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Daily Tribune
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FMR masterplan in works

In a close-in meeting with DA officials on Monday, Marcos reiterated that FMR projects will strengthen the farming industry and will provide the farmers with quality infrastructure support

From page 1

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. to craft an FMR masterplan to ensure food security in the country.

During a Laging Handa briefing on Wednesday, DA Undersecretary Kristine Evangelista said the government assures that project construction will be in areas with high production.

"The whole masterplan and the map that we are instructed to develop will reflect the priority production areas and where it will lead to going to the market and taking into consideration the route it will have to take," Evangelista said.

"We have 10 million hectares of agricultural production areas. We are identifying how many kilometers of FMR they will be needing," she added.

She said the DA closely coordinates with the DPWH for the FMR routes, adding that the FMR masterplan will be finished "the soonest possible time with proper validation with other government agencies."

The DA is also taking into consideration the route the producers have to take to bring their crops to the market, she noted.

The official disclosed that when the FMR master plan is already complete, the DA will then submit it to the economic managers for review and assessment.

Funding source

Marcos wants the plan to also include funding source, payment terms, as well as the time frame for project completion.

Marcos, who concurrently serves as the DA Secretary, has ordered Agriculture officials to come up with an FMR master plan that will serve as a guide for the government in its bid to promote food security and empower rural communities.

To address supply chain concerns, the Chief Executive has instructed the agriculture officials that the master plan should include regional maps detailing the exact locations of the farm-to-market roads to be constructed.

Farmers' groups on Tuesday expressed apprehension over the proposal of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. to prioritize the construction of a farm-to-market road network system as it might promote corruption instead of food security.

"What is the use of farm-to-market roads if there are no products to transport because the production of fishermen and farmers has failed due to high costs? Roads and infrastructure are not the solutions to achieve food security in the country but support for food producers," one group said.

In a close-in meeting with DA officials on Monday, Marcos reiterated that FMR projects will strengthen the farming industry and will provide the farmers with quality infrastructure support.

The president pushed for this measure in hopes of boosting local food production of agricultural commodities and making them affordable for consumers amid the looming food crisis.

WITH MICHELLE GUILLANG

Daily Tribune
WITHOUT FEAR WITHOUT FAVOR

Date: 21 JUL 2022 Page: A5

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Long road to food security

It is easy to see where President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. is coming from when he said that among his administration's priorities is how to tackle food security amid a weak global environment.

Focusing on food security is indeed vital as the world continues to face problems that hinder economies. These include worsening climate change, rapid population growth, elevated food and fuel costs and the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine that has wreaked havoc on the food supply chain.

The war that started last February proved to be a big hammer blow as it posed an additional challenge for ending hunger and cast a shadow over the state of food security and nutrition for many countries, particularly those that are already facing food crisis situations.

In Asia alone, which is home to over 320 million living in extreme poverty, according to the World Bank, consumers have yet to see the worst. With 4.6 billion people, it is already the most populous continent by a massive margin and reportedly is expected to grow by 700 million in the next three decades.

According to a report, the Philippines is among the countries in Asia expected to have the sharpest price increases in the months to come as agricultural prices soar and supply chains continue to be in chaos.

> ***"Somehow, somewhere, the effects of rice tariffication sent farmers reeling, forcing them to level or lower their pricing with the market to avoid incurring losses.***

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: JULY 21, 2022 Page: 2

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DA subsidies under review

By DANESSA RIVERA

A review of the distribution of subsidies to rightful agriculture sector stakeholders and a masterplan for farm-to-market roads (FMR) are now being prioritized by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In a statement yesterday, DA Undersecretary-designate for consumer and political affairs Kristine Evangelista said there is a need to review the distribution of subsidies to aid local farmers, fishers and animal raisers.

"Our producers must also feel how the subsidy can help them and, at the same time, consumers can see lower prices in the markets," Evangelista said in English and Filipino.

Earlier, agricultural groups urged President Marcos to prioritize food production subsidies over FMR road projects to mitigate the impact of rising costs affecting productivity in the sector.

But the DA is still looking to submit a masterplan for FMRs to the administration's economic managers as soon as it maps out priority production areas throughout the country, Evangelista said.

During the Laging Handa briefing yesterday, she said the agency is studying how many roads are needed as the country has 10 million hectares of agricultural production areas.

"The whole masterplan and the map that we are instructed to develop will reflect the priority production areas and where it will lead to going to the market and taking into consideration the route it will have to take," she said.

Evangelista, who is also the officer-in-charge director of the DA-Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service, said the DA's existing projects and programs will undergo thorough assessment to determine their efficacy.

She said the DA will focus on increasing agricultural production and mobilizing agricultural commodities at consumer-friendly prices.

Earlier, the President – who is also acting DA secretary – said stabilizing prices which escalated because of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is his priority.

The DA is also looking into intensifying production of rice, corn, vegetables, fisheries, livestock, high value crops and other agricultural products.

For rice supply, Evangelista said importation might still be needed for augmentation and for buffer stocking, but priority remains to be given to local palay production.

To address high prices and the stunting of poultry products, the DA Livestock Group would provide feeds, biologics, enhanced biosecurity and other forms of assistance to poultry raisers to keep prices in check, she said.

The prevailing retail price of whole dressed chicken in National Capital Region markets has remained at P200, DA Bantay Presyo-NCR reported yesterday.

To cushion the skyrocketing prices of sugar, Evangelista said the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is considering the importation of sugar.

Setting a suggested retail price is another option as consultations with stakeholders in the sugar industry are already being worked out.

At present, the prevailing retail price of refined sugar is P90 per kilo and for washed and brown sugar, P70.

The Manila Times®
JULY 21 2022 / PAGE: B4

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Malnutrition and hunger: The real issues

FINER POINTS

FERMIN ADRIANO

Last of two parts

IN my column last week, I argued that the underdevelopment of our agriculture sector is due to the protracted protection of our inefficient producers, either through import bans or imposition of high tariffs.

In turn, the underdevelopment of our agriculture sector manifests the following results: Low productivity (per unit of land and per unit of labor); low income of our agricultural workers and hence, high poverty in the countryside; high food prices; and, as a result of third item, high incidences of malnutrition, hunger and stunting among Filipinos, particularly our kids. The recent jointly published report by various United Nations agencies Food and Agriculture Organization; United Nations International Children's Fund; World Health Organization; the World Food Program; and the International Fund for Agriculture Development indicated that around 50 million Filipinos suffer from food insecurity. It is scandalous that while poor Filipino consumers are already spending around 60 percent of their income on food, they still go hungry.

Ostensibly, local food supply cannot meet the increasing demand for food by Filipinos given our relatively high population growth rate. Yet, our inefficient agricultural producers insist that we have enough local supply despite soaring food prices, their assertion defying the simple logic of the law of supply and demand. Which makes one arrive at the conclusion that it is not so much about being pro-Filipino or being pro-farmers that is at stake in this debate but simply their profit margin. For if they are really the champions of our poor farmers, why are our tillers and fishers as dirt poor as ever since this *Nationalism: A Summons to Greatness* (authored by the late Sen. Lorenzo Tañada) became their battle cry circa 1965 when the book was published? The stark reality until today is that 2 out of 3 poor Filipinos are in the rural areas (meaning agricultural workers). As for our commercial agricultural producers, that tells us a different story for they are the ones who immensely benefited from protectionism.

PBBM sees the need to import

Due to the obvious supply shortage of food commodities and to thwart the growing incidences of hunger and malnutrition among the Filipinos, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. (PBBM) himself admitted the necessity of importing agricultural and food products. Similarly, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno noted that to tame high food inflation, importation will have to be resorted to.

Unlike before that vested interest groups were so vociferous in objecting against any plan to import, vilifying the Department of Agriculture by naming it the "Department of Agricultural Importation" whenever the previous Agriculture secretary announced the need to import certain food commodities that are in short supply, the deafening silence of these vested interest groups over the admission of PBBM and Diokno of the inevitability of importation is bewildering.

Don't they subscribe now to their cause of protecting our local farmers or have they lost their sense of patriotism? Or is their silence just an indication of their desire to be considered in key government positions under this new administration?

Healthy protectionism

Lest I be misunderstood, I am not against protectionism per se. There is a role for it in the development process. Certain industries for which we have a comparative advantage need to be protected during their "infant" stage, wherein a nurturing process has to be extended to allow them to grow and develop. However, just like an infant, at some point in time, there is a need to gradually remove the protection accorded to a child so that he will become an independent and responsible adult. If one does not do that, the child will turn out to be a spoiled brat; an infant becomes a "*tiyanak*" (a monster baby).

Similarly, protection to our industries must be time-bound. We cannot allow them to be protected and subsidized forever because they will become inefficient and uncompetitive, an endless drain to our economy. Doing so will transform them into tiyanaks,which we are now experiencing in the form of exorbitant prices of local food products (compared to neighboring Southeast Asian countries), resulting in scandalously high incidences of hunger, malnutrition and stunting among our people.

Healthy nationalism

As for the idea of nationalism, I think we have been entrapped in the definition of nationalism in the 1960s wherein the notion is encapsulated in the assertion of the "Philippines for the Filipinos." This is an inward-looking type of nationalism wherein we patronize everything that we locally produce and give preference to Filipino entrepreneurs and products despite the poor quality of the goods they produced and the low wages they pay our workers.

This notion of nationalism is obsolete within the context of the current globalized trading regime and the advances in modern transport and communication technology. Why will a Filipino consumer settle for a product of poor quality, which costs higher when there is a cheaper imported product of better quality? Why should a Filipino worker choose to work in a Filipino company, in the name of nationalism, when he can get a higher compensation and enjoy a better working environment in a foreign-owned company operating here?

Today's idea of nationalism and national pride is now associated with the number of quality products a country can produce and sell to the world market which, in turn, the citizens of that country can be proud of because they banner their people's creativity and industriousness. The heyday of Nokia cellular phones made Finland a country to be admired. Apple has brought American technology to the apex of smartphone technology and innovation. Similarly, this is true of Samsung, LG, Hyundai, Kia, among others from South Korea. Japanese built their reputation and gained the respect of the world through their cars (Toyota, Honda and Mazda, among others) and television (Sony). And how China became a world power by producing Huawei and various types of manufactured and food products sold in the world market.

As for luxury and services items, we have witnessed how Louis Vuitton became the pride of the French; Rolex, Patek Philippe, among others, by the Swiss; chocolates by the Belgian and Swiss; McDonald's and Starbucks by the Americans, plus more. These companies asserted their nationalism by selling products and services that are of high quality for the world to enjoy and for which their people are proud to call their own.

This is what outward nationalism entails; nationalism that resonates with the current global realities.

In contrast, our version of nationalism only produced inefficient firms that can hardly sell their products to the world market and whose survival depends on continued protection by the government. As a result, and the sad reality is our exports consist mainly of chamber maids, seamen, nurses and many laborers who have become cheap sources of labor for the developed world.

That is what myopic protectionism has made this country.

The Manila Times®

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Saraventures launches plant enhancer

SARAVENTURES Trading Corp., with partner Zero Gravity Solutions, has launched in the Philippines its first product for strengthening plants: BAM-FX mineral solution.

Saraventures chief finance officer (CFO) and chief counsel, Ferdinand Nague, said their product is more relevant than ever, taking into account the pronouncement that agriculture will be a priority of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.

"President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos said this in his inaugural address: 'Agriculture will be a critical and fundamental part of our economic transformation.' He and his government will try to increase agricultural production. With this initial offering, we are grateful to have you join us here and share your advocacies with us due to a passion for agriculture, healthy living and food security," he said.

Initially developed to grow food crops in space, BAM-FX is a mineral-based solution that induces priming in plants, a mechanism that leads to a physiological state and enables plants to respond more rapidly or more robustly after exposure to biotic or abiotic stresses.

It is formulated to enhance plant growth and development through increased nutrition efficiency and crop quality traits, and has demonstrated the ability to help improve soil structure, function or performance.

The product also creates a systemic response, which is a form of induced resistance that is activated throughout a plant after being exposed to elicitors via foliar application. It can also be applied as a seed coat as well at various stages of plant development.

"Our product here does not eliminate pests or diseases, it instead works with the biological processes of the plant to improve its ability to ward off these stresses and, in turn, direct more energy into producing more yield," Zero Gravity Solutions and BAM Agricultural Solutions Inc. CFO Timothy Peach explained.

For this part, Teodoro Pascua, Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines deputy director general for Policy and Management Services, said the product will help the country's farmers cope with the challenges of climate change and contribute to attaining food security.

"Our country right now needs to address climate change and food security as there are a lot of experts saying that an impending crisis is coming. With this product, at least it is one step in addressing that," Pascua said.

ED PAOLO SALTING

MANILA BULLETIN

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Solon proposes transfer of DA, DENR to Mindanao to hasten region's dev't

By ELLSON A. QUISMORIO

Cagayan de Oro 2nd district Rep. Rufus Rodriguez has proposed a radical way to hasten the development of Mindanao, his home region.

He said Mindanao's development could be sped up by transferring the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to the region.

In a statement on Tuesday, July 19, Rodriguez said President Bongbong Marcos should also appoint "qualified Mindanao professionals" as secretaries of the two departments.

"The heads of these agencies will have their hands full in growing and exploring the farming and natural resources sectors, including minerals, in our island. However, the President should ban the highly destructive open-pit mining," he said.

Marcos is personally overseeing the DA, in a temporary capacity, out of his desire to better prepare the country for an anticipated food crisis in the first few months of his administration.

On the other hand, the DENR is currently headed by Georgetown University graduate and disaster resilience expert Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga. She took her oath as DENR in Malacañang also on Tuesday.

Rodriguez, a deputy speaker in the previous 18th Congress, said government should vigorously implement programs to help farmers and fisherfolks recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, high fuel prices and fertilizer costs.

He also emphasized the need to increase food production, extend credit and farm input assistance to farmers, and construct more irrigation systems.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

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GROWING AGRI SECTOR A BIG CHALLENGE FOR NEW ADMINISTRATION

ALL EYES ON THE PRESIDENT'S MANAGEMENT OF FOOD SHOCKS

By Jordeene B. Lagare
@jordeenelagare

The Philippines, despite being blessed with vast agricultural lands, has increasingly relied on the importation of key commodities to augment the supply of food products in previous years.

Under the Duterte administration, the Department of Agriculture (DA) sourced agricultural goods from abroad to feed the entire country. In the first half of 2022 alone, the agency authorized the importation of meat, fish and sugar to cover supply shortfalls and keep local prices in check.

This food importation policy was widely criticized by various agriculture groups, who not only claimed that farmers and fishers incurred billions of pesos in losses, but said the policy also eroded their productivity.

The sector's growth has remained stunted over the years, with the latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showing that agricultural production in the first quarter of this year dropped by 0.3 percent. In the same period last year, output declined by 3.4 percent.

While the government's inclination for importation has been blamed for the lackluster performance, there are other major factors at play that have influenced agricultural production. These include the typhoons that ravage the country each year as well as various animal diseases, including the African swine fever and highly pathogenic avian influenza or bird flu.

The sector has also remained the smallest contributor to economic growth over the last five years. Based on the figures from the PSA, the sector's contribution to the gross domestic product in 2021 stood at about 10 percent, making this sector the smallest contributor to economic growth. It is much smaller than the 61 percent contribution of services or the 29 percent share of the industrial sector.

But amid low farm input, the agriculture sector has made significant strides. For instance, in 2021, the country reached a new record-high palay (unhusked rice) production of 19.96 million metric tons (MT), surpassing its previous record high of 19.29 million MT recorded a year ago. Likewise, the production of corn, considered one of the country's staple crops, rose by 2.2 percent to 8.3 million MT from 8.1 million MT, another record harvest. The department attributed the all-time high palay and corn harvests to its various programs benefiting rice and corn producers.

And just before President Duterte ended his term, he issued Executive Order No. 172, or the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan, to serve as the basis for utilizing the P75-billion coco levy fund through various programs and projects. Prior to that, Mr. Duterte signed into law Republic Act No. 11524 or the Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund, which paved the way for releasing the multibillion-peso coco levy fund to revive and modernize the country's coconut industry.

Dark clouds ahead

The agriculture sector—already plagued with daunting and overwhelming problems—may find itself in deep trouble even beyond the Duterte administration. Russia's war against Ukraine since February this year added a challenge it needs to overcome to end the unabated increases in food prices. It does not help that global food markets are tightening and the cost of producing agricultural goods has skyrocketed to record highs.

For a net importer like the Philippines, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has a large impact on the country's food security, something that President Marcos needs to address.

Former Agriculture Secretary William Dar—who had warned the Philippines would feel the strain of the global food crisis the most in the last quarter of 2022—laid out the list of priorities the incoming administration should work on its first 100 days to spur the vital sector's growth.

The immediate litmus test for the Marcos administration is ensuring enough food amid threats to the supply chain. Rice production alone in the first semester was projected to have decreased by 6.8 percent as farmers reduced their fertilizer usage, the cost of which has nearly tripled as of this writing.

Mr. Marcos is not only veering away from the food importation policy of his predecessor, a move widely welcomed by various stakeholders, but also placed a high priority on agriculture, saying successors of his father had fallen short of achieving food sufficiency.

"The role of agriculture cries for the urgent attention that its neglect and misdirection now demands. Food self-sufficiency has been the key promise of every administration. None but one delivered," said Mr. Marcos in his inaugural speech.

The first item on the DA's agenda is to ensure sufficient food supply for the remainder of 2022. He said the agency would explore all ways to increase production such as rice and corn, among the staple of Filipino consumers, as well as chicken.

"We have to attend to the impending food crisis that it seems will be visiting us in the next two quarters. When we look around the world, everyone is preparing for it," he told high-ranking officials during the DA's executive committee meeting. INQ

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BusinessWorld

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Marcos urged to support agri, manufacturing without relying on FDI

THE GOVERNMENT should seek to grow the economy to ease its debt burden by offering incentives for agricultural and manufacturing projects, following the failure of its efforts to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), the Freedom from Debt Coalition said on Wednesday.

"Rather than relying on FDI inflows, which have not materialized despite the passage of investor-friendly legislation such as CREATE (the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises), government should focus on reviving and strengthening the domestic economy by providing support and incentives to key sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing," the coalition said in a statement.

These industries, it added, have been neglected for decades due to "ill-advised policies such as the infamous Rice Tariffication Law which failed to deliver its promise of cheaper rice even as it resulted in bankruptcy of millions of farmers."

The coalition also called for significant investment in human capital by ramping up spending on education, healthcare, housing, and nutrition.

"The current obsession with chasing after investors at the expense of people's needs could backfire if we end up with lower human capital stock than before the pandemic, jeopardizing our long-term development prospects," it said.

The national debt was P12.5 trillion at the end of May, putting the government under pressure to curtail spending, particularly on social services, and impose additional taxes, the coalition said. "Both moves risk further widening the inequality that was only exacerbated by the pandemic."

Other issues that need to be addressed include inflation and the expansion of the current account deficit, it added.

— **Alyssa Nicole O. Tan**

PEOPLES JOURNAL Tonight

Date: JULY 21, 2022 Page: 4

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HELP THE FARMERS BY REDUCING THE COSTS OF FERTILIZERS AND PESTICIDES

EDITORIAL

Helping Pinoy farmers

PEOPLE believe that the government of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. is in a position to protect the interests and welfare of the country's farmers.

In fact, President Marcos, who assumed office last June 30, is determined to bring down the costs of much-needed fertilizers as part of his efforts to attain food security.

The Chief Executive wants to personally pursue government-to-government (G2G) talks to import fertilizers from five countries, including superpower Russia.

Aside from Russia, the other countries are China, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia.

For the second time since he assumed office, President Marcos met with ranking officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA) last Monday (July 18). He is also head of DA.

President Marcos said the five countries "want to help, they want to approach us, then let's take advantage of that. Give us fertilizers at a very good price."

Of course, we share the view of the hard-working 64-year-old President from Ilocos Norte that farmers need to have access to low-priced but quality fertilizers.

Since last year, our farmers have been urging the government to grant them fertilizer subsidies following the sharp increase in fertilizer prices in the local market.("Sa totoo lang, may mga magsasakang naghanap na lang ng ibang trabaho dahil sa sobrang taas ng presyo ng abono at iba pang gamit sa pagsasaka," a farmer said.

"Talagang wala ng kikitain ang mga magsasaka," lamented a 60-year-old rice farmer.

Thus, President Marcos is on the right track in doing everything to reduce the costs of fertilizers and pesticides.

The Manila Times®

Date: JULY 21, 2022 Page: A4

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Editorial

PH's salty problem

MOST Filipinos probably did not know that the country is a major importer of salt, but they do now, thanks to a bill filed in the House of Representatives by a party-list lawmaker. We find the proposal interesting and worth exploring further, but the Philippines' salty problem is perhaps not quite as simple as House Bill (HB) 1976 portrays it.

In a statement last Friday, Kabayan party-list Rep. Ron Salo explained that he filed HB 1976 "in pursuit of a comprehensive plan for the development of the local salt industry and the grant of incentives to salt farmers and exporters." According to Salo, the Philippines imports about 550,000 metric tons of salt per year, or approximately 93 percent of the country's total demand, which seems to him to be quite ironic in light of the fact that this is an archipelago and has 36,000 kilometers of coastline.

To resurrect the Philippine salt industry, which historically has been made up almost entirely of small producers, the centerpiece of Salo's bill is the creation of an interagency body headed by the Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Agriculture, to be called the Administration for Salt Industry Development, Revitalization and Optimization, or Asindero.

> *"Because of the low value of salt as a commodity, a single producer can never hope to earn anything more than a subsistence income, unless his efforts are combined with many others."*

Whatever else might be said about HB 1976, Representative Salo and his staff have certainly demonstrated that they are peerless when it comes to exercising the Filipino talent for naming things in a manner that will result in a catchy acronym.

Salo said that the proposed measure seeks to promote indigenous salt-making technology, as well as to harness current technological advances in salt-making. It would also help to protect artisanal salt farmers by providing avenues where they will be able to market their products, including non-iodized salt, both to domestic and import customers.

There are a couple of key issues involved here. Indeed, we agree with Representative Salo that it is ridiculous that the Philippines should have to import salt, one of the most basic mineral commodities, which is available to almost every country on Earth in virtually infinite quantities, if only the means to efficiently harvest it exist. There is no reason why the Philippines cannot produce salt in quantities many times over our domestic demand for it, and developing the means to at least produce what we need and end this particular import dependence should be prioritized.

The revelation of the Philippines' imported salt dependence should not, however, inspire anyone in Congress or the administration to attempt drastic action to restrict imports, at least not now, as that would very likely cause a deeper inflation crisis and potentially even a food shortage. We frankly have much bigger problems at the moment; cheap imported salt is helping to keep food prices in check to some degree.

A second and more fundamental issue that the proposed salt law does not address is the unfavorable economics of salt. Even though salt is a critical commodity, because of its fantastic abundance it is one of extremely low value; the reason small salt producers seem to have disappeared is that salt production is only profitable at a very large scale. Artisanal salt, as Salo described it, does have a market niche if the product is sufficiently unique (for example, the pink salt that is mined in parts of the Himalayas), but that is not the foremost problem — supplying regular, non-unique salt in massive quantities is. The only way to achieve the scale that can meet the requirement profitably is to either create or attract very large salt-producing operations, or to consolidate large numbers, probably hundreds at a time, of individual salt farmers into single large cooperative entities. The implication of HB 1976 that the quaint ideal of the hardworking small salt farmer can somehow be preserved is a fallacy; because of the low value of salt as a commodity, a single producer can never hope to earn anything more than a subsistence income, unless his efforts are combined with many others.

HB 1976 is at least the start of an interesting idea, and one that should be pursued further. But it should be pursued with a great deal more realism and sensible appreciation of the economics involved than its initial version indicates.

The Manila Times®

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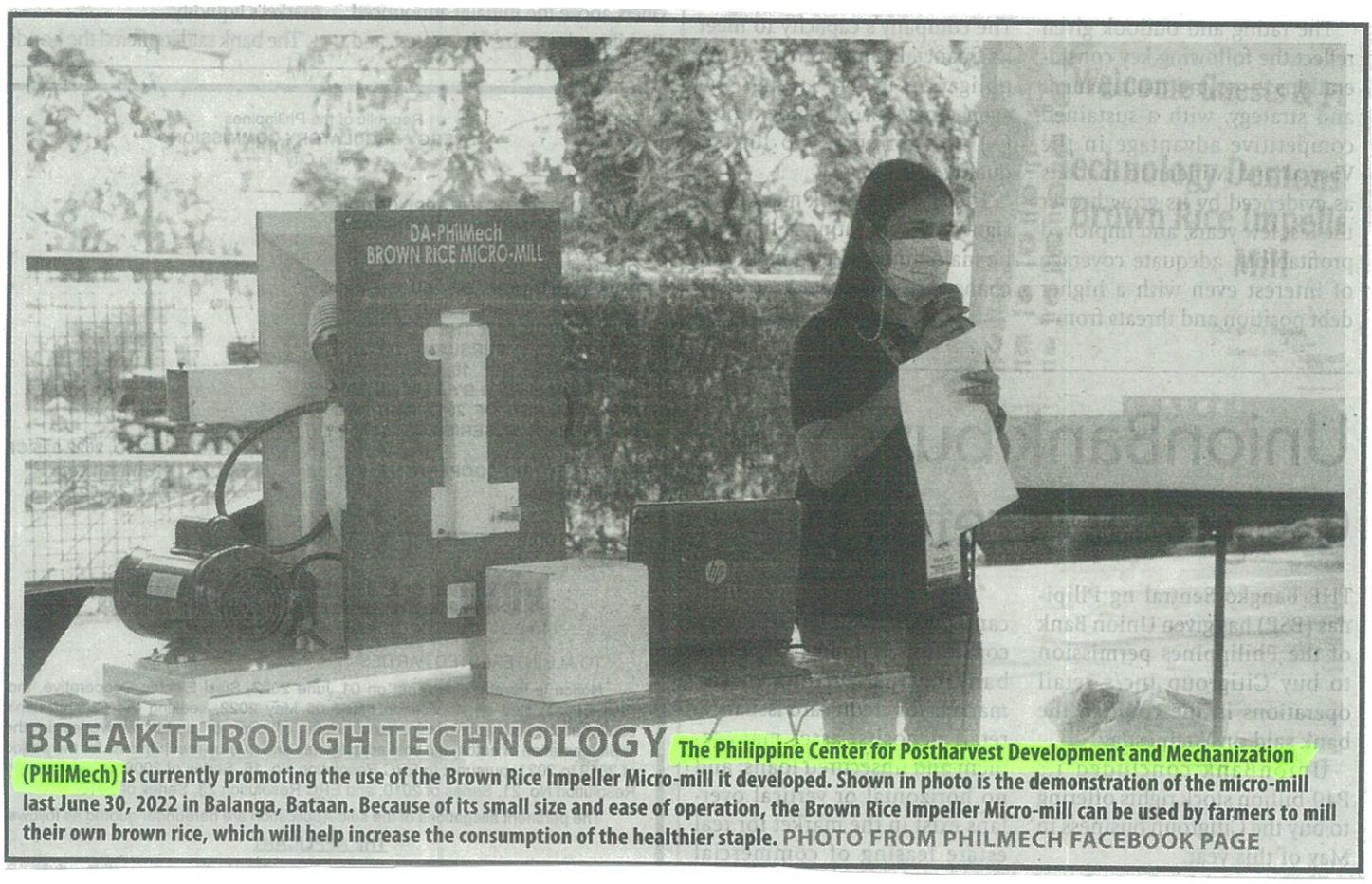

BREAKTHROUGH TECHNOLOGY The Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) is currently promoting the use of the Brown Rice Impeller Micro-mill it developed. Shown in photo is the demonstration of the micro-mill last June 30, 2022 in Balanga, Bataan. Because of its small size and ease of operation, the Brown Rice Impeller Micro-mill can be used by farmers to mill their own brown rice, which will help increase the consumption of the healthier staple. PHOTO FROM PHILMECH FACEBOOK PAGE

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

Date: 21 JUL 2022 Page: A11

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CULLING STARTS, BACKYARD RAISERS COMPENSATED

ASF HITS GENSAN VILLAGE, THREATENS ₱8-B HOG INDUSTRY

By Allen V. Estabillo
@InqNational

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The city government has ordered the immediate culling of backyard hogs in a village here amid another confirmed incursion of the African swine fever (ASF), the second since January this year.

Dr. Emilio Gargaran, acting head of the City Veterinary Office (CVO), said Wednesday the preemptive culling covers backyard farms at Purok Masagana, Upper Baluan in Barangay Baluan and adjacent communities.

Veterinary personnel already culled since Monday a total of 119 hogs, affecting over 40 backyard raisers in the area.

Gargaran said the Department of Agriculture's Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Barangay Lagao here confirmed on Monday new cases of ASF through blood samples of three backyard hogs from Purok Masagana.

"We immediately conducted preemptive culling and intensified the disease surveillance after the results came out," he told reporters.

A total of 77 hogs from 35 backyard raisers in the area and within the 500-meter radius of the identified epicenter were culled on Monday, Gargaran said.

PREVENTIVE MEASURE Personnel of the General Santos City veterinary office haul pigs from backyard farms in Barangay Baluan for culling after an outbreak of African swine fever in the area. Authorities are acting fast to prevent the disease from spreading to large commercial hog farms. —RICHELYN GUBALANI/CONTRIBUTOR

The culled hogs increased to 108 on Tuesday and 11 more were added Wednesday morning based on partial reports from the CVO.

The affected raisers were given P5,000 as compensation for the culled hogs through support from the South Cotabato Swine Producers Association (Socospa).

The investigation is ongoing as to the possible source of the latest ASF infections, which could threaten the city's P8-billion hog industry, Gargaran said.

Containing disease spread

He said they earlier received reports of suspected ASF deaths among stocks of hog dealers in the area.

The first outbreak in late January was also traced by CVO to hog stocks purchased by a local dealer from ASF-affected areas in Davao del Sur province.

Back then, at least 508 hogs were culled from backyard farms in Purok San Lorenzo, Barangay Apopong, and nearby areas, before it was declared contained.

Gargaran assured that the local government was taking all necessary measures to prevent the ASF contamination from spreading to other areas in the city.

Last month, the Bureau of Animal Industry placed the towns of Banga and Surallah in nearby South Cotabato province under the red, or infected zone, due to ASF outbreaks.

This city and South Cotabato are among the top producers of live hogs and pork in the country, shipping out at least 15,000 animals every two weeks to Metro Manila and other areas in Luzon.

Socospa, the biggest association of commercial swine farms in the area with at least 20 members, has a combined sow population of 55,000 and produces at least 45,000 hogs a month. INQ

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DA steps in: Serafica stays at SRA, Dansal at NFA for now

By Jordeene B. Lagare
@jordeenelagare

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has put an end to—at least for now—the leadership standoff that has troubled operations at the National Food Authority (NFA) and the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) for weeks.

In a memorandum, the DA advised NFA and SRA employees to maintain the "status quo" in the leadership of the two agencies.

"NFA Administrator Atty. Judy Carol L. Dansal and SRA Administrator Engr. Hermenegildo R. Serafica shall continue to hold office until their respective successors are appointed," a memo signed by Agriculture Undersecretary for Operations and Chief-of-Staff Leocadio Sebastian read.

Per the DA's Legal Service office, the Memorandum Circular No. 1 issued by the Palace earlier does not apply to the heads of both agencies despite being presidential appointees.

The first directive issued by President Marcos, who is concurrently sitting as the country's Agriculture secretary, declared certain positions in the departments, offices, agencies and bureaus in the executive department vacant.

The same issuance called for the designation of an officer in charge (OIC) until July 31 or until a replacement has been named.

Holdover capacity

The DA memo explained the appointments of Dansal and Serafica "are not classified as co-terminus with the appointing authority, in excess of the authorized staffing pattern, or Career Executive Service Positions."

Dansal and Serafica were appointed in 2019 and 2017, respectively, under the term of former President Rodrigo Duterte.

It cited Sections 17 and 18 of Republic Act No. 10149 or the GOCC Governance Act of 2011, which allows the appointive director to serve in a holdover capacity until the President names a replacement.

"Any provision in the charters of each GOCC (government-owned and -controlled corporation) to the contrary notwithstanding, the term of office of each Appointive Director shall be for one (1) year, unless sooner removed for cause: Provided, however, that the Appointive Director shall continue to hold office until the successor is appointed," the law read.

"An Appointive Director may be nominated by the GCG (Governance Commission for GOCCs) for reappointment by the President only if one obtains a performance score of above average or its equivalent or higher in the immediately preceding year of tenure as Appointive Director based on the performance criteria for Appointive Directors for the GOCC," it added.

Separate issuances

The memo stemmed from the separate issuances of NFA and SRA officials who designated OICs in compliance with Mr. Marcos' order.

Based on documents obtained by the Inquirer, NFA deputy administrator Raul Canon Jr. and SRA deputy administrator Ignacio Santillana were assigned as respective OICs for the two agencies.

Dansal and Serafica then promulgated separate orders invalidating the designation of Canon and Santillana as temporary heads.

The management debacle in the two agencies comes at a time when the Philippines is grappling with a looming food crisis, particularly high prices of food items such as chicken and sugar. INQ

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RCEF aid called inaccessible as bid to repeal rice law intensifies

THE industry modernization component of the Rice Tariffication Law, which is funded by tariffs on rice imports, has been inefficiently handled, with rice farmers unable to tap the program's benefits, resulting in rice production remaining stagnant, a peasant organization said.

"The P10 billion (in annual funding) could not compensate for the losses of the rice industry. Not all rice farmers can access the (Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund). We have received complaints from farmers that they have not received or accessed RCEF, even though they are registered. In some areas, seed distribution is delayed," Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women Secretary-General Cathy Estavillo said in an e-mail.

RCEF receives P10 billion from rice import tariffs a year for six years to drive farm mechanization, seed development, propagation and promotion, credit assistance, and extension services.

Ms. Estavillo called for the repeal of the Rice Tariffication Law because the liberalization of rice imports did not lower prices after the National Food Authority (NFA) was stripped of its function as the primary importer of the grain.

"The flood of rice imports as a result of the liberal import (policy) resulted in the drop in the farmgate prices of palay and losses in the first two years of its implementation...rice farmers were pushed deeper into poverty and bankruptcy due to the low prices of palay," she said.

"It also limited the (ability) of the NFA to (put together a buffer stock); thus, it can no longer regulate the market price through subsidized (rice), which is no longer available in markets. The proponents of the law promised that retail prices of rice would fall to P25 per kilo, but our experience for the first three years of implementation proved otherwise," she added.

Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura Regional Coordinator Rowena A. Buena said that the law "virtually obliterated the rice market and buried rice farmers neck-deep in debt."

"It basically intensified the food security problem both in the peasant and consumer sector... food security (has) always been problematic in the Philippines. On the production level, with chemical-based agriculture as the dominant production system, farmers are trapped in a cycle of expensive production costs and unpredictable yields," she said in an e-mail.

"Paired with neoliberal policies such as the (Rice Tariffication Law) that allows the unregulated entry of foreign rice... farmers are once again burdened (by) unfair market prices. If not, farmers are totally removed from the market (losing the) chance to sell their milled rice at a price that would sustain them," she added.

Ms. Buena said that conventional farmers and agricultural workers were also falling ill due to the continuous usage of glyphosate, a herbicide.

"It tells us that both the current agricultural production system and the neoliberal policies that govern it are not actually built to achieve food security. Ironically, it... serves only the profits of agri-transnational corporations (which) is the very reason we have food insecurity in the first place," she said.

"Addressing food insecurity and malnutrition will start with shifting from chemical-based agriculture to sustainable organic agriculture that puts emphasis on a diversified and integrated farming system ultimately championing a diversified, accessible, and nutritious diet for the masses," she added.

"The seeds distributed under RCEF are dependent on massive use of chemical farm inputs which [also] increases the cost of production, instead of promoting local and traditional varieties," Ms. Estavillo added. —
Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

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FOOD-DEBT TWIN WOES TO GUT POOR COUNTRIES

By Cai U. Ordinario
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POOR and even middle-income countries are at risk of facing a debt and food crisis given the steep increase in commodity prices, according to an economist from the World Bank.

In a World Bank blog post, Global Director of Macroeconomics, Trade & Investment Marcello Estevão said the war in Eastern Europe has already sent food prices through the roof and this posts a serious concern for many poor countries, including a number of middle-income countries.

"Over the next year, the tab for imports of wheat, rice, and maize in these countries is expected to rise by the equivalent of more than 1 percent of GDP," Estevão said.

"That is more than twice the size of the 2021-2022 increase—and, given the relatively small size of these economies, it's also twice as large as the expected increase for middle-income economies," he added.

This is a major concern given that one crisis alone could have a significant impact on millions. In 2008, Estevão said, the food crisis

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caused malnutrition to increase.

Many poor families were forced to sell their valuables in order to buy food. Some of them even sacrificed the education of their children just to cope with high food costs. Due to the pandemic, many countries are already seeing public debts surge. By the end of 2020, Estevão said, public and publicly guaranteed debt owed by poor countries to foreign creditors stood at a record $123.8 billion, an increase of nearly 75 percent from 2010.

He added that debt-service payments of these economies now constitute nearly 10 percent of their export earnings, up from less than 4 percent a decade ago.

Deadly combination

"WHEN a food crisis coincides with a debt crisis, the effects are magnified: the high debt paralyzes local governments, and international assistance becomes the only way out," Estevão said.

The World Bank economist recommended that emergency aid be ramped up for countries at risk of facing food and debt crises. These funds must be extended to the poorest and most vulnerable households in the form of cost-effective transfers.

Governments, the economist said, should also improve farmers' access to fertilizers in order to increase food production. This is already part of the Philippine government's plans as the Department of Agriculture, led by the President himself, is looking at government-to-government arrangements to improve fertilizer access.

Apart from this, Estevão said, countries should not impose restrictions on exports of food and fertilizers. But as of June, 34 countries had already resorted to this, causing commodity prices to further increase.

"The poorest countries face dangers they have not encountered in decades. But few outcomes are more devastating to the poor than a simultaneous food and debt crisis. This is why policymakers across the world share an obligation to act promptly and decisively to prevent it," Estevão said.

PSA warning

EARLIER, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and local economists warned that Filipinos must brace for higher inflation and expect the further decline of their purchasing power.

PSA reported that inflation averaged 6.1 percent in June, the highest since October 2018 when inflation averaged 6.9 percent. Year-to-date inflation averaged 4.4 percent as of June.

The rapid increase in commodity prices cut down the purchasing power of the peso to only P0.87 centavos. This means, in order to buy goods worth P1, every Filipino must shell out P0.13 centavos more or P1.13.

Mapa said based on their estimates, the level of the purchasing power of the peso was at P0.89 in March 2022. This means, there was a P0.02-centavo decline in the value of the currency in terms of purchasing goods and services.

For the poorest Filipinos, their purchasing power is even lower. BusinessMirror estimated that for the Bottom 30 percent or the poorest 30 percent of the population, the value of the currency is at P0.72 centavos as of June 2022 from P0.74 centavos in March 2022.

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Lawmaker: Urban farms can help cut poverty

By Jovee Marie N. Dela Cruz
@joveemarie

TO increase food production, a lawmaker is pushing for the passage of the proposed Integrated Urban Agriculture Act, which seeks to maximize available spaces and utilize emerging agricultural technologies and methods.

In House Bill 72, Negros Occidental Rep. Jose Francisco Benitez said the promotion of household-, community- and school-based urban agriculture will contribute to food security and poverty reduction, strengthen community-building and support the National Greening Program.

"Urban agriculture also puts value in otherwise idle urban spaces, maximizing limited land resources that are increasingly shrinking due to rapid urbanization and unsustainable urban development," he added.

Citing the First Quarter 2022 Survey of the Social Weather Station, Benitez said hunger has worsened from 11.8 percent in December 2021 to 12.2 percent. This translates to 3.1 million families experiencing involuntary hunger at least once in the past three months prior to the survey.

The bill covers idle or abandoned government or private lands, buildings, shipping containers, subdivisions or villages, public housing, open spaces in all urban, peri-urban and urbanizable areas in the country; and all available land resources and buildings in schools, state or private universities and colleges, military camps suitable for growing crops and raising poultry, livestock and aquaculture.

However, the bill said the utilization of idle lands for urban agriculture purposes will not be used as grounds for the eviction of informal settler families occupying the lands.

Also, the measure said the raising of poultry and livestock will be limited to "urbanizable" areas and all livestock raising shall be subject to health and safety standards and regulations issued by the Department of Health, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and other relevant government agencies.

Under the bill, local government units (LGUs) will identify and develop idle government and private lands and buildings, without prejudice to the rights of owners of private lands, buildings and open spaces, within their jurisdiction, for full or partial conversion solely to community gardens, food forest gardens, indoor farms and/or vertical farms to support food security and community nutrition.

It indicated that food forest gardens and urban farms adopting agro-ecological principles will be the priority form of urban agriculture wherever applicable and feasible.

The bill said all LGUs, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Coopera-

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PHOTO shows an urban garden in Barangay San Antonio in Pasig City. FROM WWW.SANTONIO.PASIGCITY.GOV.PH

tive Development Authority (CDA), will capacitate neighborhood associations and people's organizations, and facilitate the organization and registration of community-based cooperatives, to undertake community gardening and establish community farmers' markets.

Role of LGUs

IT said the DHSUD and DA will promote sustainable, smart and organic food production systems that harness the benefits of new technologies and methods in soil, nutrient, water and energy management, such as composting, rainwater harvesting and utilization of renewable energy.

The DHSUD will also ensure the rational use of land resources in urban planning to promote sustainable peri-urban interface, as well as for the spatial requirements of supply chain management and logistics to strengthen urban-rural foodshed linkages.

Towards these ends, the DHSUD will promulgate guidelines for the harmonization of the comprehensive land use plans and zoning ordinances of LGUs with urban agriculture policies, frameworks, strategies and standards.

The bill mandates all LGUs to incorporate urban agricultural development in their respective Annual Development Plans, Annual Investment Plans, Physical Framework Plans, and Development Master Plans including the hiring of agriculturists and agricultural and biosystems engineers to carry out urban agriculture programs.

It said LGUs, with the assistance of the DA, Department of Interior and Local Government and the Department of Information and Communications Technology, will establish and maintain a digital information system. This information system will facilitate the efficient collection, management and analysis of urban food systems, agriculture and nutrition data, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of LGU performance vis-à-vis the food system agriculture and nutrition targets.

The Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education, with the technical assistance of the DA, will integrate urban agriculture in the academic curriculum for elementary, secondary and tertiary level students of both public and private academic institutions offering courses in Agriculture, Practical Arts, Home Economics and other subjects related to agriculture.

Compliance by subdivision and condominium developers and owners may qualify them for incentives provided for under Republic Act (RA) 10771, otherwise known as the "Philippine Green Jobs Act of 2016," subject to the rules and regulations promulgated by the Department of Finance and the DHSUD.

Loans extended by government and private banks to participating individuals, corporations and partnerships will be treated as compliance with RA 10000 or "The Agri-Agra Reform Credit Act of 2009."

The measure also creates a National Convergence Program on Urban Agriculture and Aquaculture, which will be headed by the DA, to develop and sustain concerted action to promote urban agriculture.

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Sebastian designated as DA's undersecretary for operations

MALACAÑANG has designated Leocado S. Sebastian as the Department of Agriculture's (DA) undersecretary for operations.

Executive Secretary Victor D. Rodriguez issued a memorandum announcing Sebastian's designation as DA undersecretary and his additional authorities and functions.

The memo dated July 15 indicated that DA undersecretary-designate will also serve as the chief of staff of the office of the Agriculture secretary.

Sebastian has been tasked to sign contracts, memoranda of agreement, administrative issuances, and administrative and financial documents.

He also has the authority to act as the designated head of procuring entity and reconstitute the Bids and Awards Committee as well as appoint or reassign employees of the DA except those whose appointments are vested in the president or in some other appointing authority.

'Status quo'

DAYS after his designation as DA undersecretary, Sebastian issued a memo saying National Food Authority chief Judy Carol L. Dansal and Sugar Regulatory Administration chief Hermenegildo R. Serafica will continue to hold office until their successors are appointed.

"Pursuant to the authority granted to the undersigned by virtue of the Memorandum from the Executive Secretary dated 15 July 2022, everyone is advised to maintain status quo in your respective agency's leadership," Sebastian said in his memo to the personnel of NFA and SRA.

Citing the DA Legal Service Opinion dated July 6, he said Memorandum Circular No. 1, series of 2022 issued by the Office of the President does not apply to both the administrators of SRA and NFA as their appointments are not classified as co-terminus with the appointing authority.

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Higher yields, fertilizers on DA plan for food security

By Samuel P. Medenilla
@sam_medenilla

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) vowed to boost production of rice and other agricultural items and make it more accessible to consumers before the end of the year.

In a televised interview on Wednesday, Agriculture Undersecretary Kristine L. Evangelista disclosed that among the initiatives is promoting urban gardening or agriculture, and planting of cash crops, as well as providing farmers access to fertilizers, which have recently become more expensive.

No less than President Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. earlier said the country will be negotiating with several countries to secure cheap fertilizer through a government-to-government arrangement.

"The idea of finding a way to bring down the cost of fertilizer is one of the solutions to help our producers to be able to come up with a better yield," Evangelista said. The agriculture official said they will also strengthen their Kadiwa program, wherein farmers will be able to sell their products

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directly to consumers, through the government.

She said they will also provide logistical support through farm-to-market roads to farmers to help them transport their agricultural products.

"So these are the steps we are doing now aligned with the directives of our President and Agriculture Secretary," Evangelista said.

Marcos ordered DA to implement programs that will increase farmers' yield to ensure the country's food supply and keep the prices of local food items stable.

"So increasing the yield [of farmers], is something that we are looking into and that is something we intend to achieve within the year also," Evangelista said.

"We are looking at the activities that we have to put in place, including the necessary funding requirements to be able to attain the goal," she added.

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DAR, NIA turn over sun-powered irrigation system to Quezon farmers

By Jonathan L. Mayuga
@jonlmayuga

A NEWLY installed solar-powered communal irrigation system in a remote barangay in Buenavista town, Quezon Province is expected to boost rice and corn production of small farmers, officials of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) said.

On Tuesday, along with officials of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), the DAR formally turned over the P10-million solar-powered irrigation project to the beneficiaries, a farmer-irrigators' association.

In a statement, Provincial Agrarian Reform Program Officer II Cornelio P. Villapando said the project is funded under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program-Irrigation Component in partnership with the NIA.

The newly installed communal irrigation system includes 108 solar panels that can irrigate over 35 hectares of rice and corn land that would benefit over 53 farmer-members, including agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) belonging to the Hagonghong Irrigators' Association (HIA).

"The town of Buenavista can be considered an Agrarian Reform Community [ARC] because it is one of the towns with the largest distributed lands by the agency. This irrigation system is a great help to our farmer-beneficiaries whose main crops are rice and corn," he said.

Acting NIA-Quezon Irrigation Management Office Division Manager Edwin C. Nazareno expressed his gratitude to DAR Quezon II for their support, while Municipal Vice Mayor Alvin Ray U. Rivera appealed to the farmer-beneficiaries to take care of the project.

Abante TONITE
MABILIS SA BALITA

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Suplay ng asukal kakapusin

Inihayag ni Agriculture Undersecretary Kristine Evangelista na nakikipag-ugnayan sila sa stakeholders tungkol sa suggested retail price (SRP) ng asukal sa posibleng kakapusan ng suplay nito sa susunod na buwan.

"Nakikipag-ugnayan na kami sa stakeholders tungkol sa SRP. Kailangan po natin mag-agree sa cost structure. Manipis po ang ating supply situation kaya they were recommending to import sugar for household, industrial use," ayon kay Evangelista sa isang panayam.

Aniya, ang asukal ay 'commodity' na kailangang masolusyunan na hindi tumaas ang presyo kaya naman makikipagpulong sila sa Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) upang talakayin ang kanilang rekomendasyon.

Una nang isinuhestiyon ng DA noong Lunes na simulan na ang importasyon ng asukal sa gitna ng patuloy na pagtaas ng demand sa merkado kasabay nang pagsirit ng presyo na umaabot na sa P70.00 kada kilo ang regular price ng refined sugar na tumaas ng P20.00.

Sa nakaraang pulong sa pagitan ng DA at ni Pangulong Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos, inirekomenda ng ahensiya ang pag-angkat ng asukal. **(Dolly Cabreza)**

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Farmers' revolt spreads; a perfect energy storm, inflation mutates into 'greenflation'

OBSERVER

YEN MAKABENTA

First word

THE international situation in food and energy supply is moving fast and furiously.

The pace is so rapid and bewildering, many people can barely comprehend what is happening.

If the ordinary citizen is befuddled, so are governments.

The Sri Lankan people barely knew anything about their situation when they woke up to find their economy and their government had both collapsed. ➤MakabentaA5

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■ MAKABENTA FROM A1

Farmers' revolt spreads; a perfect energy storm, inflation mutates into 'greenflation'

It is because of situations like this that management education created a course and study area called "the management of change."

There is an acute need for such expertise and leadership today.

Management of change

The other day, we were stunned by the news that Dutch farmers, some of the most productive and prosperous in the world, are rising in revolt against green policies in the Netherlands.

Now, there is news that Spanish farmers are joining Dutch, Italian and Polish farmers in rebelling against green extremism across Europe,

Today, we are told that Europe and the world are now facing the prospect of a perfect energy storm. The analogy to a super typhoon is meant to highlight the sense of an event aggravated by a rare combination of circumstances. The term is used by analogy to an unusually severe storm that results from a rare combination of meteorological phenomena.

As if battling the scourge of inflation in both food and energy prices were not formidable enough, we are now being told that the real enemy may be another creature called "greenflation."

Mind your food supply

Within days after the explosion of protests by farmers against a new climate law in the Netherlands, the uprising spread to other countries in Europe. Experts say the protest could become a global movement.

Radio Geneva said the farmer protesters are telling the world and their nation that they cannot live without the farmers. Mind your food supply.

The series of farmer-led demonstrations against a harsh climate rule in the Netherlands could be the beginning of a global movement, according to experts interviewed by Fox News Digital. "There will be unrest all over," they said.

The Dutch government issued a plan in June laying out nitrogen emission reductions, largely targeting the nation's agriculture industry which produces an outsized share of such emissions, according to a report from the US Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (FSA). The government, though, directly acknowledged that "there is not a future for all" farmers to continue their business under the proposal.

In response, farmers throughout the country have reportedly taken to the streets in recent weeks, blocking roads to airports and deliveries to food distribution depots.

"I really understand their anger," Marcel Crok, a Dutch science writer and co-founder of the Climate Intelligence Foundation, told Fox News Digital. "The farmers are also angry because they say, 'we are the only sector who get all the blame.' What about industry? What about the traffic? Maybe we should just ban all the cars in the Netherlands because they also emit [nitrogen]."

"This plan in practice means that, in certain areas, farmers have to reduce their nitrogen emissions by 70 percent," he continued. "That means they simply have to quit."

The farmers' actions in the Netherlands mimicked previous protests around the world and could foreshadow similar uprisings against government overreach. For example, the so-called yellow vest movement in France began as a protest against increased nationwide fuel taxes.

Similar protests could soon happen in the UK and parts of the European Union where natural gas and energy costs are near historic levels, according to Benny Peiser, the director of the London-based Global Warming Policy Foundation. In the UK, increased prices are expected to send 24 percent of households, or about 6.5 million households, into fuel poverty.

"The issue is that despite this growing energy crisis in Europe, some governments still prioritize the climate agenda which makes energy ever more expensive, or which forces farmers to close their farms because that is the top priority, still, for a number of governments," Peiser said. "This whole green agenda is causing huge burdens."

"The Dutch are driven mad by these policies because it's killing their businesses and the farmers are fighting back big time," he said. "This is what's going to happen all over Europe. I have no doubt that, come winter and millions of families can't heat their homes or pay their bills anymore, that there will be unrest all over Europe."

A perfect energy storm

Gerard Scimeca, writing in the RealClearEnergy website, likened the energy crisis to a perfect storm.

Energy markets around the US are facing supply and price pressures not seen in generations, which is affecting far more than just the price at the pump. Dire market dynamics are firmly entrenched within other sectors, from propane to natural gas to coal.

The result, according to the head of the International Energy Agency, is a multi-faceted crisis that reaches beyond even the gas price spikes of the 1970s in its severity while being far broader in reach.

"In a nation that was seemingly energy independent just a few years ago it's important to question the path we took to this perfect storm of energy price and supply pain. As it turns out, the answer does not involve a straight path but many wrong turns along the way," writes Scimeca.

He says a major reason for the US' current energy woes is the way various governments have mismanaged the energy markets.

"We are here because we devalued and failed to comprehend the urgent importance of reliable baseload energy sources. And we're here because for decades some politicians have prioritized ideological objectives over sound policy.

"Amid the rise of solar, wind, and other non-fossil energy sources, far too many lawmakers and regulators were eager to toss aside fossil fuel-based energy. Upon the first signs of scalability on the part of renewables, they not only pursued policies that subsidized and incentivized renewables' growth, they also rushed to make traditional energy sources less economical through countless restrictive policies and heavy-handed regulation.

"The result converted the energy sector into a sort of artificial market — one that encouraged and rewarded renewable energy while actively discouraging and even punishing fossil-based energy through a maze of tax credits on one side and severely harsh regulatory policies on the other.

"We're living the consequences of those actions today. Not only are gas prices at record highs across the nation, but we also face a shortage of coal, propane, natural gas and other fuel sources. When power plants find themselves in need of an influx of affordable fuel to meet demand, the supply constraints in place today mean that fuel, far too often, simply isn't available.

"As important as policy is there is no denying that global factors play a sizable role of their own. During a period of remarkable tumult including, but not limited to, runaway inflation and a huge land war in Europe of all places, we're seeing a combination of challenges come together all at once to wreak havoc on markets of all types — not just energy. ...

"The current mess is a reminder of why it's so important for policymakers to avoid a myopic impulse to go 'all-in' on one fuel source or another, as well as the allure of putting political objectives on a pedestal to peer down at market fundamentals. Diversity of resources is, has been, and will remain for the foreseeable future the key to maintaining a stable, efficient, dependable domestic energy supply. That consideration has to be accounted for even if it's out of political favor."

I will discuss in my next column the challenge of greenflation.

(To be continued on Saturday, July 23, 2022)

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Searca conducts lecture for better vegetable growing

THE Philippine government-hosted Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) has organized a three-day training workshop on vegetable production at Salvacion National High School, Busuanga town in Palawan province.

The training workshop, through the School-plus-Home Gardens Project, is in line with the project's commitment to build the capacities of agricultural extension workers in local government units (LGUs) and educators from Busuanga and Coron in providing technical assistance on crop production and improving soil productivity in the school gardening activities of target schools.

According to Dr. Glenn Gregorio, Searca director, the training workshop is a joint undertaking of Searca, Pilipinas Shell Foundation Inc. (PSFI), Department of Education (DepEd)-Bureau of Learner Support Service, DepEd Division of Palawan, Kansas State University, Salvacion National High School and Regalo ng Kilit Foundation.

Culminating on July 21, 2022, the training workshop was attended by at least 30 school heads, Gulayan sa Paaralan or GPP and school gardens' coordinators, and agricultural extension workers from LGUs of Busuanga and Coron trained by experts from PSFI.

Searca said the participants learned and experienced hands-on training on soil sampling techniques and routine/chemical analysis, and cultural management practices of some vegetable crops.

They also learned identification and control management of some of the economically important pests and diseases of vegetable crops in their localities, and crop suitability using climate maps and agro-climatic requirements of vegetable crops.

According to Searca, the training workshop initiative may serve as experiential learning for participants in enhancing crop production and vegetable gardening activities not only in schools but also in their homes and local communities, which may contribute to addressing issues on food and nutrition security, rural poverty and unemployment.

Searca said the training workshop also featured lectures and hands-on activities on basic practices required for vegetable crop growing which include soil sampling and analysis; land preparation; and seedling establishment.

Also included in the lectures were crop cultural management practices; production of organic fertilizers, pesticides and soil amendments; commodity planning and crop suitability analysis; and farm planning and budgeting.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

The Manila Times®

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RA 10915 to help avert food crisis

BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

THE Philippine Society of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineers (PSABE) said the signing of the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 10915, or the "Philippine Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering Act of 2016," will help avert a food crisis or shortage in the Philippines.

PSABE President Andie Tuates in a statement on Wednesday said that RA 10915, once fully implemented, will lead to the full mobilization of agricultural and biosystems engineers (ABEs) nationwide, which will result in the application of the latest technologies in farming, fishery and food sector.

■ Philippine Society of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineers President Andie Tuates. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

He stressed that the Fourth Industrial Revolution offers a host of technologies to revolutionize farming in the Philippines like blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things.

"The Fourth Industrial Revolution is beginning to take root in many countries, and the Philippines should not be left behind. With the IRR for RA 10915 already signed, ABEs in our country can be fully mobilized to apply the latest technologies, including those from the Fourth Industrial Revolution, to the country's farming, fisheries and food sector," Tuates said. "And this can help avert a food crisis in the Philippines, as the latest technologies available can significantly increase local agricultural production, and incomes of farmers and fishers."

Citing information from the website of Indian multinational firm Wipro Ltd., Tuates said that AI is already being applied in the following: crop yield forecasts; intelligent spraying; agricultural robots; crop and soil monitoring; and disease diagnosis.

"ABEs, particularly those who are part of PSABE, are up-to-date on the latest trends in AI and other technologies from the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and we, the ABEs, are more than ready to help 'technologize' the country's agriculture sector," he added.

The IRR of RA 10915 was signed by Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) Chairman Teofilo Pilando and Commissioners Jose Cueto Jr. and Erwin Enad on July 8, 2022 at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City.

PSABE is the accredited and integrated professional organization by the PRC for licensed Filipino ABEs and has almost 11,400 members nationwide.

Manila Standard

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Villar applauds seed foundation on agri efforts

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

ON ITS 10th Founding Anniversary celebration, Sen. Cynthia A. Villar lauded the East-West Seed Foundation and cited its strong partnership with Villar SIPAG.

The East-West Seed Foundation aims to augment incomes of farmers through better seeds, organic fertilizers from composting kitchen and garden wastes, and teaching vegetable gardening through Villar SIPAG Farm schools in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

As the corporate social responsibility arm of East-West Seed Philippines, Villar noted that East-West Seed Foundation envisions healthy Filipinos through increased appreciation, availability, and consumption of vegetables. This is enabled by sharing of knowledge on vegetable production and health benefits.

The senator, the chairperson of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, said the partnership with East -West Seed started when their family established in 2015 the Villar SIPAG farm schools to give free training in agricrops production.

Villar acknowledged that East-West Seed Foundation has always been with them even in their Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao farm schools.

Villar SIPAG began with two farm schools in Luzon--one in Las Piñas-Bacoor that opened in 2015 and the other one- in San Jose del Monte City that opened in 2016.

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Support for growers of feed corn seen having follow-on benefits for livestock

SUPPORT for growers of yellow corn, the variety used in animal feed, will be beneficial to downstream users of the grain like the livestock and poultry industries, industry officials said.

"The first thing that needs to be done is to help yellow corn farmers... When you support yellow corn farmers, you support the entire industry, from poultry farmers, livestock farmers — you help everyone, even fishermen and those in aquaculture," United Broiler Raisers Association President Elias Jose M. Inciong said in an interview on One News.

"We need to help our farmers... President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. must... bring back the confidence of our farmers. If our farmers have confidence, then we have the chance to win. These past years, our farmers have not had the chance to win. That is the sad reality of our situation," he added.

Federation of Free Farmers Chairman Leonardo Q. Montemayor said economic managers should immerse themselves in agriculture to gain a grasp of the situation, which will guide policymaking.

"The problem is the mindset of some key economic managers and economists. They are too far away in the city. They are far away from the reality of what our everyday Filipinos go through, especially in rural areas. They do not feel the problems of the agriculture sector," he said.

"This is why they are unable to give the proper attention to the sector. We lack the right policies and budgetary support. When they say that agriculture is useless, this is a result of wrong policymaking," he added.

The administration should also focus on ramping up production through fertilizer subsidies, according to Mr. Montemayor.

"The priority now is production. For example, providing more fertilizer subsidies because many if not most farmers have really cut down on their fertilizer usage," he said.

"It's possible, for example, in the coming harvest period around October or November, (that) the harvest could drop by anywhere from 10% to 15%. That is a big drop. To arrest or minimize that, we need to ramp up the distribution of more subsidies," he added.

Mr. Marcos has announced that he is considering government-to-government deals with Russia and China to ensure favorable fertilizer pricing.

"It will take a little time for negotiations to (conclude) and for the fertilizer to actually arrive and be available to farmers," Mr. Montemayor said.

"In fact, we (must first) address the issue of the price of palay (unmilled rice). To me, that's the most critical. The price and the market for palay should be attractive enough to cover the basic costs of farmers. Otherwise, they are just producing to make themselves lose money," he added.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura President Rosendo O. So said separately that the price of fertilizer was rising even before the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

"Before the war between Russia and Ukraine, the price of fertilizer (rose) because of demand from other countries. Since urea comes from the countries that produce oil, this is (effectively) a byproduct of oil," he said on BusinessWorld Live.

"What we need now, immediately, is the fertilizer subsidy for the farmers. If we will not give subsidies, we will have high prices of palay... and the price of our rice will not go down," he added. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

Malaya
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Corn, soybeans ease for second day

SINGAPORE- Chicago corn and soybean futures lost more ground on Wednesday, with prices pressured by expectations of beneficial rains in parts of the US Midwest easing supply concerns.

Wheat slid after Egypt, the world's biggest importer, cancelled an international purchase tender that had drawn offers of US wheat.

"The market was abashed by the USDA's (US Department of Agriculture) steady US corn crop conditions survey so that weighed on prices," said said Tobin Gorey, director of agricultural strategy at the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

"Also weighing on prices was weather models' indicating more favorable projections of the US Midwest."

The most-active corn contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) lost 0.8 percent to $5.90-1/4 a bushel, and soybeans gave up 1 percent to $13.44-1/4 a bushel.

Wheat dropped 0.3 percent to $8.10 a bushel.

Corn and soybeans are being weighed down by forecasts pointing to beneficial rains in parts of the US Midwest crop belt next week, which could bolster yields.

A weekly report showed stabilizing US crop conditions. The USDA late on Monday rated 64 percent of the US corn crop in good-to-excellent condition, unchanged from the previous week, while analysts surveyed by Reuters on average had expected a decline of one percentage point.

Egypt's state grains buyer GASC cancelled its international tender for wheat with no purchase made, as offer prices were higher than estimates. - ***Reuters***

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Raw sugar futures dip nearly 3%, while arabica coffee consolidates

NEW YORK/LONDON — Raw sugar prices on ICE fell nearly 3% on Tuesday, partly hit by concerns that mills will increase the amount of cane used to produce the sweetener rather than ethanol in Brazil as fuel prices fall.

RAW SUGAR

October raw sugar settled down 0.57 cents, or 2.9%, at 18.84 cents per pound (lb).

Dealers said weaker ethanol prices in Brazil could boost sugar production in the centre-south region as mills find it more profitable to produce the sweetener.

Raw sugar futures extended losses after Brazil's oil company Petrobras announced a cut on gasoline prices, the first such a move since December. The move tends to increase pressure on ethanol prices.

Rabobank said in a report that ethanol parity had fallen to 16.3 cents per lb likely due to upcoming tax changes which will lower petrol prices, noting the sugar mix during the rest of the season would be closely watched.

October white sugar fell $14.50, or 2.6%, at $539.60 a ton.

COFFEE

September arabica coffee rose 1.3 cent, or 0.6%, to $2.165 per lb with the market consolidating after climbing by nearly 8% on Monday.

Dealers said roaster buying had contributed to the run-up in prices along with a weaker dollar. They also noted green coffee stocks in the US increased less than the average for this time of the year while cash market differentials remained high.

A further decline in ICE certified stocks to 727,222 bags — the lowest level since August 1999 — also helped support prices.

September robusta coffee rose $6, or 0.3%, to $1,998 a ton.

COCOA

September New York cocoa settled up $18, or 0.8%, to $2,347 a ton.

Dealers said second-quarter cocoa grind data, due to be issued on Thursday, would provide a short-term focus as they keep a close watch on whether global economic woes are beginning to impact consumption.

Shares in British chocolatier Hotel Chocolat Group slump as much as 40% after the company revised sales expectation.

September London cocoa rose £20 or 1.2% to £1,734 per ton. — ***Reuters***

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'Bold actions' will ensure access to nutritious food–FAO

BOLD, scaled and collaborative actions are needed so that everyone will have access to enough nutritious food every day, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

FAO Director General Qu Dongyu made the pronouncement during the opening of 28th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) in Italy last Monday.

Qu said food and agriculture are at the very heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

"Together, we are committed to achieve SDG 2 [Zero Hunger] by 2030. Unfortunately, the world has lost ground, and we are moving backwards in efforts to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and ensure food security for all. Global hunger continues to rise, reflecting growing inequalities across and within countries," he said in his speech.

According to the recently released State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report (SOFI 2022), as many as 828 million people were affected by hunger last year. This is an increase of 46 million from 2020, and 150 million more than in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, over 3 billion people worldwide could not afford a healthy diet.

Qu said the Covid-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, the war in Ukraine and other conflicts, and humanitarian crises around the world have exacerbated already existing food problems.

"We have seen the fragility of our agrifood systems, and the urgent need to transform them to put them back on the sustainable path."

Qu told members and delegates at the session that the discussions they would hold on issues relating to agriculture, livestock, food safety, nutrition, rural development and natural resource management were critical to efforts to move from strategies to action.

The way forward

"WE need bold, scaled and collaborative actions to ensure that everyone, everywhere and every day has access to enough nutritious food," he said.

"We must work together to tackle the root causes of hunger and malnutrition through transformative changes to the way we produce, distribute and consume food. We need to ensure a more efficient use of available outputs and inputs—we need to produce more with less. And we need to significantly decrease food loss and waste, which could currently feed around 1.26 billion people per year."

The director-general stressed the need for greater support and increased investment in knowledge, infrastructure and technology for sustainable agriculture to make this shift.

COAG 28 agenda

THE discussions at the 28th Session of COAG will cover a range of key topics related to the COAG mandate, including food safety, livestock, One Health, antimicrobial resistance, the State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture (SOLAW), soils, agricultural plastics, climate change, agricultural innovation, the linkages between agriculture and forestry, mainstreaming biodiversity, the UN Decade on Family Farming, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the proposal for an International Day of the Potato.

COAG 28 is taking place as a hybrid event from July 18 to 22. COAG is FAO's main technical advisory committee on agriculture. It provides overall policy and regulatory guidance on issues relating to agriculture, livestock, food safety, nutrition, rural development and natural resource management.

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A broader look at today's business

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Palm oil exports from top grower set to soar 60% in price blow

PALM oil shipments from Indonesia, the world's biggest supplier, may surge more than 60 percent in the second half of the year from the first six months as the government ramps up exports to reduce bloated inventories.

The country is likely to ship 17.3 million tons overseas from July to December, according to Sahat Sinaga, acting chairman of the Indonesia Palm Oil Board, which represents the industry. That compares with just 10.7 million tons in the first half, which was way below expectations because of an export ban imposed in late April and other curbs, he said in a phone interview on Tuesday.

The boom in supply will keep prices of the world's most consumed cooking oil under pressure and probably bring a further slowing in global food inflation from a record earlier this year. Veteran analyst Dorab Mistry said Tuesday palm oil prices could drop over 20 percent by September on the increase in cargoes.

Stockpiles have ballooned in Indonesia because of the export curbs, which were brought in to cool domestic prices. Mistry estimates the inventories are now around 10 million tons and will continue to climb in August because of high local output. Sinaga said stockpiles exceeded 7 million tons in early July.

PALM oil loaded into trucks from a tanker docked at Tanjung Priok Port in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Tuesday, April 26, 2022. BLOOMBERG NEWS

The main issue that has to be resolved right now is the high inventory level, Sinaga said. The bloated reserves mean that mills are not buying fresh fruit bunches from farmers, leaving them to rot in the plantations. That could reduce production this year to 50.2 million tons from an initial estimate of 53.8 million tons and compared with 51.3 million tons last year, he said.

Bloomberg News