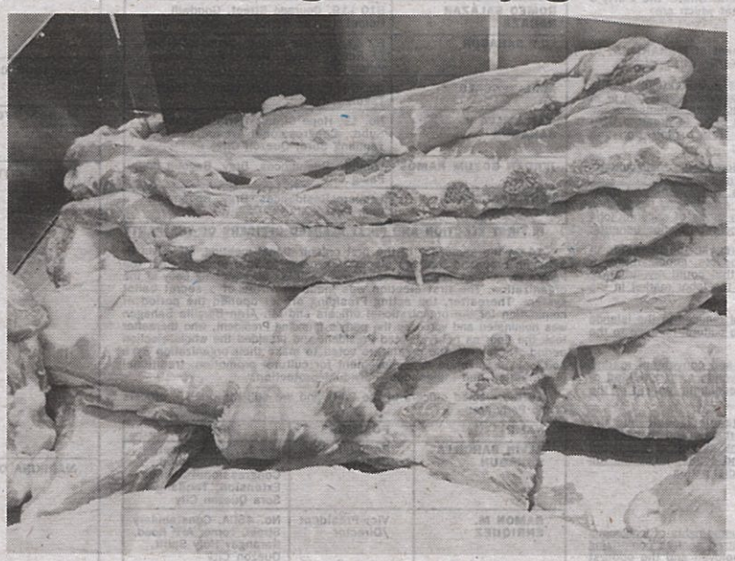
# DTI facilitates seizure of P100-M smuggled ASF-infected pork, other agri-fishery goods

**In coordination with the Department of Agriculture, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, National Bureau of Investigation, National Police, and as co-chair of the Sub-Task Group on Economic Intelligence, the Department of Trade and Industry facilitated and witnessed the confiscation of more than P100 million worth of smuggled frozen meat and assorted agri-fishery products in the National Capital Region last May 28.**



Various frozen meat and high-value agricultural food products such as beef, Peking duck, black chicken, eel, Dori fish fillet, crawfish, jumbo shrimps, scallops, and African Swine Fever-infected pork were found inside 12 refrigerated container vans that were parked in an empty lot in Barangay San Rafael, Navotas City.

According to the investigation, the shipments originated from Belgium, Brazil, China, Germany, and Vietnam based on the markings of the boxes—and almost half of the entire shipment is comprised of ASF-infected frozen pork imported from Germany despite the President Duterte's recent announcement of a state of calamity in the country because of the ASF outbreak.

The anti-smuggling operation noted several violations that were committed by the illegal traders including the absence of International Veterinary Certificate from the country of origin, absence of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance, lack of necessary border inspection of the Bureau of Animal Industry Veterinary Quarantine Officers at the port of entry, and shipments containing pork and poultry products coming from countries with existing trade suspensions due to the presence of transboundary animal diseases such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and ASF.

The seized goods would be destroyed in accordance with the DA's Memorandum Order 43 Series of 2020, otherwise known as the Temporary Ban on the Importation of Domestic and Wild Pigs and Their Products and By-Products including Pork Meat, Pig Skin, Porcine Processed Animal Proteins and Semen Originating from Germany.

Accordingly, the NBI would file appropriate criminal charges against the alleged owner of the smuggled shipments including the violation of Republic Act 10845 or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016 and RA 10611 or the Food Security Act of 2013.

"We are still in the middle of a pandemic while our country is currently under a state of calamity due to ASF. Businessmen cannot and should not take advantage of our situation with their illegal business practices as they will be dealt with the long arm of the law," Trade and Industry Undersecretary and -Consumer Protection Group chief Ruth B. Castelo stated.

Consumers are encouraged to report any unscrupulous traders and smugglers by calling the Consumer Care Hotline at DTI (1-384) or by sending an email to consumercare@dti.gov.ph.

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# Protecting the risks of the agricultural sector

By Reynaldo A. De Dios

RECOGNIZING the importance of protecting the agricultural sector against the multitude of risks, the government set up the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) on June 11, 1978 as the implementing agency of the government's agricultural insurance program.

The PCIC is an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture and its principal mandate is to provide insurance protection to farmers against losses arising from natural calamities, plant diseases and pest, and infestations of their *palay* and corn as well as other crops. In addition, the PCIC provides protection against damage to/loss of non-crop agricultural assets including but not limited to machineries, equipment, transport facilities and other related infrastructures due to perils insured against. To enhance further the crop insurance program, it can also be offered as surrogate collateral to banks and other financial institutions. PCIC also insures the livestock of farmers.

Although a low profile agency, PCIC has fulfilled its mission to help stabilize the income of agricultural producers, thus contributing to the nation's economic development.

In the latest annual report for the year 2019, PCIC President Atty. Jovy C. Bernabe cited the key achievements of the corporation as follows:

1. PCIC insured over 3.14 million farmers and fisherfolk, which is 38.78 percent more than the previous year's record;
2. The number of those provided free insurance under the special programs rose 36.18 percent to about 2.23 million;
3. The number under the regular program rose 45.54 percent to 917,353;
4. The amount of insurance cover provided grew 40.44 percent to about P112.1 billion;
5. The premium income reached P5.72 billion, which is 17.29 percent more than the year before;
6. PCIC used up the entire P3.5 billion available government subsidy for free insurance and added some more from its Agri Agra Funds to push the entire government subsidy provided to P5.49 billion; and
7. PCIC paid P4.17 billion in claims, nearly 20 percent more than the previous year, to 569,344 farmers and fisherfolk.

These achievements were complemented with organizational efforts to continue to increase PCIC's network of partners for agricultural information and advocacy. The corporation increased the number of provincial extension offices and service desks to better service their stakeholders. It continued to fine-tune their processes, which enabled them to address over 90 percent of complaints filed in their regional offices within 20 days, much lesser than the 60 days set by law. PCIC also continues to build its competency-based human resource system and has mapped the competencies and needs of its staff.

Nevertheless, while PCIC has attained significant milestones, it still has a long way toward achieving its optimum in the service of the Filipino farmers and fisherfolk.

At this juncture, we congratulate the management and staff of PCIC for doing a good job and continuing to do so in the future.

*The author is a risk management consultant and Editor of Insurance Philippines magazine.*

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# QC govt unveils community urban farm in Novaliches

TO encourage residents to participate in food security, the Quezon City government launched Sharon Farm to provide food and livelihood through urban farming.

The 5,000-square meter farm is now producing nutritious and healthy vegetable seedlings such as kangkong, talong, malunggay, and okra.

Sharon Farm is one of the city's community model farms under the GrowQC Food Security Program that will serve as a "feeder farm" to other urban gardens and farms by providing seedlings and other agricultural inputs. This was made possible through the partnership inked last year with the Diocese of Novaliches that allowed access to an idle land and make it productive.

As the chairman of the QC Food Security Task Force, Mayor Ma. Josefina Belmonte said she has been consistent in her advocacy to provide long term and sustainable food security projects to QC residents.

"It is heartening to see that more and more urban farms are sprouting up in our city after the local government started this project 10 years ago. This only proves that our Joy of Urban Farming project is a success," she said in a staement.

"This project will not only enable QC residents to plant food crops and stave off hunger, but it will also allow them to earn an income."

To ensure a sustainable way of managing the farm, the City Engineering and Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department improved its drainage system including the composting biodigester facilities. The farm also demonstrates modern and efficient farming systems like drip irrigation which helps in saving water.

QC Food Security Task Force Co-Chairman Emmanuel Velasco expressed his gratitude to the urban farmers and the city's partners for their commitment in helping feed the most food vulnerable and provide income opportunities through urban farming.

"We thank Bishop Gaa and Fr. Joseph Buslon in making this a reality for more residents of Quezon City here in Novaliches. Thank you all again for being here. This is just the beginning and I look forward to a lively community farm and continuous partnership with the diocese. *Mabuhay po kayo*," Velasco said in his speech.

This #GrowQC partnership will also provide livelihood and skills training to beneficiaries in different sectors such as Boy Scouts of the Philippines High School Students, SK Gulaynihan, QCPD Station 4, LGBT sector, BEC Novaliches Proper, Unemployed returning OFWs, Kababaihan Women's Group, SMKP (Labor Ministry), 4Ps of Novaliches Proper, Community Volunteers of Novaliches, Solo Parents, and Barangay Neighborhood Watch Group.

At the same time, Barangay Novaliches Proper Captain Asuncion Visaya signed another Memorandum of Agreement with the Diocese of Novaliches, Department of Agriculture, Philippine Seed Industry Association to collaborate on more programs and improve urban agricultural practices within Sharon Farm.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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# GOCC subsidies drop to P24 B in April

By CZERIZA VALENCIA

Subsidies extended by the national government to state-owned corporations (GOCCs) reached P23.9 billion in April, lower than the funding support provided in the same period last year, data from the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) showed.

The latest figure was 30.7 percent lower than the P34.5 billion in funding support provided to GOCCs in the same month last year.

This also brought the first four months total to P35.26 billion, nearly P22 billion lower than the P56.86 billion in the same period last year.

The bulk of the subsidies in April at P10.132 billion was given to major non-financial government corporations.

Receiving the highest funding support were the National Irrigation Administration (P3.394 billion), National Food Authority (P7 billion) and the National Housing Authority (P3.225 billion).

The balance of the budgetary support at P10.132 billion was given to other government corporations as no subsidies were given to government financial institutions in April.

Of all the GOCCS, the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. received the highest budgetary support of P8.951 billion in April.

Other large recipients of subsidies during the month were: the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (P103 million million), National Kidney and Transplant Institute (P107 million), Philippine Children's Medical Center (P204 million) and Philippine Heart Center (P147 million).

Other state-run firms which also received large amounts of budgetary support in April were the Philippine Rice Research Institute (P185 million) and the Philippine Postal Corp. (P140 million).

The national government extends subsidies to GOCCs to cover or extend funds for programs and projects, as well as operational expenses.

Subsidies provided to state firms have been lower year-on-year from February to April.

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# Aquafeed project shows promise for farmers' income

TO HELP lower the price of fish amidst volatile food prices across the country, an international aquaculture research center is coming up with a new fish feed formulation that is cost-efficient and eco-friendly.

Using byproducts of ethanol production, rendered animal protein, and processed copra meal, a scientist at the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center Aquaculture Department (SEAFDEC/AQD) formulated fish feed that performed better than commercially available feeds as proven in pond trials.

The fish diet is cheaper as it only costs about P28 per kilogram to produce, while the average cost of a commercial feed is about P34 to 36 per kilogram.

"We came up with this feed formulation to lower the price of feeds which account for more than 50 to 60 percent of the total production cost in aquaculture," said Dr. Roger Edward Mamauag, a scientist at SEAFDEC/AQD and head of its Technology Verification and Extension Division.

Dr. Mamauag compared the new formulation with commercial feeds in high-density tilapia pond culture and found it will cost about P1.6 million in commercial feeds to provide for one hectare in a year of operation, while only P1.2 million using the new formula.

Accounting for the costs and returns of the trial runs, net income from one hectare of tilapia ponds is about P21,862 in a year using commercial feeds, and P543,925 using the new formula.

**TILAPIA HARVEST.** Pond aides of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center Aquaculture Department (SEAFDEC/AQD) harvest tilapia produced from a project on the field testing of cost-effective aquaculture feed. **JF Aldon**

Manila Standard

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# QC launches Sharon Farm to give food, livelihood via urban farming

**By Rio N. Araja**

TO ENCOURAGE residents to participate in food security, the Quezon City government has launched Sharon Farm in a 5,000-square meter lot in Barangay Novaliches to provide food and livelihood through urban farming, according to Mayor Joy Belmonte.

"It is nice to see that there are now more urban farms in the city since we started the program 10 years ago. This is just one testimony of the success of Joy of Urban Farming project," Belmonte said.

"This will not only beef up the capability of the residents to plant and avoid hunger but also provides livelihood and encourage the people to plant within their backyard and eat nutritious food," she added.

Sharon Farm is one of the city's community model farms under the GrowQC Food Security Program serving as a "feeder farm" to other urban gardens and farms by providing seedlings and other agricultural inputs.

Belmonte is the chairperson of QC Food Security Task Force.

Emmanuel Gaa, task force co-chairperson, thanked the urban farmers and the city's partners for their commitment in helping feed the most food vulnerable and provide income opportunities through urban farming.

"We thank Bishop Gaa and Fr. Joseph Buslon in making this a reality for more residents of Quezon City here in Novaliches. Thank you all again for being here. This is just the beginning and I look forward to a lively community farm and continuous partnership with the diocese. Mabuhay po kayo," he said.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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# PAL transports Phl's 1st *okra* exports to Korea

Flag carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL) yesterday carried the country's first *okra* shipment to Korea.

PAL transported 1,800 kilograms of *okra* as cargo shipment through a Manila to Incheon flight.

The airline said the cargo flight, which was a milestone for the Philippine agribusiness sector, reflects the business opportunities that new markets like Korea can provide to local farmers and export sectors.

"*Okra* used to be exported to Japan and now, the Philippines has expanded exportation to Korea," PAL said.

In September last year, the country sent the first batch of *okra* export to Japan.

Meanwhile, budget carrier Cebu Pacific carried yesterday another batch of one million COVID-19 vaccine doses from Beijing to Manila.

Upon arrival in Manila, all vaccines were inspected by authorities prior to transfer to cold storage vans and facilities.

"We remain grateful for the opportunity to support the government's vaccination program. We are keen to transport the vaccines, whether internationally or domestically, so that our national vaccination campaign meets its targets," Cebu Pacific chief strategy officer Alex Reyes said.

Cebu Pacific also transported a total of 51,800 COVID-19 vaccine doses to five provinces over the week, namely, to Puerto Princesa, Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato, Zamboanga, and Tuguegarao.

To date, the carrier has already transported 3.5 million vaccine doses from China to Manila, and more than 1.1 million doses to various parts of the Philippines since March.

– **Richmond Mercurio**

**CEBU PACIFIC TRANSPORTS MORE VACCINES:** In photo (from left) are Jose Laurente, Jr., Cebu Pacific director, cargo sales; Usec. Ma. Carolina Vidal-Taiño, DOH-procurement and supply chain management; Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., chief implementer of the NTF against COVID-19; Health Secretary Francisco Duque III; Alex Reyes, Cebu Pacific chief strategy officer, and Marvin Cui, Cebu Pacific director, special projects.

Malaya
Business Insight

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# Corn, soybeans and wheat post gains

CHICAGO- Chicago corn, soybean and wheat futures gained as hot, dry conditions in parts of the US Midwest threatened yield potential at a time of tight global supply.

The most-active corn contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) ended 20-3/4 cents higher at $6.82-3/4 per bushel, gaining 4 percent for the week. New-crop December corn added 25 cents to end at $5.91-1/2.

CBOT soybeans gained 34-1/2 cents to $15.83-3/4 per bushel, increasing 3.48 percent for the week. New-crop November soybeans added 32 cents to $14.35-1/2.

CBOT wheat gained 11-1/2 cents to $6.87-3/4 per bushel, a 3.65 percent gain for the week.

Tightening global availability, linked to strong Chinese imports and deteriorating prospects for Brazil's upcoming corn harvest, have made grain markets sensitive to fluctuating US weather forecasts.

"You're going to need a record-type yield for both beans and corn. The current forecast is clearly not helpful," said Terry Roggensack, Agriculture research specialist at Hightower Report. - ***Reuters***

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A broader look at today's business

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# Worst drought in decades escalates threats across US west

ALMOST three-fourths of the western United States is gripped by drought so severe that it's off the charts of anything recorded in the 20-year history of the US Drought Monitor.

Mountains across the West have seen little precipitation, robbing reservoirs of dearly needed snowmelt and rain, said Brad Rippey, a meteorologist and Drought Monitor author with the US Department of Agriculture. The parched conditions mean the wildfire threat is high and farmers are struggling to irrigate crops. Meanwhile, dropping water levels in Lake Oroville, one of California's largest reservoirs, forced authorities to remove more than 100 houseboats, according to the Weather Channel.

"Water supply is the big story for the West, and we are getting in trouble with all the interests that try to compete for a slice of that water," Rippey said by telephone. "There is not a lot to go around this year."

Unlike the eastern US, in the West most water comes in winter months in the form of rain that gushes into reservoirs or snow that piles up on mountainsides. Last year, drought cost the nation $4.5 billion, according to the US National Centers for Environmental Information. This year, what little snow that fell soon melted away and seeped into dusty ground rather than rivers, streams and reservoirs.

"We have never seen a drought at the scale and the intensity that we see right now, and it is possible that this may be the baseline for the future," Elizabeth Klein, senior counselor for the Department of Interior told a Congressional hearing last week. "California is currently experiencing its third-driest year on record; the second two driest years on record, and the driest year since 1977."

Through the end of April, 1.7 million acre-feet of water melted off California's mountains, down from the normal rate of 8 million, Rippey said. In the last two years, there has only been 4 million.

"This is, by far, the worst recharge year in modern history," Rippey said.

In addition to the drought figures, officials are concerned about the Colorado River, which powers hydroelectric plants and provides drinking and irrigation water across much of the Southwest and parts of Mexico. So much water is taken out of the Colorado, in fact, that it rarely ever makes it to its historical delta in the Gulf of California.

Based on paleohydrology, scientists say the Colorado is experiencing one of its driest periods in 1,200 years, Klein said.

Drought has afflicted the America Southwest for nearly two decades—the period from 2000 to 2019 was the second-driest in the area since at least 800 C.E. Researchers from Columbia University's Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory estimated that man-made changes to the climate were responsible for 47 percent of the drought's severity, in a study published in the journal Science last year.

Worse, the researchers predicted that the Southwest could be entering an era of mega-drought, a period when extreme water scarcity lasts for decades rather than years. For agriculture-heavy California that spells big trouble, especially the water-intensive crops such as lettuces and almonds the state is famous for producing. ***Bloomberg News***

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# More deforestation, less rain threaten Brazil agribusiness

BRASILIA — Brazilian agribusiness is losing up to $1 billion a year as rising deforestation cuts rainfall in the southern Amazon — a problem set to expand if forest loss continues, a group of Brazilian and German researchers have warned.

In a study published in the journal *Nature Communications* in May, they found that smaller-scale forest losses can enhance rainfall on adjoining agricultural land — but once losses pass 55-60%, rainfall plunges.

Losses of tree cover in particular seem to delay the start and shorten the length of the rainy season, they found.

As Brazilian Amazon forest destruction continues, drier conditions could put a massive strain on the region's mainly rainfed agricultural industry, the authors said.

Brazil is the world's top soybean producer, and its second largest producer of beef, as well as the globe's biggest beef exporter.

In parts of the country, Brazil's farmers are already battling unusually dry weather this year, with government agencies warning in late May of drought threats as the country faces its worst dry spell in 91 years.

In the southern Amazonian state of Mato Grosso, Brazil's main soy producer, irregular rainfall is reducing potential harvests, according to the Mato Grosso Institute of Agricultural Economics.

Aprosoja Brasil, the country's main soy production association, similarly said farmers faced drought while planting last October and November, followed by excessively heavy rain at harvest time this year, lowering the expected harvest.

The new study looked at rainfall changes between 1999 and 2019 in the southern Brazilian Amazon, a 1.9 million sq. km. area that has so far lost about a third of its forests, as a model for future rainfall shifts.

Researchers predicted what might happen through 2050 under continued weakening of Brazil's conservation policies and strong political support for agricultural expansion compared to effective enforcement of forest protection laws.

Co-author Britaldo Soares told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that the difference was stark.

Unless Brazil's government quickly shifts its pro-development policies, which favor economic growth over conservation, agribusinesses could become victims of the measures many of them support.

The effect would be like "shooting yourself in the foot," said Soares, who is project coordinator for the Centre for Remote Sensing at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG).

Environmentalists say President Jair Bolsonaro's policies have weakened conservation efforts and his rhetoric has emboldened illegal ranchers, loggers and land speculators to cut down the Amazon forest to expand their business.

Bolsonaro's office did not respond to a request for comment.

## MORE FOREST LOSS

Amazon forest losses have soared to a 12-year high since Bolsonaro took office in 2019, with deforestation rising 43% in April compared to the same month a year ago, according to government data published in May.

Removing trees to plant crops and raise cattle reduces the forest's ability to trap and store planet-heating carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and can contribute to emissions if forests are burned.

But more fragmented forest, as losses grow, also is less able to produce the same volume of water vapor that rises to become rain, and can make the forest drier and more vulnerable to burning.

Less rainfall can mean lower yields and force farmers in the southern Amazon and beyond to adapt by moving to new areas or growing more drought-resistant crops, the study noted.

It did not discuss prospects for irrigating crops in the region.

Farmers in the Amazon also commonly profit from double-cropping, or growing at least two crops per year.

But that could become more difficult or impossible if continuing tree losses cause rainy seasons to become delayed and shorter, the study noted.

Researchers said that if Brazil's government fails to act against deforestation, international responses — including potential sanctions and exclusion of Brazil from international treaties — could also result in lost revenue for Brazil's farm-related businesses.

Stopping forest loss in the Amazon is vital not only to protect biodiversity and the global climate but to protect agribusiness itself, they said.

## NEW MODEL?

As part of their study, the researchers used mathematical modeling to predict the economic losses that southern Amazonian agribusiness is expected to suffer if current policies continue and rainfall in the Amazon keeps dropping.

By 2050, the beef industry could lose more than $180 billion and the soy industry up to $5.6 billion in total due to the effects of decreased rainfall, the study found.

Soares said for long-term economic prosperity the Amazon region needed to find a more sustainable economic model not reliant on land-hungry commodities such as soy and beef whose expansion were leading to major forest loss.

A study he and other researchers carried out in 2018 found landowners could potentially earn more than $700 per hectare each year in international payments to keep climate-stabilizing forests standing as well as by created processed products from forest species such as Brazil nuts.

Cattle ranching on deforested land, by comparison, earns a landowner about $40 per hectare each year, it noted.

Brazil also needs better enforcement of its forest protection laws to preserve conservation zones and indigenous territories, he said.

As well, other nations need to put more pressure on the current Brazilian government to boost forest conservation, said Paulo Barreto, a researcher who has studied the Amazon for three decades and works at the nonprofit research institute Imazon. — ***Thomson Reuters Foundation***