

CLIPPINGS FOR FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2023

A. SEC. PBBM QUOTED

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Concepcion: Transforming agriculture will be PBBM's legacy

THE MANILA TIMES

Can we attain rice self-sufficiency?

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON

Kagawaran ng Agrikultura: 125 taong naglilingkod, tungo sa Masaganang Agrikultura at Maunlad na Ekonomiya

B. DA FAMILY

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Influence your supply chain to embrace sustainability

Baguio to take over DA-run 'Maharlika'

Agriculture export initiative not yet complete

Antique town records first swine fever cases

Swine industry shows early signs of recovery from ASF

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

DA studying state of calamity due to ASF

THE MANILA TIMES

Region 3 farmers, fishers receive DA assistance

BUSINESS WORLD

Agri dep't says pork production trending upward

Imports raise inventory levels of dressed chicken at mid-June; demand still weak

BUSINESS MIRROR

Rebuilding a broken agri sector: Lessons from Masagana 99

PHL, Malaysia eye enhanced agri trade, cooperation ties

DA reports surge of ASF cases in Antique town

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON

Food stamp program, pinaplantsa na ng DA, DSWD

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

SEC eases registration rules for agri firms

BUSINESS WORLD

Smart farming in Bukid Amara and the Agri mentors

BUSINESS MIRROR

Retail price index uptick in May slows on cheaper food

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON

Presyo ng bigas, bangus at pulang asukal, tumaas - PSA

D. FOREIGN STORY

*No Stories*



## CONCEPCION: TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE WILL BE PBBM'S LEGACY



Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion discusses agri matters with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. during the ceremonial signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the implementation of the Kapatid Angat Lahat Agri Program (KALAP) in Malacanang.

Go Negosyo founder and Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC) Lead for Jobs Joey Concepcion strongly supports President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.'s decision to remain as Agricultural Secretary until the required structural reforms are instituted to make the country's agriculture sector more efficient and competitive.

President Marcos made the remark in a recent event with the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"Staying as the lead for agriculture is a smart decision from the President. He can quickly make reforms and ensure that all systems are in place to help the country's farmers just like what his father did during his term," Concepcion said.

"Having met the President several times to discuss Go Negosyo's Kapatid Angat Lahat Agri Program KALAP, I know that he cares for the farmers, and he is passionate to transform the industry. Given the right time, this will be his legacy," he added.

Concepcion said he is also highly supportive of the President's program of encouraging farm clustering as an important component of his administration's agricultural modernization thrust in his recent pronouncement during his meeting with South Cotabato farmers.

Concepcion underscored the importance of farm clustering to boost productivity, ensure food security and increase the income of farmers.

Farm clustering was among those recommended by Go Negosyo's Kapatid Angat Lahat Program (KALAP) Agri Program and think tank group Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) during their meeting with Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) officials, led by Secretary Conrado Estrella III.

"For the period 2001-2021, the annual average contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is just 0.3 % while industry and the service sectors contributed 1.4 percent 3.1 percent, respectively. This is not acceptable since the asset base of agriculture in terms on land use is huge compared to that of industry and service," said Concepcion.

"Philippine agriculture needs scale. We need clustering to achieve it. For this to become a reality, titling of land needs to be cleaned up," he added.

Through clustering, Concepcion said farming would be attractive to big companies because they only want to lease

agriculture lands and not purchase them.

Farm clustering would also serve as the best complement to the reforms and programs being initiated President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., as concurrent Department of Agriculture Secretary, to enhance food security, boost the agriculture sector and uplift the lives of farmers.

"It is different if the President himself is at the helm of the Agriculture Department. Also, he has good people implementing his vision for the country, like Agrarian Reform Secretary Estrella and other government agencies," Concepcion said.

"KALAP and the private sector, composed of big brothers in the agri sector, including Dr. Fermin Adriano of FEF, are always here to offer our expertise to help the President attain his vision," he added.

Through farm clustering, it would be easier for the government to provide assistance to farmers, such as loans and farm machinery, because it would deal with groups rather than individual tillers, FEF representative Dr. Fermin Adriano explained during the meeting with DAR.

"The process will pave way for the use of modern farm machinery and technologies, thereby achieving economies of scale, and allow the development of downstream industries, such as food processing, due to adequate and reliable supply of raw materials," he added.

Other countries that have implemented farm clustering, such as China, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, all enjoyed higher yields.

In his opinion piece for the Manila Times, Adriano batted for the immediate and proper implementation of the law condoning the debt of defaulting agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARB).

"The challenge now is to formulate implementing rules and regulations that will facilitate awarding of individual land titles. This means the process should not be burdensome for the ARBs," Adriano said in his column.

He also called for the implementation of a higher land retention ceiling, currently at 5 hectares for a couple tilling the land and 3 hectares for an individual cultivator.

"The proposal of the FEF is to raise it to at least 24 hectares in accordance with the ceiling provided for the homesteaders program of the past. If adopted, this will promote the rise of Filipino middle-class farmers or 'family-operated farms,'" he said.





**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Can we attain rice self-sufficiency?

**P**RESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. recently revived the "Masagana" program with the aim of achieving 97-percent rice self-sufficiency before his term ends in 2028. Detractors of the old program, which the President's father implemented in the 1970s, are skeptical that the goal can be attained.

A few noted that the original program bankrupted thousands of rural banks because farmer-borrowers were not able to pay their loans, and the government ran out of cash for loanable funds. This led another to claim that the success of the previous "Masagana" hinged largely on the availability of cheap credit and its massive extension support services.



**FINER  
POINTS**

**FERMIN  
ADRIANO**

But if one asks an agriculturist from the UP Los Baños — particularly one with a doctoral degree — whether rice self-sufficiency is attainable, he or she will unequivocally declare yes. For him/her, it is just a matter of having an additional budget to ramp up production through the extension of more subsidies without considering the cost of such a program to the overall economy.

Ask a politician, meanwhile,

► **Finer B2**





■ FINER FROM B1

## Can we attain rice self-sufficiency?

and he will definitely endorse the idea because rice is a political commodity. The country can run out of other food commodities but not rice, because its shortage will surely trigger social discontent.

This is the main reason why the success of our agricultural secretaries is largely judged, no matter how myopic it is, on the basis of how much rice was produced during their terms of office. Of course, there are other staples that can substitute for rice like corn, cassava, sweet potato or banana (the saba variety) but the dietary preferences of Filipinos, particularly the poor, revolve around rice.

But if one asks an economist or a businessman whether attaining rice self-sufficiency is a laudable objective, the response will likely be negative. For them, it does not make good economic or business sense.

Economists argue that we just don't have a comparative advantage in rice production. It is a low-value crop that earns little for tillers, more so if they are cultivating a hectare of land or less. They believe that a better tack is to confine rice production to areas that are favorable for "palay" (unmilled rice) cultivation (irrigated flatlands) while encouraging marginal rice farmers (rainfed areas and sloping lands) to plant high-value

crops like vegetables, pineapple, banana, cacao, coffee and papaya. This way, the farmers will earn more.

Economists also note that this obsession with attaining rice self-sufficiency has led to the lack of funding for commodities where the country has a comparative advantage. This year alone, the budget for rice is around P44 billion. This is around 70 percent of the funds devoted to the Department of Agriculture's banner programs (rice, corn, livestock, fisheries and high-value crops).

Adding the budgets of the National Irrigation Administration whose services are mainly geared to providing irrigation to palay farms, the National Food Authority, Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund and the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (whose insurance service is largely extended to rice farmers), the budget for rice is around P85 billion or around 52 percent of the total budget of the agricultural sector.

In contrast, the fishery, and livestock and poultry subsectors get less than P5 billion each and the high-value crops subsector an even lower P1.6 billion. Despite talk of investing more in our fishery subsector (because our coastal areas are larger than our land assets) and investing in commodities that can easily

generate revenues because the Philippines has a comparative advantage, the sad reality is that it is politics and not economics that determines the allocation of budgetary resources.

One may argue that we need rice to ensure the country's food security. The argument is ridiculous because there are other food commodities, as noted above, that can substitute for rice. The irony of it is that these substitutes are healthier food items as nutritionists keep on repeating.

Food security entails having access to cheap, safe and quality food at affordable prices. Whether food is affordable is mainly a function of income. If a farmer can earn more from the production of high-value crops, even from just a hectare of land, he can easily afford to buy quality rice for himself and his family.

Singapore has occupied the top ranking in food security status in the Asean region. It hardly produces rice and other food commodities required by its people. Even during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Singapore ranked as the 28th most food-secure country in the world. It relies on its ability to generate higher incomes for its workers, which enables the imports of food commodities that they prefer. This demonstrates the fallacy of the argument that we cannot rely on food imports to become food secure.

In fact, Singapore is not the only case of a country relying heavily on food imports. Oil-producing countries in the Middle East are massive food

importers as they are not able to attain food self-sufficiency, considering that they are not blessed with ample fertile lands suited for farming.

Lest I be misunderstood, this is not to argue that we make food importation as the cornerstone of our food security policy. What I have repeatedly argued is that our limited resources can be best used in supporting those agricultural commodities where we have a comparative advantage. That will raise more income for our tillers and even generate greater export revenues.

We can still produce rice up to a certain percentage where we can obtain the highest returns. It is similar to the concept of raising hogs or chicken where properly feeding them will accelerate their weight gain. At a certain point, however, it will no longer be economically efficient to provide more feed because the weight gains will have plateaued. If we persist, we will simply lose money.

The critical task for our policymakers is to decide the level of rice self-sufficiency we should aim for using our most favorable (fertile) lands. Once that is determined, we can easily calculate the amount of rice imports that we will need. For our marginal lands, the government should then encourage production of high-value crops that will mean higher earnings for our cultivators.

This makes good business sense.

fdadriano88@gmail.com





# Influence your supply chain to embrace sustainability

By Josiah Go  
@InquirerBiz

**C**arlo Endaya is the vice president and general manager for the domestic tuna business of Century Pacific, more popularly known for Century Tuna products. He won the Mansmith Young Market Masters Awards in 2009. In this interview, he shares his passion for marketing and sustainability.

**Question: What is the most pressing sustainability challenge facing the tuna industry today and how can we address it?**

**Answer:** The lifeblood of the tuna business is sustainable fish sourcing and this has always been the top priority of Century. Tuna is caught in the wild (not farmed) and we need to make sure that we have a consistent supply of tuna—not just for now but for years to come.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

There are a few sustainability challenges that the industry is facing, namely:

1. Climate change, which affects marine biodiversity and directly impacts the supply of fish; and
2. Unsustainable and illegal fishing practices. This is why fishing vessels should follow strict guidelines to ensure that we maintain a healthy level of fish biomass in our oceans and that workers onboard are fairly compensated and treated in accordance with human rights principles.

**Q: What are Century's short- and long-term sustainability programs?**

**A:** In the short term (and on a day-to-day basis), Century Tuna can directly and immediately impact sustainability in fishing. Being one of the world's largest tuna companies, we influence fish suppliers to adhere to strict global policies to ensure fish sustainability.

We make sure that we only work with fishing compa-





nies that are certified sustainable—100-percent compliant with the International Seafood Sustainability Federation and the Regional Fisheries Management Organization Conservation Measures.

These include:

- **Traceability:** Tuna caught needs to be traceable to the vessel and trip details. All vessels must be fully registered at the ProActive Vessel Registry.

- **Monitoring:** All fishing vessels must have GPS monitoring equipment. The “noncritical” fishing areas are identified and fishing is scheduled accordingly.

- **Third-party assurance:** Fishing vessels have observers and are regularly audited on board.

There are strict penalties for noncompliance, while in congruence, market opportunities open up for sustainably sourced fish.

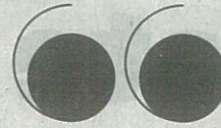
In the long term, we have also recently launched the Century Tuna Saving Our Seas initiative. This is a program to help reduce plastic pollution in Philippine waters and promote the plastic circular economy. Our country is the main contributor to plastic pollution in global

seas/oceans where 36 percent of all global plastic pollution in the seas comes from the Philippines.

In partnership with Hope and Aling Tindera’s “May Pera sa Plastic” efforts, we aim to create a plastic circular economy to ensure that used plastics are properly processed, recycled and upcycled, and at the same time, create additional sources of income for consumers.

**Q: How do you engage and collaborate with other stakeholders in the seafood industry to drive collective action on sustainability issues? How do you ensure transparency and verifiability of efforts to your stakeholders?**

A: By participating and collaborating with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in conceptualizing Fisheries Administrative Orders addressing sustainability issues in the Philippines. We also engage with sustainability groups such as International Seafood Sustainability Federation, Earth Island Institute, Fisheries Improvement Projects and Marine Stewardship Council. To ensure transparency and verifiability



**Even if their prices are lower than the market, we have a strict policy that we do not engage with noncompliant suppliers**

**Carlo Endaya**

Century Pacific vice president and general manager for domestic tuna business

efforts for our stakeholders, our facility is regularly audited by competent authorities such as BFAR, Marine Resources Assessment Group and General Society of Surveillance.

**Q: Can you share an example of a particularly challenging issue balancing sustainability and business goals that you’ve worked with and how you navigated it successfully?**

A: There have been instances in the past where there are fish suppliers that do not have the proper documentation that adheres to our sustainability policies. Even if their prices are lower than the market, we have a strict policy that we do not engage with noncompliant suppliers.

We do not compromise sustainability for a quick profit. We pay a premium to ensure that our supply is sustainable and if the fish price goes up, we manage by finding other ways to maintain our margins—implementing production and supply chain efficiency improvement projects, for instance.

**Q: Are consumers willing to pay more for sustainable prod-**

**ucts? How do you communicate your sustainability message in a way that resonates with them and drives behavior change?**

A: There is a segment of the population that pays more for sustainable products and most global customers would only purchase sustainably fished tuna, which is what we have at Century. But there is still a long way to go to increase consumer awareness on sustainability.

In order to drive behavior change, there needs to be consistency in the message through the years. We also need to find passionate groups and/or individuals who can help spread the message of sustainable living.

**Q: How do you measure the success of your sustainability initiatives beyond return on investment?**

A: For our Saving our Seas initiative, we started with Mabini, Batangas, in Anilao as our pilot area. It is one of the most marine biodiverse areas in the world. One key measure of success is how much plastic (in tons) we are able to intercept from reaching our seas.

For sustainability in fish sourcing, our key measure would be the average price of tuna that we source. Given that tuna supply directly affects our bottom line, we need to ensure that we keep the supply available for years to come. As they say, we should not “kill the golden goose,” or in our case “the golden tuna.” —CONTRIBUTED INQ

Endaya will talk about “Integrating Pull and Push Marketing: Finding synergies and opportunities for collaboration between brand and trade marketing strategies” during the 4th Mansmith Brand Summit on July 5 to July 6. For details, please visit [brandsummit.com.ph](http://brandsummit.com.ph).



Josiah Go is chair and chief innovation strategist of Mansmith and Fielders.





# Baguio to take over DA-run 'Maharlika'

By Vincent Cabreza  
@InqNational

**BAGUIO CITY**—The last surviving livelihood project that was developed by former first lady Imelda Marcos in the early 1980s will be turned over to Baguio City in 2025, so its administrators are working double time to resolve its financial and legal issues, the city council was told this week.

The land lease rights of the Maharlika Livelihood Complex will expire on April 27, 2025, according to a management team commissioned by the government-owned Human Settlements Development Corp. (HSDC), which owns the facility.

Situated beside the Baguio City public market, Maharlika was built on a 3-hectare prime government land in the city center to house vendors displaced by the 1970 fire that destroyed the original Baguio stone market.

It has since become the retail hub for artisanal crafts and

souvenirs, and is a local landmark for its design that mirrors the rice terraces of Ifugao.

The Maharlika complex opened in 1982 after the defunct Ministry of Human Settlements acquired the rights owned by a private developer.

The ministry was led at the time by Mrs. Marcos. Maharlika is now administered by the Department of Agriculture (DA), which is under the supervision of President Marcos Jr., the former first lady's son.

The HSDC, an agency attached to the DA, had offered to return the facility to the Baguio government in 2019 ahead of its lease's termination, but talks were suspended when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in 2020, according to lawyer Maan Grace Elago, Maharlika project manager.

## Transition

Elago said the HSDC is undergoing a transition process in preparation for its abolition, which was recommended



**LANDMARK** The Maharlika Livelihood Complex, built in the early 1980s and acquired by the government through the efforts of former first lady Imelda Marcos, has become a Baguio City landmark where tourists shop for souvenirs, handicrafts, woodcarvings and even silver jewelry. —NEIL CLARK ONGCHANGCO

as far back as 2013 by Malacañang. Managers overseeing Maharlika's operations have changed four times in 2022 alone.

But an HSDC transitional committee has tasked Jennylyn Dawayan, DA regional technical director in the Cordillera, to negotiate and resolve these issues

before Maharlika's scheduled turnover to Baguio, she told the city council.

The council had directed HSDC to submit a full accounting of Maharlika's operations.

Councilor Fred Bagbagen, a lawyer, said the city government needed to make sure it would take back the facility

without any legal problems, which could include uncollected rentals from previous occupants.

Elago addressed the council due to allegations that HSDC has been collecting excessive fees from its tenants.

Maharlika has more than 600 tenants, but only 28 of them have arrears and other delinquencies, said lawyer Ace Aries Solda, Maharlika's project evaluation officer.

## Pandemic impact

Businessman Geronimo Vergonia, who spoke on behalf of 26 Maharlika tenants, said they were asked to pay what he described as "exorbitant rental and utility fees and surcharges" at the start of the year, covering the period when a Luzon-wide lockdown and subsequent community quarantines restricted all commercial operations.

"The pandemic deepened income gaps, hurt the poor more and exacerbated existing

inequalities in the country," according to the tenants' position paper.

They accused HSDC of "insensitivity" and nontransparency for charging one of the tenants as much as P130,000 for unpaid electricity, without explaining how the back fees were computed.

But Vergonia said he would continue holding dialogues with Elago and Solda, who took over management at the beginning of 2023.

According to a 2021 Commission on Audit (COA) report, the fate of Maharlika has hampered "the complete liquidation of the affairs of the HSDC despite the lapse of right years from the approval of its abolition by the Office of the President of the Philippines (under then President Benigno Aquino III) on Nov. 26, 2013."

The COA urged the DA to resolve the status of Maharlika's lease with the Baguio government. **INQ**





## Agriculture export initiative not yet complete

**T**he Philippine Export Development Plan launched by President Marcos last June 15 is an excellent initiative that focuses on increased export promotion. But this will only turn out whole and complete if unnecessary regulations harming our agriculture export drive are removed.

A few days before the launch, private sector members of the Philippine Council of Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF) and the Export Development Council (EDC) met to discuss the problem.

PCAF, which is chaired by the Department of Agriculture (DA), has a Committee on International Trade (CIT). EDC, on the other hand, is chaired by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and has a Networking Committee on Agriculture Policy (NCAP). Both CIT and NCAP are chaired by the private sector.

### Motivation

What motivated the discussions among PCAF-CIT and EDC-NCAP private sector members were the numerous complaints by their exporter constituents on too many harmful export regulations. Even with excellent promotion, dysfunctional regulations will prevent our planned export expansion.

Our agricultural attachés in neighboring countries such as Vietnam, Thailand and Taiwan report that those governments go out of their way to support their exporters. The opposite is happening here. Harassment, rather than help, is what they often get.

These dysfunctional regulations affect not only agriculture, but also the industry. In a recent communication with the PCAF-CIT, the electronics industry cited a Bureau of Customs (BOC) regulation called the Electronic Tracking of Container Cargoes (ETRACC): "The ETRACC increases redundant

costs and process time to load and unload containers. The electronic industry has had no technical smuggling in over 30 years. We account for \$49 billion export and over 3 million direct and indirect workers."

The containers for both industry and agriculture exports are already sealed and tracked systematically using globally recognized systems. ETRACC is good for import containers, where control systems are absent, to prevent leakage and technical smuggling. But for export containers, ETRACC should be abolished, or at least drastically reconfigured.

### Supervising body

Two critical issues must now be addressed.

A major problem today is that nobody supervises the issuance of regulations, so much so that these have become un-

necessary and harmful.

A similar disastrous situation occurred much earlier. On March 25, 1985, President Ferdinand Marcos, the current president's father, issued Executive Order 1016. It stated that government regulations "have been identified as among the procedural and documentary requirements which may be eliminated in the interest of facilitating exports." An interagency committee (IAC) was then created and chaired by the DTI to control these regulations and eliminate the dysfunctional ones.

The implementing rules and regulations further stated: "No new inspection, commodity, and export clearance requirement may be imposed/required by a government office/agency, unless approved by the IAC."

Such an IAC must be activated immediately.

### Export action center

The second major problem is that exporters have nowhere to go for the resolution of their valid issues. In 1987, the DTI institutionalized the Export Assistance Network (Exponet). While, it is very helpful in facilitating communication with different government agencies, it does not have the authority to decide on necessary actions.

For example, there was a case of an exporter complaining to Exponet about a clearly unreasonable BOC procedure that was not justified in any document. BOC refused to move, and Exponet could not do anything about it. Subsequently, the BOC official threatened the exporter for having complained to Exponet.

Exporters are therefore left with their problems unresolved. An export action center/unit with authority to decide could be part of a strengthened Exponet. It can derive its authority from the same IAC that supervises regulations.

Our agriculture export (negative) trade balance last year declined by 33 percent to \$11.8 billion, while all our neighboring countries had a very large positive trade balance. We should therefore complete our export initiative by adding focus on eliminating unnecessary and harmful regulation to our commendable new export promotion drive. INQ

The author is Agriwatch chair, former secretary of presidential flagship programs and projects, and former undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry. Contact is agriwatch\_phil@yahoo.



23 JUN 2023

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Page: AG



**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

LAST PROVINCE IN W. VISAYAS HIT BY ASF

## ANTIQUE TOWN RECORDS FIRST SWINE FEVER CASES

By Joseph Marzan

@joeymarzanINQ

ILOILO CITY—Antique province is no longer free from the African swine fever (ASF) as the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Western Visayas region confirmed that at least four hog deaths in Hamtic town were caused by the highly contagious animal disease.

Jose Albert Barrogo, DA officer in charge in the region, said four of the five blood samples taken from hogs in Hamtic and sent by the Provincial Veterinary Office to the DA Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (RADDL) in Iloilo City on June 19 tested positive for ASF.

This is the first time swine fever-infected hogs in Antique, more than three years since the outbreak was reported in the country.

Antique, until this week, held the distinction of being the last ASF-free province in Western Visayas. Other provinces in the region that earlier recorded swine fever cases were Iloilo, Aklan, Capiz, Guimaras and Negros Occidental.

Barrogo called on the local government of Hamtic

to immediately implement depopulation and culling of hogs within the 500-meter radius of the site where the infections were detected to stop the spread of the viral disease.

### Calamity declaration

He said Hamtic officials could declare the town under a state of calamity by using DA's laboratory results so the local government could extend assistance to hog raisers.

The RADDL diagnoses, however, would need further confirmation from the Bureau of Animal Industry's central office, said Barrogo.

As of Wednesday, at least 1,359 pigs in 22 of Hamtic's 47 barangays died due to different hog diseases.

According to the Hamtic municipal agriculture office, the hog deaths in the town resulted in losses amounting to P13.04 million. The town has a hog population of about 9,000, government records showed.

The provincial government of Antique has released P1 million to reinstate border controls, which were placed in 2022 after the first swine fever cases were detected in Iloilo province. INQ





# Swine industry shows early signs of recovery from ASF

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is projecting local pork output to surge, noting the strides made by the swine industry despite the lingering effects of the African swine fever (ASF) outbreak.

In an interview, Agriculture Undersecretary Mercedita Sombilla said the production has started picking up since last year and sustained its upward trajectory in the final quarter of 2022.

"I still have to do some analysis on where is this going but based on the first quarter growth rate of [4.1 percent]. We're hoping that it will increase," said Sombilla.

The livestock subsector registered a growth of 4.1 percent in the January to March period, a turnaround from a decrease of 1 percent in the

same period a year ago, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

Hog production hit 437,990 metric tons (MT) during the reference period, as per PSA, against 416,720 MT in the previous year. Calabarzon emerged as the leading hog production, accounting for 14 percent of the total.

"It's already positive and it continued in the first quarter. We expect it to be higher," she added.

## Mitigation measures

The agriculture official expressed hope the government's existing programs such as the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (Inspire) program will lift the local swine output in the succeeding quarters.

The Inspire program, introduced in February 2021, aims to fast-track calibrated repopulation

and production expansion through farm clustering and consolidation.

"We hope that this continues and it goes back to the point that we will be able to get that production level that we had before," Sombilla said.

The upbeat outlook provided by the DA runs contrary to the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) report which stated the ASF would still affect pork output this year.

The USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service lowered the 2023 pork output forecast to 925,000 MT from 975,000 MT, pointing to the continued spread of animal disease to the Central and Western Visayas region, including Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental and Aklan.

## Affected areas

It said both regions were among the major swine producers in the past year follow-

ing the decimation of swine inventories elsewhere in the country.

The ASF remains active in 12 provinces in seven regions, based on the Bureau of Animal Industry's tally as of June 14.

Sombilla said that, given the scenario, the DA does not see retail prices of pork products declining in the near term.

"It's unlikely in the near future because the production of pork in the Philippines is still not at that level that we had before the pandemic, before the ASF, so it will still take time [to recover]," she added.

Pork *liempo* is sold from P290 to P390 per kilogram (kg), based on the DA's price monitoring as of Thursday. This was unchanged from P390 per kg recorded a year prior.

Pork ham (*kasim*) is priced from P275 to P340 per kg from P330 per kg previously. **INQ**





# DA studying state of calamity due to ASF

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is studying proposals for President Marcos to declare a state of calamity amid the spread of African swine fever (ASF) in the country.

In a radio interview, DA spokesperson Kristine Evangelista was reacting to the call of AGAP party-list Rep. Nicanor Briones, who said the declaration would ensure that funds are allocated for the importation of ASF vaccines.

"As of now we are coordinating with the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) on the issue," Evangelista said.

She said Briones may be referring to the quick response fund of the DA, which may be tapped for emergency purposes.

Evangelista gave assurance that the DA and BAI are looking at ways to help hog raisers secure ASF vaccines.

She stressed that the DA is implementing other measures to prevent the spread of the swine disease.

BAI assistant director Arlene Vytiaco said the agency is targeting the importation of 600,000 doses of ASF vaccines this year once the Food and Drug Administration issues a certificate of product registration.

Evangelista said the DA and BAI have yet to determine the price of the vaccine.

National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. president Chester Tan said the government should subsidize the cost of ASF vaccines since pork producers cannot afford the reported price of P400 to P600 per dose.

## Pork production

Meanwhile, the DA is hoping that pork production will sustain its upward trend despite the spread of ASF.

In its latest livestock and poultry update, the United States DA-Foreign Agriculture

Service Manila slashed the country's pork production forecast from 975,000 metric tons to 925,000 MT due to ASF.

While second quarter pork production data has yet to be released, DA Undersecretary for policy, planning and regulations Mercedita Sombilla said the DA is optimistic that pork production would increase this year.

The Philippine Statistics Authority said hog production recorded a 5.1 percent improvement during the first quarter compared to the 1.2 percent contraction during the same period last year.

The DA said it is banking on its ongoing programs for the hog industry such as the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives For Recovery and Expansion or INSPIRE and the Bantay ASF sa Barangay or BABay ASF programs.

— With Danessa Rivera





**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Region 3 farmers, fishers receive DA assistance

FARMERS and fisherfolk in Central Luzon seem to be consistently enjoying assistance from the Department of Agriculture (DA) amid rising prices of commodities by directly linking them to buyers through Kadiwa trade fairs and market outlets.

This was announced by Maricel Dullas, DA Regional Field Office 3 Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division officer-in-charge-chief, during the Dagyaw: The Open Government Town Hall Meeting 2023 held this week at SM City Telabastagan.

She said with Kadiwa, an initiative of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. who is also the concurrent Agriculture secretary. The DA provides free area or space for producers to directly sell their products.

"We also conduct trade fairs in

malls to help farmers to bring their products to the Kadiwa centers," Dullas noted.

She said such activities are vital to continue assisting farmers and fisherfolk to get higher profit, given that Central Luzon is the major producer of different agricultural products to feed its neighboring regions, including Metro Manila.

The region's major agricultural products include rice, onion, chicken, meat, pork, eggs, tilapia (dried fish) and vegetables.

Among these commodities, onion, pork and vegetable products were recorded to be the most sensitive in the past three years as prices fluctuate from time to time.

Dullas said the Agriculture department is also providing the Kadiwa Financial Grant Assistance

Program to deserving farmers, fisherfolk and agricultural cooperatives and associations.

"This is to improve the food distribution system nationwide by capacitating them (beneficiaries) to become reliable and efficient food commodity suppliers, increasing their engagement and participation in Kadiwa selling activities by encouraging partnerships with private sectors or institutional buyers to ensure sustainability," she added.

The grant may be used as trading or working capital, in the purchase of equipment or machinery, procurement of transport and delivery vehicles and establishment and rehabilitation of storage facilities, warehouses, post-harvest facilities and processing centers.

Beneficiaries could also allot the

money to the procurement of retail selling equipment, establishment and renovation of Kadiwa stores, or tolling for machinery and equipment in shared facilities.

The DA has distributed 30 trucks since 2021 that are being used to gather all farmers' products directly to markets.

The first Dagyaw in the region this year carried the theme "Maunlad na Gitnang Luzon Tungo sa Progresibong Nasyon" organized by Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Budget and Management and Philippine Information Agency in partnership with the provincial government of Pampanga, city government of San Fernando, national government agencies and civil society organizations.

**JERRY M. HERNANDEZ**



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Agri dep't says pork production trending upward

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said its outlook on pork production remains positive, contrary to more pessimistic forecasts issued by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

"(The) growth rate for pork... has started to become positive (continuing from) the last quarter of 2022. It's positive and continued in the first quarter, *mas higit pa* (deeper into positive territory)," Agriculture Undersecretary Mercedita A. Sombilla told reporters on Thursday.

Hog production rose 5.1% year on year to 437.99 thousand metric

tons (MT) during the first quarter, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The rise reverses a 1.2% drop a year earlier and outpaces the 3.4% gain in the fourth quarter of 2022.

The USDA downgraded its Philippine pork output forecast by 5.13% to 925,000 metric tons (MT), citing the continuous spread of African Swine Fever (ASF) in top-producing regions.

Ms. Sombilla said there is a chance production will revert to pre-ASF levels soon.

The Philippines was first hit by ASF in July 2019. The volume of hog production in 2018 was 2.3 million MT. Production was 1.74 million MT in 2022, according to the PSA.

"We're hoping that all the programs that are being implemented now are going to be implemented well and be successful," she said.

Among the programs implemented by the DA and its agencies is the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion program — a repopulation program established in 2021.

"We hope that continues and it goes back to the point that we will be able to get that production level that we had before. That's probably the time we will be seeing prices to go down but then again you have to take into consideration also the fluctuation in other inputs," she said.

When asked about the increase in the price of corn, which is used as animal feed, she said "We cannot do anything, that is what the market dictates so we cannot really do anything." — **Sheldeem Joy Talavera**





**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Imports raise inventory levels of dressed chicken at mid-June; demand still weak

INVENTORY levels of dressed chicken rose in the second week of June, with imports accounting for most of the total, the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) said.

The NMIS said dressed chicken in cold storage as of June 12 hit 61,006.94 metric tons (MT), up 1.46% from a week earlier.

On a month-on-month basis, inventory rose 25.34%.

Imports accounted for 37,487.88 MT of the dressed chicken inventory while domestically grown poultry totaled 23,519.05 MT.

The NMIS noted that the report does not include fresh chilled chicken and mechanically deboned meat.

Cold storage facilities in Central Luzon had 17,699.97 MT or 29.01% of the total. This was followed by Calabarzon (16,790.69 MT), and the National Capital Region (8,856.34 MT).

"Supply continues to outstrip low demand conditions. Current inventory of imports is more than double of last year," Elias Jose M. Inciong, president of the United Broiler Raisers Association, said in a Viber message.

"This is concerning as it is indicative of both poor demand and displacement

caused by imports," he added.

The inventory of frozen pork during the period was 74,916.09 MT, up 6.30% from a week earlier. This was up 53.92% month on month.

Imports accounted for 70,534.63 MT, while domestically grown pork in cold storage totaled 4,381.46 MT, according to the NMIS.

The pork inventory in Calabarzon represented 21,837.7 MT or 29.14% of the total, followed by Central Luzon (17,058.59 MT) and the NCR (14,836.3 MT).

Alfred Ng, vice-president of the National Federation of Hog Farmers, Inc., said that the volume of imports has "caused the liveweight price to drop continuously, and at a much faster rate than retail prices."

"As consumers still do not have disposable income to increase their pork consumption, market vendors are keeping their prices high to compensate for the lower volume of purchase to be able to earn enough for their families' needs," he said via chat.

"Other big integrator farms have also increased their hog production so local production is also more than enough to supply the market," he added.

— **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**





## Rebuilding a broken agri sector: Lessons from Masagana 99



Dr. Rene E. Ofreneo

### LABOREM EXERCENS

**A** STRONG and sustainable Philippine economy is unthinkable without a stable agricultural base.

But how does one rebuild a broken Philippine agricultural sector? Despite having a large agricultural land area (around 15 million hectares) and access to huge maritime resources, the country is unable to grow enough, harvest enough and catch enough to feed its people. Since 1995, the Philippine agricultural deficits have been growing, with the list of imports lengthening (rice, corn, coffee, sugar, pork, chicken, red meat, salt, vegetables, onion, garlic, fish, and so on). The agriculture sector employs a quarter of the labor force and yet contributes a measly 8-9 percent to the GDP, which explains why poverty wears mostly a rural face. This also explains why hunger is now stalking wider swathes of the countryside in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

So how does one rebuild a sector in shambles?

Officials of the Department of Agriculture answer that they are now polishing a recovery "road map" for the sector. The "evolving" road map contains the usual wishlist—more investments in the sector, propagation of better seeds, shift to efficient production systems, distribution of agricultural machinery, doubling of irrigation facilities, value-chain development per crop, better packaging of exports, trade protection measures and remedies against import surges and dumping, promotion of farmer cooperatives, building silos and cold storage facilities, Kadiwa market development, etc., etc. To make the road map work, the

DA bureaucrats have been busy putting numbers in the proposed budgetary allocations for each "sector"—rice, corn, sugar, coconut and so on—from the present up to 2025.

With the agri road map, shall we witness then a rebirth of agriculture as a motor of growth for the economy and as a generator of better jobs and incomes for the rural masses? The answer is there's no certainty. In the first place, we have seen the same road mapping exercises in the past, especially during the drafting of the Agricultural Fisheries and Modernization Act in the late 1990s. AFMA was enacted by Congress in response to the fears expressed by local agricultural producers that the Philippines was not ready for the competitive pressures that

the integration of the agricultural sector under the global rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) would unleash.

As its title says, AFMA was supposed to transform the sector into a progressive modernized sector of the economy. It did not. There were no concrete signs of progress in agri upgrading even right after AFMA's enactment despite the P80 billion budgetary allocations from 1999 to 2005. A study of the Integrated Rural Development Foundation (IRDF) gave a summary explanation for the AFMA's failure: The AFMA program consisted of a "hocus-pocus program of modernization under globalization and liberalization," with "no clear vision of development and [with] no one seems to be on top of the agricultural modernization" (IRDF, *Rebuilding a Damaged Agricultural Sector*, 2016).

Lately, Malacañang has been releasing statements on another agri modernization push, through the revival of Masagana 99 (M99), the Green Revolution program of the late President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. (PFMS), at a supposedly higher level. Under the "Masagana Rice Industry Development Program" (MRIDP or Masagana), the government seeks not only to duplicate the success of M99 in making the country self-sufficient in rice production but also to exceed the M99 output through the adoption of strategic modernization schemes such as mechanization, digitalization, farm clustering or consolidation, climate change adaptation and "farm to market" road mapping.

Fine. But are the rice modernization proposals under MRIDP and the road maps for various crops being developed by the DA officials enough to transform a crisis-ridden agri sector into a modern and job-creating pillar of the economy?

In this connection, it will be good for the proponents of MRIDP and the vari-

ous road maps to take a closer look on the rise and fall of M99, and draw the necessary lessons. Yes, M99 was a big success story in the 1970s, and yet, it was also a big failure story in the 1980s.

**On M99 as a success story.** In 1972-1973, the Philippines had to face a severe rice shortage crisis, a crisis that forced the martial-law government to mobilize popular entertainment personalities such as Pilita Corrales to promote corn as an alternative staple food for Filipinos. Given the rice shortage crisis, PFMS launched the Masagana 99, which sought a tripling of rice harvest through the adoption of the high-yielding rice varieties developed by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

In 1977, the government proudly proclaimed that "rice self-sufficiency" had been attained. In 1978-1979, the government also declared that the country was able to export "some" rice surpluses.

So how did the PFMS administration succeed in achieving rice self-sufficiency in so short a time? IRRI and UP Los Banos rice experts claimed that it was due to the widespread propagation of the HYV seeds. This propagation was achieved largely through the distribution of M99 credit packages to over half a million rice farmers. Each credit package contained the "miracle" seeds, subsidized fertilizer and a little cash component.

However, the successful shift in the rice culture, from the use of low-yielding traditional palay seeds to the adoption of the "miracle" IRRI HYV seeds, cannot be credited solely to the government's campaign for the HYV seed adoption backed up by M99 loans. First, the martial law regime of PFMS was on top of the overall campaign, with PFMS directing the different agri-related agencies and the banks (rural banks and the Philippine National Bank) to fully support the campaign.

Second, PFMS launched the campaign simultaneous with the implementation of a land reform program based on a decree abolishing tenancy in the rice and corn areas and declaring a limited land transfer program in landed estates. Third, a well-funded National Food Authority (NFA) was established to stabilize palay and rice prices for the benefit of both the palay farmers and rice consumers. Fourth, PFMS pursued a massive irrigation program in the rice and corn areas with hefty loans from the multilateral and bilateral aid agencies. Fifth, thousands of extension officers were deployed by DA to help the HYV palay adopters master the new planting culture.

**M99 as a failure story.** The M99 success story did not last long. In 1979-1980, the government reported that more than 90 percent of the farmer borrowers were unable to pay or service their loans. In turn, this massive non-repayment under the M99 program eroded the HYV "miracle" among the farmers and triggered a rural banking crisis, including the insolvency of the PNB.

But what accounts for the non-repayment crisis? First, the HYV seed technology turned out to be a debt trap. The IRRI HYV seeds required massive dosages of fertilizer and pesticides. When prices of these farm inputs rose in 1979-1980 due to the global oil and commodity price crisis in these years, many rice farmers became bankrupt.

This situation was compounded by the policy of "agricultural deregulation" that was imposed by the IMF-World Bank on the debt-saddled PFMS administration in the first half of the 1980s. Agricultural deregulation meant removal of government subsidies on fertilizer and other farm inputs. It also meant removal of subsidies on loans and interests; in fact, the IMF-World Bank exerted efforts for



Date: 23 JUN 2023 Page: A17



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

the government to deregulate the financial system and lift the controls on interest ceiling (about 12 percent). Finally, agricultural deregulation meant the downsizing of the NFA and reducing its power to influence palay and rice prices.

Then Minister of Agriculture Arturo "Bong" Tanco openly expressed reservations to the IMF-World Bank program of agricultural deregulation, especially the policy removing subsidies on fertilizer and interest. However, he was impotent before a very powerful IMF-World Bank tandem.

To complete the story on the M99 collapse, there was a slowdown in the government's Operation Land Transfer and many of the lessees "liberated" from the old tenancy or "kasama" arrangements found limited improvements in their economic situation.

**Key issues from the M99 story.** If the PBBM administration is serious with its new "Masagana" program, it should find time to study and reflect on the lessons that can be derived from the rise and fall of the original M99. In particular, can he formally end the aimless agricultural deregulation program advanced by the IMF-World Bank since the 1980s and still being promoted by some neo-liberal economic technocrats in government? Is he willing to repeal the Rice Tariffication law of 2019, which has reduced the capacity of the government to stabilize prices of essential agri products such as palay, sugar, and so on? Will he put the farmer at the center of the agri modernization program, that is, as active partners in the entire development process? Will he copy what the governments of the US, EU, China, India and Russia have been doing, that is, proactively intervening in support of their farmers, unmindful of what the IMF-WB and WTO are saying about the imaginary "free trade" rules?





## PHL, Malaysia eye enhanced agri trade, cooperation ties

**T**HE Malaysian government is hoping that President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. will sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to enhance partnership of Manila and Kuala Lumpur on agricultural trade and cooperation.

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

The officials expressed interest in building joint 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.

Malaysia will host this year's 45th Meeting of the Asean Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF).

Furthermore, 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. **Raadee S. Sausa**



Date: 23 JUN 2023

Page: A15



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## DA reports surge of ASF cases in Antique town

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) on Thursday reported that the province of Antique is no longer free from African swine fever (ASF) following the death of hogs in the municipality of Hamtic caused by the dreaded animal disease.

Four of the five serum samples submitted by the Provincial Veterinary (ProVet) Office to the DA Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (RADDL) in Iloilo City recently were found positive for ASF, according to Jose Albert Barrogo, DA regional officer-in-charge director.

"We had the copy of the results of the serum samples confirming it to be positive for ASF submitted to the Office of Gov. Rhodora Cadiao," he said.

Moreover, Barrogo urged the concerned local government unit (LGU) to implement depopulation and culling of hogs within the 500-meter radius of the affected site to prevent the further spread of the viral disease.

Hogs within a 500 meters radius

could already be infected by the disease, he added.

"We urge the provincial government and the LGU of Hamtic to provide assistance to the affected hog raisers," Barrogo said.

He added that the LGU of Hamtic, in particular, could also use the laboratory result to declare a state of calamity to enable the government to assist hog raisers.

The Hamtic Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) has recorded deaths of 1,359 hogs valued at P13.04 million in 22 barangays. Hamtic has more or less a 9,000 hog population.

Barrogo added that Executive Order 35 issued by Hamtic Mayor Julius Ronald Pacificador on June 19, allowing the transport, slaughtering, and sale of apparently healthy swine and pork could only be possibly implemented within the barangays of the municipality.

"The LGU should really have to contain the spread of the ASF," Barrogo said. *Raadee S. Sausa*



Date: June 23, 2023 Page: 2



**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

### **Food stamp program, pinaplantsa na ng DA, DSWD**

Inaayos na ng Department of Agriculture (DA) at Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) ang sistema sa ipatutupad na Food Stamp Program ng pamahalaan.

Ito ay upang malaman ang magiging papel ng bawat ahensiya sa nakatakdang rollout ng food stamp program sa bansa.

Ayon kay DAAssec. Kristine Evangelista, kasama sa tinatalakay nila ang pagiging bahagi ng mga Kadiwa Store sa Food Stamp.

Sa ilalim ng programa ay bibigyan ng electronic benefit transfer na nagkakahalaga ng P3,000 ang kada pamilyang benepisyaryo upang ipambili ng mga masusustansyang pagkain mula sa DSWD accredited local retailers.

Umaasa naman ang DA na magiging mabunga ang ugnayan sa DSWD lalo pa't magiging malaking oportunidad ang programa para sa mga magsasaka sa bansa. (Angie dela Cruz)





## SEC eases registration rules for agri firms

THE Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) said it is easing the registration procedure for agriculture-related firms in a bid to encourage more investments in the sector.

Emilio Aquino, SEC chairman, said in line with the government's priority programs on food security and agriculture, the program Securing and Expanding Capital for Farms and Agri-business Related Modernization Schemes (SEC FARMS) will streamline the requirements and procedures for agri-based companies registering securities for the purpose of raising capital for agriculture projects.

Applications can be approved within 28 days from filing with the SEC, subject to the guidelines set by the SEC according to Aquino.

Under SEC FARMS, agriculture firms can raise up to P500 million per project.

"SEC FARMS is in line with 'Masaganang Agrikultura, Maunlad na Ekonomiya', the President's (Marcos) strategic program focused on farm consolidation, modernization, industrialization, and professionalization in order to attract private sector investment in the agricultural sector," the SEC said in a statement.

"The initiative expands available investment opportunities for Filipinos working both locally and abroad. It is envisioned to help overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), who are notoriously targeted by scammers into investing their hard-earned money into fraudulent investment schemes, to avail of sound and legitimate investments available in the market," it added.

Aquino announced the initiative during the launch of SEC's 1 e-services for ease of doing business, attended by Marcos.

The digital services will make the registration and monitoring of corporations even easier across the country, along with a capital market initiative that will allow for more investments in the agriculture sector.

Meanwhile, Marcos told the SEC to help the administration in promoting the Philippines as an investment destination and to sustain efforts to promote ease of doing business and bring a comfortable life to Filipinos.

The President, in addressing the 85th anniversary of the SEC, recognized the various accomplishments and contributions of the agency, especially in moving the economy and promoting investments over the years.

Marcos urged the SEC to continue to do its share in promoting the country's further growth, and creating an environment where businesses will thrive so that they "will also become agents of our economic and social transformation."

"While I am pleased with the milestones that we celebrate today, there remain some challenges ahead of us. So, I call on the good people that make up the SEC: Let us use all the successes to further promote ease of doing business and to actively contribute to our overall goal of bringing a comfortable life to our people," he said.

He also urged the SEC to continue efforts to digitalize its services and further invigorate its advocacy for sustainable finance and good corporate governance.

"I know that I can count on each of you to help promote our country as an investment destination — one that is safe, that is orderly, and proactive; and one that can uphold the rights and welfare of our investors and con-



Marcos receives from Aquino a copy of the SEC Reports at yesterday's celebration of the Commission's 85th anniversary in Makati City. The SEC Reports contains the Commission's initiatives that will align its programs and projects with the government's eight-point socioeconomic agenda, as well as its efforts that will mitigate the impact of the pandemic. (SEC Photo)

sumers to their mutual benefits. I look forward to the succeeding years when more and more local businesses will reach even greater heights for a more robust and equitable economy. Let us remain united. Let us continue to support one another as we strive to build a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient Philippines," he added.

During the event, the President acknowledged the dedication of all SEC employees and personnel in improving the efficiency and impact of their work, as he recognized the agency for being a reliable regulator of corporate and capital markets and a staunch protector of the people and their investments.

Marcos said the SEC helped create an environment that benefits the business and investment sectors as well as promoted digital transformation which is integral

in fostering business formation and growth.

He said the digital reforms adopted by the SEC had made corporations comply with the requirements and maintain good standing in the business community.

These include the eSECURE, eSEARCH, eRAMP and SEC CheckApp that contribute to government efforts to digitize procedures and services, he added.

The President also said the SEC is recognized for its good corporate governance not only from the local institutions but also from international organizations, such as the Cambridge International Finance Advisory, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and International Data Corporation Future Enterprise. - Ruelle Castro and Jocelyn Montemayor





## OPINION

# Smart farming in Bukid Amara and the Agri mentors

The Agri Mentor Me Program was initiated in 2017 by Go Negosyo Founder Joey Concepcion with Arsenio "Toto" Barcelona, president of Harbest Agribusiness. Toto invited farmer friends to serve as mentors to new farmers. How ironic that farmers feed us but at times cannot even feed themselves. The farmer's average age is now more than 60 years old, and their children don't want to do farming anymore. So, who will feed us?

The Go Negosyo Agri mentors is a very active group. Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Michael "Mike" Caballes, then Allied Botanical president, after a Vietnam visit reported that Vietnam is so much more productive in agriculture than us. That got all of us MAD — mad to "make a difference."

Fast forward to last month, Go Negosyo Agri coordinator Abby Famadico organized a field trip to Bukid Amara, Mike's new "baby" located in Lucban, Quezon. I went together with my "roommate" Atty. Ed, Baby Atanacio of Terra Verde, and Basil Bolinao, president of the Vanilla Industry Development Association. There we had a "reunion" with other Agri mentors: former Agriculture Secretary William Dar, now the senior adviser to "Kapatid Angat Lahat" (KALAP) as head of the agriculture program, Glen and Magel Villaroman, Alex

Pasia, and Josephine Costales with son Reden, among others. Former Secretary Dar updated us on KALAP, its plans and the importance of agriculture in our economy. The issue of organic and non-organic also came up and a healthy discussion followed among the participants.

Bukid Amara is so picturesque, located in a valley surrounded by mountains with a man-made lake. It's like a countryside idyllic Amorsolo painting, even more vibrant and colorful with so many lovely flowers in bloom. What's amazing is Mike's smart melon farming automated technology, the first

in the Philippines, in coordination with the Department of Science and Technology. I thought I was visiting another country using advanced technology as the watermelons were all uniform in size, in the same level, hanging from the vine in a greenhouse. The irrigation and plant nutrition are

FINEX, S2/3

FLOR G. TARRIELA was former chairman of Philippine National Bank. Former undersecretary of Finance and the first Filipina vice-president of Citibank N.A. She is PNB board advisor, Nickel Asia's lead independent director, director of LT Group and FINEX. A gardener and an environmentalist, she founded Flor's Garden in Antipolo.



done using an automated dosing system that can be controlled remotely via the cloud. Climate sensors are installed, with climate data recorded and correlated to the growth rate of the crop.

What's remarkable is that this dosing system was done by Alvin Valdez, Mike's very own Go Negosyo mentee. Alvin is a computer engineering graduate from the Batangas State University. During the pandemic, Alvin helped his father in their farm, which opened his eyes to the challenges of farming, such as relying mainly on manual labor. He saw the need to support the community with his inventions that would revolutionize farming. Commendable, too, is Mike's support to give a break to young inventors like Alvin. Atty. Ed had to ask Mike, "can we clone you?"

Another active member of the Agri group is Cherrie Atilano, UN Nutrition ambassador and AGREA Philippines CEO. AGREA, focusing on sustainable agriculture recently teamed up with SODEXO On-site Services Philippines, a leading integrated facilities food company to uplift the livelihoods of local farmers by purchasing their produce directly. Sodexo is led by managing director Paul Depabrateem. Together, they cre-

ated the Nourishing Workforce Sustainably- Sourced from Well-Nourished Farmers. Their plan is to purchase fresh produce of farmers all over the Philippines and supply these to commissaries preparing 50,000 healthy meals (designed by licensed nutritionists) daily for workers from BPOs, manufacturing and other service industries.

This initiative will hopefully also address the severe malnutrition issue affecting child stunting that can affect multiple generations, quality of life and economic development. It is so critical an issue that the Management Association of the Philippines,

through President Dick Du-Baladad, urged the government to declare severe malnutrition to be in the national agenda as it has the effect of negating whatever demographic sweet spot advantage the Philippines has.

Mike and Cherrie are two of the models of the Go Negosyo Agri mentors. There are many others who are "MAD": Bernie Arellano, Ginggay Hontiveros-Malvar, Andry and Joji Lim, Mat Maderazo, Ed Canuto, Chit Juan, Sandy Montano, and Eddie Guillen, among others. Thank you to Big Brother Joey and Toto for initiating the Agri mentors towards a better tomorrow.





## Retail price index uptick in May slows on cheaper food

By CAI U. ORDINARIO [@caiordinario](#)

**C**HEAPER food prices slowed the increase of retail prices in Metro Manila in May 2023, according to the latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Based on the General Retail Price Index (GRPI) in the National Capital Region (NCR), retail prices averaged 4.9 percent in May 2023, the slowest since June 2022.

This also marked the third consecutive month that the GRPI slowed. Retail prices in Metro Manila started to slow in March 2023 when it averaged 6 percent from 6.6 percent in February.

"The primary driver of the lower annual growth of GRPI in NCR was the slower year-on-year increase in the heavily-weighted food index at 10 percent during

the month from 10.6 percent in April 2023," PSA said.

PSA said another contributor to the downtrend of GRPI was the continued annual decline in mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials which contracted 12.8 percent in May 2023 from a contraction of 8.4 percent in the previous month.

The statistics body also noted slower annual increases in the indices of machinery and transport equipment at 1.3 percent in May 2023 from 1.5 percent in the previous month, as well as beverages and tobacco at

6.9 percent during the month, from 7 percent in April 2023.

Meanwhile, prices remained elevated due to higher annual increases in crude materials, inedible except fuels, 7.1 percent from 6.9 percent.

There were also higher increases in the price of chemicals, including animal and vegetable oils and fats at 3.5 percent from 3.3 percent as well as miscellaneous manufactured articles, 1.9 percent from 1.8 percent.

Meanwhile, the index of manufactured goods classified

chiefly by materials retained its previous month's annual rate of 2.8 percent.

The GRPI is a statistical measure of the changes in the prices at which retailers dispose of their goods to consumers or end-users relative to a base year.

The GRPI is an indicator used to monitor the economic situation of the retail trade sector. It is also used as a deflator of the National Accounts, especially on the retail trade sector and serves as a basis for forecasting business in retail trade.



Date: June 23, 2023 Page: 2



**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

### **Presyo ng bigas, bangus at pulang asukal, tumaas - PSA**

Tumaas ang presyo ng bigas, isdang bangus at pulang asukal sa unang bahagi ng Hunyo ngayong taon.

Batay sa monitoring ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), tumaas sa P0.07 hanggang sa P1.00 ang retail price ng kada kilo ng regular milled rice sa walong trading centers.

Nagkaroon din ng pagtaas na P0.50 hanggang P25.00 sa kada kilo ng bangus sa pitong trading centers at pati na ang native bawang ay tumaas ang presyo ng P10.00 hanggang P30.00 kada kilo.

Maging ang pulang asukal ay patuloy ang pagtaas ng presyo na nasa P0.25 hanggang P6.13 ang dagdag sa kada kilo sa anim trading centers.

Samantala, bumaba naman ang average retail prices sa kada kilo ng manok na may tapyas na P2.50-P20.00 sa anim na trading centers gayundin ang bentahan ng saging na lakatan na may naitalang tapyas na mula P2.08-P15.00 sa anim trading centers.  
(Angie dela Cruz)