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Stop degradation of PHL soil—PBBM

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday called for the implementation of innovative solutions and better natural resource management to mitigate soil degradation, which has already affected at least 11 million hectares of the country's land area.

During the first National Soil Health Summit at the Diamond Hotel in Manila, Marcos expressed concern over the extent of the country's soil degradation, which could be detrimental for the country's agricultural productivity.

"Around 11 to 13 million hectares [of the country's soil] are considered degraded. This is on top of the 2.2 million

hectares that suffer from insufficient levels of soil fertility," Marcos said.

The President said the main causes on the country's soil degradation are the conversion of lands for settlements and loss of about 47,000 hectares of forest cover every year.

Citing a report from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Marcos pointed out the said factors have left 75 percent of total cropland vulnerable to erosion, with agriculture losing about 457 million tons of soil annually.

He said the situation is worsened by improper use of fertilizers and pesticides that pollute and acidify the soil.

In its website, the Bureau of Soils

and Water Management (BSWM) of the Department of Agriculture (DA) noted land degradation is manifested by the loss of productive topsoil through water erosion; loss of soil fertility due to over-cultivation; loss of vegetation cover due to illegal logging and widespread forest tree cutting, and expansion of slash and bum agriculture in critical slopes.

To ensure soil health, Marcos, who is also the concurrent secretary of DA, said they would be implementing the National Soil Health Program and the Implementation of Sustainable Land Management.

"This will ensure the proper use and management of soil resources, address land degradation, enhance crop productivity, and, hence, improve farmers' income," Marcos said.

Also part of their anti-soil degradation efforts is the empowerment the BSWM and capacitating soil laboratories nationwide in the soil and land resources mapping and evaluation process.

Marcos said he hopes to also get inputs from the private sector and other stakeholders on how to mitigate soil degradation during the National Soil Health Summit.

"This summit is an opportune time for all of us here to collaborate, to share our wisdom and experience to improve our soil and boost our agricultural productivity, all while promoting sustainability and environmental protection. This will play a pivotal role in nation building and uplifting the lives of our people," Marcos said. **Samuel P. Medenilla**



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NFA aims for rice distribution instead of cash assistance to indigent families

THE National Food Authority (NFA) has targeted to supply poor households with physical rice rather than cash aid to lessen the pressure on the price of the staple, according to NFA Administrator Roderico Bioco.

The NFA is mandated to procure palay locally and maintain the optimal level of buffer stock at all times in grain silos strategically located across the country.

Bioco recently said the government now has more than P35 billion for rice procurement.

"There has been an endeavor before to make this physical, but NFA has not been able to transition to that physical stock, and this is where we're going to change as part of our transformation from that, when we buffer, we actually buffer for the poor," he said.

"What we hope to achieve is that quantitative easing in prices of rice...supply the bottom 18 percent of our society, take that away from the market, then we can put lesser pressure on prices, especially during the lean season."

He said Indonesia is implementing a similar scheme with its government producing more than 200,000 metric tons of rice monthly.

However, Bioco raised the present

difficulty being encountered by Asian nations in securing food stock to temper the rise in prices during the lean season.

Recently, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the NFA to look into the feasibility and efficiency of building rice and corn station modules using a mother-daughter or hub-and-spoke system to ensure a 30-day buffer stock of rice and corn in the country.

"I'm happy to see that NFA is returning to its original function in trying to even out the price of rice, making it stable all throughout harvest and then the planting cycle," the President said.

Marcos' remark was in response to the report that the NFA would transition to providing physical rice stock from granting cash assistance to poor households under the government's welfare program as part of the agency's new rice stocking scheme.

For her part, Aileen Christel Ongkauko, head of the Private Sector Advisory Council Agriculture group, said the system has been used by other countries such as China, the United States and India.

She said the project could be under a public-private partnership scheme as each mother station may cost P5.7 billion each or a total of P170 billion. Raadee S. Sausa



PHL rice imports up 7.69% in 5 months to May

THE PHILIPPINES imported 1.62 million metric tons (MT) of rice in the five months to May, up 7.69% from a year earlier, the Bureau of Plant Industry said.

During the five months, Vietnam — the Philippines' leading top rice supplier — delivered 1.5 million MT or 89.63% of the total.

In a report, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) projected Philippine

rice imports at 3.8 million MT this year, upgrading a previous estimate of 3.6 million MT.

Overall global rice consumption next year is expected to come in at 523.772 million MT, it said.

"Global consumption is up with increases for India and the Philippines. Imports are forecast higher, mainly for Kenya and the Philippines," the USDA said.

The USDA also forecast Philippine consumption at 16.5 million MT for the 2023-

2024 period, exceeding the previous forecast of 16.3 million MT.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., who is also the Secretary of Agriculture, signed an Executive Order (EO) No. 10 extending the validity of reduced tariff rates on various agricultural commodities, including rice, importers of which pay 35% for Southeast Asian grain.

The EO is set to expire at year's end. —
Sheldeen Joy Talavera



Soil under threat, crisis looms

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. yesterday said the country's soil is under threat and continuing to neglect it could lead to a crisis in the future.

The President made the pronouncement at the 1st National Soil Health Summit in Manila where he called for more public-private collaboration to improve soil health in the country and eventually boost agriculture productivity and promote sustainable soil use and environmental production.

"We are all aware that our nation is blessed with rich and fertile lands that fed and empowered our people throughout our history. While that has been the case, we will still find ourselves burdened by grave and urgent issues in providing quality and sufficient food for our people – some of which are caused by factors beyond our control, others are within, in fact, our control," Marcos said.

He cited data from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) which showed that 75 percent of the Philippine cropland is vulnerable to erosion in various degrees, with 457 million tons of agricultural soil and 47,000 forest covers lost every year.

He said around 11 to 13 million hectares of soil are also "considered degraded" and at least 2.2 million hectares "suffer from insufficient levels of soil fertility."

The President said among the factors that affect the current soil conditions are the improper use of fertilizers and pesticides that pollute and acidify the soil resulting in its degradation, even as the conversion of lands for settlements reduces land for agricultural



Volunteers help in Ilocos Norte's effort to build a green wall to protect the province against flash floods and soil erosion on Feb. 9, 2021. DENR data showed 75 percent of the Philippine cropland is vulnerable to erosion. (PNA Photo)

SOIL

production and forest covers.

"Needless to say, our soil is under threat and to continue to neglect this vital agricultural component will lead to an even worse crisis in the future," Marcos said.

The President called for increased collaboration among various stakeholders to avert future crises.

Marcos said the government is currently pursuing a five-point priority agenda on soil and water management under the National Soil Health Program and the Implementation of Sustainable Land Management which pro-

motes proper soil use and management, addressing land degradation, enhancing crop productivity and improving farmers' income.

He said under the program, the government empowers the Bureau of Soil and Water Management by capacitating soil laboratories across the country to yield better data; conducting a soil and land resources mapping and evaluation process that includes soil-based and land-based level assessments; and doing soil sample analyses and digital map preparations under the Philippine Soil Land Resources Information program.

The program also increases collaboration between the Department of Agriculture, DENR and the Department of Science and Technology to ensure the successful implementation of the projects.

The President added his administration is exploring Water Security for Climate Resilient Rainwater Technologies, and conducting cloud seeding operations for agriculture to improve water conditions in production areas, critical watersheds and reservoirs, and to eventually mitigate the effects of the El Niño phenomenon especially in agriculture.

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Gov't readying El Niño response – PBBM

By BETHEENA KAE UNITE

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said the government is exploring rainwater technologies that are deemed helpful to mitigate El Niño in the country.

Marcos bared this during the first National Soil Health Summit on Wednesday, June 21, where he talked about “grave and urgent” problems hounding the country’s agriculture sector.

“The administration is also exploring Water Security for Climate Resilient Rainwater Technologies and the conduct of Cloud Seeding Operations for Agriculture,” Marcos said.

“All these to improve water conditions in production areas, in critical watersheds, and in our reservoirs. These are all part of the collective efforts to mitigate the effects of the El Niño phenomenon,” he added.

The President said the government

has come up with a five-point priority agenda on soil and water management, such as the national soil health program and the implementation of sustainable land management.

He said that this will ensure the proper use and management of soil resources, address land degradation, enhance crop productivity, and improve farmers’ income.

“The administration shall empower the Bureau of Soil and Water Management to achieve these goals,

especially through capacitating soil laboratories across the country to yield better data,” the Chief Executive said.

“We are conducting a soil and land resources mapping and evaluation process that includes soil-based and land-based level assessments, soil sample analyses, and digital map preparations under the Philippine Soil Land Resources Information program,” he added.

Marcos emphasized that these

efforts are aimed at forming a “cohesive overall approach” that will address the “systemic and perennial ills” in the agriculture sector.

He lamented that while the Philippines is blessed with rich and fertile lands that fed and empowered Filipinos, “we will still find ourselves burdened by grave and urgent issues in providing quality and sufficient food for our people – some of which are caused by factors beyond our control, others are within, in fact, our control.”

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Huwag harangin ang Pinoy fishermen

ITO ang malaon nang pakiusap ng Pilipinas sa China na tila hanggang ngayon ay wala pang malinaw na katugunan. Inamin ni Presidente Marcos na may ginagawang negosasyon ang Pilipinas at China tungkol dito ngunit mabagal ang usad. Subalit kahit mabagal aniya, ito ay umuusad.

Kahit noong presidente pa si Rodrigo Duterte na lantarang nakipag-alyansa sa China kasabay ng pagkondena sa United States, naganap pa rin ang pambubuli ng mga Chinese militia o mismong coast guard ng China sa ating mga mangingisda. Walang sinseridad ang China na ang tanging layunin ay ipakita ang talas ng mga pangil nito sa buong daigdig. Isang wagas na diktador si Xi na maikukumpara lang kay Hitler ng Germany.

Ang kailangan natin ay ang agarang pagtugon ng China sa hiling natin na huwag namang pigilan ang mga Pilipinong mangingisda at huwag tatakutin dahil naghahanapbuhay lang ng patas ang mga ito. Sa ngayon, nadarama natin ang masamang epekto ng ginagawa ng China sa sobrang taas ng presyo ng isda sa palengke. Ilang beses na bang nakaharap



Ak syon
NGAYON
 NIAL G. PEDROCHE

ng presidente ang pinuno ng China na si Xi Jinping sa mga international meeting ng mga pandaigdig na leader?

Sa pagkaalam ko, maski paano ay puwedeng maungkat ng presidente ang matagal nang problemang ito sa pag-uusap nila nang sarilinan. Kung si Xi ay isang leader na may puso, dapat sana ay nagtapos na ang problema'ng ito. Ngunit katulad ni Hitler, ang ambisyon ni Xi ay maghari sa buong mundo. Kung magsusuri tayo, iisa ang ugat ng mga kaguluhang nagaganap sa daigdig, at iyan ay ang militarisasyong ginagawa ng China.

May resulta naman ang negosasyon ng Pilipinas at China tungkol sa ating mga mangingisda na pumapalaot sa West Philippine Sea. Sabi ni Marcos, hindi na umano sila itinatayo pero sa pangangisda nila ay may nakabuntot sa kanilang Chinese Coast Guard. Kung magkagayon, wala pa ring tunay na kalayaan ang mga Pinoy at tila ba mga dayuhan tayong nagsadya sa teritoryong may karapatan tayo pero may sumu-

(Sundan sa pahina 5)

AKSYON NGAYON... Mula pahina 4

subaybay sa lahat ng ating gagawin.

Pero hanggang kailan? Naitanong ko ito dahil lantad na sa China ang pagkiling natin sa U.S. Siguradong hindi mamabuthin ito ng China dahil ang la-

hat ng kakampi ng U.S. ay itinuturing na mga kalaban nito. Aminin natin o hindi, ang Pilipinas ay matatawag na kaalyado ng U.S. at ibang bansa sa pagpigil sa plano ng China na mabawi muli ang Taiwan.

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PBBM BARES STRATEGY VS HOARDING, SMUGGLING

THE national government is carrying out a "vertical integration" strategy to address the issues in the agriculture sector such as hoarding and smuggling of commodities, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said on Tuesday.

In a media interview on the sidelines of the Department of Agriculture's (DA) 125th founding anniversary in Quezon City, Marcos said the implementation of vertical integration is seen to boost agricultural production and stabilize commodity prices.

"There's a very simple concept na tinatawag na (called) vertical integration. Imbes na isang kumpanya may ginagawa, isa naging trader, isa naging marketing, isa retail. Pagka iba-iba 'yan, maraming cost 'yan paglipat. 'Pag vertically integrated 'yan, 'pag kasama lahat 'yan, wala ng cost 'yun, tuloy-tuloy na lang hanggang sa retail," Marcos, also acting as DA chief, said.

Marcos said his administration is exhausting all efforts to address the hoarding and smuggling issues, given that these affect the implementation of Kadiwa, a DA initiative aimed at ensuring the

availability and affordability of agricultural products.

Kadiwa ng Pangulo is a market linkage facilitation program of the DA to make agricultural commodities like rice, poultry and livestock accessible and affordable to the poor.

Kadiwa seeks to increase the income of farmers and other workers in the agriculture sector by getting rid of intermediaries.

It also sells other processed goods produced by micro, small and medium enterprises.

He said the operations of Kadiwa outlets nationwide would only be sustained if there is an improvement in the production and supply side.

"We are making sure that first of all, simple lang, 'yung mga simpleng problema na hinarap natin. 'Yung mga rice smuggling, sugar smuggling, onion smuggling, gagawin namin lahat para matigil 'yan," Marcos said.

He added that some organized syndicates had tried to control the use of cold storage facilities to manipulate the release of onions to the markets. *PNA*



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Marcos dismayado sa kalidad ng mga lupang pangsakahan

BUMABABA ang kalidad ng lupang pangsakahan sa Pilipinas dahil sa maling paggamit ng fertilizers at pesticides na nagpapababa sa kalidad ng ani ng mga magsasaka.

Ito ang inihayag ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. sa kanyang pagdalo sa National Soil Health Summit sa isang hotel sa Lungsod ng Maynila nitong Miyerkoles.

Ayon sa pangulo, lumitaw sa report ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na 75% ng kabuuang lupang pangsakahan ay namimiligrong gumuho at 457 milyong tonelada ng lupa ang nawawala kada taon dahil sa bumababang kalidad at pagkawala ng natural na nutrisyon.

Nagpalala aniya sa kalidad ng lupa ay dahil sa epekto ng maling paggamit ng mga kemikal na ginagamit sa agrikultura.

"As the DENR has reported, 75% of our total cropland is vulnerable to erosion in various degrees, with agriculture losing about 457 million tons of soil annually. Making matters worse is the improper use of fertilizers and pesticides that pollute and acidify our soil," anang pangulo.

Isa rin ayon sa pangulo sa mga dahilan ang conversion ng mga lupa para maging residential at tinatayuan ng mga pabahay o subdivision.

Dahil dito, sinabi ng presidente na bumuo na sila ng mga plano na may kinalaman sa pangangasiwa sa lupa at tubig upang masigurong matugunan ang pagbaba ng kalidad ng mga lupang pangsakahan at mapahusay ang produksiyon para tumaas ang kanilang kita. (Aileen Taliping)

REMATE

ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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Pagsirit ng sibuyas isinisi sa hoarding

ISINISI ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. sa hoarding o pag-iimbak ang pagsirit ng presyo ng sibuyas na nagsimula sa unang bahagi ng taon.

Sa isang panayam sa sidelines ng 125th anniversary ng Department of Agriculture, sinabi ni Pangulong Marcos na itina-go at hindi ipinagamit ng mga sindikato ang cold storage sa ibang producers.

"I think maliwanag na maliwanag na sa ating lahat na 'yung pagtaas ng presyo by 87% noong nakaraang... Enero, Pebrero, walang dahilan 'yun. Kumpleto ang onion natin dito. Nagho-hoard lang talaga at iniipit ang presyo," sinabi ng Pangulo.

"Tapos 'yung cold storage ay hindi pinapagamit sa iba para 'yung kontro-

lado lang... 'Yung mga sindikato, 'yung kontrolado lang nila na onion, 'yun lang ang pwedeng aabot sa palengke," dagdag na pahayag nito.

Matatandaang pumalo sa P420 hanggang P600 kada kilo ang presyo ng local red at white onions sa mga pamilihan sa Kalakhang Maynila, noong unang bahagi ng taon.

Dahil dito, nagsagawa pa ng Senate inquiry para imbestigahan ang mataas na presyo ng sibuyas sa bansa.

Bilang kalihim ng DA, sinabi ng Pangulo na patuloy na tutugunan ng administrasyon ang hoarding at smuggling ng agricultural products sa bansa.



Odette-hit farmers to get aid from Japan, FAO

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

[@joveemarie](#)

THE Department of Agriculture (DA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and Japan have forged cooperation to restore agri-fishery-based livelihoods and promote climate resiliency among farmers and fishers affected by the onslaught of Typhoon Odette (international name: Rai).

Titled "Project for Restoring Livelihoods and Enhancing Resilience of Farmers and Fisherfolk Affected by Typhoon," the DA, in a statement late Tuesday, said the project entails the use of the ¥251-million donation from the government of Japan for 4,000 small-scale coconut farmers, landless coconut farm workers, coconut farmers' organizations, fishers, and fisherfolk organizations in 12 municipalities.

"Back-to-back crises—conflicts,

typhoons, flooding, earthquakes—make it difficult for many farmers and fishers in the Philippines to rebound as they struggle to replace what was lost or damaged—be it seeds and tools, livestock, or fishing gear. Getting vulnerable families back to producing food and earning an income and helping them withstand the next disaster is at the heart of FAO's work in the Philippines," FAO Representative in the Philippines Lionel Dabaddie said.

Dubbed the second costliest

BusinessMirror

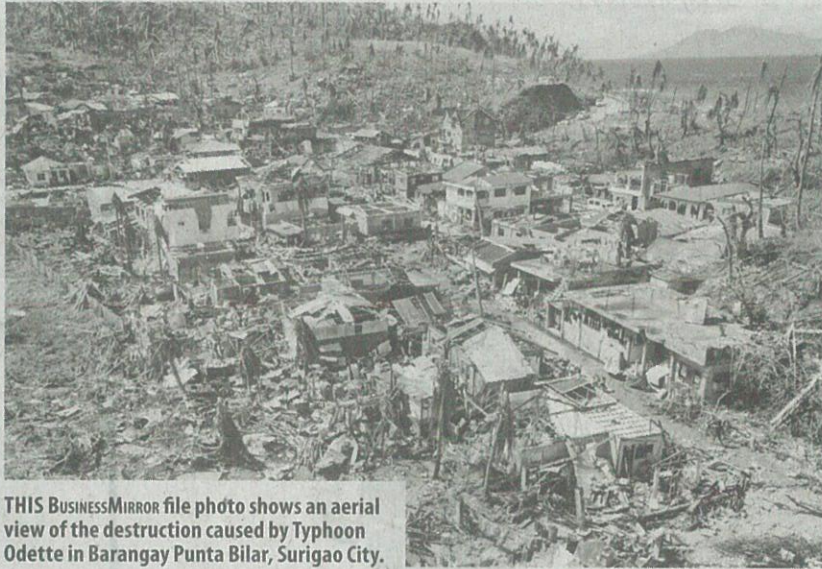
A broader look at today's business

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THIS BUSINESSMIRROR file photo shows an aerial view of the destruction caused by Typhoon Odette in Barangay Punta Bilar, Surigao City.

typhoon in the Philippines, the calamity struck the country in December 2021. As of February 21, 2022, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (NDRRMC) reported 10,607,625 affected persons in 11 regions and P51.8 billion worth of damages—P17.7 billion of which belong to the agri-fishery sector.

According to Project Team Leader Gay Therese M. Bucol, the project takes a bottom-up planning approach and is made up of interventions that are unique per province.

"This guarantees its relevance and responsiveness to the needs of the beneficiaries, as well as its alignment and complementation to the plans, priorities, and ongoing projects of the local government," said Bucol.

According to the DA, the municipalities of Carlos P. Garcia, Mabini, and Ubay in Bohol will receive assorted seeds and fertilizers for vegetable production, island-born Bohol native chicken strain and feeds for poultry and egg production, water pumps as irrigation support, milkfish fingerlings and fish feeds, and drift gill nets.

It added that the provincial government of Southern Leyte will implement a "one municipality, one product" scheme among the municipalities of Bontoc, Tomas Oppus, Malitbog, and Limasawa with priority for sweet corn, peanuts, and vegetables. Farmers' associations will be given vermicomposting facilities and native chicken production support, while individual fishers and fisherfolk's associations will receive milkfish and tilapia fingerlings, feeds, and other fishing equipment.

Meanwhile, the agency said the municipalities of Surigao City, San Francisco, Gigaquit, Mainit, and Sta. Monica in Surigao del Norte will be encouraged to partake in climate-resilient agriculture practices such as the use of integrated vegetable production technology under protected culture for banana and cassava production.

Vermicomposting facilities and poultry and egg production will also be provided to qualified farmers organizations. Fisherfolk in the province will be entitled to seaweed propagules and other planting materials, tilapia fingerlings and feeds, and other fishing equipment.

To complement the agriculture and fishery inputs that will be distributed through the project, the DA

said Farmer's Field Schools, Training of Trainers for farmer-leaders and agricultural extension workers, and season-long and short-term trainings on selected and specialized topics will also be conducted at the local level.

"Natural disaster itself is a tragedy, but people have the power to get better. I really hope that this project will contribute to the revitalization of affected farmers and fishermen," said Embassy of Japan in the Philippines First Secretary and Agriculture Attache Tachikawa Junpei.

For his part, Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban said the partnership with FAO, the Japanese government, and the local municipalities involved in the project is necessary to restore agricultural production in vulnerable areas, especially those that were affected by the calamity.

"I assure you the full support and commitment of the department—from the Regional Field Offices to its attached agencies, namely the **Philippine Coconut Authority** and the **Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources**—to effectively address the needs of the beneficiaries and enhance their resilience to climate change impacts."



PH, Malaysia eye agriculture cooperation

BY JED MACAPAGAL

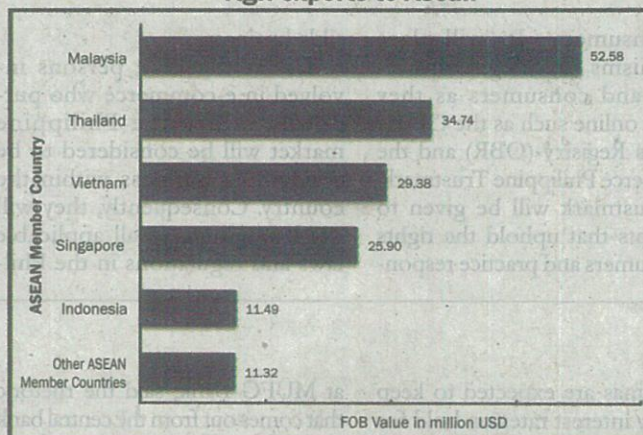
THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is eyeing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Malaysia on advancing cooperation on agriculture.

DA Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban and Dato' Abdul Malik Melvin Castelino bin Anthony, Malaysia's newly-appointed ambassador to the Philippines, on Monday discussed how the two countries can enhance their partnership on agricultural trade and cooperation.

The DA said the officials expressed interest in building joint

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Agri exports to Asean



Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

PH

ventures that will encourage more trade and investment in Filipino produce such as meat and meat products, halal products as well as high value fruits and vegetables.

The parties also discussed potential collaborations on research and knowledge sharing in fisheries, aquaculture, mariculture and rubber industries.

DA said the Malaysian ambassador expressed hope the signing of the MOU will be done during President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s state visit to Malaysia for the 45th Meeting of the Asean Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry scheduled this year.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed the country's agricultural exports to Asean-

member countries in the first quarter amounted to \$165.42 million or 5.8 percent of the total value of exports to the region.

Malaysia was the top buyer of agricultural exports from the Philippines worth \$52.58 million or 31.8 percent of the total value of agricultural exports to Asean member countries for the period.

-Jed Macapagal

The Manila Times[®]

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READY TO EAT

Photo shows the mushroom crackers that was developed by the Department of Agriculture (DA)-Central Luzon (Region 3) office in collaboration with the Bureau of Agricultural Research, an agency under the DA. PHOTO FROM BAR FACEBOOK PAGE



Japanese firm eyes Davao coffee beans

A GROUP of Japanese businessmen is exploring the possibility of importing Davao del Sur coffee beans into their country.

Cherrilyn Lyciah Baylon, enterprise development and marketing specialist of the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rural Development Project (DA-PRDP) Project Support Office in Mindanao, said Japanese businessmen came to the region on Monday to visit coffee farms of PRDP-assisted beneficiaries in Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur.

The Japanese businessmen were Masatsugu Fujimoto and Shigeru Chiba, the president and the executive manager, respectively, of Aj-Sewing LCC based in Tokyo.

The two visited the Tibolo Farm Workers Association (Tifwa) in Sta. Cruz and were impressed with the distinct sweetness of Tifwa's Arabica coffee, which they said should be classified as specialty coffee eligible for a premium price due to its unique flavor profile, according to Baylon.

"To meet the minimum annual supply requirement of 100 metric tons, Jeciry and Rey Antik, Tifwa marketing manager and president,

respectively, will call for a meeting with the Davao del Sur coffee council on June 23 to secure the volume of green coffee beans required by the Japanese group," Baylon said.

The challenge for Tifwa is to meet the demand of supplying 100 metric tons, and the need to submit samples to test if it will pass the quality standards of the Japanese group.

Baylon noted that Tifwa is set to send initial samples of their green coffee beans to Japan by September after the coffee harvest season.

"This will also allow time to perfect their coffee process with the expected arrival and installation of PRDP's P12.5-million coffee post-harvest facility with solar dryer, which is part of their interventions for the "Green Coffee Beans Processing and Marketing" enterprise subproject," she said.

In anticipation of the market-link up, Fujimoto and Chiba asked for the production schedules of PRDP's other Arabica-producing groups in Bukidnon, South Cotabato and Maguindanao to explore similar arrangements in the future. **TMT**



Leveling up the country's agricultural value chain

First of two parts

IT is common knowledge that the agricultural value chain in the Philippines needs to be leveled up given the high post-harvest losses across a big number of crops grown locally.

Such was affirmed in an Asian Development Bank (ADB) report released in June 2022 titled "Analysis of Fruit and Vegetable Value Chains in the Philippines." The partner for the ADB report was the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, an institution with in-depth knowledge on various issues affecting Philippine agriculture.

Although the report covered tomato, onions and mango, it can give us an overview of the various value chain issues in the agriculture sector.

For this column, I will go straight to the recommended course of action as these also give an overview of the challenges the country's agricultural value chain and the sector as a whole faces.

For the short-term recommen-



**MOVING
FORWARD**

**WILLIAM
D. DAR**

dations, or for six to 12 months, the ADB report recommended the following, and let me quote most of them: address input supply issues; provide training of producers in good agricultural practices (GAP), better harvesting technique and improved post-harvest and processing technologies/practices; promote mechanization and irrigation to reduce labor costs and product handling; make plastic crates available to producers; promote community-based post-harvest and processing facilities; and increase access to credit and crop insurance.

Good inputs and practices

For addressing input supply issues, the recommendation is to get more involvement from the private sector in the distribution

of certified disease-free seeds and seedlings. Hence, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and local government units (LGUs) explore private-public partnerships for producing and distributing quality seeds to organized farmers and clustered production areas.

I also recommend that research institutions, especially those from government, and state colleges and universities, accelerate and contribute to the development of quality seeds for Filipino farmers.

The ADB report also recommended providing technical and financial assistance for the production of organic solutions for controlling pests and growing crops.

For training of producers in GAP, post-harvest and processing, the report recommended that farmers also be trained in use of inputs, proper cultural management practices, and improved post-harvest and processing technologies/practices.

GAP can also help lower post-harvest losses, with the ADB report citing that GAP lowered such losses of mangoes shipped from Guimaras to Manila to only 11

percent. On the other hand, mangoes shipped from Iloilo to Manila recorded three times more post-harvest losses to 33.89 percent.

For promoting mechanization and irrigation, this is a no-brainer and does not need rocket scientists to comprehend. Mechanization has been actively promoted from the Duterte administration and has been sustained during the watch of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as Agriculture secretary.

Mechanization can reduce labor costs, which makes up more than half of the production costs of most farms, according to the ADB report.

"Efforts could reduce these costs by increasing access to mechanization for land preparation, irrigation for watering (SWIP or drip irrigation), and streamlined harvesting and sorting procedures to minimize rough handling of harvested product which increases the incidence of post-harvest losses," the report said. SWIP are small water impounding systems.

Making plastic crates available to producers was described by the ADB report as "one of the simplest and quickest ways to

reduce post-harvest losses," and I wholeheartedly agree. From what I have observed, the use of plastic bags and baskets made from Indigenous materials makes fruits and vegetables prone to high post-harvest losses.

The ADB report particularly cited post-harvest losses as high as 24 percent particularly for tomatoes shipped to Manila from Northern Mindanao, 45 percent for red onions shipped to Divisoria from Bongabon, Nueva Ecija, and, again, mangoes shipped from Iloilo to Manila logged post-harvest losses of 33.89 percent.

Community-level engagement and crop insurance

For promoting community-based post-harvest and processing facilities, the report said that this should include drying facilities for onion, hot water treatment for mango and semi-processing machines for tomato.

As for increasing access to credit and crop insurance, it was recommended that Agricultural Credit

and Policy Council set the strategies to enable and encourage more farmers to avail of crop insurance from the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC). The ADB report also recommended that PCIC work with LGUs to forge partnerships with cooperative banks, rural banks and partner cooperatives. Furthermore, PCIC sustains its orientation of farmers on crop insurance programs and how they can benefit from it.

For the second part of this column-series, I will discuss the medium- to long-term recommendations, or for one year and beyond, of the ADB report. These recommendations, and let me quote some of them, are: strengthening extension services through the Province-led Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Systems, a program that was kicked off during my watch at the DA; and strengthening market development services that should be a multi-agency effort.

Also recommended is supporting investments for climate-smart infrastructure development including post-harvest, processing and marketing facilities.



Ilocos agri products shine in Aspire

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

THE agribusiness industry in Ilocos Region has so much to offer, be it a warm cup of hot choco made from Pangasinan cacao, "pakbet" crisps of Ilocano young farmers and the nine-year-old "bugnay" wines from Ilocos Norte.

With these, the Department of Agriculture (DA) held the annual Agribusiness Support for Promotion and Investment in Regional Exposition (Aspire) in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. (PCCI) for the region.

Aspire has four driving components -- production support; enterprise development and industry support; investment promotion and market promotion and development.

The DA said the event also served as an avenue for agriculture-based businesses and organizations to showcase their products and expand their network.

The Agriculture department said the overall objective of the project is to support farmers to become successful agripreneurs.

PCCI Agri-Committee co-chairman Salvador Salacup said the Ilocos Region also has handicrafts, and the popular bagnet (deep fried pork), chichacorn (corn crisps) and longganisa

(sausage) in different variations, among others.

"In Aspire, we aim to connect the farmers and fisherfolk to the market in hopes to transform the sector with more competitive agripreneurs," he added.

The DA Ilocos Region office, headed by Executive Director Annie Bares, said that for its fifth year, Aspire kicked off on June 16, 2023 at Robinsons Place, Calasiao in Pangasinan.

The event ended on June 18, 2023 with 25 exhibitors participating.

Bares said many interested individuals visited the Aspire event and were connected with farmers and fisherfolk who also produced fresh and processed farm products.

Bares said the other local products that were showcased during the event include condiments such as suka (Ilocos vinegar) and soy sauce alongside booths with displays of chichacorn, banana chips, cassava chips, baked goodies, handmade crafts, and organic fruits and vegetables.



How our native trees and fruits will save us someday

ABACA KADABRA Abaca fiber is often used to hand-loom various Indigenous textiles in the country

What are the most familiar Pinoy fruits? Mangoes, bananas, pineapples, and papayas probably come to mind—but did you know that Philippine forests harbor hundreds of lesser-known fruits, nuts, and herbs?

Alupag or the Philippine lychee tastes like the lychees originally imported from China. Saba or native bananas are loved by millions of Pinoys. Kamansi is our local version of langka. Sticky Tibig fruits are produced by our native fig trees. In our mountains sprout sour berries like Alingaro, Bignay, and Sapinit. And though most of the world's mango trees originally hailed from India, we have our own indigenous mangoes like Pahutan and the fragrant Kuini.

The Philippines has strong agrobiodiversity resources.

The pandemic and post-pandemic periods, coupled with intensifying climate change effects, have highlighted the importance of agricultural diversity and biodiversity-friendly agriculture, plus the global rethinking of our agriculture and food systems.

These new concepts now form the foundation for economically viable, resilient, and sustainable agriculture.

Native trees and plants in UP Diliman

Inside the sprawling UP Diliman Campus in Quezon City lies the UP Institute of Biology and Energy Development Corporation's (UPIB-EDC) Threatened Species Arboretum. An arboretum is a botanical garden that specializes in trees. Inaugurated in 2014, the one-hectare park features over 70 native tree species and serves two vital functions—as a gene bank for endangered trees in case wild populations drop below sustainable levels and to educate students and the greater public about the country's native flora.

"We have so many indigenous tree species that very few Pinoys know about," explains EDC BINHI forester Roniño Gibe. "One of our goals is to popularize the conservation of our native plants, especially our threatened Philippine native trees."

In general, native plants naturally occur throughout a country, whereas indigenous plants thrive only in particular locales. Endemic plants can only be found in one country, whereas naturalized plants are exotic imports, which have settled into new countries over several centuries.

The Philippines hosts at least 10,107 plant species, as of a 2013 study by Barcelona et al. Over 57 percent of the country's plants are endemic, as per a 1996 study by Oliver and Heaney. The great majority of plants currently cultivated in Pinoy orchards, farms, and gardens, however, are exotic or naturalized plants originally imported from other countries.

Pineapples, for instance, came from South America, papayas from Mexico, lanzones from Malaysia. The ubiquitous trees found in many abandoned lots, like sampaloc and aratilis, came from Africa and Central America, respectively. Despite being called the Philippine lemon, even the iconic calamansi probably originated from the Himalayas.

Pineapples, for instance, came from South America, papayas from Mexico, lanzones from Malaysia. The ubiquitous trees found in many abandoned lots, like sampaloc and aratilis, came from Africa and Central America, respectively. Despite being called the Philippine lemon, even the iconic calamansi probably originated from the Himalayas.

Some native Philippine plants, however, successfully broke through as mainstream products. "The pili nut is a great example of an indigenous tree, which became popular, with a following both in the Bicol Region and abroad," explains botanist David Ples.

Abaca, which is made from the fibrous stalks of a native Philippine banana, is another indigenous cash crop. "The key is to recognize these plants' value and create useful, viable products," adds David. As pili trees and abaca plants have become economically valuable, their survival over the next generations is assured. The same cannot be said for other Philippine tree species.

B-7



Philippine Agrobiodiversity resources

As per the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), biodiversity provides primary medicine for four billion people while agrobiodiversity improves the lives of one billion undernourished people.

"Our indigenous fruits, herbs, nuts, and other products can provide vital nourishment for Pinoys, who might not have ready access to mainstream food. Indigenous plants also have important vitamins and minerals that are sometimes deficient in the typical Pinoy diet," explains Department of Science and Technology Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI) senior science researcher Charina Javier.

to all types of biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices, the formulation and adoption of enhanced Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUP) using the revised Housing Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB) framework, which incorporates ecologically-sound agricultural land use plans and increasing the number of recognized nationally-important agricultural heritage systems (NIAHS).

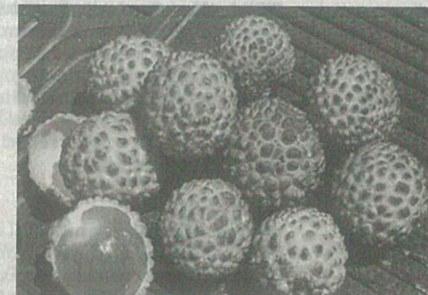
In some protected areas, the encroachment of agricultural lands has become so evident that the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) signed Joint Administrative Order (JAO) 2021-01 or Mainstreaming Biodiversity-friendly Agricultural Practices

project manager Anabelle Plantilla. "Native and even naturalized plants can be used for a host of purposes. Alupidan and pandan leaves can be used to garnish dishes, batuan fruits for flavoring, and rattan vines to make furniture."

According to the Forest Foundation Philippines, the promotion of native trees is beneficial for threatened native flora and fauna species as they help recover and expand forest habitats, protect watershed and freshwater resources, secure the livelihood of local people, and link protected areas with natural forests.

Food forests, where various combinations of cash-crops are planted in a natural setting, instead of the endless monocrop rows, which dominate large-scale agriculture, are slowly taking root.

At the Subic Bay Jungle Environment Survival Training (JEST) Camp, where participants learn to survive



A TASTY TREAT Alupag, or the Philippine lychee, is similar in taste to the lychees originally imported from China

Local knowledge is already boosting forest productivity.

"The United Nations Development Programme promotes ethical, natural ways not just to produce food and other vital resources, but to find alternative livelihood opportunities for communities living in or near forestlands, and that are supportive of the UN Sustainable Development



KUINI SO TASTY Kuini fruit are known to have a sour or sweet taste when eaten

life, generate the oxygen we breathe, even offering us places to spiritually recharge," concludes Anabelle. "We can make them worth more than logs or farmland by seeing them as our First-Nations people have for generations—as a pharmacy, a grocery, and an extension of our home."

Visitors interested in learning more about native Philippine trees, fruits, nuts, and herbs can schedule a visit to the UPIB-EDC Arboretum in UP Dili-man, where donations for upkeep and maintenance are appreciated.

The Philippines hosts at least 10,107 plant species. Over 57 percent of our plants are endemic.

"But many of our indigenous flora are neglected and underused, so their potential to provide us with nutrients is not fully utilized."

The Philippine government has been working on the promotion of agrobiodiversity since 2015 and continues to achieve its agrobiodiversity targets under the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP). Its targets include maintaining and conserving the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and wild relatives, increasing agricultural areas devoted

(BDFAP) in and around protected areas and promoting the same in wider agricultural landscapes.

The United Nations Development Program's Biodiversity Finance Initiative (DENR-UNDP BIOFIN) is currently assisting the two national agencies to enable the implementation of the JAO through by developing an agrobiodiversity framework for the country.

"We should do all we can to strengthen local agrobiodiversity, such as promoting our native fruits," says DENR-UNDP BIOFIN national

in a tropical rainforest, campers are taught how to make "jungle coffee" from Kupang seeds, how to use Gugo vines as "jungle soap," how to fashion survival implements from bamboo, and which leaves one can chew on to help stave off hunger.

In the uplands of Sibalom in Panay, locals seasonally harvest the leaves and stems of bakan, balud, banban, and nito to make tourist souvenirs while locally grown tobacco leaves are ground and inserted into dried duhat leaves to make native cigarettes called Lomboy or Likit.

Goals," adds UNDP resident representative to the Philippines Dr. Selva Ramachandran.

Established in 2012 and with a network comprising 41 countries in Africa, Europe, South and Central America, plus the Asia Pacific Region, DENR-UNDP-BIOFIN helps raise funds for smart agriculture to boost the productivity of ecosystems, while repurposing potentially harmful agricultural subsidies into effective conservation measures.

"Our forests serve many key functions. They provide habitats for wild-



Vegetable prices remain on uptrend

By BELLA CARIASO

Prices of vegetables are still on an upward trend despite earlier assurance from the Department of Agriculture (DA) that prices would normalize this week.

In a recent radio interview, Nueva Vizcaya Agricultural Terminal (NVAT) general manager Gilbert Cumila said the wholesale price of farm products, particularly tomatoes, at NVAT has increased, as few farmers planted in March due to the oversupply.

Cumila added that farmers were also forced to stop spending for fertilizer due to high costs, resulting in a decline in harvest.

Many traders in various provinces in Luzon also go to NVAT to source their vegetables, contributing to the increase in wholesale prices, according to the food terminal official.

"The farmers did not spend for farm inputs, that's the reason why the wholesale price of tomatoes went up," he said.

He added that the wholesale price of squash at the trading post at NVAT has also increased.

He said that the wholesale price of lettuce at the NVAT has also increased to between P200 and P250 per kilo.

The retail price of lettuce in Metro Manila has doubled to P400 to P450 per kilo.

Based on DA's monitoring, retail prices of tomatoes ranged between P45 and P75 per kilo, and for squash, between P25 and P60 per kilo.

Evangelista earlier said retail prices of vegetables are expected to stabilize this week after a P20-per-kilo increase last week amid rains experienced in many areas in the country.

She added that the upward trend in the prices of farm products happened as many vegetable farms were affected by rains as Typhoon Chedeng enhanced the southwest monsoon.

Based on the DA's monitoring, the highest retail price of cabbage in Metro Manila markets last Friday reached P120

per kilo compared with the highest retail price of P100 per kilo a week prior or last June 9.

The retail price of carrots had also increased by P20 per kilo as of Friday after it reached as high as P120 per kilo compared with P100 per kilo seven days ago.

The retail price of chayote also increased by P7 per kilo last Friday compared with the P80 per kilo a week ago.

Kadiwa stores

The National Housing Authority (NHA) is planning to open Kadiwa stores in government resettlement sites.

In a statement, NHA assistant general manager Alvin Feliciano, who met with DA Assistant Secretary Kristine Evangelista yesterday to discuss the matter, said the plan is part of NHA general manager Joeben Tai's vision to provide affordable food as well as livelihood to beneficiaries of the government's housing program.

The NHA is also planning to distribute seedlings to those

who are interested to pursue urban gardening, according to the agency's official.

He added that the NHA aims to pilot-test the Kadiwa store at one resettlement site by next month before its replication in other resettlement areas nationwide.

Rice price hike

A rice watchdog group yesterday reported that there was a P50 increase in the 50-kilo per sack price of the staple, causing a P1-per-kilo increase in the retail prices in Metro Manila markets.

In an interview with **The STAR**, watchdog group Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy Estavillo said the rice stocks are in the hands of the millers and traders as the palay harvest already ended amid these lean months.

"Based on our monitoring, a retailer from Nepa Q-Mart (in Quezon City) said there was an increase. The increase ranged between P30 and P50 per 50-kilo-sack," she said.

- With Elizabeth Marcelo

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MARKET WATCH

DA READIES STEPS TO EASE UNSTABLE VEGGIE PRICES

By Jordeene B. Lagare
@jordeenelagare

Amid unstable prices of certain commodities, such as tomato and eggplant, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said it would not hesitate to bring in produce from "other sources" to help ease food prices.

In an interview on Wednesday, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Kristine Evangelista said the agency observed that prices of these vegetables have increased, mainly due to unfavorable weather conditions, but also to some other reasons.

Wholesale prices

"Based on our historical data, prices of tomato have declined in the trading post, but it increased at the retail level," said Evangelista, referring to the hubs across the country where produce are bought and sold at wholesale prices.

According to the DA official, the usual rainy season in May and June will definitely affect the wholesale price at the trading post.

"In the case of eggplants, we have seen an upward price movement of as much as P20 at the retail level," she added.

Eggplant retails from P60 to P100 per kilogram as of Wednesday, higher than P85 per kg in the same period last year, based on the DA's price monitoring.

On the other hand, tomatoes are sold from P45 to P75 per kg from P50 per kg previously.

Evangelista said the DA is exploring various ways, such as food mobilization, looking for other sources of commodities and beefing up the presence of Kadiwa stores nationwide to ease the upward pressure on food prices.

Produce from elsewhere

"What we're trying to do now is to bring in other commodities from other areas to ease the supply and the demand requirements of [the National Capital Region]," Evangelista said.

Acting on President Marcos' instructions, Evangelista said the DA is also in discussions with local government units and some government agencies to open additional Kadiwa outlets, hoping to sell food items to the consumers at affordable prices.

Further, the agency is in discussions with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to help in the rollout of the food stamp program.

"We are still in the exploratory stage and hopefully we will finalize our game plan for the partnership with the DSWD. But most likely, the Kadiwa on Wheels will be a big part of their program," she added.

INQ

REMATE

ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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Tone-toneladang frozen meat, prutas nasabat sa Tondo

SINALAKAY ng mga operatiba ang dalawang bodega ng naglalaman ng mga tone-toneladang frozen products gaya ng mga karne at prutas sa Tondo, Maynila Martes ng hapon.

Ayon sa impormasyong na ibinigay ni Manila Police District (MPD) director, P/Brigadier Gen. Andre P. Dizon, aabot sa 19 katao na pawang tauhan ng binabantayang bodega ang inaresto ng mga awtoridad.

Sa pangunguna ni Dizon, kasama rin sa joint operation ang mga tauhan ng Veterinary Inspection Manila, Bureau of Customs (BOC), Department of Agriculture (DA), Philippine Coast Guard

(PCG), Regional Investigation Division, NCRPO Ancar NCR na pinamumunuan ni NCRPO (National Capital Region Police Office) chief PMGen. Edgar Alan Okubo.

Nasamsam sa dalawang magkahiwalay na bodega ang mga frozen na karne at prutas sa Infanta St., corner H. Lopez, Brgy. Balut, Tondo, at kasalukuyang inalam pa ang kabuuang halaga ng mga nakumpiskang produkto.

Dinala sa himpilan ng District Police Intelligence Operation Unit (DPIOU) ang mga naarestong mga indibidwal para disposisyon at imbestigasyon.

RENE CRISOSTOMO



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Food stamp ikokonek sa mga Kadiwa store

Nakikipag-ugnayan ang Department of Agriculture (DA) sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) para sa implementasyon ng food stamp program.

Plano ng DA na magamit ang food stamp sa mga Kadiwa store kung saan mabibili ang mga murang gulay at karne.

Ayon kay DA Assistant Secretary Kristine Evangelista, pinag-iisipan na rin nilang dagdagan ang iba't ibang mga ahensiya ng gobyerno na mayroong Kadiwa store para mas marami ang makakabili ng pagkain sa abot-kayang halaga.

"Ito po ay isang oportunidad para sa ating mga magsasaka, dahil ang atin pong directive palagi is bring our farmers direct to the consumers," ayon kay Evangelista.

Kasunod ito ng pagtaas ng presyo ng gulay dulot ng mga nagdaang sama ng panahon.

Sa datos ng DA, nasa P5 hanggang P20 ang itinaas ng presyo ng mga gulay kada kilo sa Metro Manila.
(Natalia Antonio)

Abante

UNA SA BALITA

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Ilang toneladang frozen meat, prutas bumulaga sa 2 warehouse

ILANG toneladang frozen meat at mga prutas ang nasamsam nang salakayin ng magkakasanib na pwersa ng mga ahensya ng pamahalaan ang dalawang bodega sa Tondo, Maynila noong Martes.

Ayon kay Manila Police District (MPD) Director police Brig. Gen. Andre Dizon, 19 na tauhan ng warehouse ang dinakip habang tinutukoy pa ang mayari ng mga nakumpiskang kontrabando. Bukod sa MPD, kasama sa joint

operation ang mga tauhan ng Bureau of Customs (BOC), Department of Agriculture (DA), Veterinary Inspection Manila (VIM) Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Regional Investigation Division ng National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO).

Nakumpiska sa dalawang magkahilaw na bodega sa Infanta sa kanto ng H. Lopez St. sa Balut, Tondo ang hindi pa matukoy na halaga ng mga puslit na karne at prutas. **(Mina Navarro)**

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Multi-milyong halaga ng ilegal na imported goods, nasabat

Sinalakay ng mga tauhan ng National Capital Regional Police Office at Manila Police District (MPD) ang isang 'cold storage facility' kung saan nakaimbak ang multi-milyong halaga ng mga frozen meats at prutas na walang kaukulang mga permits, sa Tondo, Maynila.

Dakong alas-12:45 ng hapon nang salakayin ng pulisya kasama ang mga kinatawan ng Department of Agriculture, Veterinary Inspection Manila, Bureau of Customs, at Philippine Coast Guard ang pasilidad sa may Infanta corner H. Lopez Street, Brgy. 133 Zone 11, Balut, Tondo.

Inaresto ng mga awtoridad sa naturang operasyon ang 19 na mga

tauhan na inabutan dito. Inaalam pa ng pulisya ang pagkakakilanlan sa may-ari ng mga nakaimbak na produkto.

Sinabi ni MPD Director, PBGen Andre Dizon, unang dumulog ang mga tauhan ng DA at BOC sa pulisya ukol sa nakarating sa kanila na ulat na imbakan ng ilegal na frozen meat at prutas. Dito nagkasa ng 'surveillance operation' ang mga awtoridad hanggang sa magpositibo at saka naglabas ng "Letter of Authority" ang BOC para salakayin ang lugar.

Nadiskubre sa pasilidad ang tone-toneladang karne at prutas na nakabalot sa plastic, kahon at sako. Ilang buong baboy naman ang nakita rin na basta na lamang

nakatambak at nakitaan ng senyales ng pagkabulok na.

Sinabi ni Dizon na hindi naman tiyak kung saan ibinabagsak ang mga frozen products. Sa impormasyong nakarating sa kanila, bihira naman na nakikitang may humahakot ng mga produkto sa naturang pasilidad.

Wala rin umanong rehistro ang naturang pasilidad at walang mga kaukulang dokumento kaya hindi matiyak kung ligtas na makonsumsi ng publiko ang mga produktong nakaimbak dito.

Patuloy ang imbestigasyon ng pulisya kabilang ang pagtukoy sa mga nasa likod ng naturang mga produkto. (Danilo Garcia)

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Kadiwa stores, target ilagay ng NHA sa mga resettlement areas

Target ng National Housing Authority (NHA) na maglagay ng mga Kadiwa store sa mga resettlement site ng pamahalaan para mabigyang tulong ang mga residente dito na makapamilya ng abot kayang pagkain ng pamilya.

Ayon kay NHA General Manager Joeben Tai, malaking tulong sa mga pamilyang nasa resettlement sites na may mabibiling mga abot kayang pagkain sa kanilang lugar tuloy mababawasan ang gastusin pati na rin sa oras dahil hindi na lalabas ng lugar para mamili ng abot kayang pagkain.

Kaugnay nito, nakipagpulong na si NHA Asst. General Manager Alvin Feliciano kay Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Kristine Evangelista para sa paglalagay ng Kadiwa Center sa mga resettlement site kasama ang mga magsasaka.

Sinabi ni AGM Feliciano na dahil sa farm-to-market ang istilo ng Kadiwa, makasisigurong mura at sariwa ang mga produktong ibebenta gaya ng bigas, gulay, kame, isda, itlog at iba pa na pangunahing kailangan ng bawat pamilya.

Target ng NHA na simulan ang pilot testing ng proyektong ito sa Hulyo bago ilunsad sa ibang bahagi pa ng bansa.

Bukod sa paglalagay ng Kadiwa Center, plano rin ng NHA at DA na simulan dito ang techno demo seminars, urban gardening, value adding training, seedling distribution at iba pang programang makakatulong sa kanilang kabuhayan. (Angie dela Cruz)



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Ayala-led joint venture opens cold storage facility in CDO

By VG CABUAG

@Villygc

GMAC Logitech Refrigeration Corp., a joint venture between AC Logistics Holdings Corp. and Glacier Megafridge Inc. on Wednesday said it opened its new cold chain storage facility in Cagayan De Oro.

The construction of the facility, which is situated in Brgy. Tablon, started in 2022 and is now ready to serve clients and communities, the company said.

The facility can store up to 5,348 industrial pallets and is expected to service the increasing cold storage demand of various industries in Northern Mindanao, help ensure food preservation for the community, and

be a key player in the region's economic development.

AC Logistics, a wholly owned subsidiary of Ayala Corp., serves as the Ayala group's portfolio company for logistics solutions services providing end-to-end supply chain solutions through its subsidiaries.

The company's partnership with GMI is a testament to its commitment to address the country's need for reliable and efficient supply chain solutions that can foster food preservation and security, it said.

"AC Logistics aims to use technology-driven supply chain solutions in addressing the country's most pressing problems. We are sincerely proud to be partnering with Glacier Megafridge in helping our stakeholders ensure

food security and preservation in Cagayan de Oro. This is only the start of a very meaningful venture and we look forward to aggressively expanding our cold chain solutions across key areas in the Philippines," Rene Almendras, president and CEO of AC Logistics said.

"Glacier Megafridge, Inc. has always been committed to creating logistics solutions that address its stakeholders' supply chain needs. Our team is excited to use our technical expertise in providing logistics services to more clients and addressing supply chain challenges in Cagayan de Oro," Arturo Yan, President of GMI, said.

GMI has been in the cold storage and logistics industry since 2005 with over 65,000 pallet capacity throughout the

country. As the leading cold storage service provider, the company builds and operates cold chain industrial facilities using Japanese technology for perishable meat, poultry, aquamarine, and dairy products around Metro Manila and key emerging cities in Bicol, Panay, Bulacan and Samar.

GMI is also recognized and certified by a variety of government and professional organizations such as the National Meat Inspection Service, the Department of Agriculture, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point, International Finance Corp. and the International Organization for Standardization.

"This joint venture is committed to aggressively grow its cold chain portfolio throughout the country as it ensures food security and preservation in the cold chain corridor," Ayala said.



MHC handles fertilizer donation from China



Unloading of more than 400,000 bags of urea fertilizers from the bulk carrier Loch Melfort.

MANILA Harbor Center (MHC), the largest international bulk and breakbulk handling operation at the Port of Manila and subsidiary of International Container Terminal Services, Inc. (ICTSI), facilitated the safe and efficient handling of 20,000 metric tons of urea fertilizers from China last 7 June 2023.

The fertilizers were donated by the Chinese government as part of the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation with the Philippines, and will distributed to local farmers across the regions of Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, CALABARZON and Bicol in Luzon.

"Despite the intermittent inclement weather, the MHC team was able to achieve high

discharging productivity under safe working conditions," said Kevin Randall, MHC terminal director.

From the Port of Manila, the shipment was taken to Valenzuela city for the official turnover ceremony with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Huang Xilian.

Other guests who graced the official turnover ceremony for the donated fertilizers were Phillip Marsham, MHC global director; Geraldine Santos, MHC commercial head and; Iran Isabelle Servillon, MHC corporate affairs & management services manager.



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PH universities raise level of bioinformatics skills

DELEGATES from the Cagayan State University, the Nueva Vizcaya State University, University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) and the Visayas State University were sent to Thailand for a training program on practical bioinformatics skills for plant and animal whole genome sequencing data.

Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) Director Glenn Gregorio said the participation of the delegates in the training was made possible through the support of the center's Leveling-Up Philippine Higher Education Institutions in Agriculture, Fisheries and Natural

Resources (LevelUPHEI AFAR) grant.

In addition to the four project-sponsored delegates, two additional UPLB representatives were present, courtesy of the Searca Faculty Mobility Grants. In total, 18 participants from the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand attended the international training.

The training was organized by the Center for Agricultural Biotechnology (CAB) at Kasetsart University (CAB-KU) in Thailand last month at KU's Kamphaeng Saen campus. It was outlined by CAB-KU, encompassing the entire bioinformatics workflow from data acquisition to its application in plant and animal breeding,

as well as conservation research.

Gregorio said the training offered a comprehensive curriculum that combined lectures with hands-on activities and was designed as a beginner's course that catered specifically to biologists with limited experience in using command-line software but with an interest in genomic analysis.

He said the LevelUPHEI AFAR project is funded by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education under its International Continuing Professional Education grant program.

Searca also announced that the center, the University Consortium and KU plan to conduct three more training

programs in 2023.

Gregorio said these programs include the UC Summer School, which will focus on the sustainability of agricultural systems in challenging environments, as well as specialized courses on aquatic animal nutrition and feed manufacturing.

He also noted that another iteration of the training on practical bioinformatics skills will be offered.

Gregorio said these activities will be open to universities affiliated with the State Universities and Colleges-Association of Colleges of Agriculture in the Philippines or SUC-ACAP.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO



Hog deaths rise in Antique

As ASF spreads in Negros Occidental

By **BELLA CARIASO** and **GILBERT BAYORAN**

Hog deaths in Antique have continued to increase amid a suspected outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) in the province.

In a radio interview, Gov. Rhodora Cadiao said more than 1,000 hogs had been culled in Antique to prevent the spread of swine diseases.

"We are puzzled why most of those deaths occurred among piglets. According to our provincial veterinary office, previously piglets were not affected by ASF," Cadiao said.

She said the cause of swine deaths has yet to be determined.

"We are just presuming that it is due to ASF... We sent blood samples to Iloilo... The results have yet to arrive," Cadiao said.

She said the highest num-

ber of hog deaths was recorded in Hamtic town.

"Here in Panay... only Antique was ASF-free for the past month. Unfortunately, we cannot prevent the spread so we are implementing strict border control. In the meantime, we prohibit traders from selling pork in local markets, including processed meat. Consumers do not buy even *tocino*," Cadiao said.

In Negros Occidental, new ASF cases and hog deaths were reported in Hinigaran town.

Mayor Nadie Arceo said two pigs in Barangay Cambaog tested positive for ASF.

Arceo said the area was

cordoned off to prevent the transport of hogs outside the barangay.

He said the municipal government would indemnify affected hog raisers with P500 per piglet and P1,000 per adult swine.

Meanwhile, daily hog deaths in Negros Occidental have dropped from 140 to 150 from a peak of more than 400.

As of Tuesday, swine deaths in the province were recorded at 13,718.

Losses to the swine industry were estimated at P154.3 million, with 2,691 hog raisers in 140 barangays affected.

National African swine fever Prevention and Control Program cluster coordinator Dr. Janice Garcia said most of the new ASF cases in the country are confined in the Visayas.

Garcia blamed the spread

of ASF to the failure of affected hog raisers to immediately report outbreaks.

The latest ASF cases in the Visayas had been detected in the cities of Bacolod and Victorias and Pulupandan in Negros Occidental as well as Dauin and Sibulan in Negros Oriental.

As of June 1, the Bureau of Animal Industry said ASF outbreaks were reported in eight towns in Aklan and two towns each in Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental.

"We are conducting surveillance. In this way, we can determine the areas where there is a spread of the virus and at the same time immediately contain the spread of ASF," Garcia said.

Hot meat

Meanwhile, in Tarlac City, 40 kilos of suspected "hot

meat" were confiscated at a market on Tuesday.

The seized items were disposed in a pit at the city's slaughterhouse.

Mayor Cristy Angeles issued a notice of violation to

vendors found selling suspected "double dead" meat to the public.

She said erring vendors face charges for violating the Meat Inspection Code.

— With Ric Sapnu



Maharlika, Kadiwa, Masagana

In at least three flagship government programs, the Marcos administration has used labels that obviously evoke connections with the 20-year reign of his father, Ferdinand Marcos Sr. These are the Masagana rice program, Kadiwa stores, and the Maharlika Investment Fund (MIF).

The Masagana and Kadiwa programs were originally conceptualized by Marcos Sr. to help farmers and consumers, respectively. On the other hand, "maharlika" was a favorite brand word of the old man. Maharlika was the supposed anti-Japanese guerilla unit led by Marcos Sr. during World War II, a claim debunked by historians. Marcos Sr. also renamed to Maharlika the Pan-Philippine Highway which is our country's transportation link from Luzon to Mindanao. Maharlika is likewise the name that Marcos Sr. attempted to adopt in replacement of "Philippines" as our country's name.

What's the intention behind the adoption of this series of labels that stir connections with the first Marcos presidency? Is it because President Marcos fervently believes that his father's programs were excellent ones that need to be reinstated as solutions to our current problems? In other words, is this part of efforts to fulfill the promise of bringing back the "glory days" of the first Marcos administration?

Are these old programs being relaunched in modernized forms, stripped of the features that have been fodder for unending criticisms against the first Marcos presidency? Are there other programs to be relaunched which are resurrections of the old administration? If there are such other recycled programs in the pipeline, are these indications of a soft scheme of revisionism, in order to recast the Marcos Sr. administration in a modern and polished light?



FLEA MARKET OF IDEAS

JOEL RUIZ BUTUYAN

The three-fold criticisms against a number of social and economic programs of the first Marcos presidency are the following: (1) they were palliative but ineffective solutions that wasted public funds, (2) their implementation were mismanaged resulting in worsened lives for the people, and/or (3) they were laden with corruption.

Those who praise the Kadiwa stores of the first Marcos presidency point to the food products sold at low prices by the mobile stores. Those who criticize point to the heavy burden on public funds caused by substantial government subsidy, as well as the token presence of the mobile stores compared to the sizeable number of consumers nationwide.

If there's any bright side that we hear on the revival of the Kadiwa stores, it's this talk on supporting farmers' cooperatives and on creating direct links between food producers and end-consumers. But will all these verbiage translate into genuinely laudable implementation efforts? Or will this revived program end up again as palliative but ineffective effort?

Those who praise the Masagana rice program of the first Marcos presidency point to the farm machinery and farm inputs support given to farmers. Those who criticize the program point to the heavy loans that bankrupted both farmers and rural banks nationwide. Apart from declaring that the government will promote the use of high yielding rice varieties by farmers, the current Marcos administration has yet to spell out the full details of this revived program. If the current administration does not address the giant syndicates that manipulate palay prices, and the loan sharks that enslave farmers, no amount of tweaking will ever make a Masagana rice program succeed.

Those who support MIF point to our government's need to raise money to fund public projects. Those who criticize point to the fund's uselessness because our economy allegedly does not produce the kind of surplus capital appropriate for investments. For all intents and purposes, this supposed investment fund is no different from government loans, in the sense that both are intended to finance public projects. No matter how well-intentioned, however, any investment fund will suffer the same scourge as those borne by the behest loans of the old Marcos presidency, if the new Marcos administration fails to address corruption and mismanagement loopholes.

Is the new Marcos administration falling for the pitfalls of the old Marcos administration? Or will the old Marcos presidency benefit from absolution because of the reign of the new Marcos presidency?

Comments to fleamarketofideas@gmail.com



AGGIE'S SHRINKING GDP SHARE NATURAL -- EXPERT

AN agricultural economist in the academe recently said the agriculture sector's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) naturally declines as a country moves closer to developed economy status.

This came as a reaction to a Philippine Statistics Authority study showing that the agriculture, forestry and fishing (AFF) sector accounted for only 8.9 percent of GDP in 2022, the lowest in five years.

In an interview, Roberto Galang, dean at the Ateneo de Manila's John Gokongwei School of Management, explained that the diminishing share of agriculture in the Philippine economy is expected as most countries go through this shift as they develop.

"Higher productivity sectors, like manufacturing, Business Process Outsourcing services and tourism are expected to be the main drivers of the economy going forward," he added.

The dean cited neighboring Thailand, whose agriculture sector only



contributed some 8.5 percent to its GDP during the same period.

However, Galang said the Philippines' AFF sector still leaves much room for improvement.

He emphasized that there is an urgent need to raise agricultural productivity to alleviate poverty and ensure food security in view of recent shortages in certain staple commodities.

ties.

"A lot of interventions can help, including the clarification of rules around ownership and consolidation of agricultural lands, greater investments in agricultural technologies like high-value seeds, greenhouses, better access to finance for smallholder farms, and improved logistics," Galang said.

Meanwhile, hybrid rice proponent

Henry Lim Bon Liong said a sure way to increase agricultural productivity is to abandon traditional rice varieties in favor of much more prolific ones.

He noted that traditional rice can only produce 3 to 4 tons per hectare while hybrid rice can produce 8 to 10 tons per hectare, and in some cases, even an excess of this.

"If three million hectares of the country's 4.6 million hectares of rice land can be planted with hybrid (rice), we will never have to import again," he added.

Bon Liong, chair of SL Agritech, a private company engaged in the research, development, production and distribution of hybrid rice seed, lauded the incumbent administration for reviving the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program, which attempts to modernize the rice sector with the aim of achieving self-sufficiency.

In PSA's report, it was noted that the AFF's contribution to GDP was 9.7 percent in 2018; 9.2 percent in 2019; 10.2 percent in 2020; and 9.6 percent in 2021.



China to be world's top wheat buyer with Australia key supplier

ADD wheat to the extensive list of commodities markets dominated by Chinese buyers.

Already the world's top importer of corn and soybeans, the nation is now poised to overtake Egypt and Turkey as the biggest buyer of wheat in the year through June, Chinese and official data from the United States show. Purchases exceeded 12 million tons in the first 11 months of the marketing year, which runs through June. More than half of those cargoes were supplied by Australia.

Imports of the food staple accelerated above 1 million tons a month from October, before peaking at a record of 1.68 million tons in April. The US Department of Agriculture is forecasting another 12 million tons of Chinese imports in 2023-2024 after damage to the latest harvest left a lot of the crop suitable only for animal feed.

Heavy rains in Henan, China's biggest growing region, have affected quality and pushed up prices of the higher-protein grain used to make bread and noodles. That should benefit wheat farmers and shippers around the world, while potentially hurting demand for other feed ingredients like corn and soybeans as more wheat gets swapped into live-stock rations.

"Imports have been quite profitable and lots of cargoes were booked," said Zhang Zhidong, senior analyst with Guolian Futures Co. "Domestic grains are expensive and stockpiles



WHEAT grows in a field in Balliang, Victoria, Australia, November 9, 2021. CARLA GOTTGENS/BLOOMBERG

are falling, so there is the demand."

Purchases should stay elevated if prices remain favorable and buyers need to replenish their reserves, said Rosa Wang, an analyst with consultancy Shanghai JC Intelligence Co.

Meanwhile, some key gauges of China's copper market are hinting that demand for the metal is faring well despite a steady flow of downbeat economic news.

Solar stocks are plunging even as demand for panels boom. The combined market capitalization of the four largest producers, all based in China, has dropped by more than 40 percent since August.

China is likely to cut the reserve-requirement ratio for banks and interest rates further this year as part of efforts to shore up the world's second-largest economy, according

to the country's top three securities newspapers, citing analysts.

Groupe Lactalis expansion

THE world's largest dairy maker, France's Groupe Lactalis, is expanding in Chicago after a \$3.2-billion deal to acquire cheese brands from Kraft Heinz Co.

The family-owned company plans to hire almost 100 people at its offices in the Windy City over the next year, according to Peter Cotter, chief executive officer of Lactalis Heritage Dairy—the business that runs the natural cheese brands bought from Kraft.

The expansion comes as Lactalis prepares to separate its supply chain and finance systems as part of the integration of Kraft brands including Cracker Barrel and Knudsen. The little

known, secretive French dairy giant has in recent years been growing its business in the US, which is now its second-largest market.

"The US is obviously a much bigger country from a land-based standpoint than France is," Cotter said during an interview at the firm's office in Chicago's West Loop neighborhood. "The absolute growth opportunity that exists I think makes it the perfect growth market."

Lactalis agreed to buy Kraft's natural cheese business in 2020 and has since then completed the first phase of separation, which included sales, marketing, human resources, the commercial area and manufacturing, Cotter said. A transition agreement for the supply chain and finance systems will end in March, he said.

Lactalis, founded in 1933 and known for its President cheese, is now hiring to build out those areas and expects to have about 220 employees in its Chicago offices by the end of the year, bringing the division's total workforce to 850. Lactalis Heritage Dairy represents 39 percent of the group's total US business.

Lactalis says hiring is still challenging in engineering, manufacturing and other technical areas, but the company is confident it can continue bring in employees from firms that have decided to leave the city. Cotter also touted the company's locations in a trendy neighborhood close to multiple commuter rail lines as enticements to lure talent. *Bloomberg News*



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Corn futures climb; soybeans, wheat gain

SINGAPORE- Chicago corn futures rose on Wednesday as dry conditions in key areas of the US Midwest raised supply concerns and prompted heavy buying.

Soybean and wheat futures were also headed for gains.

Corn futures were up 2.6 percent at \$6.12-3/4 a bushel, as of 0355 GMT. The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was up 0.2 percent at \$13.45-3/4 a bushel, while wheat futures gained 1.5 percent to \$7.06 a bushel.

The US Department of Agriculture cut its corn and soy crop ratings more than expected on Tuesday, including steep drops in top-producing states Iowa and Illinois, as a deepening drought stressed crops in the heart of the Midwest farm belt.

Selected states showed a decline in good-to-excellent corn of 6 percent, with the two largest corn producing states of Iowa and Illinois in the worst condition, according to a note from com-

modities research firm Hightower.

Not surprisingly, poor to very poor crops increased with the biggest jump in Illinois, Hightower said.

The Biden administration plans to increase the amount of biofuels that oil refiners must blend into the nation's fuel mix over the next three years, but the plan includes lower mandates for corn-based ethanol than it had initially proposed, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an acceleration of Black Sea grain shipments from Ukrainian ports under a deal allowing safe wartime exports, a UN spokesperson said on Tuesday as Russia threatens to quit the pact next month.

Algeria's state grains agency OAIC bought milling wheat in an international tender closed on Monday, with supplies expected to be sourced largely from Russia, European traders said in initial assessments. - Reuters