CLIPPINGS FOR WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2022

A. SEC. PBBM QUOTED

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Marcos at NYSE: Can't see PH future without US

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Sketches: take a bullet

MANILA BULLETIN
No need to import rice till next year –Imee Marcos

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Marcos, in New York, Talks of 'Vibrant' PH economy

DAILY TRIBUNE
No sugar imports 'till 2023

REMATE
Magandang buhay ng Pinoy inaasahan

B. DA FAMILY

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Imports, start of milling season to stabilize sugar prices

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
NIA pushes PPPs for P800 B worth of projects
Sugar prices seen stabilizing by November
Gov't urged to look into looming sardine shortage
Coca-Cola supports sugar importation order
Aspirin vs Cancer
Gotcha: Promoting Filipino cuisine can boost agriculture

MANILA STANDARD
Food firms seek representation in sugar admin board
Imee: No need to import rice til 2023

MANILA BULLETIN
Agricultural woes: From salty to sweet

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
SRA expects sugar prices to 'stabilize' in next 2 months

THE MANILA TIMES
SRA: Sugar prices at P70-P80/ kilo in Nov.

DAILY TRIBUNE
Ignominious fall from power (1)
Rice supply stable – Imee

BUSINESS WORLD
Dens's P60 – million hydroponic farm seen to boost food security
No more sugar imports this year – SRA

BUSINESS MIRROR
Editorial: Helping farmers cut postharvest losses
With SO2 shipment due, sugar prices to decline

ABANTE
Hontiveros, Tolentino sabong sa import asukal

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL TONIGHT
Antiporda fights 'bad eggs' in NIA

ABANTE
DA tinulak paggamit ng native bawang sa mga negosyante
500 toneladang asukal hirit ng PCCI

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Eating without consuming the world

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Bank lending in agri-agra rises in 1st half
Global commodity prices continue to soar

MANILA BULLETIN
Bayer woos PH youth into farming

THE MANILA TIMES
SC clears vice mayor in fertilizer scam
DMW wants Filipino fishers be considered as seafarers

ABANTE
Pabigas sa mga private worker tinulak

D. FOREIGN STORY

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Farm, food investors face $150B loss

BUSINESS WORLD
Arabica Coffee futures settle 3% up but raw sugar closes down

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

MARCOS AT NYSE: CAN'T SEE PH FUTURE WITHOUT US

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan
@dpazzibuganINQ

NEW YORK CITY—President Marcos has invited American investors to do more business in the Philippines, giving his strongest commitment yet to the country's long-standing alliance with the United States and indicating a major foreign policy shift after the pivot to China and Russia of his predecessor, former President Rodrigo Duterte.

On the second day of his six-day US visit, Mr. Marcos addressed global investors and traders from the world's financial center, the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), as the special guest to ring the bell to close the day's trading at 4 p.m. on Monday (4 a.m. on Tuesday in Manila).

READY FOR TAKEOFF President Marcos and his official delegation, including Speaker Martin Romualdez, meet with Boeing officials on Sept. 20 as part of his six-day working visit to New York. —MALACAÑANG PHOTO

"We have adjusted many of our ways of doing business at the behest of our friends in the United States and of the American businesses that are already in the Philippines," he said in a forum hosted by NYSE vice chair John Tuttle and attended by his economic team and business executives, including several Filipino tycoons.

"I think that that will give us great opportunities in the future and for both our countries, for private corporations, for government-to-government agreements and arrangements," he added.

He related his geopolitics discussion earlier during the business lunch hosted by the US-Philippine Society at The Brook Club, one of the oldest elite private clubs in New York.

"It is very clear to me in my vision for the way that the country will move forward, that I cannot see the Philippines in the future without having the United States as a partner," Mr. Marcos said.

"When we are in crisis, we look to the United States. We look to the relationship that has been forged over the many years and I have to say the reason that we have done that is that for the most part we can say that the United States has not failed us," he pointed out.

The President cited recent policies that further opened the A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A1 & A2

FROM A1

TRADING FLOOR GUEST President Marcos leads the traditional bell ringing ceremony at the New York Stock Exchange as the bourse's special guest on Sept. 19 (New York time). The President mainly spent Day 2 of this six-day working visit offering investment opportunities for American businesses in information technology, business process outsourcing, medical products, electric vehicles, agribusiness and telecommunications, among others. —MALACAÑANG PHOTOS

Philippine economy, such as lowered corporate income tax rates and rationalized fiscal incentives; reduced minimum paid-up capital requirements for foreign retailers and foreign startups bringing in advanced new technology, and full foreign ownership of companies providing public services such as telecommunications, shipping, air carriers, railways, subways, airports and toll roads.

He said his administration was seeking partnerships in public infrastructure such as mass transit systems, airports, toll roads; in public services; in digitization initiatives; in energy development; and agriculture modernization.

He offered investment opportunities for American businesses in areas such as information technology and business process management or IT-BPM; medical products and devices; electric vehicles and batteries; agribusiness, and telecommunications infrastructure and services.

"We are all thrilled to be here. We're familiar with the New York Stock Exchange and the bell and that most important balcony in the world. We had always watched it from afar," said Mr. Marcos, who later signed the guest book reserved for dignitaries and rang the closing bell from the balcony of the trading floor.

He was joined by first lady Liza Araneta-Marcos, the President's son Ilocos Norte Rep. Sandro Marcos, Speaker Martin Romualdez, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual, Aboitiz Group CEO Sabin Aboitiz, and Tuttle.

The Philippine flag was hoisted at the façade of the historic NYSE building and shown on the screen of the trading floor.

Aboitiz, whom Mr. Marcos designated as head of the Private Sector Advisory Council, was one of the 30 representatives of the Philippine business community selected to accompany the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)-led government delegation to the United States.

According to a statement from the Aboitiz Group, the Philippine business delegation included International Container Terminal Services Inc. chair and president Enrique Razon Jr.; Metro Pacific Corp. chair and president Manuel V. Pangilinan; San Miguel Corp. president and CEO Ramon Ang; Ayala Corp. chair Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala; JG Summit Holdings Inc. president and CEO Lance Gokongwei; Magsaysay Group president and CEO Doris Ho, and SM Prime Holdings director Hans Sy, among others.

Protest

Earlier in the day, he met with executives of American companies NuScale Power, which designs and markets small modular reactors; Wastefuel, which is into waste-to-fuels technology, and Boeing, one of the world's biggest aerospace manufacturers and defense contractors, urging them to invest in the Philippines.

The President's convoy arrived at the NYSE just as a group of Filipino-American protesters shouting anti-Marcos martial law chants converged in the street in front of the NYSE that was only closed to motorists but remained open to pedestrians.

With US Secret Service agents around, the protesters were just a few meters away as they heckled Mr. Marcos when he alighted from his vehicle.

The same group also held a protest outside the venue of Mr. Marcos' meeting with members of the Filipino community at the New Jersey Performing Arts Hall on the first day of his visit.

The protesters, who were denouncing Mr. Marcos' father, the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos, and former President Duterte, dispersed more than an hour before the presidential convoy arrived.

Exporters' plea

In Manila, two of the biggest export groups said on Tuesday that they welcomed the President's trip to the United States as it bodes well for businessmen in both countries.

"It is good. This is like public relations. This is to remind the US that we are still here," Foreign Buyers Association of the Philippines (Fobap) president Robert Young told the Inquirer over a phone interview.

Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. (Philexport) president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. agreed, saying that a goodwill visit was a positive move by the current administration.

"It shows that we are ready to work with them," Ortiz-Luis said in a separate phone interview with the Inquirer.

Young said he was hoping that the US Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) could be tackled at the sidelines of one of the meetings because of its importance to local exporters.

"It expired almost two years ago. They have not extended it for some reason," said Young. The trade program, which gives preferential tariff rates on US imports from eligible countries, was last granted to the Philippines in March of 2018 under former US President Donald Trump. It expired on Dec. 31, 2020.

"They (US buyers) will not be buying more because they pay (import) duties now with the GSP suspended. They told me they would be deducting the quantity that they are buying," Young said, recalling a conversation with one of their US clients.

According to the DTI, Philippine exports to the western country under the GSP totaled $1.73 billion in 2019. —WITH A REPORT FROM ALDEN M. MONZON INQ

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

SKETCHES

ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

Take a bullet

Today being the 50th anniversary of the declaration of martial law, we remember Ferdinand Marcos the elder and the chief implementers of his military rule.

His defense chief, the impressively durable Juan Ponce Enrile, at 98 is very much alive, with a touch of age-related dementia but still kicking… the butt, it seems, of the "little president" himself, Victor Rodriguez.

Enrile faked an ambush on his vehicle so it could be cited by Marcos Senior as the last straw justifying the imposition of military rule (or was the ambush real? I've lost track of JPE's numerous shifting recollections of this story).

JPE signed all those nasty ASSOs – arrest, search and seizure orders that were served on Marcos' political opponents, critical journalists and communist rebels, many in the dead of night, after which they were tossed in detention centers. Some stayed in detention for months; others, like Ninoy Aquino for years. Some were tortured; others disappeared, never to be seen again.

Under Ferdinand Marcos Junior, JPE is still signing documents, as the chief presidential legal counsel. This time it's an opinion that has spelled the ouster of Junior's erstwhile executive secretary, Vic Rodriguez. By most accounts, JPE is the winner in this controversy.

After quitting as "ES" – the Cabinet's *primus inter pares* – Rodriguez has managed to get BBM to sign an administrative order creating the new position of chief of staff or COS in the Office of the President.

Whether Rodriguez will get the broad powers that he proposed as COS remains to be seen.

As of last weekend, Malacañang said a new ES would be named shortly, and the COS' role would be strictly limited, to prevent the confusion, duplication of functions and turf tensions that JPE had warned about.

Rodriguez, however, could still end up enjoying the upper hand as COS. Marcos will be back in a few days. BBM might have a soft spot for his campaign spokesperson, and allow the requested powers, which smack a lot of the same powers and functions of the little president.

If this happens, BBM should just leave the post of executive secretary vacant. The COS will then have the same functions as the chief of staff in the White House, where there is no ES.

* * *

The last time the idea of creating the position of COS was floated at Malacañang was during the presidency of Noynoy Aquino.

At the time, talk was rife about turf wars between two power blocs: the so-called "Balay" group led by Aquino's BFF Mar Roxas, and the "Samar" faction led by the ES, Paquito Ochoa. Jojo Ochoa was also identified with a faction that supposedly maneuvered the winning "Noy-Bi" pairing in 2010 of Aquino and his late mother's loyal supporter Jejomar Binay.

Roxas, who lost to Binay, wanted to be appointed as COS, whose powers were similar to those envisioned by Rodriguez for himself.

Aquino's spokesman, Edwin Lacierda, told "The Chiefs" on *One News* last Monday that Roxas made the proposal after the one-year ban on the appointment to government posts of losing candidates lapsed.

Lacierda said Aquino eventually thumbed down the proposal, for the same reasons cited by JPE in his opinion opposing the creation of the office of the COS.

At the same time, Lacierda said an opening in the Cabinet occurred after Jose de Jesus resigned as secretary of what was then the Department of Transportation and Communications. The buzz at the time was that Ping de Jesus was in fact pressured to quit, ostensibly over corruption issues, but mainly to make room for Roxas.

The Samar-Balay feud had simmered as early as the 2010 campaign, amid the push for a Noy-Bi win. So it's not unusual for the current Palace intramurals erupting just into the third month of the new administration.

Still, early turf wars indicate disunity and disorganization that reflect badly on the new team and ultimately on the President himself.

* * *

This brings to mind the other implementer of Marcos Senior's martial law, his military chief and cousin Fabian Ver, who would later clash with another cousin, Fidel Ramos.

Until the people power revolt, Ver remained loyal to Marcos Senior. Ver's sons controlled what was then called the Presidential Security Command. It was often said that if Marcos told Ver to jump out of a building, Ver would ask, "From which floor?" Ver would have taken a bullet for Marcos Senior.

Marcos Junior needs at least one official who will take a bullet for him. Unfortunately for him, it doesn't look like his erstwhile little president is it. Instead, it's the ex-ES who wants to be shielded by the President from adversity.

Power struggles can be disastrous for an administration. A power struggle within Marcos Senior's inner circle was believed to have led to Ninoy Aquino's assassination in 1983.

* * *

Rodriguez's woes are tainting his principal particularly because they emanate from the scandal over sugar – an issue over which Marcos, being the concurrent agriculture secretary, has direct supervision.

Yesterday at an outlet of one of the major supermarkets that promised to sell sugar for P70 a kilo, there was sugar at that price, all right, but washed – which as I have previously pointed out has always been cheaper than refined white – and only in 500-gram packs.

Refined white sugar, meanwhile, was available only in 1/4-kilo packs, at P24 each. That means P96 per kilo.

Instead of shielding Marcos from flak arising from the sugar shortage and high prices, Rodriguez has washed his hands of the mess, with resigned agriculture undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian as the main sacrificial lamb.

The new Senate Blue Ribbon committee, in handling its first major controversy, has been a disappointment. If it will sustain its performance as a Malacañang-friendly whitewashing panel, it should be renamed the Senate laundromat.

Last week, rumors circulated that Rodriguez would be given an ambassador's post, possibly to Australia. The diplomatic service in this country, unfortunately, has long been used for dispensing patronage, to the detriment of Philippine career diplomats. But anyway, the rumors were debunked by the announcement of the COS post for Rodriguez.

This controversy will still be raging when BBM returns from the US. How he ultimately resolves this will set the tone for his presidency.

★

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 1

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

No need to import rice till next year — Imee Marcos

By MARIO B. CASAYURAN

Senator Imee Marcos has assured rice farmers that the government need not import rice until next year.

This is because local supply would more than adequately meet consumer demand and make the issuance of new import clearances unnecessary, she explained.

"The DA (Department of Agriculture) has no reason to call for any more rice imports. which will only push down farmgate prices of palay. Our farmers are doing a great job producing more than ample domestic supply," she said, citing the DA's Rice Supply Outlook "Also, there are no remaining valid sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPS-ICs) to justify more rice imports this year."

Marcos, the elder sister of President Ferdinand E. Marcos Jr., explained that the projected 5.13 million metric tons (MMT) of locally grown rice in the third quarter would exceed domestic demand of 3.7 MMT and provide a buffer stock of 1.43 MMT by the end of September.

In the fourth quarter, local rice supply is expected to reach 6.24 MMT against demand of 4.02 MMT, for an additional buffer stock of 2.22 MMT by the end of December.

In effect, rice harvests in the third and fourth quarters will provide the country with a total buffer stock of 3.65 million metric tons by yearend, good for 55 to 60 days.

The National Food Authority (NFA) is required to have a rice buffer stock of 15 to 30 days for national consumption.

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: B1 & B3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Marcos, in New York, talks of 'vibrant' PH economy

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. yesterday wooed American and other foreign investors to do business or expand their ventures in the Philippines and eventually "reap the benefits of a vibrant economy."

The President, who is in New York for the 77th United Nations' General Assembly, met with business executives Monday morning (Tuesday in Manila) and attended in the afternoon an economic forum at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), before he rang the closing bell to end the day's trading.

Marcos said the event at the NYSE is an "invaluable opportu-

See MARCOS ➤ Page B3

PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE/TWITTER

Bourse guest. President Marcos Jr. flashes a wide smile during his visit to the New York Stock Exchange where he delivered a message and rang the closing bell.

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: B1 & B3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

MARCOS

nity" for him to share with business leaders how the Philippines is ramping up efforts to open up the economy and accelerate post-pandemic recovery.

He said investment opportunities are available in various sectors such as in information technology, business process management, agribusiness, and telecommunications.

"Bouncing back from the pandemic, the Philippine economy has seen robust growth since last year and has returned to its path toward upper-middle-income country status, achievable within the next few years," he added.

The President said the Philippines has also been implementing policies and laws that will liberalize the country's economy, such as those lowering corporate income tax and rationalizing fiscal incentives, as well as the reducing minimum paid-up capital requirements for foreign retailers and foreign start-ups.

Marcos said the country also now allows full foreign ownership of companies providing public services such as telecommunications, shipping, air carriers, railways, subways, airports, and toll roads.

He said the Philippines also offers high-quality labor and a large consumer market, and the country also remains committed to maintaining sound macroeconomic fundamentals.

The President said that with a wide range of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives, the Philippines has become a key destination for investments.

PRIORITIES

Marcos said the top priorities of his administration are "protecting the purchasing power of Filipino families by managing inflation, reducing the scarring effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic, and ensuring sound macroeconomic fundamentals."

He said his administration is keen on implementing policies that enhance food security, quality of education and skills of workers; reduce energy, transport, and logistics costs; and strengthen social protection.

"As we pursue our short-term agenda, we build the foundations for a stronger, more inclusive future. Our medium-term agenda includes reducing the poverty rate to single digit by 2028 and undergoing an industrial transformation through which science, technology, innovation, and sustainability will drive our industries," he said.

The President said the government is also implementing massive stimulus programs to readily support the most vulnerable sectors, and measures to reduce the public debt.

He said the debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to go below 60 percent by 2025 and reach 51.2 percent by 2028. As of June 2022, the country's outstanding debt was 62.1 percent.

"Although our borrowings increased substantially during the pandemic, we continue to reduce the cost of our public debt through judicious debt management," Marcos said.

He also said the country has "sufficient" buffers against external shocks, with the steady inflow of remittances from Filipinos working overseas, receipts from business process outsourcing, and foreign direct investment.

PH-US TIES

The President said he cannot see the Philippines' future without the US as a partner in politics and economy.

Marcos said the US is the Philippines' third largest trading partner and second major source of foreign direct investment applications in 2021.

He said the US and the Philippines also have strong and enduring ties in trade and commerce, among many other areas of cooperation, for years and he sees its continued growth in the years ahead.

"It is very clear to me in my vision for the way that the country will move forward that I cannot see the Philippines in the future without having the United States as a partner. Although I was referring to the geopolitics of it, and I was referring to the political situation in the region and around the world, that certainly does continue to apply in our exchanges on the economic front," he said.

Earlier in the day, the President met with the executives of US-based companies NUscale Power, WasteFuel, and Boeing.

The Radio Television Malacañang (RTVM), in its Facebook page, described NuScale Power as an American energy firm that offers scalable advanced nuclear technology for the production of electricity, heat and clean water to improve the quality of life for people around the world.

It described WasteFuel as a company that produces renewable fuels through proven technologies such the conversion of municipal and agricultural waste into low-carbon fuels, renewable natural gas, and green methanol.

RTVM described Boeing as a leading global aerospace company and premier manufacturer of commercial jetliners for decades.

Details on the three meetings were not yet immediately available but Press Secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles, on Facebook, said Marcos met with companies involved in sustainable renewable energy production because ensuring energy supply in the country is part of the "economic transformation" that the Marcos administration is pursuing.

Asked about meetings the President is supposed to hold with

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: B1 & B3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

other world leaders, Angeles said details will be released after the meetings.

The President, who is on a working visit in the US until late Friday, is hoping to have a meeting with US President Joe Biden at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. He is expected to be back in Manila by Sunday.

Marcos is in the US to deliver the Philippines' national statement at the 77th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) where he intends to talk about the country's vision of people-centered development, and highlight his administration's thrust for economic recovery, food security, and agricultural productivity.

PH TIES WITH SOKOR, NORWAY

Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, who is part of Marcos' delegation, met with counterparts from South Korea and Norway on the sidelines of the UNGA.

Manalo discussed with South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin regional and international developments, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

"We covered a lot of issues and committed ourselves to formalizing soon the elevation of PH-Korea bilateral relations to a strategic partnership," Manalo said in a tweet.

The DFA said Manila and Seoul will be signing an agreement for the latter to help fund more development projects in the Philippines through loans from the Economic Development Cooperation Fund.

A similar agreement inked in 2018 under the previous administration allowed Manila to tap up to $1 billion in loans from 2017 to 2022 from South Korea.

Seoul is also one of the largest sources of official development assistance to Manila.

Manalo said both countries also agreed to enhance relations to include more high-level engagements, maritime cooperation, increased security collaboration, as well as in trade and investments, science and technology and more people-to-people exchanges.

There are about 242,000 Filipinos living and working in South Korea.

Manalo also met with Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt, during which they affirmed the primary importance the two countries place on maritime affairs.

"Great meeting with Norwegian Foreign Minister Huitfeldt where we discussed energy, maritime cooperation and pressing international developments on the sidelines of the UNGA 77 High Level Week," Manalo said in another tweet.

Manalo said he also expressed gratitude to Norway's continued support for peace and development in the country, including peace negotiation with the communist movement.

Oslo played host to peace talks between the Philippine government and the communist movement during the Duterte administration until the latter decided to terminate the talks in 2017.

There are about 25, 000 Filipinos living and working in Norway.

JET ESCORTS

TWO FA-50 fighter jets of the Philippine Air Force escorted the chartered plane that took Marcos to the US last Sunday.

The Air Force said it did not escort the President's first state visit, to Indonesia earlier this month, because no aircraft was available.

"During the earlier presidential trips, our fighter jets had been committed for priority patrol missions elsewhere that needed urgent presence. And considering that we have limited aircraft, our government's priority is for our aircraft to be utilized for such urgent and critical missions," said Air Force spokeswoman Col. Ma. Consuelo Castillo.

"That is why, even in the said brief fighter escort mission, we jibed it with the conduct of maritime patrol … It would really help if we could have more fighter aircraft for better coverage of our territories," she also said.

Castillo said the FA-50 jets in the country's eastern front, starting from Polillo Island in Quezon all the way up to 200 miles.

"This is the first time that our FA-50s were able to escort out the President on a foreign trip," said Castillo. The procedure lasted for a "few minutes" only, she said.

After accomplishing the mission, Castillo said the two FA-50s "continued on with the conduct of regular maritime patrol to secure the country from unauthorized intrusions within our Philippine air defense identification zone," Castillo said.

"Maritime patrols are also done by our fighter jets to monitor developments and illegal activities within our (200-mile) exclusive economic zone," she added.

Castillo said escorting the President out of the country is not only a tradition but "an essential standard operating procedure to clear and secure our air space for the arrival and departure of the President of the Republic and other visiting heads of state."

"The said procedure is similarly practiced in other countries for added security of their presidential flights," Castillo said.

The last time the Air Force escorted a presidential visit was during the time of President Aquino, said Castillo, referring to FA-50s escorting of Aquino's plane while returning from a US visit in February 2016.

Castillo said the Air Force did not escort any plane of former President Duterte during a foreign trip. – ***With Ashzel Hachero and Victor Reyes***

Daily Tribune
WITHOUT FEAR ▪ WITHOUT FAVOR

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A1 & A6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

No sugar imports 'til 2023

BY MARIA ROMERO
@tribunephl_mbr

The Sugar Regulatory Administration sees no importation of sugar at least until early next year as the country's sugar situation normalizes once refinery operations resume in full swing and the 150,000 metric tons of imported sugar reach the market by next month. ***Turn to page A6***

No sugar imports 'til 2023

By November, all the mills and refineries will be in operation. (Likely, we will not import at least by early next year) but the SRA will monitor the outputs of the mills and refineries so we will see the trend around March or April, usually, around March or April we will know the situation if we will need to import

From page 1

At a press conference on Tuesday, SRA acting administrator David John Thaddeus P. Alba said the agency will monitor the output of the mills and refineries to ensure that it can apply all necessary measures once the need to import arises.

"By November, all the mills and refineries will be in operation. (Likely, we will not import at least by early next year) but the SRA will monitor the outputs of the mills and refineries so we will see the trend around March or April, usually, around March or April we will know the situation if we will need to import," Alba told reporters.

The SRA, through its Sugar Order 2 issued last week, allowed the importation of 150,000 metric tons of sugar as a "stop-gap measure" to ensure the stability of supply in the market.

The order, which was signed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., allocated 75,000 MT for industrial users and another 75,000 MT for consumers.

The order mandates that sugar traders participating in the import program need to ensure that their respective allocated volumes arrive in the Philippines before 15 November.

Once the imported supply came in, Alba said consumers can expect a slight easing in the prices of the confectioner at around P70 to P80 per kilogram. It will be lower than the current prices of P95 per kilo of refined sugar, P75 per kilo of washed sugar, and P72.50 per kilo of brown sugar.

"Hopefully by November, once all imported refined goods come in we should see stabilization on the prices," Alba said.

The SRA also issued the Sugar Order 1 series of 2022 to 2023, which strictly allocates all sugar produced during the crop year 2022 to 2023 for domestic consumption to avoid the country's import dependence.

The SRA said that 100 percent of raw sugar production for the current crop year should be classified as "B" or the domestic sugar market.

Based on the latest projection of the SRA, the total raw sugar production for the crop year 2022 to 2023 is estimated to reach 1.87 million metric tons, while the total domestic raw sugar withdrawal during the year is pegged at 2.03 million MT.

Historically, the country must have carryover stocks of 250,000 MT of raw sugar and around 200,000 MT to 250,000 MT of refined sugar at the end of any crop year.

A crop year starts in September and ends in August of the following year, however, the sugar mills and refineries generally stop operations around May to June. The mills start operations for the next season around September to October while the refineries start around two weeks after the mills.

REMATE
ANG DIARYO NG MASA

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 5

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

MAGANDANG BUHAY NG PINOY INAASAHAN

REMATE OPINION

PUNTO DE VISTA

NI NORMAN LAURIO

MALAKI ang paniniwala ng 46 porsyentong kababayan na aangat ang kanilang kasulukuyang lugmok na kalagayan sa darating na araw kung pagbabatayan ang inilabas na survey ng SWS kamakailan.

Bagaman halos hindi nagkakalayo sa naturang datos ang naniniwalang walang pagbabagong inaasahan sa susunod na mga araw subalit malaki umano ang bilang ng mga grumadweyt sa kolehiyo na magkakaroon ng bagong pag-asa sa buhay nila sa pamamagitan ng magagandang trabahong naghihintay sa kanilang tuluyan nang mag-aangat sa buhay ng pamilya nito.

Maaaring tugma ang survey sa sentro ng programa ni PBBM kung saan pagpapalakas ng negosyo sa bansa sa pamamagitan ng pag-imbita sa mga lokal at dayuhang negosyanteng sadyang magbubukas ng libo-libong trabaho sa sambayanan lalo na sa mga kompanyang hindi lang mga gradweyt ang makikinabang kundi ang nakararaming kababayang nawalan ng mapagkikitaan noong sumabog ang pandemya.

Sila 'yung waiter sa mga resto,ordinaryong manggagawa sa mga kompanya at taga deliver ng mga order sa maliliit na fastfood chains na inaasahang maibabalik ang kita sa darating na mga araw.

Ito ang pangunahing dahilan ni PBBM ng kanyang pagkumbinsi sa mga dayuhang kompanya nang bumiyahe at bumisista sa Indonesia, Singapore at Amerika kung saan bukambibig ang paghikayat niya sa mga ito na palakasin pa ang kanilang negosyo sa 'Pinas.

Hindi ba't ang mababang unemployment rate ang hudyat ng unti-unting pagbangon ng ekonomiya sa bansa kasabay din ng food security na prayoridad ng kasalukuyang administrasyong tutugon ng kahirapan na nararanasan pa rin ng taumbayan?

Ngunit kailangang tutukan naman ng otoridad ang pagtaas ng krimeng pinaniniwalaang malaking balakid sa mga mamumuhunan dito na sadyang iniisip ang seguridad ng mga negosyo nila laban sa masasamang elementong noon pa man ay naghahasik na ng karahasang hindi magandang pangitain lalo na sa mga dayuhang negosyante.

Anomang puna o reaksyon itex sa 09999398537/email normanlaurio17@gmail.com

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: All

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

SRA TO MONITOR SUPPLY SITUATION FOR NOW

IMPORTS, START OF MILLING SEASON TO STABILIZE SUGAR PRICES

By Jordeene B. Lagare
@jordeenelagare

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) expressed confidence on Tuesday that the projected influx of sugar imports and the beginning of the milling season will stabilize the prices of the sweetener in retail markets.

With the supply situation expected to normalize, the SRA's top official said they might not resort to staging a new round of importations until at least the early part of 2023.

Acting SRA administrator David John Thaddeus Alba said selling prices of refined sugar are seen to decline to P70 to P80 per kilogram in less than two months.

"It will stabilize and will go a little lower when all the mills and refineries are in full operation," Alba told reporters during a press briefing.

The majority of big mills in Negros Occidental, the sugar capital of the Philippines, are operating full swing, he added.

In Metro Manila, refined sugar as of Sept. 20 is being sold for P95 per kg and brown sugar for P70 per kg, from P50 per kg and P44 per kg a year ago, based on the Department of Agriculture's price monitoring.

Before the SRA announced its import program last week, retail sugar prices skyrocketed to as high as P100 per kg.

Alba earlier said bringing in sugar from abroad was a "stopgap measure" as they expected supply from the mills to flow into the market with refineries projected to be in full operation by next month. INQ

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: B4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

NIA pushes PPPs for P800 B worth of projects

By DANESSA RIVERA

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) is pushing for public-private partnerships (PPPs) for around P800 billion worth of irrigation projects nationwide.

With PPP's focus on reduced costs, better risk allocation, faster implementation, improved services, and possible generation of additional revenue, the NIA is calling on the private sector for the much-needed investments in the agriculture sector.

In a media briefing yesterday, NIA administrator Benny Antiporda said the agency is strengthening its PPP thrust with 50 potential irrigation projects nationwide.

He said the estimated development cost of these irrigation projects amounts to P594.76 billion but this could balloon to P800 billion due to inflation, rising prices of materials, and other factors.

Majority of these are big-ticket multipurpose projects with hydropower component with potentials on floating solar power farm and small river irrigation projects (SRIPs) with reservoirs that can be utilized for floating solar power farm and/or mini-hydroelectric power plant.

"The biggest problem of NIA is funding to undertake irrigation projects," Antiporda said.

He said the agency had conducted a study on PPP projects and already began efforts towards forming a special committee for inviting experts.

NIA has already received pledge of investments amounting to more than P1 trillion from different investors.

"There are potential applications for more than P1 trillion from potential private partners which will then allow irrigation projects without restrictions of funding," Antiporda said.

NIA hopes to start rolling out PPP irrigation projects ahead of the second year of the Marcos administration.

Antiporda said the agency can only assure the success of PPPs if there is no corruption.

The agency has filed cases with the Office of the Ombudsman against two officials in its legal department, Lloyd Allain Cudal and Mary Annabelle Cruz-Domingo, for violating the Republic Act No. 3019 or Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards of Public Officials and Employees, Gross Inexcusable Negligence, Misconduct and Conduct Unbecoming of Public Officers in the performance of their official duties.

This was after the Construction Industry Arbitration Commission (CIAC) ruled in favor of Green Asia Construction Development Corp., holding NIA liable to pay P205.96 million.

The case is is appealable to the Court of Appeals through a petition for review but Cudal and Cruz-Domingo filed a motion for reconsideration instead, which is a prohibited pleading before the CIAC while the petition for certiorari was dismissed by the CA for being the wrong remedy.

Antiporda said NIA stands to lose the Green Asia case due to the officials' lackadaisical attitude and cavalier handling of the case.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 1 & 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Sugar prices seen stabilizing by November

By DANESSA RIVERA

Sugar prices are projected to stabilize in November as imported sugar arrives and as refineries go into full operation, enough to meet the country's demand for the sweetener.

And once local refined sugar comes in, industries are urged to source from local production as importation is taken off the table, Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) Board officials said yesterday.

At a media briefing yesterday, SRA acting administrator David

Turn to Page 2

Sugar From Page 1

John Thaddeus Alba said no importation will be done as local production should be able to meet demand, particularly of industrial users.

"By the time were refining, we would like everybody to buy locally from the refineries, locally produced refined sugar," Alba said, adding that industrial users should work with the imported sugar cleared under Sugar Order No. 2 (SO2), he said.

The SRA chief said imported refined sugar under SO2 is expected start coming in by next month until Nov. 15 at the latest.

Last week, the SRA Board issued SO2 to import a total of 150,000 metric tons of refined sugar – 75,000 MT each for industrial users and consumers, a stopgap measure to arrest the skyrocketing sugar prices.

"We received a lot of applications already and we're just trying to pro-rate everything, but we have traders already," Alba said, noting applications to import closed yesterday.

Currently, two sugar refineries are in operation while all refineries are expected to go full blast by November, SRA Board-millers' representative Ma. Mitzi Mangwag said at the same briefing.

"We are really looking forward to operating these refineries soon to be able to bridge the gap as soon as these deliveries of imported will come in and by that time these will be disposed to consumers and industrial users, we'll have domestic production to supply the needs of the locals," she said.

The imported and local sugar combined will provide the country enough, but tight, supply. With this, the SRA Board hopes the price of sugar sold in Metro Manila markets will start to ease. From over P100 per kilo, Alba said sugar prices should stabilize around P70-80 a kilo in two months.

"The word guarantee is… I don't think we can use that. We can say categorically (that) it will stabilize because everybody will start milling. Barring another typhoon like Odette, the canes are looking good. Hopefully, if it continues, if the trend continues, we'll have more sugar that we have estimated," he said.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: B9

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Gov't urged to look into looming sardine shortage

By **DANESSA RIVERA**

The government is being urged to spearhead discussions with coastal local government units (LGUs), fishermen and the canning industry to address the looming shortage of sardines for canning.

Fisherfolk leaders and sardine cannery groups made the call to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in a media briefing of food security advocacy group Tugon Kabuhayan.

Sardines Canners Association of the Philippines (SCAP) executive director Francisco Buencamino said the suggested multi-party meeting should discuss the possibility of having commercial fishers catching from 10.1 kilometers outward from the shore still covered by municipal waters.

"LGUs should allow us to fish near the shore where there is more fish. We will make sure that it will not affect the municipal fishermen. We just need to get closer so we could build up our inventories before Dec. 1. There will be a shortage if the issue is not addressed," he said.

Republic Act 10654 or the amended Philippine Fisheries Code states that small and medium commercial fishing vessels may be allowed to operate within the 10.1 to 15 kilometers from the shoreline in the municipal waters provided that the LGU enacts a municipal ordinance allowing their operation.

There should also be talks about a compromise arrangement between canneries and municipal fishermen during the multi-party meeting.

This as municipal fishermen can supply the needed sardines of canneries, fisherman and environmentalist from Zamboanga, Sibugay Roberto Ballon said in the same briefing.

He stressed that they would need bigger and better boats, as well as post-harvest facilities that would make their catch competitive to those of commercial fishers.

He also raised his concern about the low pricing that their catch may get from the canneries.

"We would need logistics support and facilities both in the production and harvest stages…We have what we call 'pangulong' (to cage) with small lights. We may use those instead of fishing nets that may damage the sardines' fins," Ballon said.

Canneries rely on commercial fishers with bigger and better equipped boats and post-harvest facilities that keep the fish fresh.

Buencamino clarified that there is no shortage of canned sardines yet.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: B9

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Coca-Cola supports sugar importation order

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

Beverage firm Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines, Inc. (CCBPI) welcomed the issuance by President Marcos Jr. of an order allowing the importation of bottler's grade sugar.

"CCBPI welcomes the issuance of Sugar Order No. 2 (SO) series of 2022-2023 by President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. – concurrently the head of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and chair of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) – as well as his administration's collaborative actions working with the food and beverage manufacturing industry to address the national sugar supply situation," the company said in a statement yesterday.

Last week, the SRA issued SO 2 which allowed the importation of 150,000 metric tons (MT) of sugar.

Of the total volume, 75,000 MT have been allocated for industrial users, while the remaining balance will go to consumers.

Industrial users, as defined under the order, include food, confectioneries, biscuits, bread, candies, milk, juices and beverage manufacturers that use refined sugar in the manufacture of their finished products for sale exclusively in the domestic market.

"We are grateful to the government for heeding the industry's call to import bottler's grade or premium refined sugar. We appreciate the efforts and welcome this step forward as we work across sectors towards a sustainable solution in addressing the country's sugar situation," the company said.

"We hope to be able to normalize our bottling operations once we have secured a sufficient supply of bottler's grade sugar," it said. The beverage company also expressed gratitude to consumers who have been patient with the company as it prepares to once again serve its full line-up of beverages.

Last month, three large beverage firms in the country, including CCBPI, confirmed a shortage of sugar it uses for its products.

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

PAGE: B3
SEPT. 21, 2022

Aspirin vs cancer

You can't cure the malady in our agricultural sector by treating it with aspirin because it has become cancerous and needs something drastic.

Fermin Adriano, a former agriculture undersecretary, last week wrote a dire prediction in his column in another newspaper about the imminence of a food crisis in this country. The reasons for it are both internal and external.

"My bold prediction is that by the end of this year or early next year, the country will be facing a full-blown food crisis if corresponding corrective measures are not undertaken by the government."

DEMAND AND SUPPLY

BOO CHANCO

It should be expected. After all, the Philippines is a net importer of agricultural products. And importing may not be as easy and will be expensive under current world conditions.

Productivity of our agricultural sector had been dismal for decades. Because of bad policies and bad management, we can't grow enough food to feed our fast-growing population.

We have not been able to grow enough rice and sugar in recent years. And both have been governed by self-serving cartels that disregard the national interest.

The debate on whether we have a sugar supply shortage requiring importation is a waste of time. What better proof of shortage than retail prices doubling and soft drink companies closing down due to lack of sugar?

As for rice, ex usec Adriano is seeing a decline in our palay (unmilled rice) production because of insufficient application of fertilizer by our farmers as fertilizer prices doubled and the government failed to provide enough assistance.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute calculates a reduction in palay harvest of around 1.3 million metric tons. If destructive typhoons hit our palay producing regions during the last quarter of the year, it will be a lot less.

We are also experiencing a shortage of onions, garlic, salt among others.

After a lot of hullabaloo, President Junior authorized the importation of 150,000 MT of sugar, half of what was originally proposed. Sugar regulatory authorities also announced all production in the current crop year will be destined for domestic sale. This is something that should have been done a long time ago.

Curiously, there had been no decision on freeing thousands of metric tons of sugar classified for export now stored in bodegas. Freeing those sugar stocks will immediately help ease supply shortage and prices while waiting for imported sugar to arrive in November.

In the meantime, the drastic rise in domestic sugar prices is a growing concern for many businesses, mostly MSMEs.

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) estimated that local sugar production will hit just 1.8 million MT in 2022, lower than the annual demand of 2.03 million MT averaged for the past three years. So, expect the same zarzuela over importation and photo-op raids of bodegas to entertain us.

Rising food prices is fueling our inflation rate. The impact on most of our people is also worrisome since poor Filipinos spend as much as 60 percent of their budget for food. Food inflation has been rising with its percentage share of contribution to CPI also rising to 30.6 percent in eight months this year.

There are many obviously common-sense solutions to our food supply problems but our politicians and bureaucrats refuse to fix things once and for all.

Ex-usec Adriano's son, Karlo Adriano, a newly minted PhD, traced the cause of high poverty incidence among farmers, soaring domestic food prices, and high malnutrition rates to the festering inefficiency and underdevelopment of our agricultural sector.

On average, agriculture, fisheries and forestry or AFF grew only by 2.5 percent and its contribution to the country's GDP growth was only 0.3 percent from 2001 to 2021… which is really almost nothing.

From 2000 to 2021, the major contributor to the country's inflation was food with an average share of 43 percent. Before the Rice Tariffication Law or RTL, the main contributors to food inflation were rice, fish, and meat. After RTL, the main contributors were meat and fish.

Filipinos are paying more than double for pork compared to Thailand and 73 percent more compared to Vietnam. Similarly, Filipinos are also paying more than double for chicken compared to Thailand and 44 percent more compared to Vietnam.

The young Adriano cited attempts at self-sufficiency, permanent protectionist policies, rice centric budget, weak value chain approach, small farm size, inadequate attention on climate resiliency and institutional problems in the Department of Agriculture as causes of our present problems.

Young Adriano thinks the permanent protectionist policy gives little incentive for agricultural producers to be productive and innovative because foreign competition is held at bay through high tariff protection and non-tariff barriers.

Critical value chain infrastructure such as logistics, warehouse, and cold chain remained undeveloped such that around 30 to 40 percent of total production is lost before it reaches the market. Horrible waste!

Small land size is a problem. The average farm size of only around one hectare impedes economies of scale (use of technology and restricts investments) and efficient transfer of government programs. Consolidation of farms under the agrarian reform program will help modernization and productivity.

Important institutional problems at DA are its low absorptive capacity (as measured by disbursement rates) and its bias toward more regulation than development. Of what use is increasing the DA's budget if they are incapable of spending it?

The young Adriano captured the problems of the agricultural sector very well. He has very good prescriptions. But ten years from now, these recommendations will still sound very current.

Our politicians and bureaucrats don't want to solve problems for good, especially if they benefit from the chaos. Aspirin solutions are enough when the problem calls for chemotherapy.

Our academics always have great ideas but no execution by our leaders. Emil Javier had to go to Taiwan and get its vegetable farming sector going to show he is more than an academic. Leo Sebastian was awarded in Vietnam for helping them make their rice sector so productive we buy from them.

Junior told Pinoy expats in New York to come home and help. But after throwing Sebastian under the bus, they have to be crazy to do so.

Boo Chanco's email address is *bchanco@gmail.com*. Follow him on Twitter *@boochanco*

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL
SEPT. 21, 2022
PAGE: 7

GOTCHA

JARIUS BONDOC

Promoting Filipino cuisine can boost agriculture

Former Senate president Tito Sotto had long ago proposed how to ensure farmers' incomes. Make government buy at least half of all farm produce, he told *Sapol-dwIZ* in June. Then, sell those cheap in bulk at trading posts. Input the cost of labor, transportation and sundries in the selling price. National and local agencies won't lose money. They would recover the initial funds and buy more goods with the rolling capital.

Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban might wish to study Sotto's idea. He need not blame farmers for "just planting but not thinking of the market." His Department of Agriculture will have a 40-percent budget increase of P46.5 billion next year, from P117.29 billion to P163.75 billion. That money would go a long way to helping farmers, fishers and backyard chicken and hog raisers rise from penury. Agriculture can transform from over-importing to self-sufficiency. Consumers can enjoy cheaper food.

Sotto's plan has been tried in other lands. By building a train network, India ensured transport of produce from farm to city. This was partly responsible for decades of bumper harvests of rice, wheat, barley, rye, corn, potato, pulses, jute and sugarcane. Same with Thailand.

Thai King Bhumibol did better in the 1980s. Summoning the best Thai chefs, he requested them to write basic recipes for the most popular Thai dishes: *tom yum goong* (spicy shrimp soup), *som tum* (spicy green papaya salad), *tom kha kai* (chicken in coconut milk), *gaeng daeng* (red curry), *pad thai* (fried noodles), *khao pad* (fried rice) and *pad krapow moo saap* (fried pork with basil).

The King distributed the recipes to Thai eateries and communities overseas. Foreigners got introduced to Thai cuisine. The standardized recipes guaranteed the distinctive taste of Thailand.

But where to get the ingredients? The king had a ready scheme: replicate Japan's one town-one product (OTOP) method.

He identified what crops and livestock were most suitable for each of the 76 provinces to raise. Towns were assigned specific vegetables and fruits: bean sprouts, soy, papaya, chili, onion, garlic, ginger, cassava, coconut, cabbage, lettuce, chayote, radish, sugarcane, salt, aside from rice. Cottage industries sprang up for shrimp paste, fish sauce, soy sauce and condiments. Large-scale poultry, piggery, goat and cattle-raising were encouraged, along with fish ponds and cages.

Agriculture boomed. Thai farmers became a formidable political class that can install or topple parliaments and prime ministers.

Adobo supposedly is the most popular Filipino dish for more than a century. Why Rizal never mentioned it in his many novels, short stories and essays is a puzzle, descendant Gemma Cruz Araneta wrote recently. What Rizal featured in "Noli Me Tangere" was *tinolang manok* (chicken stew). In chapter one, over dinner at Capitan Tiago's house, Padre Damaso raged why he was served only chicken neck.

Sisig is becoming a global hit. Years ago, Ambassador to Washington Babe Romualdez reported how the sizzling pork cheek wowed diners across America to ask for second servings. Filipino envoys elsewhere made sure *sisig* was the fiesta feature.

For *sisig*, *adobo* and *tinola* to cross over the world, the Department of Trade and Industry suggests recipe standardization. Taking off from the book "Kulinarya," DTI has assembled world class Filipino chefs for the task.

Foreign tourists want the taste of Filipino. Restaurateurs are only too willing to indulge them. Ten million overseas workers and five million emigrants can be ambassadors of "foodwill."

They can serve up *sinigang, dinuguan, kare-kare, lechon, humba, burong isda, bistek, longganisa, tocino.* One won't find *lumpia shanghai* or *pancit canton* in those Chinese cities; they're Filipino concoctions. *Balut* and variations *penoy, abnoy* and *maalat* are attractions. Not to forget *bibingka, suman, kutsinta, puto, biko, sapin-sapin, tibok-tibok, puto maya, puto bumbong, palitaw, minatamis na kaong* and *burong mangga*. *Halo-halô* was originally Thai and *gulaman* Malaysian (*gula melaka*), but Filipinos perfected them.

Agriculture, trade, tourism and transport officials can get together to grow and distribute the ingredients. Food producers will have ready markets.

* * *

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__ of _____

Manila Standard

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Food firms seek representation in sugar admin board

By Othel V. Campos

LOCAL food manufacturers and exporters are calling for representation of the business sector on the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) board to ensure that the voice of the MSMEs is heard and considered.

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) agreed to push for this proposal to the SRA, which is chaired by the President as concurrent head of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"We believe that all sectors must be heard. Our local food processors and manufacturers, which are mostly MSMEs have long been burdened with the high cost of refined sugar and sadly, they are not able to compete with our counterparts in ASEAN, whose sugary-made products are sold way cheaper than ours," Paul Cuyegkeng, PCCI head of agriculture committee, said.

Specifically, the PCCI seeks the designation of a representative from the Philippine Food Exporters (Philfoodex) to participate in the SRA Board consultative meeting.

Cuyegkeng said that the proposal is essential to strike a balance between the needs of farmers, millers, and food manufacturers, which are composed largely of MSMEs.

Manila Standard

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Imee: No need to import rice til 2023

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

SENATOR Imee Marcos assured rice farmers that there is no need to import rice until next year, saying that the local supply will surpass consumer demand.

She also noted that importing rice would make the issuance of new import clearances unnecessary.

According to Marcos, there is no reason for the Department of Agriculture (DA) to call for any more rice imports which will only push down farmgate prices of palay. She said farmers "are doing a great job producing more than ample domestic supply.

"Also, there are no remaining valid sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPS-ICs) to justify more rice imports this year," Marcos added, citing the DA's Rice Supply Outlook.

Marcos explained that the projected 5.13 million metric tons (mmt) of locally grown rice in the third quarter will exceed domestic demand of 3.7mmt and provide a buffer stock of 1.43mmt by the end of September.

She said in the fourth quarter, the local rice supply is expected to reach 6.24mmt against a demand of 4.02mmt, for an additional buffer stock of 2.22mmt by the end of December.

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 9

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural woes: From salty to sweet

THE RIGHT MOVE

RIKKI MATHAY

Weeks after news broke out about how an archipelago surrounded by 36,000 kilometers of shoreline has been importing 93 percent of its national salt requirements, local markets continue to experience shortage of agricultural items. While having sufficient resources may shield us from the effects of any shortage in our households, head over to fast food chains and you'll hear of apologies for missing ingredients in their menu, including potatoes and white onions.

Meanwhile, the economics of low supply and high demand resulting in increasing prices has set back majority of Filipino households on a daily basis.

Before, salt farming was a thriving industry in the country. The Philippines was nearly, if not 100 percent salt self-sufficient. All this changed in 1995 with ASIN, or the Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide's passage which required all food-grade salt in the Philippines be iodized. Lack of training and funds to iodize their salt forced many of our salt farmers to give up their livelihood. Hence, the need for importation arose.

From salty to sweet, it is dumbfounding how the Philippines has been largely importing agricultural products — an irony for a largely agricultural nation. What's more incredulous is despite the wide-scale importations, we still suffer from shortages of several agricultural goods.

Despite several laws in place to prevent smuggling of agricultural products, the line between smuggling (defined as the illegal movement across an international border violating customs laws and regulations) and legalized importation seems to have been blurred.

At the forefront of this new battle against the blurry lines is Senator JV Ejercito, and understandably so as he was the main author of the Anti Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016. At that time, I was working in his office and I witnessed how hard he fought, even as a neophyte senator back then, to protect the farmers through legislation.

"We relentlessly pursued the anti-smuggling act when there was a shortage of rice back in 2016. This law covers sugar, garlic, onions and other agricultural products. Instead of relying on imported rice, I wanted to protect our very own farmers from unscrupulous traders and importers, and in doing so promote our agricultural sector. We needed to protect the livelihood of the thousands of Filipino farmers against the economic saboteurs," Ejercito said.

Aside from defining large scale agricultural smuggling as economic sabotage and a heinous crime with 17 years or lifetime imprisonment, he had been advocating to modernize farming methods and building new sugar mills in order to help the agricultural sector. From sweet to salty matters, the key to protecting our local farmers is empowering them with the proper tools, not only to support their livelihoods, but for them to compete at the global stage.

While importation seems to be the viable option for now, another matter that needs to be addressed are the massive grants of permits to importers.

"Left and right, agencies are giving the authority to import so technically the smuggling has stopped," Ejercito said.

While the matter of granting importation permits has yet to be addressed if not regularized, the nation needs the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to heighten border security against unscrupulous importers of agricultural products.

The BOC Intelligence and Enforcement Groups expressed its commitment to work with stakeholders "to curb the proliferation of smuggled sugar in the country."

With the President of the Republic no less at the helm of the Department of Agriculture, Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food Chair Senator Cynthia Villar herself, expressed confidence that if anyone can curb agricultural smuggling, it is the President himself.

For the first time since the DA was established in 1898 (then under the name Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce), a chief executive has risen to the occasion to lead what could be one of the nation's driving forces to economic growth. With President and concurrent DA Secretary Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.'s resolute commitment to increase agricultural production and ensure the protection of our farmers, the nation has the actual opportunity to finally see true agricultural reform.

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

SRA expects sugar prices to 'stabilize' in next 2 months

BY JED MACAPAGAL

PRICES of refined sugar will start to stabilize next month and could hover from P70 to P80 per kilogram by November, according to the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

David Alba, SRA administrator, said in a briefing yesterday that by November, all sugar refineries will be running at full operations and the 150,000 metric tons(MT) of imported sugar will have arrived.

"It will stabilize, we can say categorically it will stabilize because everybody will start milling. Barring another typhoon like 'Odette,' the canes are looking good. Hopefully, if it continues, if the trend continues, we'll have more sugar than we have estimated," Alba said.

Pablo Azcona, SRA planters' representative, said farmers are usually blamed for the high retail price of sugar even if their farmgate and millgate prices are lower.

"It's a big misinterpretation that farmers earn so much because sugar is being sold at high prices in the market... Most of the farmers only produce brown then to turn brown sugar to white, you add around P10 to P12 from raw then you refine it," Azcona explained.

Based on the Department of Agriculture's monitoring of 13 public markets in the National Capital Region, prevailing retail prices as of yesterday were still at P95 per kg for refined sugar, P75 per kg for washed sugar and P70 per kg for brown sugar.

On the other hand, the SRA millsite monitoring showed that composite price of raw sugar as

See SRA ➤ Page A2

SRA

of September 4 was at P3,021.04 per 50 kg (LKG) bag, up by almost 7 percent from P2,824.18 per 50 kg bag in August 28.

As of September 4, the country's total available supply of sugar is at 150,444 MT equivalent to 3,008,880 LKG bags of sugar, Alba said.

The SRA earlier said local sugar production for the current crop year will increase by 5 percent to 1.88 million MT from the previous 1.79 million MT.

Despite the expected improved production, SRA said it is still short to serve the expected 2.03 million MT demand for the period which has become the basis for allowing the entry of 150,000 MT of imported sugar.

Meanwhile, the global sugar market is expected to have a surplus of 3.9 million tons in the new season starting in October, as good production in Asia and Brazil will offset problems in Europe and China, broker and analyst StoneX said.

In its new global crop report, the broker increased its view for the surplus from 3.3 million tons seen in July.

It projected that India will have another near-record crop in 2022/23 (Oct-Sept) at 36.5 million tons, 500,000 tons more than in 2021/22, as the weather has been positive for development of cane fields.

The weather helped another large producer in Asia, Thailand. StoneX sees Thai sugar output at 11.5 million tons in 2022/23, 14 percent more than in the previous season.

The analyst cut its estimate for the Europe plus United Kingdom region by 400,000 tons to 16 million tons as well as for China by 300,000 tons to 10 million tons, both because of dryness in production areas.

It expects Brazil to continue its recovery after the 2021 drought, seeing a potential production of 37.2 million tons in the country in the October to September global cycle. ***—with Reuters***

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

SRA: Sugar prices at P70-P80/kilo in Nov

SUGAR Regulatory Administration (SRA) Administrator Dave Alba on Tuesday said prices of sugar are expected to stabilize between P70 and P80 per kilo in November.

"The P70 to P80 is a good price hopefully by November, once all the imported refined sugar comes; you should see a stabilization in the prices," Alba said, referring to the arrival of the 150,000 metric tons of imported sugar.

Based on monitoring of the Department of Agriculture on Tuesday, retail prices of refined sugar ranged from P90 to P105 per kilo.

"Regarding the 150,000 tons that we are importing, it's clear in Sugar Order 2 that everything should arrive at the latest November 15. Everything should be here by November 15," Alba said.

He added that the 150,000 metric tons of sugar imports are equivalent to 3 million bags.

At the same time, Alba said sugar stocks in some warehouses that had been raided were allowed to be released in the market.

"[Documented stocks from the raided warehouses] are already starting to go in the market," he added.

Those with questionable paper, Alba said, are still being withheld at the Bureau of Customs.

The country has an inventory of 134,000 metric tons of raw sugar and 143,000 metric tons of refined sugar while the weekly demands for raw sugar and refined sugar are 6,222 metric tons and 6,899 metric tons, respectively.

SRA board member Pablo Luis Azcona said the farm gate price of raw sugar is at P38 per kilo.

"As a farmer and farmer representative, we want to make it clear from a farmer's point of view, the highest price of raw sugar that we sold last year was P46 per kilo and we stopped selling last June. We averaged at around P38 per kilo. From the farmer, you have to make it to white sugar or refined, that's the high price in the wet market. It's the start of milling, supposedly the supply is a bit low. Once everybody mills in Negros already, because basically 60 percent of the supply comes from Negros, then the price will surely stabilize," Azcona also said.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry backed a call of the local food manufacturers and exporters to allow the sector's representation in the SRA to ensure that the voice of MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) is heard and considered.

BELLA CARIASO AND EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

Daily Tribune
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LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A4

Ignominious fall from power (1)

COUNTERPOINT
SALVADOR S. PANELO

> ***"While all these were happening like a whirlwind, the sugar fiasco blew up, with the Executive Secretary in the vortex of the controversy.***

By reason of the power he wields and proximity to the President, the Executive Secretary is the most coveted position in the Executive department. He is the *primus inter pares* or first among equals in the Cabinet, referred to as the "Little President," owing to the extensive authority he holds. He issues executive and administrative orders "by authority of the President."

Understandably, the Executive Secretary is the most trusted among the various alter egos of the President. He is the gatekeeper of the Palace. Outside of the First Lady, he has the ears of the President.

Vis-a-vis the roster of previous executive secretaries, the resigned Executive Secretary suffers by comparison, not having acquired the prominence and stature in the profession or field that his predecessors chose to distinguish themselves.

Despite the absence of impressive professional background and glowing earned credentials that the preceding executive secretaries have deservingly tagged to their names, he managed to weave his way to the inner sanctum of the very few close friends of the then defeated vice-presidential candidate and joined his legal team, and acted as campaign spokesperson of the then presidential candidate Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

His appointment as Executive Secretary by the President raised a lot of eyebrows who were expecting someone in the league of the previous ones. Among the Cabinet members, he is the least known and lacked the wealth of experience of government work. Only the President knows why he chose him over other more competent and outstanding legal luminaries. What is evident, however, is he trusted the man, and that is one trait that tilted in his favor.

Just a few days and weeks after his assumption to office, talks swirled about a high official causing the appointment of questionable and undeserving appointees, of imposing millions of pesos as a condition precedent for appointments, and offending political allies of the President by blocking their recommendees. There were rumors also about botched appointments resulting in their recall. There were talks, too, about the high official pocketing huge campaign donations from campaign backers, and unverified allegations of multimillion deposits in foreign banks.

It didn't take long that the loose talks referred to him. It was bandied about that a person closest to the President asked him to resign, and while he allegedly did, the appointing power did not accept it.

As a consequence, there gradually evolved an incessant call for him either to be fired by the President or for his immediate resignation. Political commentators had a field day speculating and predicting his fall from power.

While all these were happening like a whirlwind, the sugar fiasco blew up, with the Executive Secretary in the vortex of the controversy, and it appears that he mishandled, and that's putting it kindly, the sugar shortage and the issuance of the sugar importation order. Not even his exoneration by the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee, which appeared to cover up his undoings and opted to sacrifice the resigned DA officials as scapegoats or fall guys for the joint gross incompetence of the two Cabinet members who triggered the sugar controversy, by wrongly classifying the issuance of the sugar importation as illegal and irregular, could abort the spiraling call for his ouster.

> ***"The Executive Secretary is the most trusted among the various alter egos of the President. He is the gatekeeper of the Palace.***

Thereafter, social media was abuzz with a high government official being barred from joining the birthday party of President BBM on 13 September, because the said Cabinet member was "neither a friend or family." Thereafter, word spread that the said official was going to be replaced by a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Then on Saturday (19 September), the Executive Secretary, who was the subject of intense and continuing negative talks and speculations, issued an official statement announcing his resignation as Executive Secretary citing family reasons. By his resigning, all those ugly talks surrounding his person and his acts at once gained premium.

While those asking for his departure were elated by his resignation, the elation seems to be premature as subsequent actions he made before his announced resignation indicate that he has crafted an executive order and an administrative order designed to make his resignation a ruse to expand his power.

(To be continued)

Daily Tribune
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LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Date: Sept. 21, 2022 Page: A6

Rice supply stable – Imee

BY JOM GARNER
@tribunephl_jom

Senator Imee Marcos on Tuesday assured rice farmers that the government need not import rice until next year, citing that the local supply will surpass consumer demand.

"The Department of Agriculture has no reason to call for any more rice imports which will only push down farmgate prices of *palay*. Our farmers are doing a great job producing more than ample domestic supply," Marcos said in a statement.

She also pointed out that there are no remaining valid sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances to justify more rice imports this year, citing the DA's Rice Supply Outlook.

Marcos explained that the projected 5.13 million metric tons of locally grown rice in the third quarter will exceed domestic demand of 3.7 MMT and provide a buffer stock of 1.43 MMT by the end of September.

The Department of Agriculture has no reason to call for any more rice imports which will only push down farmgate prices of *palay*. Our farmers are doing a great job producing more than ample domestic supply.

In the fourth quarter, local rice supply is expected to reach 6.24 MMT against the demand of 4.02 mm, for an additional buffer stock of 2.22 MMT by the end of December.

In effect, the lady senator said that the rice harvests in the third and fourth quarters will provide the country with a total buffer stock of 3.65 million metric tons by yearend, good for 55 to 60 days.

The National Food Authority is required to have a rice buffer stock of 15 to 30 days for national consumption.

Last month, the Federation of Free Farmers, one of the biggest peasant groups in the country, appealed to the national government to amend the Rice Tariffication Law claiming it does not serve the interest of the farmers and consumers.

The FFF also claimed that farmers' incomes have dropped significantly since the RTL was passed three years ago due to "excessive" rice imports alongside the rising cost of production.

BusinessWorld

Date: SEPT 21, 2022 Page: S1/3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Denso's P60-million hydroponic farm seen to boost food security

DENSO PHILIPPINES Corp. recently launched a P60-million hydroponic farm in Ibaan, Batangas in a bid to support the development of the country's agriculture sector.

The project, introduced on Aug. 25, involves the commercial production of high-value crops such as microgreens, kale, arugula, herbs, and melons with the use of hydroponics.

Earlier, the Board of Investments (BoI) approved the registration application of Denso Philippines for the hydroponic farm project under the 2022 Strategic Investment Priority Plan.

The target markets of the hydroponic farm include hotels, restaurants, online market, culinary schools, and other food-related businesses in central business district areas across the Philippines.

"The farm involves the commercial production of vegetables using hydroponic growing technology with plans to use IoT (Internet of Things) for nutrient dosing and monitoring through sensors," the BoI said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Hydroponics is a soil-less farming system that includes the process of growing plants with the use of mineral nutrient solution through an inert medium such as perlite, gravel, mineral wool, expanded clay, or coconut husk. Through hydroponics, water remains in the system and is reused, which, in turn, can decrease carbon footprint," it added.

According to the BoI, the hydroponic project was endorsed by the Department of Agriculture (DA), and is seen to help achieve food security in urban areas across the country.

"Through hydroponics, water remains in the system and is reused, which, in turn, can decrease carbon footprint. In 2027, the global hydroponics market is projected to reach $13.4 billion," the BoI said, adding that a 19.2% compound annual growth rate is forecast from 2021 to 2027.

"Denso's high-value crops will be essential in supporting urban areas in the Philippines, as well as address the low local self-sufficiency of highland vegetables (22%) and the DA-forecasted deficit of 51,116 metric tons in Calabarzon, where the project will be located," it added. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

BusinessWorld™

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: S1/1 & S1/10

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

No more sugar imports this year — SRA

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson *Reporter*

THE GOVERNMENT does not plan to import more sugar for the remainder of this crop year as output is expected to begin picking up, Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) chief David John Thaddeus P. Alba said on Tuesday.

"By November, all the mills and refineries will be producing. There will be no importation until we finish stock," Mr. Alba said at a briefing.

"We don't want to import when our mills and planters are in full (operation). While they are operating, we will never import," he added.

The current sugar crop year began on Sept. 1 and will end on Aug. 31, 2023.

Earlier this month, the SRA issued Sugar Order (SO) No. 2, which authorized the importation of 150,000 metric tons (MT) of refined sugar to augment local supply and bring down prices.

Under the order, the total volume of imports will be equally divided between industrial users and consumers. The imports are expected to arrive not later than Nov. 15.

Mr. Alba said the import volume under SO No. 2 was decided as a "stopgap measure" as it would cover the demand needed for two months.

Latest SRA data showed the country's current stock of physical raw sugar is at 134,526.72 MT, while its total stock of refined sugar is at 143,665.05 MT.

The official said sugar prices will likely go down by November as imports arrive and with milling already in full swing, adding that the SRA is targeting to lower the average retail price of refined sugar to P70-P80.

Sugar, S1/10

Sugar,
from S1/1

As of Sept. 9, the average price of refined sugar in wet markets almost doubled to P97.36 from P52.64 in the same period last year. The price of raw sugar likewise rose to P72.64 from P43.36 in 2021.

"Right now, most of the big mills in Negros are in full operation and are milling. Refineries will be in full operation by November. We're hoping that by November, prices will stabilize," he said. "By the time we start refining, we would like everybody to buy locally produced refined sugar from the refineries."

"Barring another typhoon like Odette, the canes are looking good. Hopefully, if the trend continues, we'll have more sugar than we have estimated," Mr. Alba added.

Pablo Luis S. Azcona, who represents the sugar planters' bloc in the SRA board, said prices are normally higher before the start of milling due to low supply.

"Once everybody mills in Negros, because 60% of production comes from there, the prices will surely stabilize," Mr. Azcona added.

SRA board sugar millers' representative Mitzi V. Mangwag likewise said prices may begin declining once refineries commence operations in November.

"By November, all refineries will be operating at full speed. So, we can really have enough refined sugar for the needs of the industrial and direct consumers. Hopefully by that time, input costs will be a little bit lower...to sell [sugar] at a reasonable cost in the market. We are really looking forward to operating these refineries soon to be able to bridge the gap," Ms. Mangwag said.

BUSINESS SECTOR

Meanwhile, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) in a statement on Tuesday urged the SRA to appoint a business sector representative for local food manufacturers and exporters.

"We believe that all sectors must be heard. Our local food processors and manufacturers, which are mostly micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have long been burdened with the high cost of refined sugar and sadly, they are not able to compete with our counterparts in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), whose sugary-made products are sold way cheaper than ours," PCCI Agriculture Committee Chairman Paul Cuyegkeng said.

The chamber said the SRA should give a board seat to the private sector so they can better determine the sugar requirements of companies and MSMEs and consider them in import requests.

It also recommended modernizing the milling industry to increase production and provide incentives to attract investments in the agriculture-related manufacturing sector.

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
SEPT. 21, 2022
PAGE: A14

editorial

Helping farmers cut postharvest losses

CITY residents who go to the provinces for rest and relaxation have surely seen unmilled rice grains that are spread along road pavements. This practice is common during harvest season, when farmers sun dry unmilled rice before selling it to traders or to the National Food Authority. Planters resort to sun drying because of its low cost compared to mechanical drying, according to the International Rice Research Institute (Irri).

Irri said sun drying requires little investment and is even considered environmentally friendly as it uses the sun as heat source and therefore produces no carbon dioxide. Unfortunately, sun drying is labor-intensive and temperature control is difficult in this method, which can cause the grains to crack. A sudden downpour during the wet season would also cause farmers to lose a portion of their grains.

Sun drying, according to the Philippine Rice Research Institute's Rice Engineering and Mechanization Division, is being discouraged ***(See, "Food waste, postharvest losses where millions remain hungry," in the* BUSINESSMIRROR*, October 18, 2018).*** Despite the risk of incurring losses, planters could not stay away from drying *palay* on road pavements, as they could not afford mechanical drying. Because of this, annual postharvest losses in *palay* production remain at double digits—around 16.4 percent, based on BUSINESSMIRROR estimates that used data from the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development.

The Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture found significant postharvest losses not only in *palay* but also in mango, onion and tomato production ***(See, "Study bares big postharvest losses of PHL's mango, onion, tomato," in the* BUSINESSMIRROR*, March 27, 2022).*** According to the study, mango produced in Iloilo and traded in Manila showed the highest postharvest losses at nearly 34 percent. It also indicated that the total postharvest loss of freshly harvested onions from the farms in Bongabon, Nueva Ecija, to the final market destination in Divisoria, Manila, was 45.06 percent, and that the estimated volume of postharvest losses for red onion reached 48,891 tons valued at close to P1.96 billion.

Meeting the food needs of the country's population does not only mean increasing the production of staple crops and other agricultural products. It also entails huge investments in other crucial components in food production such as postharvest facilities to reduce losses, which remain significant. Reducing postharvest losses in rice alone would enable the Philippines to cut its purchases of the staple from abroad and allow local farmers to increase their incomes.

It would do well for our policymakers to allocate funds for postharvest facilities and invest in cold storage and packing facilities, facilitate the transport of agricultural goods and increase the access of planters to credit and insurance.

There is also an urgent need for the national government to strengthen extension services by partnering with local government units so that farmers would get guidance on practices that would enable them to reduce postharvest losses. Output gains would not help the Philippines if farmers would continue to dry their grains on road pavements or incur losses during the transport of their crops.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A1 & A2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

With SO2 shipment due, sugar prices to decline

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

FILIPINO consumers may soon see retail prices of refined sugar stabilizing in the market as shipments under the 150,000-metric ton (MT) importation program start to arrive as early as next month.

Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) chief David John Thaddeus P. Alba said refined sugar imports under Sugar Order (SO) 2 will start arriving in a month's time.

Alba said they will soon approve the import allocation of sugar for all eligible and qualified sugar traders and importers under SO 2.

Alba added that the 150,000 MT import volume has been fully subscribed.

"In a month's time, it's going to start coming in. We have received a lot of applications already and we are just trying to prorate everything but we have the traders already," he said in a press conference in Makati on Tuesday.

Last week, the SRA board, chaired by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. as concurrent agriculture secretary, issued SO 2 that greenlighted the importation of 150,000 MT of refined sugar to "ensure" domestic supply and "manage" sugar prices. Marcos signed the document himself together with other members of the SRA board. ***(Related story: https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/09/14/pbbm-oks-importation-of-150000-mt-of-sugar/)***

Under SO 2, the refined sugar imports must enter the country no later than November 15, so as not to affect local sugar refining operations.

Furthermore, Alba did recognize that Coca-Cola might require "more" premium bottlers' grade refined sugar than what was approved under SO 2.

However, he pointed out that the 150,000-MT refined sugar import volume was based on historical withdrawals that ranged between 70,000 MT and 80,000 MT every month.

"We cannot really get the right figures. We can only base it on

See "SO2," A2

SO2...

Continued from A1

actual withdrawals. And actual withdrawals historically are 70,000 metric tons to 80,000 metric tons," Alba said.

"Coke might need more, but for the 2 months that we are not yet refining, they can work with that, they should work with that. By the time we are refining, we would like everybody to buy locally from the refineries, locally produced refined sugar," he added.

Around 60 percent of the country's raw sugar production goes to industrial users, including Coca-Cola, Alba said.

Alba said sugar refiners will be in full-blown operations by November, with some already starting to refine raw sugar as early as late October.

Alba said they anticipate the refined sugar retail price to hover between P70 per kilogram and P80 per kilogram once the entire 150,000-MT import volume enters the country.

Alba issued Memorandum Circular (MC) 1 Series of 2022-2023 last week that outlined additional implementation guidelines for the 150,000-MT refined sugar import program under SO 2.

Under the MC1, the SRA will accept applications to import between September 19 and 21, with the issuance of approved allocation per importer scheduled on September 24.

MC 1 also reiterated that the SRA will collect a P33 per 50-kilogram bag clearance fee.

SRA data showed that total raw sugar stock as of September 4 stood at 134,526.22 MT, while refined sugar inventory was at 143,665.05 MT.

SRA data also showed that 115,180.5 MT of the total refined sugar stocks were imported.

Furthermore, SRA data showed that raw sugar output from September 1 to 4 almost doubled to 16,935 MT from 8,567 MT recorded in the same period of last year.

Abante TONITE
MABILIS SA BALITA

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 3

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Hontiveros, Tolentino sabong sa import asukal

Muling nagkainitan sina Senadora Risa Hontiveros at Senador Francis Tolentino matapos lumutang ang bagong dokumento na sumusuporta sa alegasyon na kakulangan sa suplay ng asukal sa bansa.

Kinuwestyon ni Hontiveros ang isang bahagi ng Senate blue ribbon report hinggil sa inaasahang kakulangan sa suplay ng asukal base sa datos ng Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA).

Aniya, Abril 8, 2021 pa lang ay nagbabala na ang National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) sa limitadong supkay ng asukal at sa papataas na preso ng frefined sugar.

Ang tinutukoy ni Hontiveros ay ang liham na pinadala ni dating NEDA chief Karl Kendrick Chua kay dating Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez bilang tugon sa komento sa concern ng Coca-Cola sa supply gap na 116,000 metriko tonelda ng asukal.

Tugon naman ni Tolentino, hindi niya alam ang liham na tinutukoy ni Hontiveros na aniya'y hindi naman bahagi ng committee report at hindi ito natalakay sa pagdinig ng Senate blue ribbon committee sa Sugar Order No. 4 na pumapayag sa importasyon ng 300,000 metriko tonelada ng asukal.

Umaasa naman si Hontiveros na makakatulong ang kanyang concern para matukoy ang katotohanan sa sugar shortage sa pag-amyenda sa report ng komite sa naturang kontrobersya. **(Dindo Matining)**

PEOPLES JOURNAL
Tonight

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 4

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Antiporda fights 'bad eggs' in NIA

THE LAST MOHICAN

By MARIO FETALINO JR.

ASIDE from the bloated government workforce, the Marcos government is also seriously dealing unfit public officials.

This is very true at the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) where negligent, unprofessional and incompetent executives are being made to answer for their mistakes.

Leading the campaign is newly-installed NIA Administrator Benny Antiporda who wants to rid the agency of 'bad eggs'.

NIA recently filed criminal and administrative charges against two of its lawyers for alleged "gross inexcusable negligence".

In a press briefing, Antiporda said the "negligence, unprofessionalism, and incompetence" of the lawyers caused the agency to lose a case against Green Asia Construction Development Corporation (GACDC) before the Construction Industry Arbitration Commission (CIAC).

As a result of losing the case, NIA was ordered to pay P205,958,119.

"This is the Green Asia Case, wherein NIA just lost P205 million, natalo po tayo dahil lang sa technicality (we lost due to a simple technicality)," Antiporda said.

The agency said the defeat could have been prevented if the state lawyers duly fulfilled their duties.

"Such case could have been avoided if they performed their tasks and duties with devotion, utmost diligence, and good faith. The said damage is unduly suffered by the government and, ultimately, by the taxpayers – an injustice to the Filipino people," NIA said.

NIA said the charges were filed due to the lawyers' alleged "gross ignorance of the law." One of the lawyers was reportedly insistent in refusing to either take the case or testify as a witness.

Worse, the said lawyer advised the filing of a Motion for Reconsideration, which was denied for being a prohibited pleading, leading to the expiration of the period to file an appeal, NIA said.

Meanwhile, the other lawyer used the "wrong remedy ". Instead of filing a petition for review, the lawyer filed a petition for certiorari, NIA said.

"They miserably failed to perform and discharge their duties with the highest degree of excellence, professionalism, intelligence, and skill," the agency said.

They also caused NIA to lose the right to appeal because of their sheer inefficiency, incompetence and lack of devotion and dedication to perform their duties," it added.

The Green Asia case pertains to the long-delayed 22-kilometer project of irrigation canals and installations of steel gates from Nueva Ecija to Bulacan since 2016.

The contract was then terminated in 2020, with the CIAC ruling in favor of Green Asia last February.

Meanwhile, Antiporda said NIA seeks to strengthen Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with 50 potential irrigation projects nationwide.

Majority of these are big-ticket multipurpose projects with hydropower component with potentials on floating solar power farm and Small River Irrigation Projects (SRIPs) with reservoirs that can be utilized for floating solar power farm and/or mini-hydroelectric power plant.

At present, he said NIA already received a pledge of investment amounting to more than PHP1 trillion through Letters of Intent from different investors.

More power to the NIA chief!

For comments, please call or text 09569012811 or email lastmohican2004@yahoo.com

Abante
UNA SA BALITA
Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DA tinulak paggamit ng native bawang sa mga negosyante

NAKIKIPAG-UGNAYAN na ang Department of Agriculture (DA) sa mga mangangalakal at negosyante para mahikayat na bilhin ang native na bawang mula sa mga local Filipino farmer matapos naglabas ng hinaing ang mga magsasaka ng Batanes at Occidental Mindoro dahil nasasayang lamang umano ang kanilang mga bawang dahil sa oversupply at naibebenta na lang sa murang halaga.

Ayon kay Undersecretary Kristine Evangelista, nabili na rin nila ang mga bawang ng magsasaka na maaari nila ngayong maibenta sa Kadiwa program.

"We will encourage mobile biyaheros and more traders to buy from our farmers from the region and sell here in Metro Manila," ayon kay Evangelista.

Sinabi pa ni Evangelista na nakipagusap na rin ang DA sa ilang restaurant na gumamit ng native garlic sa kanilang mga lutuin. (Vick Aquino)

Abante
UNA SA BALITA

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

500 toneladang asukal hirit ng PCCI

HUMIHINGI ang Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry ng alokasyon sa aangkating 150,000 toneladang asukal para sa mga food manufacturer at exporter.

Sa isang pahayag kahapon, sinabi ng PCCI na matagal na itong hinihiling sa Sugar Regulatory Administration na ibigay dito ang 10,000 sako o 500 toneladang imported refined sugar sa mga food manufacturer at processor para makalaban naman sila sa mga produktong gawa ng ibang mga bansa sa ASEAN.

Bukod ng alokasyon, humihingi rin ang PCCI ng representasyon para sa food manufacturers and processors sa SRA board.

"We again appeal to SRA for a refined sugar allocation which is only 0.3% of the 150,000 tons approved for importation this season, sabi ni Philfoodex President Ruben See. Aniya, pormal na itong hiniling sa SRA at sa Department of Agriculture ngunit hindi pa ito naaaksyunan.

Dagdag ng PCCI, dapat ipagawa sa Philippine International Trading Corporation ang importasyon para masiguro ang monitoring at accounting ng paglabas ng imported sugar. **(Eileen Mencias)**

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Eating without consuming the world

COMMENTARY

JONG-JIN KIM

Indeed, we live in a world full of competing interests and disagreements. Yet despite this, there is one underlying, unifying interest that we all share. It is in all our interests to have access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food at all times.

The question is will there be enough food for all in the near future, and will it be produced sustainably? The answer is not so affirmative without immediate action. Despite our common interest, this region is backsliding into greater hunger and malnutrition. According to one recent United Nations report, Asia and the Pacific is so off track, it would need an additional 35 years to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals—in 2065.

Some of the backslidings are obvious. This year, in Asia and the Pacific, we've witnessed droughts and floods, the highest food prices in decades, an armed conflict in Eastern Europe, and a lingering COVID-19 pandemic that continues to threaten health, disrupts supply chains and livelihoods. Together, these have resulted in a crisis of five "Fs"—lack of food, feed, fuel, fertilizer, and finance, and it's predicted there could be reductions in cereal output next year due to fertilizer shortages in some countries in the region.

But even before these crises, successive annual reports of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) flagship publication, the State of Food Security and Nutrition, were warning the fight against hunger and malnutrition was stalling, and then failing.

In 2021, more than 400 million people in Asia-Pacific were malnourished, most of them in South Asia. In fact, of the billions of people in this region, 40 percent cannot afford a healthy diet. For decades, as the world's population grew, we took our collective eye off the agrifood systems ball. The world was producing enough food, and there was little political appetite to upset the apple cart. Our agrifood systems were (and still are) a complex, interdependent system, of planting, harvesting, transporting, processing, marketing, and consuming.

The wake-up call came two years ago with the arrival of a global pandemic. While food production didn't come to a halt, the lockdowns and supply chain disruptions that followed took a serious toll on this interdependent system. For those of us in Asia and the Pacific, the pandemic and fallout were happening in tandem with other huge disrupters such as climate change, natural disasters, hazards, and risks that account for 60 percent of global fatalities and 40 percent of economic losses. And so it became clear, we urgently needed to fix our agrifood systems by transforming them to withstand shocks and disruptions, and also use this as an opportunity to make nutritious foods and healthy diets more accessible and affordable for all.

Last year, the UN Food Systems Summit in New York was the world's first major attempt to move these plans forward. Now it's time to get that transformation underway on the ground in our Asia-Pacific region. In other words, it's time to roll up our sleeves and build a better apple cart. But it will take more than just a few of us to do that. Governments in our region must act through leadership. Asia-Pacific's private sector, among leaders in technology and innovation, must broaden its customer base to provide affordable solutions to the region's smallholders. Civil society, while continuing its important role as watchdog, must work more proactively with policymakers and the private sector. Academia must accelerate its research, while resource partners must make this transformation their top priority because to achieve this massive transformation, our region, indeed the world, must literally put its money where its mouth is.

More than 80 percent of the world's smallholders and family farmers live off the land in this region, and their interests and livelihoods must be safeguarded. Social safety nets and reskilling programs to improve employment prospects should form an important part of this transformation. The good news is that, overall, there are plenty, and a variety, of available solutions—policy and evidence-based, regenerative, innovative, and technological. These include strengthening actions to sustainably manage natural resources, enhance forest areas, and restore landscapes.

The Asia-Pacific region benefits from thousands of years of agriculture-based systems and hundreds of generations of traditional knowledge, which could be coupled with a fast-growing entrepreneurial ecosystem. For our part, FAO's mission is to support the 2030 Agenda through helping member nations and partners build more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

Without doubt, this transformation will require massive public and private investment—and the political will to effect the change. But if we fail to act, even the year 2065 may be too optimistic. This time, all eyes are on the ball, as no one doubts what's at stake. Failing to transform our agrifood systems is not an option—it is imperative for our future and that of our children. **The Jakarta Post/Asia News Network**

Jong-jin Kim is assistant director-general and regional representative for Asia and the Pacific of the FAO.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer is a member of the Asia News Network, an alliance of 22 media titles in the region.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: B4

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Bank lending in agri-agra rises in 1st half

By LAWRENCE AGCAOILI

Loans disbursed by Philippine banks for agriculture and agrarian reform grew by 11.1 percent to P847.95 billion in the first half of the year, but this remains short of the mandated threshold for both sectors.

Preliminary data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) showed the banking system was only able to allocate about 10.31 percent of its total loanable funds during the six-month period, way below the 25 percent mandate under Republic Act 10000 or the Agri-Agra Reform Credit Act of 2009.

The law retained the mandatory credit allocation in Presidential Decree 717 where 15 percent of banks' total loanable funds are to be set aside for agriculture, while 10 percent should be made available for agrarian reform beneficiaries.

However, the central bank is now committed to implement RA 11901 or the Agriculture, Fisheries, and Rural Development Financing Enhancement Act of 2022 that now provides a comprehensive financing framework for the development of the agriculture and fisheries sector and rural communities.

Total loanable fund generated by banks increased by 10.8 percent to P8.22 trillion in end-June this year from P7.42 trillion in end June last year.

According to the BSP, the loans extended by the banks to the agriculture sector grew by 11.6 percent to P783.77 billion, for a 9.53 percent compliance ratio or below the required 15 percent.

The central bank said big banks or universal and commercial or big banks registered a compliance ratio of 9.66 percent after extending P746.43 billion to the agriculture sector while the ratio of thrift or mid-sized banks only reached 5.8 percent after granting P19.59 billion.

Rural banks extended P17.74 billion to the agriculture sector for a compliance ratio of 11.43 percent.

On the other hand, loans for agrarian reform declined by 10.3 percent to P64.18 billion in end-June. The ratio fell short of the mandated 10 percent with a compliance ratio of only 0.78 percent.

The compliance ratio of big banks for agrarian reform loans only reached 0.65 percent while that of thrift banks and rural and cooperative banks settled at 0.93 and 7.01 percent, respectively.

BSP Governor Felipe Medalla earlier said the central bank is committed to effectively implement the new Agri-Agra and Rural Financing law that aims to enhance access of rural communities and agricultural and fisheries households, including their micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), to much needed financial services and programs.

"The new law has been a priority legislative measure of the BSP since it considers the requirements of rural community beneficiaries from a holistic perspective, taking into account their evolving social networks and complex needs," Medalla said.

Banks are no longer required to reserve 10 percent of their lending portfolio for agrarian reform beneficiaries and 15 percent for agricultural activities.

Instead, this new law provides banks with greater flexibility in allocating the combined 25 percent mandatory credit quota to a range of borrowers in the agriculture, fisheries, and agrarian reform sectors.

Moreover, banks that are unable to directly lend to rural community beneficiaries may contribute through other means, such as investing in debt and equity securities, undertaking agricultural value chain financing, and granting agri-business loans to fund agricultural and community-enhancing activities.

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

SEPT. 21, 2022
PAGE: B8

Global commodity prices continue to soar

PARIS (AFP) — Consumers and businesses around the world are facing steeper prices for everything from Mexico's beloved tortillas to the aluminium cans used by beer companies.

Inflation jumped after countries emerged from COVID lockdowns and it has soared since Russia invaded Ukraine, with the IMF expecting consumer prices to rise by 8.3 percent globally this year.

Here is a look at how higher prices are affecting the world:

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the world's third largest oil producer, sent crude oil prices through the roof.

The main international contract, Brent North Sea, almost hit $140 per barrel, but has now dropped back below $100.

Prices at the pump have followed suit, surging to over two euros per litre in eurozone countries and above five dollars per gallon in the United States, before falling back in recent weeks.

Natural gas has also become more expensive, especially in Europe, where electricity prices hit record levels in Germany and France.

Energy prices were up 38.6 percent in the eurozone in August from the same month last year, according to revised official data published Friday.

Higher energy prices ripple throughout the economy as they affect the production and transportation costs of companies.

The war sent food prices soaring as the war disrupted grain exports from Ukraine, a major supplier of wheat and sunflower oil to countries around the world.

In May, Allianz estimated that pasta prices had risen 19 percent in the eurozone over the previous 18 months.

In Canada, another large exporter of wheat, a 500-gram package had risen by 60 cents in July from the same month last year, to CAN$3.16, according to official data.

In Thailand, the price for instant noodles, which is controlled by the state, rose for the first time in 14 years in August — a 17 percent increase to seven bahts (20 US cents).

The price of the corn flour used to make tortillas in Mexico — a staple used for tacos and other dishes — is up by around 13 percent from last year and contributing to two-decade high inflation.

Pinto beans, a Brazilian staple, cost nearly 23 percent more in August than at the same time last year.With grain more expensive, feeding livestock has become costlier and farmers have in turn raised their prices.

Pork, the most popular meat in China, cost 22 percent more in August than last year.

Chinese authorities will tap into their strategic reserves of pork for a second time this year in order to stabilise prices, the official *Xinhua* news agency said Friday.

In Argentina, ground beef patties are popular as their prices have traditionally been low, but these have shot up by three quarters in the past 12 months.

The country currently has one of the highest inflation rates in the world at 56.4 percent over the first eight months of the year.

In Europe, it is chicken prices that have taken wing as farmers have had to contend with bird flu in addition to cost pressures. Wholesale prices were up by a third in August from the same month last year.

Beef is advertised for sale in a grocery store in Los Angeles. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the Consumer Price Index rose 0.1 percent from July, after no increase the previous month, as inflationary pressures continue. AFP

Brewers have been hit with not only rising grain prices, but also for the aluminium cans and glass bottles for their beer.

These are 70 percent more expensive than before the war in Ukraine, according to the trade association of European brewers.

Heineken, the world's second-largest brewery group, hiked its prices by an average of 8.9 percent over the first half of this year.

According to estimates by *Bloomberg*, AB InBev, the world's top brewer whose beers include Budweiser and Corona, has increased its prices by eight percent.

In Britain, the cost of a pint has risen above four pounds ($4.6), the highest price since 1987, according to Britain's Office for National Statistics.

Paper prices have climbed as demand has risen following the end of COVID lockdowns. Printing is an energy-intensive process.

Several French dailies raised their prices earlier this year, as have a number British newspapers like the *Sun*, the *Times* and *Sunday Mail*.

Others have reduced their number of pages.

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: B4

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Bayer woos PH youth into farming

By BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT

In an effort to help raise more agriculture entrepreneurs, agriculture science firm Bayer Philippines Inc. has embarked on a program to lure youngsters to hands-on farming amid a dwindling farmer-population in the country.

Bayer has signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Philippine Science High School (PSHS) that would enable selected students to attend the Bayer's Agronomic Testing Center Southeast Asia (ATC-SEA) in Laguna and engage in plant and crop breeding.

Another training site for the "Science Immersion Program" (SIP) is the Plant Breeding Station in General Santos City.

"As a partner of the PSHS we hope to help inspire our young scientists to take a deeper interest in agriculture, and to support science education in the country through hands-on activities in our research sites in Laguna and General Santos City," said Bayer Philippines Inc. Managing Director Angel-Michael Evangelista.

"Bayer aspires for a world where there is 'Health for all, Hunger for none' – and science will help us get there. It's in our purpose of 'Science for a Better Life' and it is integral to our Pharmaceutical, Consumer Health and CropScience divisions."

At the Bayer Seeds Research and Development Station in General Santos City, students will learn about plant breeding as both a business and science.

At the Bayer ATC-SEA site, PSHS students will be exposed to agriculture operations that contribute to skills in agriculture entrepreneurship. These include seedling production, land preparation activities, crop maintenance, and safe use of crop protection products.

As agribusinesses require technical know-how, Bayer would like young Filipinos, to gain basic understanding of agriculture and crop protection research and gain hands-on experience in conducting laboratory and field bio-efficacy trials from insect rearing, field assessments and analysis.

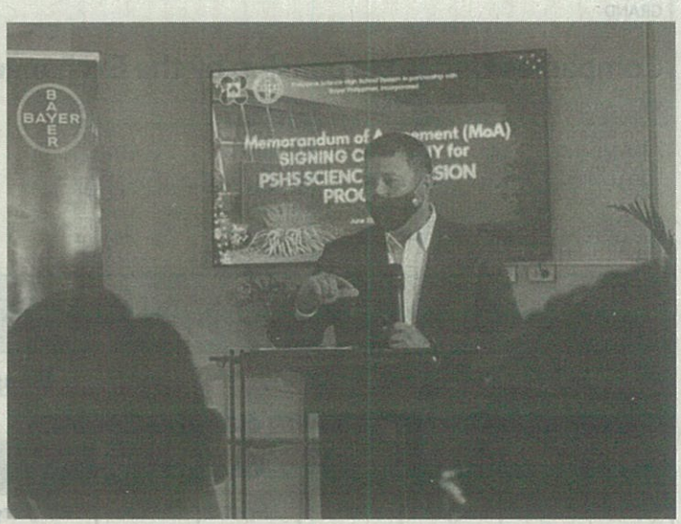
They are expected to gain exposure to the end-to-end breeding process of rice and corn in an industry setting. This includes development of breeding populations, molecular breeding, testing and evaluation of lines and hybrids from early pipeline to pre-commercial stage, as well as exposure to digitalization, mechanization, and automation of breeding operations.

They will be familiarized with the activities of the Plant Pathology Laboratory, Seed Laboratory, and field and screenhouse nurseries.

Students will participate in actual inoculum propagation, inoculation, rice emasculation and hand pollination.

"The Philippine Science High School System is committed to provide Pisay students relevant learning opportunities to advance their scientific aptitude and interpersonal skills. Today we earned another collaborator to champion the worthy cause of science education. I am thankful to Bayer Philippines for accommodating the PSHS System to the Science Immersion Program (SIP) for Grades 10-12 students," said Lilia Habacon, PSHS director.

Bayer scientists from India and the Philippines had earlier conducted a plant breeding and biotechnology webinar across all PSHS campuses to share how Bayer DEKALB corn seeds from the laboratory to the farm have helped Filipino farmers increase their yield and improve their livelihood.



Bayer Philippines Inc. Managing Director Angel-Michael Evangelista conveying support for science education through the PSHS Science Immersion Program. (Photo credit: John Carlo Quito)

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A1

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

SC clears vice mayor in fertilizer scam

BY JOMAR CANLAS

THE Supreme Court has cleared Tuao, Cagayan Vice Mayor Francisco Mamba Jr. of the graft charges filed against him and several others in relation to the 2004 fertilizer fund scam.

In a 10-page ruling signed by Division Clerk of Court Librada Buena, the high court's First Division granted the petition filed by Mamba and his co-accused.

"The assailed Resolutions dated 05 August 2019 and 13 September 2019 of the Sandiganbayan Fifth Division are annulled and set aside. The Sandiganbayan is ordered to dismiss [criminal cases] for violation of petitioners' constitutional right to speedy disposition of cases," the high tribunal said.

Mamba Jr., then municipal mayor, was charged with two counts of violation of Section 3(e) of Republic Act 3019, also known as the "Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act," together with his brother and former mayor William Mamba and several other local officials in connection with the reportedly anomalous procurement of 3,333 bottles of Bio-Nature Liquid Organic Fertilizer at P1,500 per bottle worth P4,999,500 from Feshan on April 5, 2004.

On July 2, 2004, they made another purchase with the same amount.

The anti-graft court denied Mamba's motion to quash until the case reached the high court.

Mamba argued that the Commission on Audit found out the alleged irregularities in May 2011 but the Office of the Ombudsman Field Investigators came out with their own accusations against Mamba Jr. seven years after.

Mamba questioned why it took so long for the anti-graft body to act on the audit report.

In granting Mamba's petition, the Court found that "petitioners timely asserted their rights because they filed the motion to quash information for inordinate delay and motion for reconsideration with motion to defer arraignment at the earliest opportunity."

"Before they were even arraigned, they already filed the motion to quash information for inordinate delay and motion for reconsideration with motion to defer arraignment on the ground of violation of their right to speedy disposition of cases."

Given the inordinate delay of five years, two months and 15 days in the conduct of the preliminary investigation and the Ombudsman's clear failure to provide sufficient justification, the court held that the "Sandiganbayan gravely abused its discretion when it refused to uphold the petitioners' timely asserted right to speedy disposition of cases."

"Consequently, the criminal actions filed against petitioners should be abated and dismissed," it added.

The Manila Times®

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: B3

DMW wants Filipino fishers be considered as seafarers

THE Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) made a strong appeal to lawmakers to include Filipino crew working on overseas fishing vessels to be included in the proposed Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers.

DMW Undersecretary Hans Leo Cacdac made the pitch in favor of Filipino fishers, who inarguably are the most oppressed and exploited among overseas Filipino sea-based workers, during the recent public hearing on the bill conducted by the House Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs.

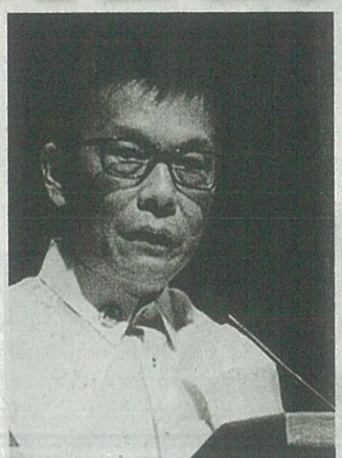
Even as he expressed full support for the enactment of the proposed Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers, Cacdac underscored the need to extend protection to Filipino workers deployed onboard overseas fishing ships by including them in the coverage of the bill.

"May mga specific po *kaming panukala para mapalakas pa po natin ang* bill. *Unang-una 'yung mga* fishers; *alam po namin na karamihan sa pang-aabuso sa* Filipino seafarers *ay sa mga naglalayag na mga mangingisda. (We have specific proposals for fishers who are often abused),"* Cacdac informed the House committee chaired by Kabayan party-list Rep. Ron Salo.

Unlike the traditional seafarers, the crew of international fishing vessels are often subjected to underpayment of wages, the substitution of contracts and long working hours with practically no medical benefits. Many of them are undocumented.

"Kaya ang kahilingan po namin ay masiguro lang na kasama ang Filipino fishers *sa* definition ng Filipino seafarers *sa* bill (that why we are requesting that Filipino fishers be also covered by the bill)," Cacdac said.

The proposed magna carta, if enacted, will serve as the enabling law to enforce the Maritime Labor Convention 2006, otherwise known as the "Bill of Rights" of seafarers. The MLC 2006 sets minimum labor standards for seafarers onboard commercial ships.



■ Department of Migrant Workers Undersecretary Hans Leo Cacdac
FILE PHOTO

"Para sila (fishers) *po ay hindi maging biktima ng tinatawag na* human trafficking, *sila'y hindi mabiktima ng* underpayment of wages and other forms of abuse *ng kanilang* shipowners," Cacdac continued.

The committee chairman, Salo, welcomed the proposal to improve the several House versions of the bill which, in the last 18th Congress, had been approved on third reading by the House of Representatives.

Passing the DMW proposal to include fishers in the bill, however, is easier said than done. The proposal may likely encounter some problems since the Maritime Labor Convention 2006 explicitly provides that it only covers seafarers onboard specific commercial ships.

It says: "The Convention applies to all those ships, whether publicly or privately owned, that are ordinarily engaged in commercial activities, except ships engaged in fishing or similar pursuits, ships of traditional build such as dhows and junks, and warships or naval auxiliaries."

Moreover, another issue that needs to be clarified, the proposed magna carta, if enacted, can only be applied or enforced on Philippine-flagged ships or ships registered in the country, but most if not all of the oceangoing fishing vessels are flying foreign flags.

Nonetheless, DMW officials volunteered to help the committee in addressing some challenges in the bill through the technical working group. When he was still with Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Cacdac was one of the few Filipino Labor officials directly involved in the crafting of a landmark convention that seeks to protect seafarers worldwide. **CIH**

■ This undated file photo shows a Filipino fisherman showing his catch. Filipino fishers are deemed the most oppressed and exploited among overseas Filipino sea-based workers.
PHOTO FROM IDSI

Abante
UNA SA BALITA

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 2

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Pabigas sa mga private worker tinulak

HABANG pinaplantsa ng gobyerno ang pagbibigay ng rice allowance sa mga empleyado nito, nanawagan ang isang solon sa Kongreso na talakayin na ang panukalang pagbibigay ng bigas sa mga manggagawa sa pribadong sektor.

Sinabi ni AGRI party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee na hindi dapat hintayin ng Kongreso na mapa-'sanaol' (sana all) ang mga empleyado sa pribadong kompanya kapag tumatanggap na ng rice allowance ang mga empleyado ng gobyerno.

Noong nakaraang linggo, sinabi ni Pangulong Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. na itutulak nito ang pagbibigay ng rice allowance sa mga empleyado ng gobyerno.

Itinutulak naman ni Lee ang pagpasa ng corporate farming bill (House Bill 1296) upang matulungan ang mga magsasaka at magkaroon ng suplay ng bigas ang mga empleyado sa pribadong kompanya.

Sa ilalim ng panukala, papasok ng kasunduan ang mga pribadong kompanya sa mga organisasyon ng mga magsasaka. Ang mga magsasaka ang magtatrabaho sa bukid at ang mga pribadong kompanya naman ang mamumuhunan at bibili ng produkto.

Ang bawat empleyado ng kompanya ay bibigyan ng 50 kilong bigas kada buwan o 600 kilo kada taon. Ang sobrang ani ay ibebenta naman sa National Food Authority. **(Billy Begas)**

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: A6

LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Farm, food investors face $150B loss

TOP farming and food firms could lose up to a quarter of their value by 2030 if they do not adapt to new government policies and consumer behavior tied to climate change, United Nations-affiliated campaigners said in a new report.

A study looked at how 40 big companies including agricultural producers and food retailers could fare under scenarios called key to reducing emissions, such as if governments impose carbon emssions prices or if consumers reduce their consumption of meat.

The study, seen by Reuters News, found the companies' value would decline by an average of around 7 percent by 2030, equivalent to some $150 billion in investor losses, if they did not adopt new practices.

At the same time, business areas like plant-based meat and forest restoration offer the same companies big new opportunities, the report states.

The report does not name specific companies so it is not taken as investment advice, a campaign representative said.

It is being published by Race to Zero, a U.N.-backed campaign to address climate change. Researchers used data from Vivid Economics, part of consulting firm McKinsey & Co. The report will be presented at Climate Week in New York, a series of events tied to the gathering of world leaders in the city.

Backers said the findings show the importance of previous calls for investors and companies to eliminate commodities tied to products like cattle, palm oil and soy that contribute to deforestation. More than 100 global leaders last year pledged to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by the end of the decade.

"The reality is stark: Nature risk is fast becoming an integral factor to investment risk," said Peter Harrison, chief executive of Schroders Plc, in a statement sent by a Race to Zero representative. – ***Reuters***

BusinessWorld

Date: SEPT. 21, 2022 Page: 4/S2

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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Arabica coffee futures settle 3% up but raw sugar closes down

NEW YORK — Arabica coffee futures on the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) US closed nearly 3% up on Monday as the market remains supportive amid reduced supplies and views of a smaller-than-expected crop in top grower Brazil. Raw sugar futures closed down.

COFFEE: December arabica coffee settled up six cents or 2.8% at $2.211 per pound (lb), in a choppy session. The contract rebounded after touching a nearly one-month low earlier at $2.1085.

Dealers said fundamentals remain positive after downward revisions for the Brazilian production and reduced ICE certified arabica stocks.

The exchange stocks fell to the lowest since June 1999 on Friday at 532,448 bags, with only a bit more than 3,000 bags pending grading.

Brazilian government agency Conab will release on Tuesday at 9 a.m. Brasilia time (0600 GMT) its third projection for the country's 2022/23 coffee crop.

SUGAR: October raw sugar settled down 0.19 cent or 1.1% at 17.69 cents per lb. The contract will expire on September 30th.

Dealers said that the market appeared weaker due to expected higher production in Asia and Brazil, but that there is support from the fact current levels would not attract Indian exports.

Brazil's Petrobras reduced diesel prices on Monday, keeping its policy to reduce fuel prices that have led Brazilian mills to produce more sugar and less ethanol.

Broker StoneX revised upwards its projection for a surplus in the global sugar supply.

COCOA: December New York cocoa settled up $9 or 0.4% to $2,369 a ton.

Ivory Coast farmers said heavy rains recently could damage the main crop in the world's top producer. Cocoa arrivals in Ivory Coast reached 2.095 million tons by Sept. 18 since the start of the season on Oct. 1, down 4.1% from the same period last season. — ***Reuters***