

CLIPPINGS FOR SATURDAY JUNE 24, 2023

A. SEC. PBBM QUOTED

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Declare state of calamity due to ASF, Marcos urged

B. DA FAMILY

BUSINESS MIRROR

House bill seeks to create Agriculture Pension Fund

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Negros Occ swine industry losses reach P157.6M

NIA, BPEC to test viability of micro-hydro power plants

THE MANILA TIMES

Panganiban: Agriculture inching back to growth

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Rice prices surge as production costs rise

In Quezon, return of illegal fishers alarms green groups

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON

*Photo: ASF*

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL

Marcos leads coconut-planting rite to mark PCA's 58<sup>th</sup> year

ABANTE

SRA palpak sa P326M project

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

BUSINESS MIRROR

Cattle, Chicken dispersal program benefits BARMM farmers' co-op

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

French firms keen on helping Phl develop dairy industry

Pilmico recognized for long production cycle of hens

Sugar millers oppose new 'sweet tax'

Food for thought: A volunteer program that really works

D. FOREIGN STORY

*No stories*

Date: 24 JUN 2023 Page: A4



**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

**Declare state of calamity due to ASF, Marcos urged**

Citing that local hog raisers have lost P100 billion due to the African Swine Fever (ASF), Sen. Francis Tolentino has urged President Marcos to declare a state of national calamity due to its impact on the swine industry. Under Senate Resolution No. 565, Tolentino said data showed that the virus has spread to 460 towns across 54 of 82 provinces in the country. He said the ASF, first detected in the country in 2019, has "devastated" the swine industry. "Farmers' groups are lamenting what they describe as the government's weak response to the outbreak," Tolentino said. He said a state of calamity would allow the Department of Agriculture and local governments to use appropriate funds, including their Quick Response Fund, to address the crisis. —NESTOR CORRALES





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## House bill seeks to create Agricultural Pension Fund

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

**A** BILL seeking to establish a fund that would provide lifetime pension for the country's 9.7 million small farmers and fisherfolk, most of whom live in poverty, was filed on Tuesday at the House of Representatives.

Bicol Saro Partylist Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan and Camarines Sur second District Rep. LRay Villafuerte filed House Bill (HB) 7963 to establish the Agricultural Pension Fund (APF) to be managed by the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC).

The measure stands to benefit at least 708,000 workers in the Bicol Region who are employed in the agriculture sector, said Yamsuan, citing the latest available data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

"Our farmers and fisherfolk are among the poorest of the poor in our society. Despite their hard work and sacrifices to ensure that we have food on our table, they retire without expecting any lifeline aid from the government. Providing them with pension benefits when they reach

old age is a long-overdue measure that Congressman LRay and I hope will be approved in this Congress," Yamsuan said.

In their explanatory note to HB 7963, Yamsuan and Villafuerte pointed out that the measure "recognizes that universal access to comprehensive and adequate social protection systems is an important tool to prevent and reduce poverty and inequality."

Under the bill, the PCIC is tasked to create a pension plan for retirees in the agriculture sector, and manage and invest the Agricultural Pension Fund to ensure its sustainability.

The PCIC, which is an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA), is also authorized under the measure to determine the criteria for eligibility of the potential agricultural pensioners, in coordina-

tion with other relevant government agencies.

PSA data as of 2019 show a steady decline in the number of workers in the agriculture sector over a five-year period. From 11.294 million workers in 2015, the number of workers employed in the agriculture sector fell to 11.064 million in 2016; 10.261 million in 2017; 9.998 million in 2018; and 9.698 million in the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

The Bicol Region accounts for the most number of agricultural workers, with 871,000 in 2015, which dropped to 841,000 in 2016 and 698,000 in 2017.

In 2018, the number of agricultural workers in the region rose slightly to 741,000.

In 2019, however, only 708,000 workers were reported by the PSA as having been employed in the Bicol Region's agriculture sector.

A paper published by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) in 2021 attributed the decline to population growth, as well as diminishing farm size and reduced incomes in agriculture.

Yamsuan said providing lifetime pensions for farmers and fisherfolk should be included in the roster of measures that the government aims to implement to encourage more workers to stay in, or shift to, the agriculture sector.





**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Negros Occ swine industry losses reach P157.6 M

BACOLOD CITY – Losses to the swine industry due to deaths caused by hog cholera and other diseases in Negros Occidental increased to P157.65 million as of Thursday.

Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson said the number of barangays where hogs had been infected with cholera, African swine fever (ASF) and other diseases has increased to 142.

Hog mortalities rose to 14,404 or 9.79 percent of the pig population in Negros Occidental, the provincial veterinary office reported.

From June 1 to 16, hog farmers in Negros Occidental had been selling 5,776 heads of pigs to Luzon and the Visayas.

The Bureau of Animal Industry had earlier confirmed that ASF cases were detected in Bacolod, Silay and

Victorias cities as well as in the towns of Pulupandan and Hinigaran.

Lacson said daily hog mortalities in the province, which rose to 400 before ASF was detected, dropped to 140 in the past several days.

The Department of Agriculture-Western Visayas office admitted it has no funds to provide assistance to hog raisers affected by ASF.

– Gilbert Bayoran





**LIBRARY**  
**DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE**

## NIA, BPEC to test viability of micro-hydro power plants

State-run National Irrigation Administration (NIA) has partnered with BPEC Corp. (BPEC) to explore the possibility of developing a micro-hydroelectric power plant at the Angat-Maasim River Irrigation System (AMRIS) in Bulacan.

NIA acting administrator Eddie Guillen and BPEC president Jesus Francisco Gabriel Delgado have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the conduct of major studies for the development of a micro-hydroelectric power plant at the AMRIS South Main Canal.

Based in Pasig, BPEC is a renewable energy firm backed by BlueCap Hydro (BCH) Group of Hague, Netherlands.

The project is part of NIA's innovation and modernization thrusts, particularly in the utilization of irrigation project for renewable energy development.

Guillen said the agency received a proposal to install turbines along with the repairs of the AMRIS South Main Canal gates.

Under the MOU, BPEC will shoulder the cost to conduct studies on the financial, socioeconomic, and technical viabilities of the project.

"There is no cost to the NIA for this project. They will first look at what specific technol-

ogy will work. What will happen is that they will rent our facility to install the turbines at the gates," Guillen said.

"This will allow us to harness renewable energy at the canal and repair the old gates at no cost to government," he said.

The MOU also stipulates that BPEC shall ensure the NIA properties and facilities will not be damaged and further ensure that the timely irrigation needs of its service area will not be affected or compromised.

"The advantage for NIA is that we save money on the repair of the gate, and we'll earn from the rent of the facility, and the savings we generate can be used for postharvest facilities there. This is really a good opportunity for us," Guillen said.

Last year, the NIA pushed for public-private partnerships (PPPs) to pursue big-ticket multipurpose projects with renewable energy components.

In line with this, the NIA signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Center last March to formalize their collaboration to boost the utilization of NIA's assets and irrigation projects.

Under the partnership, NIA aims to maximize the technical services of the PPP Center in terms of its capacity-building for the utilization of various

PPP modalities for irrigation projects.

As of March 29, the NIA identified 50 potential projects for PPP with seven revenue streams, namely, hydroelectric power, solar power, aquaculture, wind energy, bulk water supply, water treatment, and carbon credits.

NIA said funding is its biggest challenge in undertaking big-ticket multi-purpose projects.

It also pointed to the slow phase of project preparation due to failure of local consultants to deliver necessary outputs like feasibility study and detailed engineering design, as well as the conversion of developed irrigated areas to other land uses like residential, industrial, and other purposes.

The lack of budgetary support has led to slow irrigation development in the Philippines at two percent of the potential irrigable area of 1.3 million hectares annually.

PPP is not new to NIA as the Casecan Multipurpose Irrigation and Power Project (CMIPP) located in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija is a PPP project implemented by the agency.

The project generates electricity through the 150-megawatt (MW) hydroelectric power plant and diverts water through a 26.27-kilometer underground tunnel into the Pantabangan Reservoir. — Danessa Rivera





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# Panganiban: Agriculture inching back to growth

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

**T**HE country's agriculture is back on the path to growth, a top official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban described the sector's development during his speech at the closing ceremony of the DA's 125th anniversary on Friday.

"The Filipino agriculture sector is, slowly but surely, inching back onto the high road to growth again," Panganiban said.

He added that the department was able to deliver assistance to more than 2 million farmers and 21,000 of their cooperatives in the past year.

"Together, we have made significant progress confronting the after-effects of the pandemic, powering our economy's historic recovery, meeting the climate crisis, advancing President Marcos' food security agenda — and strengthening our agriculture and fisheries sector," he said, referring to President and Agriculture Secretary Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Panganiban also said that one of their basic goals include the growth of the "palay" (unmilled rice) average yield from 4.14 met-

ric tons per hectare (MT/ha) to at least 7.5 MT/ha by 2028.

He also emphasized food inflation dropping from 9.8 percent in October last year to 7.5 percent last month.

"Right now, the gradual recovery which the economy is experiencing is evidenced by nearly all of the key economic indicators," he said.

The senior undersecretary also sees the need to build on innovations and technologies to serve the agriculture sector, and to make the government more efficient, resilient and effective.

President Marcos graced the weeklong celebration of the DA's anniversary on Tuesday and stressed the agency's key contributions to the development of the Philippine economy.

"As we look back to the long and storied past of this institution, it is crucial that we remember the development of the Department over the past 125 years, and we must also recognize its impact on the lives of farmers, fisherfolk and the Filipino people," Marcos said.

He stated that the Agriculture department has achieved many milestones over the last 125 years, including the implementation of the Masagana 99 program, which enabled the country to be self-sufficient in rice and enabled the country to export the commodity.

Marcos also vowed for the continuous development of interventions to boost the competitiveness of agri-fishery goods and increase the income of Filipino farmers and fisherfolk.





**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DESPITE ENOUGH SUPPLY

## RICE PRICES SURGE AS PRODUCTION COSTS RISE

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

Despite having enough rice supply, retail prices of the country's staple food in Metro Manila have jacked up by about P2 per kilogram as farmers face increased production costs.

In an interview, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Kristine Evangelista said the buying price of "palay" (unhusked rice) has reached P20 per kg while in other areas, it has surged to P23 per kg.

"The price of some agricultural inputs has increased, so that will definitely affect their production cost," said Evangelista.

"What we're trying to do now is also introduce other agricultural inputs to help our farmers to bring down their production cost," she added.

In the Philippines, the rule of thumb is that the commercial price of rice is double the farm-gate price.

The farm-gate price of pa-

lay refers to the selling price between farmers and traders, with the pricing largely dictated by farmers.

As of Friday, locally produced rice is sold from P34 to P60 per kg, compared to P38 to P50 per kg a year ago, based on the Department of Agriculture's (DA's) price monitoring.

Imported rice is priced from P40 to P55 per kg, previously P37 to P50 per kg. Imported regular milled rice is not available in the markets.

While certain farmers managed to sell palay at higher prices, Evangelista said others were able to sell their produce at lower prices.

"We have talked to farmers in Nueva Ecija and Tarlac and they said because of using a different type of fertilizer, they have reduced their price of palay. Now, they are our partners in selling rice in Kadiwa outlets for P25 without any subsidy," she said.

"However, we see the need to monitor them because if our

farmers are able to sell their palay for P12 without incurring a loss even if they are using other types of fertilizer, the retailers should feel that (lower selling prices)," she added.

The Philippines, Evangelista said, is assured of sufficient supply of rice as it has 64 days' worth of buffer stock, enough to meet this month's demand pegged at 7 million metric tons.

The DA earlier said the domestic stockpile should be 37,000 MT a day or 3.33 million MT good for three months.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that palay production reached 5.02 million MT in the first quarter of 2023, up by 2.6 percent from 4.90 million MT in the same period a year ago.

Rice imports that entered the country hit 1.73 million MT, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry's data as of June 15. Vietnam accounted for 1.55 million MT of imported rice, representing a share of almost 90 percent. **INQ**





## DESTROYING LAMON, TAYABAS BAYS

# IN QUEZON, RETURN OF ILLEGAL FISHERS ALARMS GREEN GROUPS

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.  
@dtmallarijrINQ

LUCENA CITY—The resurgence of big-time illegal fishing activities in the bays of Tayabas and Lamon in Quezon province has alarmed an environmentalist group.

“Despite the nonstop operations by law enforcement agencies, the moneyed operators of illegal fishing never stop,” Jay Lim, project officer of the public interest law firm and environmental protection advocate Tanggol Kalikasan, said in an interview on Thursday.

Lim reported that on June 19, law enforcers from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the Philippine Navy and the Philippine Coast Guard apprehended two illegal fishing boats known as “buli-buli” (modified Danish seine) in the municipal water of Calauag town fronting Lamon Bay.

The two fishing boats and

their paraphernalia were valued at P3 million.

Lim noted that one of the fishing boats had already been apprehended in November last year for the same illegal activity.

On June 5, another buli-buli fishing boat was also caught conducting illegal fishing in Tayabas Bay, fronting Unisan town. The boat owners and fishing crew were facing criminal charges.

The seized fishing boats were expected to be returned to their owners after they filed a motion for release, as “only the boat paraphernalia (fishing gear) will be confiscated,” Lim said, quoting Danilo Larita Jr., fishery regulation officer of BFAR in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon).

### Destructive

The government has banned buli-buli fishing since 2013 because it destroys corals, seagrass and traps, and eventually kills small fish.

Still, the illegal method, along with the equally destructive “pangulong” (purse seine) and “taksay” (ring net), was being employed by commercial fishers, said Lim.

Small fishers engaged in blast fishing in Tayabas and Lamon bays were also reported almost every day by the Quezon police.

“With the widespread illegal fishing activities [of commercial fishers], most of us have been tempted to join them,” a fisherman in Barangay Barra here admitted to the Inquirer on condition that he would not be named.

The small fishers should not be faulted since “family survival is at stake,” he added.

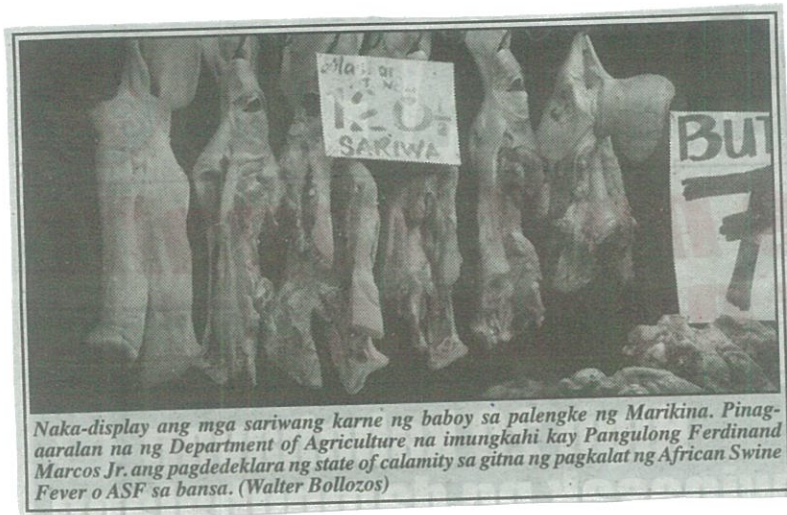
The resource-rich Lamon Bay facing the Pacific Ocean covers towns in the southern part of Quezon while Tayabas Bay encompasses the northeastern towns of Quezon, the island province of Marinduque and parts of Batangas. INQ



Date: June 24, 2023 Page: 2



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



Naka-display ang mga sariwang karne ng baboy sa palengke ng Marikina. Pinag-aaralan na ng Department of Agriculture na imungkahi kay Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang pagdedeklara ng state of calamity sa gitna ng pagkalat ng African Swine Fever o ASF sa bansa. (Walter Bollozos)



Date: June 24, 2023 Page: 3



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Marcos leads coconut-planting rite to mark PCA's 58th year

**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is expected to grace the national coconut tree-planting ceremony on June 29 as part of the 50th anniversary festivities of the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA).**

With the theme "Honoring the Past, Embracing the Future of the Coconut Industry," the PCA's golden anniversary celebration on June 30 shall recognize the accomplishments of the Authority during its first 50 years in moving the coconut industry forward, despite setbacks and challenges.

The celebration will also highlight the vast potential that the coconut industry still holds in driving economic development and uplifting the lives of coconut farmers in the country.

Despite recent years of stagnation and decline, the coconut industry remains to be a source of the country's top dollar-earning exports, and the Philippines still ranks only second to Indo-

nesia in global coconut production.

PCA administrator Bernie F. Cruz noted the President's decision to personally lead the national coconut tree-planting ceremony confirms the importance of a revitalized coconut industry to his vision of agricultural development and modernization as a driver of economic growth and employment.

"As we communicated to the President, the ceremonial tree-planting shall not only mark our 50th founding anniversary but shall also represent the PCA currently planting the seeds for a resurgence in coconut production in the country, the impacts of which will be felt down the line during this Administration and beyond," Cruz said in a news release on Thursday.

"With increased productivity, product diversification, and engaging our farmers in higher value-adding activities, we expect in the long run to

reverse the trends of declining growth rate and share to GDP of the coconut industry, and significantly increase and even double coconut farmers' incomes," he added.

Created on June 30, 1973 by virtue of Presidential Decree 232, the PCA is the sole government agency tasked to develop the coconut industry to its full potential in line with the new vision of a united, globally competitive and efficient coconut industry.

It was made an independent public corporation by virtue of Presidential Decree 961, which first codified the laws dealing with the development of the coconut and other palm oil industry in the country, as subsequently revised by Presidential Decree 1468, known as the "Revised Coconut Industry Code," which presently serves as the PCA Charter.

At present, the PCA's core functions include improving the produc-

tion and productivity of coconut farms; research and development, including market research and promotion of emerging high-value coconut products and by-products; infrastructure development, particularly of seed farms, research-based plantations, and post-harvest facilities; and institutional development of coconut farmers' organizations and enterprises.

In 2021, a significant milestone in the coconut industry was reached with the enactment of Republic Act 11524, otherwise known as the "Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act."

The law directed the transfer of an initial P75 billion in total of coconut levy funds to a trust fund which shall be used for the benefit of coconut farmers and the development of the coconut industry, in accordance with the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan (CFIDP) prepared by the PCA.





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Sinina ng COA

### SRA PALPAK SA P326M PROJECT

PINATUTUTUKAN ng Commission on Audit (COA) sa Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) ang mga kakulangan nito para maayos na maipatupad ang Block Farm Program na ang layunin ay palakasin ang produksiyon ng asukal sa bansa.

Sa 2022 audit report ng COA sinabi nito na bumili ang SRA ng P326.233 million halaga ng agricultural machineries at equipment for irrigation facilities para sa Visayas subalit ang mga ito ay nakatengga dahil wala namang water sources na pagkukunan para sa irigasyon gayundin ang ilang farm implements ay pinarenta sa mga asosasyon.

"The foregoing deficiencies somewhat negatively impacted the attainment of the objective of the Block Farm Program to boost the production of sugarcane and sugar and increase the incomes of the sugarcane farmers/planters and farm workers," ayon

sa report ng COA.

Ang Block Farm Program na nasa ilalim ng Sugar Industry Development Act ay may mandato na magbigay ng service facilities, funding para sa training, at iba pang support activities para sa mga magsasaka upang mapalakas ang produksiyon subalit bigo itong maramdaman.

Tinukoy pa ng COA na sa Bukidnon, Batangas at Cotabato ay nasa P10.482 million accessories para sa farm tractors gaya ng power harrows at fertilizer applicators ang hindi nagagamit dahil hindi ito akma sa lugar.

"There was also a lack of training on the part of the suppliers and SRA personnel on the use of agricultural machinery. The lack of training resulted in the non-utilization of the machineries and equipment or these were not utilized to their full potential/capacity," nakasaad pa sa report.

Sa North Cotabato ang transfer of owner-

ship ng mga truck para sa farmer beneficiaries ay hindi pa rin naisasagawa.

"One of the five hauling trucks costing P3.8 million, distributed to Calunasan Sugarcane Planters Association, Calunasan, M'lang, North Cotabato was still registered under the name of the supplier, hence ownership of the beneficiary-association not ensured," giit ng COA.

Sa panig ng SRA sinabi nito na nagsimula na ang kanilang Property and Procurement Management Division na iayos ang registration ng mga truck.

Ang kopya ng report ng COA ay ipinadala kay SRA Acting Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona upang mabigyang solusyon ang mga puna ng audit team. (Tina Mendoza)





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Cattle, chicken dispersal program benefits BARMM farmers' co-op

By MANUEL T. CAYON

**D**AVAO CITY—Farmers' cooperatives in mainland Bangsamoro provinces got a boost of their livestock after the autonomous government gave them another batch of cattle and free range, or native, chicken for dispersal and propagation.

The dispersal program was undertaken last month on separate occasions by the Office of the Chief Minister (OCM), the highest ranking official of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR).

The OCM distributed 140 cows worth P5.6 million under its Tulong Alay Sa Bangsamorong Nangangailangan (Tabang, which literally means help in the Cebuano dialect) program. The Tabang's Oplan Bangsamoro Rapid Assistance program handed over 68 cows to 12 farmers' co-operatives in Maguindanao del Sur and

Maguindanao del Norte alone.

Asnur Pendatun, head of the Tabang livelihood unit, said the bigger allocation went to the farmers' groups in Guindulungan, Rajah Buayan, Ampatuan, Datu Piang and Pagalungan in Maguindanao del Sur, and Matanog and Talayan in Maguindanao del Norte, as well as Cotabato City.

A separate dispersal program was undertaken in Marantao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu as well as in Cotabato City, and the Special Geographic Area (SGA) in North Cotabato, Pendatun said.

The cattle dispersal program also involved promoting mechanized farming by distributing farm tractors, crop threshers and transplanting facilities since last year and until 2024, Pendatun added.

The MAFAR, on the other hand, distributed 1,200 free-range native chickens to 24 cooperatives and farmer associations in Maguindanao del Sur and Maguindanao del Norte at the end of May.





## French firms keen on helping Phl develop dairy industry

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

At least three French companies are interested in developing the country's dairy industry, while two more submitted proposals for aviation and infrastructure projects in the Philippines, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

During the 10th Joint Economic Cooperation (JEC) meeting this week, French Minister Delegate for foreign trade, economic attractiveness and French nationals abroad Olivier Becht presented three letters of intent to Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual extending French expertise and technical support in developing the Philippines' dairy industry.

Apart from the three letters of intent, Becht also presented concrete proposals of Aéroports de Paris (ADP) on aviation and the French Treasury and Matière on road bridges in the Philippines.

The two ministers convened the JEC meeting last Tuesday also witnessed the signing of the two separate memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between the National Power Corp. (Napocor), the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) and Hydrogène de France (HDF) to facilitate the development of renewable energy and hydrogen power plants in the Philippines, the first project of its kind to be undertaken in Southeast Asia.

"Both countries vowed to continue cooperation on ongoing projects such as the commitment of OCEA, a French company, to build a shipyard in the Philippines, technical cooperation on maritime safety through the placement of a French marine expert in Manila, and on nuclear energy through an upcoming study mission," the DTI said.

During the 9th Philippine-France JEC in July 2021, the DTI welcomed OCEA's pledged investment worth P1.5 billion in shipyard development in the Philippines. The company also renewed this commitment during the President's visit to Belgium in December last year.

"Among the 33 JECs the Philip-

pines has, France is one of the few JECs we hold at the Ministerial level. This fact highlights France's important role in our overall relations with Europe. Indeed, we accord high importance to the JEC as a mechanism to continuously enhance our economic relations, particularly in trade and investments," Pascual said.

During the technical session of the JEC led by Trade assistant secretary Allan Gepty and deputy director Denis Le Fers, the Philippines expressed its continued interest in forging space cooperation with the Centre National D'Etudes Spatiales (CNES), the French Space Agency.

Last November following CNES'

invitation during the last JEC meeting, the Philippine Space Agency signed the Space for Climate Observatory Charter, making it the National Focal Point of the Philippines in the French-led climate resilience initiative.

In the area of aviation, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) deputy director general Edgardo Diaz reaffirmed the Philippines' commitment to the MOU with the Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile (DGAC) or the French Civil Aviation Authority, which was renewed in 2021.

"Both sides welcomed the ongoing discussion with Thales on air traffic management," the DTI said.





## Pilmico recognized for long production cycle of hens

By DANESSA RIVERA

Pilmico Animal Nutrition Corp. (Pilmico), a unit under the Aboitiz Group's agribusiness, has bagged the recognition as the first in the Philippines and in Asia for achieving longer production cycles in hens.

In a statement yesterday, Pilmico said it was awarded the "500 Egg Club Award" by Hendrix Genetics—a multi-species animal breeding, genetics and technology company based in Netherlands—for being able to produce 500 eggs each hen at the age of Week 100.

"The 500 Egg Club Award is a huge milestone for Pilmico, especially for our poultry team, as we are not only the first in the Philippines to achieve this but also the first in Asia," Pilmico assistant vice president for poultry and swine grower-finisher operations Serge Tan said.

"Genetic companies have been aspiring to achieve this for many years, but it seemed

impossible. We're glad to attain this remarkable achievement which sets a new standard for excellence in the poultry industry," he said.

Prior to achieving this milestone, Pilmico's farms only produced 470 to 492 eggs per hen at Week 100. Meanwhile, the industry average in the Philippines is 400 to 450 eggs per hen.

Tan said suitable layer genetics, equipment, management and feeds allowed the company to achieve this milestone.

"As challenging as it may be, we achieved this through having the right layer genetics and equipment, proper farm management and systems, and most importantly the high-quality feeds of Pilmico designed for precise nutrition to express optimal growth and productivity of hens. Along with these, the hard work, dedication, and innovative mindset of the Poultry team became the key to our success," he said.

Pilmico Animal Nutrition houses the Aboitiz Group's hog

and layer farms operations.

It started its layer farms operations in December 2015, with its layer farm facility fully operational a year after. This facility can hold up to 173,000 egg-laying chickens that translates to four million eggs per month.

Pilmico Foods Corp. and Gold Coin Management Holdings are the integrated agribusiness and food companies of Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. (AEV).

Gold Coin is now fully managed and owned by Pilmico International and to date, it is the largest investment in Asia-Pacific in their shared history.

Meanwhile, Gold Coin is a pioneer in animal nutrition and the manufacturing of scientifically-balanced animal feed in Asia.

Pilmico and Gold Coin represent one of the largest privately owned agribusinesses in the region, with over 2,900 partners throughout the multitude of production facilities across eight countries in Asia.





## Sugar millers oppose new 'sweet tax'

By BELLA CARIASO

The Philippine Sugar Millers Association (PSMA) yesterday opposed the plan of the Department of Finance (DOF) to increase the tax on sweetened beverages to P12 by next year.

PSMA executive director Jesus Barrera maintained that what should be done is to ensure efficient collection of excise tax.

"Instead of focusing on increasing tax rates, DOF should prioritize the enforcement of existing laws to ensure compliance and fairness," Barrera said.

Barrera noted that just recently, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) raided a warehouse in Cavite as a beverage maker failed to pay P800 million in excise taxes, as well as three supermarkets in Quezon City for distributing untaxed sweetened beverages.

"The latest efforts of the BIR to inspect manufacturers and retailers on their payment of the excise tax are

Turn to Page 2

## Sugar From Page 1

commendable. The additional revenue can be realized from the thorough enforcement of the existing tax laws. Furthermore, what purpose does it serve to raise tax rates if there exist individuals or companies that fail to adhere to them?" he said.

According to Barrera, improving the tax collection will not create an adverse impact on affected sectors yet it will achieve the government's health and revenue objectives.

"The significance of an effective tax collection mechanism extends beyond public health concerns. It offers a reliable source of revenue for the government that is directed towards essential public services and reinforces public trust, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic as the economy recovers," he added.

Barrera said the DOF should reconsider its proposal and engage in a comprehensive dialogue with all stakeholders, including sugar millers, sugarcane farmers and industry experts.

### DOH support

On the other hand, the Department of Health (DOH) has expressed support for the proposal to impose additional taxes on junk food and sweetened beverages. The DOH said the measure can help provide additional funding for the Universal Health Care (UHC) program.

"We still need to pay for

more health programs and services. Hence, the DOH supports any measures which may provide additional money to do UHC," said the DOH in a statement.

The DOH likewise said, "Because of health taxes, the DOH-wide budget for 2023 is five times higher than what it was ten years ago." At the same time, the health department expressed belief that it would be an essential tool in helping reduce public consumption of unhealthy food and drinks.

"The DOH recognizes the potential benefits of imposing a health tax or excise tax on unhealthy food and beverages to reduce the burden of malnutrition and non-communicable diseases," it said.

The health department said this proposal could have the same positive effect as when taxes were imposed on alcoholic drinks and tobacco products, which gave the DOH more money for its health programs and lessened public consumption, thus leading to better health, the DOH added.

### Awaiting proposals

Meanwhile, the House committee on ways and means is still studying the "best form of junk food tax, or whether to do it at all" as the DOF and DOH have not submitted their respective proposals for a tax on salty food.

According to panel chair and Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, they are still waiting for the two agencies' proposals, which still have to go through "the usual tests the committee applies."

"Who pays for it? What are its macroeconomic impacts? What are the costs and benefits? What are other countries doing? And what do we do if something goes wrong?" he said of what the panel wants to know from the proposals.

He noted the committee also has not received "a formal bill from the DOF on sweetened beverages."

The lawmaker underscored that the decision on taxing salty food will depend on this data.

The panel, he said, will also look at the "inflationary impact" of taxing junk food "because there will definitely be price implications on taxes on food."

Salceda said his panel is open to junk food taxes but it will prioritize taxes "that are clearly progressive and hit the rich first."

"Progressivity is definitely the first priority, because that is the only quality of tax measures that the Constitution specifically requires. So, taxes that hit the rich come before taxes that hit the family table," he added.

Salceda, however, cautioned that the Philippines is "just in the median of obesity rates in the region, while having the highest sweetened beverage levies in ASEAN."

"As for salt, we do exceed the 2g per day of sodium recommended by the World Health Organization. So, there is cause for government-led efforts to reduce consumption," he added.

- With Danessa Rivera, Sheila Crisostomo, Rhodina Villanueva





## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

CHIT U. JUAN

### A volunteer program that really works

We often hear the saying "it takes a village" when referring to concerted efforts to find an answer to a problem or a solution to an issue. We actually went to a village or small town in Negros Occidental to see how a volunteer program plus a social enterprise cum non-profit are making a difference in the lives of a sample group of 100 children in this town.



First of all, the children chosen are stunted or are short in height for their age. This is the most obvious physical sign of malnutrition. What we do not see but is also proven, is that the brain also is "stunted" and such is a more difficult problem to address.

Negros Volunteers for Change or NVC Foundation is trying to address a seemingly insurmountable national issue by doing their small part through several ways: They manufacture healthy food mixes made from local farmers' produce, feed them to children enrolled in the program and watch these kids achieve normal height and weight over a year's time. They conduct feeding programs with the help of other NGOs and donors, and some local government units (LGU) who have put Nutrition in their top ten list of priorities.

It is amazing what Millie Kilayco and her group have achieved through sheer passion, dedication and, if I may say, creativity. When they saw farmers wanting to abandon their squash farms to raise money to migrate to Manila, they bought their squash, dried the vegetable to a powder mix to be used with their original Mingo - *malunggay* (moringa oleifera), *monggo* (mung bean) and local rice. Mingo provides a child with enough protein and carbohydrates and is given at one portion a day, everyday, until such weight and height targets are met.

**The NVC Foundation manufactures healthy food mixes made from local farmers' produce, feed them to stunted children enrolled in the program and watch these kids achieve normal height and weight over a year's time.**

Under a Harvard model, Millie and her volunteers track the progress of the children in this particular town to make a best case that can be replicable around the country. The mothers undergo a quick assessment, get guidelines on nutrition and wellness, see volunteer doctors and if the child and mother are on track, they are given an incentive or a prize of P250 for

coming over for check up.

Then, a community pantry is set up where a mother can use P150 of her prize money to get three kilos of rice plus a host of extras like cheese, sardines, margarine, sandwich spread, noodles, etc. from more donations gathered by NVC. What a deal! I would not think twice spending P150 on such a deal. No mother has skipped the community pantry station because it is such a good deal.

Millie humbly explains that her group did not have a grand plan but to just take baby steps in first producing Mingo, then designing a feeding program that they could sustain. Well, they have been to 60 towns and that is not a small feat for a motley group of passionate do-gooders. They have coordinated with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and Department of Health (DOH) and have since gotten an FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approved facility that makes these healthy meals.

The Management Association of the Philippines ([www.map.ph](http://www.map.ph)) has launched a project to fight malnutrition and we as members volunteered our time and resources to visit Millie and her facilities. We timed our visit to be able to observe the quarterly meeting with parents under the feeding program. We spoke with mostly young teenage parents, some with five kids at the tender age of 21. These mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their babies from birth to six months, granted they are eating well, of course. After six months, Millie's group can take over and enroll these children and be beneficiaries of these Mingo meals.

Though Millie's group can only handle a limited number of programs due to their limited resources, it is a model that is replicable across the country. The importance of proper nutrition cannot be over-emphasized. So we at MAP are asking if this model can be replicated in Luzon and in Mindanao. We are looking for partners who can help set up another facility and make it a sustainable enterprise.

The other good thing that comes out of this project is that local farmers find a market for their produce. So far, Millie uses local rice, local *monggo*, *malunggay*, squash, *ube* (purple yam) and even local Negros cacao for the chocolate variant. She is also looking to have farmers grow *Chlorella*, an algae that can be used as supplement for growth - an ingredient a popular vitamin syrup uses to make kids grow taller.

Local farmers will definitely have a ready market if such a facility is built in every major island of the country. There is continuous demand for vegetables that NVC puts in driers or dehydrators, then a tested formula combines these ingredients into extrudates that are then pulverized into Mingo meals.