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# 119 retail stores, supermarkets join DTI-DA's PRD program

The Presyong Risonable Dapat program of the Departments of Trade and Industry and of Agriculture has gained support from the business community as 119 retail stores and supermarkets participated in the program.

The DTI said retail stores and supermarkets that joined the program include the 83 Robinsons supermarket branches, 25 Puregold branches, and 10 retail stores of participating meat importers and traders, and WalterMart's North EDSA Supermarket.

Under the PRD program, the government aims to bring high-quality but affordable meat products to the consumers, particularly in areas under strict community quarantine status.

"With the extension of modified enhanced community quarantine until 07 September 2021, the DTI assures the public that we will continue to work with the private sector to ensure consumer's access to meat products," DTI Undersecretary and Consumer Protection Group chief Ruth Castelo said.

Last Saturday, the PRD program held its Frozen Meat Edition Weekend Pop-up in Riverbanks Center in Barangka, Marikina City.

Frozen meat products, ready-to-cook meals, and processed food were sold in the weekend pop-up store.

The PRD pop-up store also gives discounts for selected products.

BusinessWorld™

Date: SEPTEMBER 2, 2021 Page: 2/S1

# Sugar producers expect to be profitable after 100% of local production allocated to domestic market

THE SUGAR Regulatory Administration's (SRA) decision to allocate 100% of sugar output to the domestic market in crop year 2021-2022 is expected to help producers be profitable because they will not be required to sell sugar to the US at concessionary prices.

Manuel R. Lamata, United Sugar Producers Federation president, said in a phone message that Sugar Order (SO) No. 1, which allocated 100% of production to the domestic market, will mean producers will not be loss-making.

SRA issued SO No. 1 on Aug. 31, which classified the entire crop as "B" sugar, for domestic allocation.

"We are thankful that the SRA has followed our advice to make all of our sugar production "B." It will positively benefit the industry since we are going to have the same price all the way. We will not post losses," Mr. Lamata said.

Mr. Lamata said however that small volume of imports might be needed with supply expected to be tight due to the high levels of projected rainfall, which will negatively affect production.

"In terms of supply, it is going to be tight. I think we may need to import a bit of sugar. It will depend on the weather and production in the coming crop year. We will know by May next year," Mr. Lamata said. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

**FULL STORY**

Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone
<bit.ly/Sugar090221>

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: SEPTEMBER 2, 2021 Page: B3

# NMIS orders release of imported meat products

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas @jearcalas

THE National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) has ordered the release of meat shipments that had been held in abeyance due to the lack of proper labels.

The NMIS issued Memorandum Circular (MC) 08-2021-028 dated August 26 that ordered the release of all imported meat put on hold due to noncompliance with the government's minimum labeling requirements.

The MC was signed by NMIS Executive Director Jocelyn A. Salvador.

Based on the MC, the 23 shipments that were held in abeyance were "deemed not to constitute misrepresentation, misbranding, false claims and other deliberate acts."

The NMIS added that this was the basis for their release "for utilization to further measures on modification."

Industry sources told the BusinessMirror that importers have been given the go-signal to modify the labels of the non-compliant shipments, which were subsequently allowed to be released for market use.

The meat shipments that were ordered release under MC 08-2021-028 included imported beef (boneless beef navels, striploin, ribeye,

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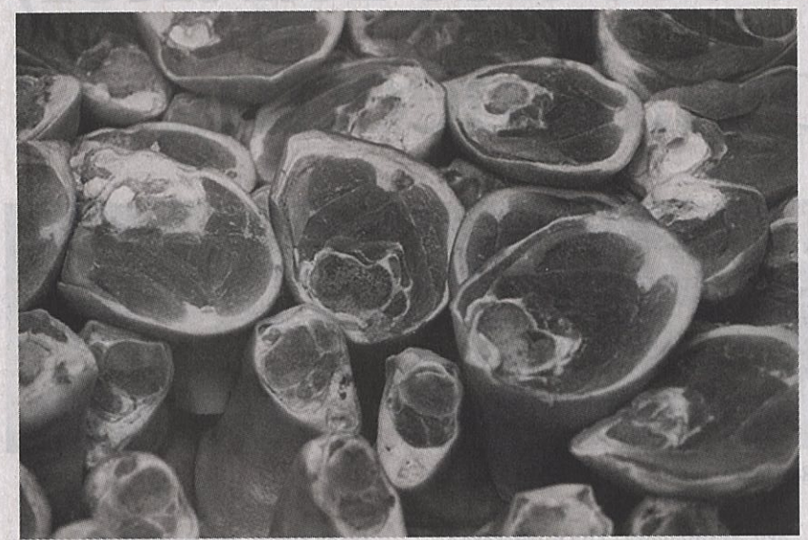

BusinessMirror file photo

chuckeye roll, shortlate), pork, (trimmings, middle bone-in, jowls, loins bone in skinless, hams, ear drum) as well as frozen ground mature chicken breast meat.

The BusinessMirror reported last month that the stringent implementation of the minimum meat labeling requirements on imported meat have resulted in a supply bottleneck as the government put on hold at least 2.5 million kilograms of imported meat products. ***(Related story: https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/08/11/meat-labeling-rules-seen-affecting-food-supply/)***

The confiscation of meat shipments started after the NMIS issued a memorandum circular last July 27, which reiterated the strict enforcement of labeling requirements for meat products.

The Bureau of Animal Industry and the NMIS issued a joint memorandum circular (JMC) on meat labeling requirements last August 10 after industry players aired their concerns over the NMIS memorandum circular.

However, the JMC did not sit well with industry stakeholders. Some of them pointed out that the JMC contains "legal impediments" and that it had nothing to do with food safety.

## Frozen inventory

AHEAD of the issuance of the MC, the NMIS released data which indicated that the country's frozen pork inventory shrank after it declined for two consecutive weeks. Inventory as of August 23 was at 67,551.59 metric tons (MT).

NMIS data showed that frozen pork inventory in accredited cold storages nationwide as of August 23 fell by 3,608.22 MT from 71,159.81 MT recorded on August 16.

The agency attached to the Departement of Agriculture reported that 96.95 percent, or 65,492.05 MT of the August 23 total frozen pork inventory was imported.

The volume of imported frozen pork during the reference period was almost 5 percent lower than the 68,859.82 MT recorded on August 16, based on NMIS data.

The volume of imported frozen pork in cold storages nationwide reached a new record on August 9. Inventory reached 75,488.97 MT as a result of the meat shipments held by the government due to noncompliance to minimum labeling requirements.

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# PhilRice: Azolla cuts fertilizer cost in rice production

FILIPINO rice farmers may save as much as P17,500 per year if they intercrop palay with azolla particularly in irrigated areas as it can help cut their fertilizer expenses, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) said.

PhilRice said a recent study by its researchers showed that azolla, a fern that thrives in freshwater, maintains a symbiotic relationship with the blue-green algae Anabaena azollae, creating a sustainable environment for nitrogen production.

"The algae provide nitrogen to the fern and the fern provides a habitat for the algae. This symbiosis allows the conversion of nitrogen into ammonia, which can be used by rice plants when incorporated into the soil," said the PhilRice, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Cielo Luz C. Mondejar, DA-PhilRice researcher, said their computation showed that farmers can save about P17,500 per year "if they use azolla as biofertilizer for rice."

"It can also increase their rice yield to 1 [metric ton per hectare]," Mondejar said in a recent statement.

PHOTO from *www.philrice.gov.ph*

If azolla covers the floodwaters of 1-hectare rice paddy, it can supply 30 kilograms of nitrogen, which can replace at least 50 percent of the inorganic nitrogen requirement of rice without lowering the yield.

"The azolla-anabaena association can fix about 1.2 [kilogram of nitrogen per hectare] daily or about 864kg N/ha annually, which is equivalent to about 34 bags of urea," she said.

PhilRice said Mondejar and her team put up a demonstration farm at DA-PhilRice in Negros to show the benefits of azolla in rice production.

"Many studies have been done on the effectiveness of azolla as an alternative or supplementary fertilizer in flooded rice cropping systems," Mondejar said.

"One of these studies revealed that it increases humus content, which ultimately improves the physical, chemical, and biological soil conditions. Another study showed that azolla intercropped with rice also reduces weed population."

PhilRice said an earlier study of its researchers showed that growing azolla in the rice field is a good way "to minimize golden apple snail damages in transplanted rice."

"We're putting up this demonstration farm for more farmers to know about the benefits of Azolla in rice production," she said. Mondejar said the demo farm, which was put up in January, also demonstrates the viability of azolla in fertilizing vegetables and feed to animals such as ducks, chickens, and tilapia.

"With 22 percent to 37 percent crude protein content of azolla, farmers could raise livestock and poultry without the need for high protein commercial feeds," she added.

***Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas***

The Manila Times

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# 237 villages affected by ASF in Davao Region

**DAVAO CITY:** At least 43 towns consisting of 237 *barangay* (villages) in five provinces and one city in Davao Region have been affected by the African swine fever (ASF) for the past two years.

Department of Agriculture (DA) Region 11 Livestock Coordinator Dr. Karl Laurence Pineda said ASF has affected a total of 10,664 hog raisers in the region of which 5,669 are from Davao Occidental, 1,138 from Davao del Sur, 1,259 from Davao City, 1,068 from Davao del Norte, 106 from Davao de Oro, and 1,424 from Davao Oriental.

"During this period, a total of 49,315 pigs were culled in the region due to ASF," he said.

Pineda said he hopes other local government units in the region will come up with their own legislation that will institute measures to control the spread of the ASF.

Pineda cited the government units of Davao Occidental and Mati City in Davao Oriental which passed ordinances designed to come up with a uniform approach to control the spread of the virus.

Pineda told the members of the technical working group of the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council 11 in a meeting recently that the agency has conducted training on farmers to also act as barangay biosecurity officers in the community.

DA 11 has released over P172 million as financial assistance to the affected hog farmers in Davao Region.

**RUTH PALO**

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPTEMBER 2, 2021 Page: B3

# Capiz farmers provided with farm equipment

SOME 502 farmers in Panay, Capiz will benefit from the farm machineries that will be distributed by the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF)-Mechanization Program.

Last August 26, the Butacal Farmers Association based at Baranga Butacal in Capiz signed an agreement with PhilMech for its members to receive at no cost a four-wheel tractor, walk-behind transplanter, rice combine harvester, recirculating dryer and single-pass rice mill.

Other farmers' groups of Panay also signed similar agreements in Barangay Calitan in Capiz together with Editha Dollete, Panay officer-in-charge municipal agriculturist. Each of the groups will receive the following machines. Calitan Multi-purpose Cooperative — driven disc plow for four-wheel tractor; Bago Grande Irrigators Farmers Association — four-wheel tractor, hand tractor, floating tiller and riding type transplanter; Lus-onan Farmers Association — four-wheel tractor and rice combine harvester; Bago Chiquito Farmers Association — four-wheel tractor and rice combine harvesters; and Calapawan Farmers Association — rice combine harvester.

"This intervention is under the mechanization component of RCEF, which aims to improve their farm activities through appropriate and efficient mechanized technologies," said engineer Romar Areno, Visayas Cluster head of PhilMech.

The qualified farmers' groups all passed the accreditation requirements to receive the machines.

The RCEF-Mechanization Program aims to improve rice farmers' competitiveness and income amid the liberalization of rice imports.

**THE TIMES**

The Manila Times

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# A consumers' party-list

FINER POINTS

FERMIN ADRIANO

THE biggest political and economic grouping in the Philippines are the consumers whose fundamental interests are to buy reasonably priced goods and services, which are of the quality advertised by sellers. The government is supposed to be championing and protecting the interest of the consumers through the laws and numerous bodies (i.e., a unit in the Department of Trade and Industry, the Philippine Competition Commission, among others) that were passed and created for this purpose.

Unfortunately, the government's efforts to protect the interest of the consumers are often drowned by the effective campaign of producers' groups who have the resources and the political networks to protect their vested interests.

Thus, for instance, the government is practically helpless in addressing tons of complaints by users regarding the poor quality of the services of telecommunication firms. A similar situation exists in the water and energy subsectors where consumers' complaints hardly merit the attention of operators. During the pre-pandemic period, airline companies similarly ignored with impunity any complaints by their passengers knowing that they would receive minimal penalties from the government for their poor services.

In the retail trade business, big companies can hardly sympathize with the plight of the consumers who end up purchasing goods that turn out to be lemons. In the public sector, license-granting government agencies most often provide lousy services so that fixers, with whom they are in cahoots, will have a demand for their services.

The economic literature reveals that these firms and agencies behave this way because of their monopolistic or oligopolistic control (one or a few sellers) of the product or service. Since there are no competitors or a few competitors selling the product or service, they can afford to be inefficient because consumers have no other choice but to deal with them. In other words, they behave like a "cartel" in the business.

## Protecting food consumers

Such a situation is not confined to the industry and services sectors. It also happens in the agricultural sector. The difference though lies in the urgency by which the government should respond to protect the consumers' interest with regard to food products being sold.

Food, which comes from agricultural products, is vital for human survival and a healthy daily existence. Everyone has to eat and therefore it is inevitable that consumers will demand food. Access to food, particularly the nutritious ones, is primarily a function of prices. The more expensive food is, the more difficult it is for the consumers, particularly the poor, to have access to them.

Everyone knows that prices rise whenever there is a supply shortage, whether real or artificial. During this pandemic, prices of food commodities are on the upswing because of production and logistical bottlenecks. The food price hike has become a global phenomenon because of labor shortage and logistical bottlenecks in transporting goods from the farm to the market and finally to the consumers, especially during lockdowns. There are also endogenous factors, such as the outbreak of the African swine fever, which wiped out a significant portion of the hog stock in Asian countries including the Philippines. And one should not forget about the depletion of our sea resources, which has resulted in diminished fish catch.

Unfortunately, local production cannot keep up with local demand, which was the situation even before the pandemic, if we are to rely on the data churned out by the Philippine Statistics Authority, the government's official data source. The problem of access to sufficient and affordable nutritious food has been aggravated by the pandemic with the loss of jobs and dwindling income of many of our workers.

Expectedly, the incidence of hunger among our people is on the rise. Government surveys on the hunger incidence reveal that more than half of Filipinos are suffering from hunger. This is validated by the results of the public opinion poll surveys of private polling outfits such as the Social Weather Station Inc. and Pulse Asia.

## Opposing sentiment

However, despite obvious supply shortages of key commodities such as pork, fish, corn, vegetables, among others, local producers' associations claim that they are capable of filling in the supply gap. Any attempt to address the supply shortage by temporarily raising import volumes or lowering the tariffs on imported agricultural products by the Department of Agriculture is vehemently opposed.

However, two facts cannot be denied. There is really a supply shortage causing the price spike. Second, despite the supply shortage (and as a result of it), prices of those food products that are in short supply are still rising. This means that while consumers are bearing the brunt of the high prices, producers keep raking in profits.

## What about the consumers, especially the poor?

The usual justification for maintaining high tariffs and preventing the entry of imported agricultural products is that we need to protect our poor local farmers and fishers. But the problem is that our poor rice farmers also buy pork, fish, among others. Our small hog raisers eat rice, vegetables, among others. And that majority of our consumers are neither farmers nor fishers. Given the dwindling income of majority of our workers, should they suffer from hunger because food has been made so unaffordable by the supposed need to protect our poor farmers and fishers?

One thing is certain — the small farmers or fishers are not the ultimate beneficiaries of protectionism. How can they be, since their individual produce, when sold to the market, represents but a minuscule portion of total sales. It is the big producers, the big boys in the industry, who are the net beneficiaries of protectionism. That is why they are the noisiest groups in the media and public forums opposing any attempt to allow more agricultural imports even as a temporary measure due to the pandemic and the rising hunger incidence among our people because the entry of imported food products will diminish their profit.

Of course, our big local producers will always assure us that they are capable of providing an adequate supply of food for all the Filipino consumers in the future. But as Prof. John Maynard Keynes, a Nobel Prize winner in economics, declared: "In the long run, we are all dead!"

It is about time that the more than a hundred million Filipino consumers protect their own interest by establishing a consumers' party-list.

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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# Sugar groups welcome allocation for 2021

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

Sugar stakeholders have welcomed the decision of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) to allocate the production for this crop year for the domestic market to ensure the stability of local supply.

Based on SRA's sugar order number one for the crop year 2021 to 2022, 100 percent of the sugar allocation will go to the "B" or the domestic sugar market.

The SRA emphasized that almost all sugar stakeholders recommended the said allocation for the crop year, which officially started yesterday and will end in August next year.

"With the on-going pandemic, it is imperative that we ensure our local domestic supply. More importantly, an all "B" domestic allocation is advantageous to our sugar farmers," SRA board planters representative Emilio Bernadino Yulo III told **The STAR**.

Confederation of Sugar Producers Associations Inc. (Confed) spokesperson Raymond Montinola said their group was among those who recommended a 100 percent domestic allocation.

"We computed the figures based on SRA pre production projection.Weather outlook was a major factor in our computation," Montinola told **The STAR**.

"We came to a conclusion that in order to maintain stability in supply and demand in the market and also most especially to maintain food security in the country, there should be an all "B" for this crop year," he said.

The SRA cited the statements from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration on the reemergence of the La Niña phenomenon either in late October or November until the first quarter of 2022, which encompases almost all sugar producing provinces at their start and peak milling for the crop year.

Since La Niña is characterized by above normal rainfall, which results in low sugar recovery, the SRA estimates raw sugar production for the crop year to reach 2.1 million metric tons (MT).

"The raw sugar supply and demand projections of the SRA regulation department shows that even with a carry-over volume of 158,557 MT domestic sugar, the country's sugar supply situation is better served with an all "B" domestic sugar allocation for the crop year," the SRA said.

In March, the SRA terminated the seven percent export allocation for the US for the current crop year, which means 100 percent of the country's sugar output for the year will go to the domestic market.

MANILA BULLETIN

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■ WESTERN VISAYAS

# Farming communities to adopt climate-resilient practices

By TARA YAP

ILOILO CITY—The Department of Agriculture (DA) is pushing local government units (LGUs) in Western Visayas to adopt climate-resilient agriculture (CRA) practices to curb the impact of climate change on the region's agricultural industry.

The LGUs in Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, and Negros Occidental provinces as well as the highly urbanized cities of Iloilo and Bacolod are urged to incorporate CRA practices during a recent climate information services (CIS) training.

"They were taught to calculate site-specific climate information that will lead the farmers to determine the priority crops, stages of the crops versus the rainfall forecast," said Chrystal Jane Almendralejo, DA Region 6's specialist for CIS.

Almendralejo also discussed the features of the information system, such as the Seasonal Climate Outlook and Advisory (SCOA), highlighting the six months climate report, weather systems, rainfall forecasts.

The LGU agricultural offices were also urged to utilize the Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA) as a "climate information services is an early warning tool designed for farmers, fishers, and local government units (LGUs) to optimize weather information and advisories provided by the system their production and reduce losses."

MANILA BULLETIN

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## 119 stores join PRD Program

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) continues to partner with the local government units and private establishments to bring affordable yet high-quality meat products to consumers amidst the community quarantine. Aside from frozen meat products, ready-to-cook meals and processed food were sold at discounted prices during the weekend pop-up. "With the extension of Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine until 07 September 2021, the DTI assures the public that we will continue to work with the private sector to ensure consumer's access to meat products," said DTI Consumer Protection Group Undersecretary Ruth B. Castelo. The Presyong Risonable Dapat (PRD) Program – Frozen Meat Edition is scheduled to be conducted in different areas in the National Capital Region (NCR) every week. (Bernie Cahiles-Magkilat)

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: SEPTEMBER 23 2021 Page: B-5

# BFAR opens Laguna tilapia intensive hatchery

By MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR

The Department of Agriculture's (DA) Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has successfully conducted the first trial run of its second tilapia intensive hatchery in the CALABARZON region, a development that will help boost the productivity of tilapia farmers.

Located in Los Baños, Laguna, the hatchery recorded a high hatching rate of 95 percent, which means a high number also of fry produced. At present, the hatchery has six fry trough and hatching jars, and can produce 300,000 fry in just three to five days.

Following the successful trial run, the hatchery now aims to complete four rounds of hatching per month, BFAR said.

With 95 percent hatching rate and 80 percent survival of fry, the hatchery can produce around 960,000 fry in a month. In order to achieve this, more breeders will be required.

BFAR National Director Eduardo Gongona said the tilapia intensive hatchery project is expected to secure sustainable supply of fry/fingerlings and will help improve the productivity and profitability of tilapia farmers.

He further said that aside from producing high volume of quality fry and fingerlings through the application of new technologies and cost-effective methodologies, the project aims to create a model hatchery th n boost production at minin osts.

Tilapia Intensi tchery is a type of artifici reeding of tilapia in which eggs are collected from the mouth of the female breeders, incubated in the Artificial Incubation System facility where they are placed in hatching jars until hatched and become swim-up fry for further rearing.

This technology differs from the other type of hatcheries wherein the breeders spawn naturally in the breeding units and eggs are incubated and hatched in the mouth of female breeders, then released from the mouth as swim-up fry.

Production in Intensive Hatchery is uniform in size and higher compared to traditional method. The economic return is also faster because production can be disposed earlier.

The Manila Times

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# Bill supporting next generation of farmers hailed

CALASIAO, Pangasinan: The Pinablin 4-H Calasiao Inc., a nongovernment youth group here, has commended Congress' passage of a measure aimed at sustaining food production through the provision of financial support to the next generation of farmers in the Philippines.

House Bill (HB) 9575 establishes the young farmers and fisherfolk challenge program, council and funding.

*"Isang panukala po na magpapanumbalik sa mga kabataan sa aspirasyon nila sa agrikultura.* (This is one way to return young people's aspirations for agriculture)," the group's president, Gerald Quinit, said in a phone interview on Tuesday.

Quinit said as a young farmer and leader of the organization, he saw a "brighter future" ahead in agriculture but there were obstacles such as the wrong connotation that farming is difficult and provides meager income.

*"Sana po maipatupad na ang* Magna Carta of Young Farmers *nang magkaroon kami ng boses at upang matulungan po kami na magkaroon ng mga iba't ibang benepisyo at madagdagan ang tulong mula sa gobyerno* (I hope the Magna Carta of Young Farmers will be implemented soon so that the young people like me will have their voice and for us to have support through different benefits and there will be more help from the national government)," he said.

Pangasinan Fourth District Rep. Christopher de Venecia said last week the bill is aimed at creating programs to support and empower the young Filipino farmers and fisherfolk to become partners of the state in attaining food security, agricultural development and modernization.

It is also to encourage young people to be active participants in agriculture.

De Venecia authored HB 1997 seeking to provide for the Magna Carta of young farmers, which was included along with other similar bills to create HB 9575.

HB 9575 has been approved but still needs to undergo the bicameral committee with the Senate for approval before it will be signed by President Rodrigo Duterte to finally become a law. THE TIMES

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: SEPTEMBER 23 2021 Page: A5

# Wheat eases; corn, soybeans flat

SINGAPORE- Chicago wheat futures slid for a fourth consecutive session on Wednesday, weighed down by worries over demand for agricultural products following a recent rally in prices.

Corn and soybeans were little changed.

"Prices have gone up a lot and now we are seeing the impact on demand," said one Singapore-based trader. "Buyers are reluctant to lock deals at current price levels."

The most-active wheat contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) fell 0.2 percent to $7.21 a bushel. In August, wheat futures climbed to their highest in more than eight years. - ***Reuters***