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## 'Farmers' debt condonation law can be included in SONA'

BY WENDELL VIGILIA

THE enactment of the law condoning the debts of farmers is a "legacy legislation" that President Marcos Jr. can mention in his second State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 24, Speaker Martin Romualdez said yesterday. Republic Act No. 11953, or the New Agrarian Emancipation Act, was signed by the President last Friday.

"It is indeed a legacy legislation that will benefit not only the beneficiaries of the agrarian reform program but their families, their communities and the whole nation as well," Romualdez said.

RA 11953 condones P57.56 billion worth of debt of 610,054

agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) who are cultivating a total of 1.173 million hectares of land.

These farmers are beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

With their debts written off, Romualdez said hundreds of thousands of farmers will now have extra resources to spend on food, education, shelter, wellness, and other family expenses that they would otherwise forego.

Under the new law, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) will issue Certificates of Condonation in favor of ARBs, which shall be annotated on the Emancipation Patent (EP) or Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA), as the case may be.

When the condonation takes effect, the appropriate Registry of Deeds shall register the EP, CLOA, or any other title pursuant to the applicable agrarian reform law, along with the annotation of the Notice of Condonation.

"For me, this is the true intent of agrarian reform, for our farmers to own the land they till and for them to cultivate it without the burden of debt. It has now become a reality for more than 600,000 of our farmers with the signing of the law," Romualdez said.

Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymond Villafuerte said the condonation of the farmers' CARP debts puts flesh to a provision of RA 11494 or the "Bayanihan to Recover as One Act" or Bayani-

han 2 which aims to give financial relief to ARBs during the state of calamity declared by then President Duterte at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under Section 4 of RA 11494, "the payment of interests, penalties and surcharges of loans used for land acquisition to any and all government agencies and government-owned or -controlled corporations (GOCCs), including Land Bank of the Philippines (LandBank), shall be condoned and the remaining original principal value be restructured without interest thereon," said Villafuerte, who was also the principal author in the House of RA 11469 or the "Bayanihan to Heal As One Act."





## Marcos urged: Focus on El Niño, water crisis

### Push Maharlika bill to the back burner -Koko

BY ASHZEL HACHERO

SENATE minority leader Aquilino Pimentel III yesterday asked **President Marcos Jr.** to focus on short and long-term solutions to the water crisis and the looming threat of the El Niño weather phenomenon in his second State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 24.

The two pressing issues, Pimentel stressed, are far more important than

the controversy-ridden Maharlika Investment Fund (MIF) bill which administration lawmakers and economic managers have been rushing to be enacted.

He said the negative effects of the two have “far-reaching consequences” that could play havoc with the country’s economy, particularly on food security and agricultural productivity, and it would do well for the president to focus his sights on addressing them.

“Huwag puro Maharlika Investment Fund (Don’t put too much attention to the Maharlika Investment Fund). The adverse effects of water shortage and El Niño have far-reaching consequences on various sectors of the economy. Past droughts and water crises have caused a significant toll on the economy, business, agriculture, power generation, public health, and natural resources, among others,” Pimentel said.

The senator cited a study by Columbia University stating that the El Niño event in the late 1990s left 70 percent of the Philippines experiencing devastating drought conditions, while Union Bank of the Philippines Inc. chief economist Ruben Carlo Asuncion has warned that a strong El Niño event could lead to national gross domestic product (GDP)

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# Malaya Business Insight

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## PUSH

losses of up to \$3.3 billion.

"These staggering economic implications highlight the importance of pro-active and preventive measures to mitigate the impact of the water crisis and El Niño. It is crucial for the President to use the State of the Nation Address as a platform to present long-term strategies and sustainable solutions that can mitigate the effects of water shortage and El Niño," Pimentel said.

He said that while President Marcos Jr. has earlier acknowledged the gravity of the water crisis when he said last March that 11 million families still lacked access to clean water, the government should also be more pro-active in solving the problem.

"The concerns about the impending water shortage and El Niño phenomenon were made earlier. Ano na ang ginawang hakbang ng gobyerno (What has the government done? As I said before, the government should take an anticipatory approach and not merely be passive in addressing these challenges)," Pimentel said.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) has warned that the El Niño phenomenon could cause dry

spells and droughts in the country in the last quarter of the year and the first half of 2024.

It said that at least 28 areas could experience dry conditions and 36 others may record dry spells by the end of 2023, while at least 26 areas in Luzon, including Metro Manila, may experience drought by January 2024.

The United Nations World Meteorological Organization has likewise officially declared the emergence of El Niño conditions in the Tropical Pacific for the first time in seven years, with a 90 percent probability of it persisting until the second half of 2024.

Over the weekend, Maynilad Water Services announced daily water supply interruption in several areas in Metro Manila starting Wednesday due to Angat Dam falling below its minimum operating level.

The water level in Angat Dam was at 179.26 meters as of 5 a.m. yesterday, while the water level of the Ipo Dam was at 98.59 meters.

Angat Dam supplies potable water to Metro Manila and nearby provinces. It is also the source of irrigation water for Bulacan and Pampanga farmers. On the other hand, the Ipo watershed, a vital link in the Angat-Umiray-Ipo watersheds system, supplies around 96 percent of the water needs of NCR.

Maynilad said the water interruption will cover several areas in Caloocan City, Malabon City, Manila, Valenzuela City, Navotas City and Quezon City, and will be implemented from 7 p.m. to 4 a.m., with some localities to be affected until 6 a.m.

Pimentel appealed to the public to conserve water and electricity during this critical period.

"These problems need immediate attention and concerted efforts from both the government and the public. I implore each of us to conserve water," he said.

## HEALTH ISSUES

On the heels of the onset of the El Niño phenomenon, the Department of Health (DOH) yesterday said it is on alert over the possible surge in cases of diseases, such as dengue and cholera.

In a press conference, DOH spokesman Dr. Eric Tayag said they are on guard over the possible rise in dengue cases as seen during the 1998 El Niño phenomenon.

"One may wonder why the threat of dengue when mosquitoes need water. But, during El Niño, there is a tendency by the people to store water. These water containers, thus, become the breeding places of mosquitoes," said Tayag.

Based on the latest Dengue

Surveillance Report, there are 72,333 dengue cases reported from January 1 to June 17, which is 14 percent higher than the 63,526 dengue cases recorded during the same period last year.

Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa also said they are concerned over the potential cholera outbreaks that the El Niño may cause, especially in areas where there are water interruptions.

"When water pipes are shut off, those old, broken, and dilapidated tend to be penetrated by dirty water, especially those near comfort rooms," said Herbosa.

According to the latest Cholera Surveillance Report, there are 2,125 cholera cases reported from January 1 to June 17. This is 4 percent lower than the 2,209 cholera cases recorded during the same period last year.

The DOH reminded the public to observe the 5S strategy against dengue, which stands for Search and destroy mosquito breeding sites, uphold Self-protection like using insect repellents, Seek early consultation at the nearest health care facility, Support fogging, spraying, and misting in hot spot areas, and Sustain hydration.

"The implementation of the 5S strategy calls for everyone to become prime movers in controlling the mosquito population and

avoiding any possible dengue deaths within the community," said the DOH.

As for cholera, Herbosa urged the public to make it a point to always boil their drinking water, especially if they observe discoloration.

## PAMPANGA

Pampanga Board Member Jun Canlas said the provincial government is bracing for the possible harmful effects of the El Niño in the province.

Canlas said during the "Laging Handa" public forum that Gov. Dennis Pineda has already ordered an inventory of the province's agricultural and aquaculture lands "so that we know what interventions" can be done.

The governor has also supposedly ordered the repair of communal irrigation facilities to maximize the utilization of their water resources.

Canlas said the provincial government has been coordinating with municipal agriculturists so they can launch a massive information campaign and inform farmers on what to do when El Niño starts.

At present, he said the province has the Congress Diosdado Macapagal dam as the main water source for irrigation of farmlands,

aside from water sourced from the Porac and Gumain rivers.

"I had the provincial agriculturist to present an inventory of all cooperatives and irrigators associations to determine the irrigation paths under their care so we can determine what resources are needed to be subsidized by the local government," Canlas said in Filipino.

He also said the province will make use floodwaters in their irrigation system, and at the same time introduce "water saving technology" and the "rotational irrigation scheme" to maximize their water resources.

He said proper coordination has also been made with the National Irrigation Administration to ensure a stable supply of water for Pampanga farmlands.

He said the Department of Agriculture has also prepared financial assistance to farmers to be affected by the El Niño, while soliciting the help of the Department of Labor and Employment for TUPAD or the Tulong Pangkabuhayan sa Ating Displaced/Disadvantaged Workers.

In terms of food security, Canlas said the provincial government is now building its rice complex where farmers can stock their produce. — *With Gerard Naval and Raymond Africa*





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## Address water shortage in SONA, Marcos asked

SENATE Minority Leader Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel 3rd has called on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to address the water shortage and the El Niño phenomenon in his upcoming State of the Nation Address (SONA).

The senator on Monday expressed hope that the President would not focus more on the Maharlika Investment Fund in his July 24 SONA.

"It is crucial for the President to use the State of the Nation Address as a platform to present long-term strategies and sustainable solutions that can mitigate the effects of water shortages and El Niño," he added.

In a statement, Pimentel raised the need to immediately address the water crisis and mitigate the impact of El Niño on agriculture and farmers.

The United Nations World Meteorological Organization officially declared the emergence of El Niño conditions in the Tropical Pacific for the first time in seven years, with a 90 percent probability of them persisting until the second half of 2024.

"The adverse effects of water shortages and El Niño have far-reaching consequences on various sectors of the economy," Pimentel said.

He noted that past droughts and water crises have taken a significant toll on the economy, business, agriculture, power

generation, public health and natural resources.

Citing a study by Columbia University, Pimentel said that the El Niño events of 1997 and 1998 left 70 percent of the country experiencing devastating drought conditions.

He also cited the statement by the Union Bank of the Philippines Inc. Chief Economist Ruben Carlo Asuncion who said that a strong El Niño event could lead to national GDP (gross domestic product) losses of up to \$3.3 billion.

"These staggering economic implications highlight the importance of proactive and preventive measures to mitigate the impact of the water crisis and El Niño," Pimentel said.

He said that in March 2023, the President himself acknowledged the gravity of the water crisis, stating that 11 million families lack access to clean water as the dry season approaches.

"As I said before, the government should take an anticipatory approach and not merely be passive in addressing these challenges," Pimentel said.

The senator also appealed to the public to conserve water and electricity during this critical period.

"These problems need immediate attention and concerted efforts from both the government and the public. I implore each of us to conserve water," he said.

**BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO**





## Long-term solution to El Niño



Manny B. Villar

### THE ENTREPRENEUR

**T**HE El Niño phenomenon, or a period of extended drought, is one climate change problem that needs a long-term solution. It is occurring more often and could have permanent and damaging effects if we do not treat it as a persistent economic threat.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. last week was quick to recognize that crop production would bear the brunt of the El Niño phenomenon that might last until the first half of 2024. Reduced crop output, as we know, leads to higher inflation, which the government is starting to tame. But worse than the inflationary impact is the ensuing dire situation of our rural farmers, who mostly rely on harvests and their income from them for their daily sustenance.

Another obvious impact of the extended dry spell is the reduced supply of potable water to millions of Filipino consumers in urban centers and the rural areas. The lack of ample water supply is actually an age-long problem worldwide even without El Niño, and climate change is exacerbating the situation.

Some 11 million families, per the National Water Resource Board, face

the predicament and are forced to rely on "unprotected" deep wells, springs, rivers, lakes and rainwater for their household needs. Lack of sanitation facilities, according to NWRB Executive Director Dr. Sevillo David Jr., has also forced some families to defecate in the open, risking water contamination and diseases.

The United Nations, meanwhile, is not remiss in warning about the global water shortage. The United Nations, in the latest edition of the UN World Water Development Report, says between two and three billion people worldwide experience water shortages. About 2 billion people (26 percent of the population) do not have safe drinking water, and 3.6 billion (46 percent) lack access to safely managed sanitation, according to the report.

UN Secretary-General Antonio

Guterres has called on the world to safeguard water resources to avert conflict and ensure future global prosperity. Water, he says, is "the most precious common good" and "needs to be at the center of the global political agenda."

The El Niño is a reminder to our policymakers to treat the water resource problem more seriously. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration has already warned some 36 provinces may experience a dry spell while at least two provinces may suffer from drought.

The weather phenomenon has reared its ugly head this early. The water levels in all major dams in Luzon have been going down, with Angat Dam's reserve nearing the 180-meter critical level as of last week. A reserve below this elevation means reduced water supply to Metro Manila and other users that depend on Angat, including irrigation and the power sector.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System has warned an estimated 632,000 Metro Manila households may be affected by water service interruptions arising from low allocation and lack of rain over the watersheds.

The lower water level due to El Niño and reduced rainfall are expected to decrease the volume of other water resources such as lakes and rivers that feed into rural irrigation

canals. Our farmers, no doubt, will suffer the most from the dry spell.

Perhaps, we should take the warning of the UN's World Meteorological Organization more seriously. The onset of El Niño, according to WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas, will greatly increase the likelihood of breaking temperature records this year and triggering more extreme heat in many parts of the world and in the ocean.

"The declaration of an El Niño by WMO is the signal to governments around the world to mobilize preparations to limit the impacts on our health, our ecosystems, and our economies," says Taalas.

Our local government units should be drawing up mitigating measures now to lessen the impact of the dry spell on consumers and our farmers. But beyond these stopgap actions, our policymakers should start considering long-term preemptive measures against El Niño and other natural disasters.

It may be wise to consider the construction of alternative and mini dams, and other water impoundments to protect Filipinos from destructive weather phenomena. We can also introduce modern technology to our farmers, and drought-tolerant crops as part of the solution.





# Koko urges BBM to address water shortage in SONA

By CECILLE SUERTE FELIPE

President Marcos should prioritize long-term measures to tackle pressing issues, including a recurring water shortage and the looming threat of El Niño in the upcoming State of the Nation Address (SONA), Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel III said on July 10.

Pimentel emphasized the urgent need to address the water crisis and mitigate the impact of El Niño, particularly on agricultural productivity and farmers, the most vulnerable

to El Niño. The agriculture sector is estimated to lose up to \$3.3 billion because of the phenomenon.

"Not just Maharlika Investment Fund (MIF)," Pimentel quipped in Filipino, referring to the proposed measure to manage a pool of funds sourced from state-run financial institutions that will be invested in high-impact projects, real estate, as well as in financial instruments.

The President has certified the MIF as urgent.

"The adverse effects of water shortage and El Niño

have far-reaching consequences on various sectors of the economy. Past droughts and water crises have caused a significant toll on the economy, business, agriculture, power generation, public health and natural resources, among others," he said.

Pimentel also appealed to the public to conserve water and electricity during this critical period.

"These problems need immediate attention and concerted efforts from both the government and the public. I implore each of us to conserve

water," he said.

Citing a study by Columbia University, Pimentel said that the El Niño event of 1997-98 left 70 percent of the country experiencing devastating drought conditions.

Pimentel cited the statement by the Union Bank of the Philippines chief economist Ruben Carlo Asuncion that a strong El Niño event could lead to national GDP losses of up to \$3.3 billion.

"These staggering economic implications highlight the importance of proactive and preventive measures to miti-

gate the impact of the water crisis and El Niño. It is crucial for the President to use the State of the Nation Address as a platform to present long-term strategies and sustainable solutions that can mitigate the effects of water shortage and El Niño," Pimentel said.

In March 2023, the President acknowledged the gravity of the water crisis, stating that 11 million families lack access to clean water as the dry season approaches.

"The concerns about the impending water shortage and El Niño phenomenon

were made earlier. What steps has the government taken?" Pimentel said.

"As I said before, the government should take an anticipatory approach and not merely be passive in addressing these challenges," he added.

The United Nations World Meteorological Organization officially declared the emergence of El Niño conditions in the Tropical Pacific for the first time in seven years, with a 90 percent probability of it persisting until the second half of 2024.





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## VIRTUAL REALITY

TONY LOPEZ

### Debt amnesia for farmers

Perhaps, the best economic reform so far by President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. is the law that condones the P57-billion debts of some 610,000 agrarian reform farmers to the government.

Marcos Jr. on Friday (July 7) signed the law that forgets over P57 billion worth of loans of 610,000 farmers who are agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs).

Republic Act (RA) 11953 writes off "all principal loans, unpaid amortization and interests, and exempting payment of estate tax on agricultural lands awarded under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program."

The farmers include those who on Oct. 21, 1972 were declared emancipated by President Ferdinand Edralin Marcos Sr. when he signed PD 27, the Agrarian Reform Act. PD 27 gave farmers the land they were tilling for centuries but they must pay for it at concessional terms, for 30 years. Alas, they could not pay for it.

RA 11953 condones all loans, including interests, penalties and surcharges that covered the land awarded to ARBs under PD 27, RA 6657 (the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988) and RA 9700, which extends the acquisition and distribution of agricultural lands under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) of President Corazon Aquino.

Albay 2<sup>nd</sup> District Rep. Joey Salceda shepherded the agrarian debt condonation bill through Congress, a house of oligarchs and landowners. Since the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, where Joey served briefly as a Cabinet member, he had been advocating for debt amnesia for farmers.

Also, the government will assume the P206 million owed by 10,201 ARBs tilling 11,531.24 ha. of land as compensation for landowners under the Voluntary Land Transfer or the Direct Payment Scheme.

Under RA 11953, the ARBs will be included in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture of the Department of Agriculture (DA). Inclusion entitles them to all support services given to farmers by the DA and other government agencies.

BBM was naturally in his best mood while signing RA 11953.

"Pinangako ko sa ating mga kababayan na itutuloy ang (I promised our countrymen that we will continue the) Agrarian Reform Program. I'm here today to build on that promise because our beneficiaries deserve nothing less. Ituloy natin ang repormang agraryo (Let us continue the agrarian reform)," he exulted.

Genuine emancipation, he said, required more than just land distribution. The handing titles to ARBs was just the first step toward more sustainable farms and higher income for farmers. He also pledged to speed up the resolution of agrarian cases.







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The President pledged to revitalize the agricultural sector by training a new generation of young farmers "who will become the driving force behind a modernized and profitable agriculture sector that fuels sustainable rural development."

"It is time to give our farmers the recognition that they deserve as the providers of our nation's sustenance, the providers of life to all of Filipinos," said Marcos.

"It was my father's dream to give every Filipino farmer and his or her family, a life beyond mere survival, a life free from hunger or fear of the future," the President recalled.

"Freeing our farmers from debt through the passage of the New Agrarian Emancipation Act today is the first concrete step towards fulfilling the vision that our late father, President Ferdinand Edralin Marcos, enunciated more than 50 years ago, when he signed Presidential Decree (PD) 27 decreeing the 'emancipation of tenants from the bondage of the soil,'" said the President's sister, Senator Imee Marcos. She authored RA 11953 in the Senate.

More than the amount involved (P57 billion) and the total farm land involved (over one million hectares), this debt amnesia is symbolic in many ways:

One, it shows the government cares – for the poorest of the poor (our farmers) and for the greatest number, us food consumers.

The P57 billion is a drop in the bucket in the government budget.

The national government has a 2023 budget of P5,268 billion. So P57 billion is just one peso for every P100 of government expenditure for 2023. The impact of that one peso will be permanent and lasting. We will now have more and cheaper food.

Each senator collects P200 million in pork barrel. That's P4.8 billion. Each congressman gets P70-million pork. So 316 times P70 million is P22.1 billion – 38.5 percent of the P57-billion debts of 610,000 farmers forgiven.

P57 billion divided by 610,000 yields just P93,442 per farmer debt, or \$1,700 in dollar terms.

Farmers on average own 1.8 hectares of land, not a viable size for farming in these days of high cost of farming inputs like fertilizer and seedlings.

Two, debt condonation is the real emancipation. Government routinely forgets the monumental debts of its cronies. So why not farmers.

Three, the P57-billion completes the cycle of emancipation of farmers under two Marcos regimes, after more than half a century (51 years, between 1972 and 2023).

Four, with RA 11953, the government should finally get serious with the food production business, currently dismal.

Food is 50 percent of an average household's expenses; the poor spend more for their food, 55 percent. Of the 50 percentage points of the Consumer Price Index, rice is 15 points. For every P100 of household money, P15 goes to rice, alone. Alcohol is P2.

Utilities (rent, water, electricity, gas and other fuels) are P22.47 of every P100 of consumer money.

Food is the No. 1 expense item of the people. Yet, the farmers get little if any of that demand, despite working body and soul to produce the food.

The land developers, the telcos and the power and energy companies get the bulk of consumer money, 22.5 percent. No wonder they are our richest billionaires.

Man can live without housing, without electricity, without cellphones and even without clothes. But not without food.



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**‘Farmers are providers  
of our nation’s sustenance’**



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**F**ood security in our country has always relied upon the backbreaking toil of our farmers. Yet, throughout our history, protecting them has proven easier said than done. However, on July 7, 2023, a significant moment occurred in Malacañan as the President signed Republic Act 11953, also known as the New Agrarian Emancipation Bill. This historic legislation demonstrates this administration's commitment to uplifting the lives of farmers who provide sustenance for our nation.

At its core, the New Agrarian Emancipation Bill seeks to liberate "farmer-beneficiaries of the government's agrarian reform program from the shackles of debt." The President himself affirmed that the beneficiaries "deserve nothing less." Therefore, Republic Act 11953 "condones all loans, including interests, penalties, and surcharges incurred by agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) who have received land under Presidential Decree (PD) 27, RA 6657, and RA 9700."

PD 27, issued on Oct. 21, 1972, by President Ferdinand Marcos Sr., is the Tenant Emancipation Decree. RA 6657 represents the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988, while RA 9700 is the legislation extending the acquisition and distribution of agricultural lands under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

"It is time to give our farmers the recognition that they deserve as the providers of our nation's sustenance, the providers of life to all Filipinos," Marcos said. "Let us work together to realize this dream, our dream, as it was my father's dream to give every Filipino farmer and his or her family, a life beyond mere survival, a life free from hunger or fear of the future."

While land distribution is crucial, Marcos emphasized that genuine agrarian emancipation encompasses more than just the allocation of land.

He stressed the need to expand credit facilities and support services for farmers, recognizing that such efforts would yield sustainable farms and higher incomes. "As your President, I assure you we will never stop providing our farmers with the support that they need to make their farms more productive while also improving their lives and the lives of their families," he said.

According to a statement from Malacañang, RA 11953 will cover "P57.56 billion in agrarian arrears, benefiting 610,054 ARBs, who are tilling a total of 1,173,101.57 hectares of awarded land." It also added that the New Agrarian Emancipation Act is the "fulfillment of Marcos' call on Congress during his first State of the Nation Address in July 2022 to pass a law condoning the farmers' unpaid debt."

Secretary Conrado Estrella III of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) commended the President, affirming his significant contributions to the country during his initial year in office. Notably, Estrella's grandfather, Conrado Estrella Sr., served as the minister of DAR during the '70s and '80s.

Lawmakers, too, lauded the President, recognizing the New Agrarian Emancipation Act as a means to "break the generational shackles of indebtedness endured by our farmers." Senators collectively applauded the passage of RA 11953, with Sen. Imee Marcos stating, "The patrimony of our nation not only lies in the richness of our soil but in the freedom and fullness of those who toil for it."

May this landmark legislation serve as a catalyst for further rural economic development, propelling the modernization of our agricultural sector. Moreover, may it stand as a testament to our concern, respect, and empathy for our farmers; for without them, where will we find the food to serve on our table?





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THRU INFRASTRUCTURE, VALUE CHAIN

## \$600M loan to modernize agri signed

BY ANGELA CELIS

THE Department of Finance and the World Bank signed a \$600-million loan agreement last Friday for a project that aims to transform agriculture into a modernized and industrialized sector through public infrastructure interventions and

strengthening the commodity value chain.

The Philippine Rural Development Project Scale-Up, an initiative of the Department of Agriculture (DA), is an expanded response to the challenges confronting the agriculture and fisheries (A&F) sector and rural communities in the country.

In particular, the project will boost farmer and fisherfolk access to markets, increase income from selected agri-fishery value chains and improve efficiency in the food supply chain.

In a statement, the DOF said the project will focus on areas where about half of the Philippines' 109.03 million A&F

population resides.

It will entail direct investments in rural infrastructure and enterprise sub-projects, which will directly benefit about 450,000 farmers and fisherfolk and generate about 42,000 new jobs.

Amounting to \$818 million (P45.01 billion) in total, the

remaining \$218 million will be funded by the national government and involved local government units.

The World Bank has been supporting the project since 2014 and has provided two additional loans in 2018 and 2021.

Upon the completion of the project, the DA aims to

facilitate its transition into a regular locally-funded program to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the project's interventions.

As of July 2023, the total World Bank official development assistance loan and grant commitments amount to an estimated \$7.94 billion.





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## Rice imports fall 6.43% in six months to June as harvest improves

THE PHILIPPINES imported 1.81 million metric tons (MT) of rice in the six months to June, down 6.43% from a year earlier, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry, amid the improving supply of domestically-grown rice.

In June, rice imports dropped 56.13% to 187,530.760 MT. They also fell month on month against the 319,482.360 MT shipped in May.

During the first half, Vietnam remained the top source of imported rice, accounting for 1.61 million MT or 89.09% of the total.

It was followed by Myanmar and Thailand with 81,895 MT and 73,667 MT, respectively.

**Agriculture Undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Leocadio S. Sebastian** said that the private sector is guided by market forces because most imports have been liberalized.

Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law of 2019, opened up rice imports to private traders but required importers to pay a 35% tariff on grain bought in from Southeast Asia.

It also created the Rice Competitiveness Enhance-

ment Fund, which is allotted an annual budget of P10 billion between 2019 to 2024, funded from rice import tariffs.

Mr. Sebastian said that the domestic harvest has improved in recent months compared to the results achieved year earlier. The Philippine Rice Information System estimates that the harvest of palay, or unmilled rice, rose 6% in the first six months.

"With the favorable weather during harvest time, the quality of the palay was very good. A good quality of harvest plus a high price of rice in the global market encouraged many rice traders to buy our locally-produced rice," he told *BusinessWorld* in a Viber message.

"Hence, the buying price of palay was also high, enabling our farmers to recover from the high cost of inputs (such as fertilizer and fuel)," he added.

According to Mr. Sebastian, the volume of imported rice that has been landed remains high as the Philippines does not expect to match last year's import levels. Imports in 2022 hit 3.8 million MT. — **Sheldene Joy Talavera**





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## Cabanatuan to get P72-M rice facility

To prevent unmilled rice spoilage and to improve milled grain quality, a Rice Processing System (RPS) 3 facility will be built in Cabanatuan City under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund Mechanization Program.

The program is being managed by the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech).

PhilMech Director 4 Dionisio Alvindia and Interim Director for Operations Joel Dator, together with Cabanatuan City Mayor Myca Elizabeth Vergara, signed the agreement to pave the way for the project.

Dator said RPS 3 is a state-of-the-art facility that will include three units of 12-ton capacity recirculating dryers and one multi-pass rice mill that can process four to five tons of unmilled rice every hour.

The machines, pegged at P72 million, will be given by PhilMech to the local government, which will shoulder the construction of a warehouse and manage the facility's operations.

Dator said that once completed, the project is expected to bring services needed by the farmers, particularly in drying and the processing of palay

(unmilled rice).

He emphasized that models for the machines to be used in the RPS 3 facility are new and far more advanced than those being utilized by private millers in the country.

The director noted that it is the priority of PhilMech to choose quality machinery that can be used in the long term by farmers, cooperatives, and the local government.

Prior to the turnover of the facility, Dator said the agency will provide training to personnel who will handle the machines. He also vowed that the local government could expect consistent support from PhilMech.

Aside from the postharvest facility, the agency will also include production technology in its package of support. Dator advised recipients to coordinate with them to enjoy the benefits of the program, which is now in its fifth year of implementation.

Around 23 units of different farm equipment amounting to P33.7 million had already been distributed by PhilMech to farmers and cooperatives in the area from 2019 to 2021.

**JERRY M. HERNANDEZ**





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# Water supply rotation in Metro begins July 12

*MWSS turns  
to rain dance*

By DANESSA RIVERA

West zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. has scheduled nighttime water service interruptions starting tomorrow to preserve water supply amid Angat Dam's declining water level.

"Affected customers are advised to remember the service interruption schedule and to store water for their needs for hours of the day when supply will be unavailable. Mobile water tankers will be deployed as needed," Maynilad said in an advisory on July 10.

Water service interruptions in Caloocan, Malabon, Valenzuela, Navotas, Quezon City and Manila will affect 591,000 customers, according to Maynilad supply operations head Ronaldo Padua.

The specific list of affected barangays is announced on Maynilad's social media pages.

Turn to Page 4



An engineer from the Shimizu Fujita Takenaka EEl joint venture for the Metro Manila Subway Project checks on the work progress on the subway depot in Valenzuela City yesterday. He joined railway engineers and officials from the Department of Transportation during the inspection of the depot, where two tunnel boring machines are currently operational for the excavation process.

JESSE BUSTOS





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# THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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## Water From Page 1

The daily service interruptions will be limited to the nighttime hours of 7 p.m. to 4 a.m., or 6 a.m. in some areas.

The service interruptions are being implemented after Angat Dam's water level fell below its normal operating level of 180 meters.

Maynilad has yet to determine whether this service interruption will be extended and expanded in scope.

"We can't answer until when this situation will end. We're hoping there will be rains over the Ipo watershed to augment the water supply," Padua said.

### Rain dance

Dumagat tribe members will perform a rain dance at Angat Dam.

"Last year (the indigenous group) also conducted a rain dance. The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System called this weather modification or specification program as we respect the connection of our fellow Dumagat with nature. This traditional ritual could help in managing our watershed," MWSS division manager engineer Patrick Dizon said in a radio interview.

As of Monday morning, the water level of Angat Dam dropped to 179.23 meters or 0.33 meters less compared to its previous level of 179.56 meters.

Based on the National Water Re-

sources Board (NWRB)'s projection, the water level of Angat Dam could reach between 176 and 177 meters.

"Based on the historical record, even if there is El Niño, by August or September we expect the water level of Angat Dam to increase," Dizon said.

Maynilad Water Services Inc. has been instructed to ensure that the schedule of rotating water interruptions will be followed, he added.

"Maynilad should follow the announcement on water interruption and if possible, the nine hours interruption should be shortened. The interruption should not exceed 4 a.m.," he said.

Dizon said Manila Water will provide 25 million liters daily to Maynilad.

"It may increase, depending on the arrangement between Maynilad and Manila Water. We may increase it to an additional 25 to 50 million liters," he said.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides for the irrigation needs of 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

### 'Alarming'

Meanwhile, Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) hydrologist Rosalie Pagulayan said the drop in Angat Dam's water level is "alarming."

"The drop in the level of Angat Dam is very critical for Metro Manila... If there will be no rains to re-

plenish the elevation, the downward trend is quite alarming," Pagulayan said in a radio interview.

She added the water level will reach 176 meters if no rain will replenish the reservoir in the next nine days.

Pagulayan said that only three dams - Binga Dam in Benguet, Magat Dam in Isabela and Caliraya Dam in Laguna - registered a water level increase while the rest suffered further drops in water elevation.

The water levels of other dams - Ipo Dam in Bulacan, La Mesa Dam in Quezon City, Ambuklao Dam in Benguet, San Roque Dam in Pangasinan and Pantabangan Dam in Nueva Ecija - dropped.

NWRB executive director Seville David Jr. said they will further cut the 48 cubic meters per second (cms) water allocation for Maynilad and Manila Water if the water level of Angat continues to drop.

The 48 cms and 20 cms water allocation for the two water concessionaires and for irrigation, respectively, took effect on July 8 when Angat Dam's water level fell below its normal operating level.

"We continue to monitor the water level (of Angat Dam) together with the MWSS and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA). If the water level continues to drop and no rains will come, we need to further adjust the water allocation to protect the current supply and prepare for the effect of El Niño at the end of the year," David said.

"Based on our projection and PAGASA data, if we experience below-normal rains because of El Niño, we may not attain our target elevation of Angat before the year ends," he added.

### Tube wells mobilized

NIA's Central Luzon office will mobilize 500 shallow tube wells as Angat Dam's water level continues to drop.

NIA Central Luzon director Josephine Salazar told **The STAR** in a text message that through its different irrigation associations, the 500 shallow tube wells distributed last year to the region's farmers will be mobilized.

They will also assist the irrigation associations with the fuel requirements for the shallow tube wells, and will make final assessments on the number of additional tube wells to be constructed.

Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor told **The STAR** in a text message that they are "not sure if shallow tube wells will be reliable under drought conditions because the underground water table may also dry up fast."

"Pumps also need fuel and are relatively costly to operate. Some farmers reportedly spend as much as P30,000 per season to run their pumps. There are also water management technologies such as alternate drying and wetting, but I am not sure if this is doable in large irrigation systems where there are fixed

schedules for the release of water," Montemayor said.

He advised farmers to look at alternative crops that do not need a lot of water, such as corn and mongo.

4 SM Agri Multipurpose Cooperative chairman Simeon Sioson urged the government to conduct cloud-seeding operations to save rice crops in Central Luzon.

### Regulate water use

San Juan Mayor Francis Zamora said the proposal to regulate the water usage of businesses in Metro Manila will depend on the decision of local government units (LGUs) in the National Capital Region.

"What are the establishments that consume huge amounts of water in their operations? These are the car wash, golf courses and swimming pool. Not all cities in Metro Manila have golf courses or hotels... It will now depend on the LGUs to pass ordinances for the regulation of establishments' water usage," Zamora said in an interview with **GMA-7**.

Zamora mentioned that San Juan City is setting up water catchment areas to store rainwater.

The water dousing tradition during the feast of Saint John the Baptist on June 24 was banned.

He urged LGUs and Metro Manila households to conserve and recycle water and collect rainwater. - **With Bella Cariaso, Ramon Efren Lazaro, Jose Rodel Clapano**



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# P-6.6-B program to aid indigenous people

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

The **Department of Agriculture (DA)** and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) will work on a P6.6-billion project that seeks to improve the livelihood of farmers and fishers in Mindanao.

On Monday, the DA and the NCIP signed a memorandum of agreement for the implementation of the Mindanao Inclusive Agriculture Development Project (MIADP).

MIADP is a five-year plan that intends to increase agricultural productivity while protecting the natural resources of ancestral domains.

Under the partnership, the DA will ensure that all programs, subprojects and activities in the ancestral domains are conducted in accordance with the environmental and social safeguards.

Such initiatives are to be implemented with established indigenous knowledge, systems and practices of the indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples (ICCs/IPs) and in a participative manner.

The DA will lead the planning, implementation, policymaking, monitoring, evaluation and other related activities of the MIADP. It will coordinate with the NCIP to carry out the undertakings.

## NCIP endorsement

The NCIP will select and endorse the ICCs/IPs with a certificate of ancestral domain title (CADT) or certificate of ancestral land title (CALT) for the priority ancestral lands.

The DA will lead the preparatory activities, such as coordination or consultative meetings with stakeholders and site visits in close coordination with the NCIP.

The NCIP will provide the necessary technical support and assistance, and facilitate the conduct and documentation of the free, prior and informed consent process pertaining to the programs of the DA within the ancestral domain, provided it is undertaken in accordance with the prescribed timeline of the MIADP.

The NCIP is responsible for processing and issuing the certification precondition to all projects situated in the ancestral domain.

The NCIP will provide or facilitate data collection on the following: certificates of ancestral domain title, ancestral domain claim, ancestral land title or approval of CADT application by the Commission en banc, as well as ancestral domain sustainable development and protection plan and demographics and socioeconomic profile of partner ICCs/IPs.

MIADP will focus on 26 ances-

tral lands in Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao Region, Soccsksargen, Caraga and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The World Bank (WB) had approved a \$100-million loan to the government for the MIADP, which it said would benefit around 120,000 farmers and fisherfolk in selected ancestral domains in Mindanao.

Mindanao contributes 33.4 percent of the total value of agricultural production in the Philippines, surpassed only by Luzon at 39.2 percent and followed by Visayas at 27.4 percent, according to WB.

"Mindanao is home to about 25 percent of the Philippines' population but accounts for 35 percent of the country's poor," said Ndiame Diop, World Bank Country Director for Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. **INQ**



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## PH, World Bank sign \$600-M loan

### Fund to help modernize agriculture sector, optimize food supply chain

By CHINO S. LEYCO

**T**he Department of Finance (DOF) announced it has successfully secured a loan agreement with the

World Bank that seeks to revitalize and modernize the country's agriculture sector.

The Philippine government, represented by the DOF, and the World Bank signed on July 7 the

loan agreement worth \$600 million, roughly ₱33.34 billion, for the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) Scale-Up.

According to the DOF, the PRDP Scale-Up ini- ▶ **5**



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## PH, World Bank sign \$600-M loan

initiative is aimed at propelling the agriculture sector into a modernized and industrialized era through public infrastructure interventions and the reinforcement of the commodity value chain.

DOF added that the **PRDP Scale-Up, led by the Department of Agriculture (DA)**, is also in response to the persistent challenges faced by the agriculture and fisheries (A&F) sector and rural communities in the country.

Central to the project's objectives is the facilitation of enhanced market access for farmers and fisherfolk, allowing them to reap the benefits of increased income from selected agri-fishery value chain, the DOF said.

Additionally, the project aims to optimize efficiency within the food supply chain, thereby contributing to an improved overall agricultural landscape.

Earlier on June 6, President Marcos emphasized the need to develop the agriculture sector not only in terms of production, but also in ensuring the welfare of farmers and fisherfolk.

The President's thrust for a modernized agriculture and agribusiness sector is envisioned to spur social and economic transformation, as detailed in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028.

The PRDP Scale-Up will cover 16 regions composed of 82 provinces in the country, focusing on areas where about half of the Philippines' 109.03-million A&F population

resides.

It will entail direct investments in rural infrastructure and enterprise sub-projects, which will directly benefit about 450,000 farmers and fisherfolk and generate about 42,000 new jobs.

Amounting to \$818 million (₱45.01 billion) in total, the remaining \$218 million will be funded by the national government and involved local government units (LGUs).

The World Bank has been supporting the project since 2014, and has provided two additional loans in 2018 and 2021.

Upon the completion of the PRDP Scale-Up, the DA aims to facilitate its transition into a regular locally funded program to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the project's interventions.

On June 26, the World Bank also granted over ₱63 billion in loans to the Philippines to finance various government initiatives of the Marcos administration.

Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno and World Bank Philippines Country Director Ndiamé Diop signed four loan agreements amounting to US\$1.14 billion, equivalent to around ₱63.59 billion.

According to the Department of Finance, the financing agreements are aimed at accelerating economic recovery, strengthening climate resilience, improving the quality of education, as well as developing the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

As of July 2023, the total WB official development assistance (ODA) loan and grant commitments amount to an estimated \$7.94 billion.



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### **Giit sa DA, DSWD: Magsasaka ayudahan sa El Niño**

Hinimok ni Senador Christopher "Bong" Go ang Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) at sa iba pang ahensya ng gobyerno na paghandaan ang epekto ng El Niño phenomenon sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng mas matatag na suporta sa mahihirap na komunidad, partikular sa mga magsasaka.

"Inaasahan natin na malaki ang epekto ng El Niño sa ating bansa kaya nananawagan ako

sa gobyerno na magtulungan tayo na tiyaking may maayos na suporta ang ating mga kababayang Pilipino, lalo na ang mahihirap," ani Go.

Sa isang advisory na inilabas ng United Nations noong Martes, hinihimok nito ang buong mundo na maghanda sa epekto ng El Niño phenomenon dahil maaari itong humantong sa mataas na temperatura.

Sinabi ng UN na mayroong 90 porsiyentong posibilidad na magpatuloy

ang El Niño sa buong 2023.

Hinimok ng senador ang DA na magpatupad ng mga programang makikinabang ang mga magsasaka gaya ng access sa mga modernong teknolohiya na makatutulong upang mapabuti ang kanilang mga ani.

Hiniling naman niya sa DSWD na lumikha rin ng mga programa na ang target ay mga mahihirap na komunidad at siguruhing sila ay may access sa sapat at masustansyang pagkain.



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## Support poor farmers amid El Niño, gov't agencies told

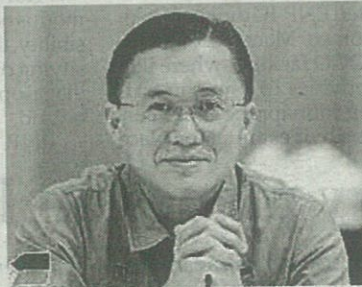
SENATOR Christopher "Bong" Go has urged the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), among other agencies, to prepare for the potential impact of the El Niño phenomenon by providing more robust food security initiatives for the Filipino people particularly the vulnerable and poor communities.

"Inaasahan natin na malaki ang epekto ng El Niño sa ating bansa kaya naman nananawagan ako sa gobyerno na magtulungan tayo na siguraduhin na may maayos na suporta ang ating mga kababayang Pilipino, lalong-lalona ang mahihirap," Go said.

"Importante ay walang magutom. Pangalagaan natin ang mga kababayan nating pinakanangailangan," he added.

An advisory issued by the United Nations on Tuesday, July 4, urged the world to prepare for the impact of El Niño phenomenon, as it can lead to elevated global temperatures.

The UN said there is a 90 percent probability that the El Niño will continue throughout 2023. This event typically occurs every two to seven years, and its duration typically ranges from nine to 12 months.



Senator Bong Go

El Niño is commonly linked to heightened heat levels worldwide, accompanied by dry conditions in certain regions and heavy precipitation in others.

Go said there is an urgent need to address the potential effects of El Niño, particularly among the vulnerable sectors of society. He stressed the importance of providing adequate support to poor farming families to enhance their agricultural productivity and overall livelihood.

The senator urged DA to implement stronger programs that would benefit poor farming families. He said providing farming families with necessary resources and access to modern

farming technologies will help improve their yields and enhance their economic well-being.

Go emphasized the importance of collaboration between the DA and the DSWD. By pooling their efforts, these two agencies can jointly implement programs that target impoverished communities, and ensure they have access to sufficient and nutritious food, Go said.

"Ang importante posa akin ay may laman ang tiyan ng ating mga kababayan. Unahin natin ang kapakanan ng mga mahihirap. Dapat walang magutom," Go urged.

"Dapat maramdaman nila ang pagbangon ng ekonomiya tungo sa mas ligtas at komportableng buhay pagkatapos ng pandemya. Food security has always been a critical concern for any nation, and the Philippines is no exception," he stressed.

Go also emphasized the significance of two key bills. The first is Senate Bill No. 188 or the establishment of the Department of Disaster Resilience, which aims to strengthen the government's disaster response capabilities. It also seeks to better prepare the country for the impact of natural hazards including El Niño.



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## BONG GO SA DA, DSWD: MAGSASAKA AYUDAHAN SA EL NIÑO

**H**inimok ni Senador Christopher "Bong" Go ang Department of Agriculture, Department of Social Welfare and Development at iba pang ahensya ng gobyerno na paghandaan ang epekto ng El Niño phenomenon sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng mas matatag na suporta sa mahihirap na komunidad, partikular sa mga magsasaka.

"Inaasahan natin na malaki ang epekto ng El Niño sa ating bansa kaya nananawagan ako sa gobyerno na magtulungan tayo na tiyaking may maayos na suporta ang ating mga kababayang Pilipino, lalo na ang mahihirap," ani Go.

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Sinabi ng UN na mayroong 90 porsiyentong posibilidad na magpatuloy ang El Niño sa buong 2023.

Karaniwan itong nangyayari tuwing dalawa hanggang pitong taon at ang tagal nito ay

umaabot mula siyam hanggang 12 buwan.

Ang El Niño ay nauugnay sa tumataas na antas ng init sa buong mundo na sinasamahan ng dry conditions sa ilang partikular na rehiyon at malakas na pag-ulan sa iba.

Sinabi ni Go na dapat na kagay na tugunan ang mga potensyal na epekto ng El Niño at binigyang-diin niya ang pamamahagi ng suporta sa mahihirap na pamilyang magsasaka upang mapahusay ang kanilang produksyon sa agrikultura at pangkalahatang kabuhayan.

Hinimok ng senador ang DA na magpatupad ng mga programang makikinabang ang mga magsasaka gaya ng access sa mga modernong

teknolohiya na makatutulong upang mapabuti ang kanilang mga ani.

Hiniling naman niya sa DSWD na lumikha rin ng mga programa ang target ang mga mahihirap na komunidad at siguruhing may access sila sa sapat at masustansyang pagkain.

Muling binigyang-diin ni Go

ang kahalagahan ng isinusulong niyang batas, ang Senate Bill No. 188 na magtatatag ng Department of Disaster Resilience.

Layon nitong palakasin ang disaster response capabilities ng gobyerno at maihanda ang bansa sa epekto ng mga natural na kalamidad, tulad ng El Niño.

RNT



# Abante TONITE

MABILIS SA BALITA

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## BIGAS TIPIRIN SA EL NIÑO

Nanawagan ang National Irrigation Administration (NIA) sa publiko na huwag magsayang ng bigas sa harap ng inaasahang epekto ng El Niño sa produksyon ng palay sa bansa.

Ayon kay NIA Admin-

istrator Eduardo Guillen, kung hindi naman kayang ubusin ang isang buong takal ng kanin ay makabubuti pang umorder na lamang ng half-cup rice.

Kailangan aniyang magtulungan ang lahat upang hindi mahirapan

sa nakaambang hagupit ng El Niño sa bansa.

Kasabay nito, hini-kayat din ni Guillen ang mga lokal na pamahalaan na dapat magsagawa rin ng mga kinakailangang paghahanda para mabawasan

ang epekto ng matinding tagtuyot sa kanilang mga nasasakupan.

Subalit sakali aniyang mangyari ang matinding senaryo ay tutulungan ng gobyerno ang mga magsasaka na inaasahang hirap makapagtanim kapag nagkaroon ng tagtuyot.

Nanawagan din si Guillen sa Department of Budget and Management na taasan ang pondo ng ahensya para sa pagkumpuni ng mga nasirang irigasyon. (Dolly Cabreza)





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## Rep. Co pushes RE tech in agri sector to mitigate El Niño impact

**A** LEADER of the House of Representatives on Monday called for the utilization of renewable energy (RE) to help the agricultural sector mitigate the impacts of El Niño.

Ako Bicol Party-list Rep. Elizaldy Co, chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, said it is necessary to take proactive measures to address the potential adverse effects of the weather phenomenon that is seen to bring hotter days ahead as it may affect rainfall patterns in various provinces that may result in decreased water supply or even drought.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) earlier declared that El Niño is here in the country and that it may intensify in the coming months through the first quarter of 2024.

"Given the predictions from Pagasa, it is crucial that we take proactive measures to address the potential adverse effects of El Niño on our agricultural communities," Co said.

For instance, he added, solar-powered water supply systems could help ascertain reliable access to clean water, especially in impoverished, far-flung, and upland communities.

He noted that solar-powered water supply

systems have proven successful in addressing the water needs of areas that require a sustainable and dependable water source.

The lawmaker said he is pursuing an innovative approach by collaborating with experts to implement solar-powered irrigation and "fertigation" systems in the Bicol Region.

Through this, he said, Bicol farmers would be provided with sustainable solutions to mitigate the impact of water scarcity and optimize agricultural practices.

"The proposed solar-powered irrigation facility, coupled with an advanced fertigation system, holds great promise in ensuring an uninterrupted and environmentally friendly water supply for our farmers," said Co.

"We can harness the power of RE to ensure efficient water usage and enhance crop productivity in the Bicol Region. We can empower our farmers with sustainable and efficient methods to overcome the challenges posed by El Niño and maximize their agricultural output," he added.

By promoting responsible water management practices, adopting innovative technologies, and empowering communities, Co said the country could enhance its resilience and minimize the impact of El Niño on local farmers and their livelihoods.

*Jovee Marie N. Dela Cruz*



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## Negros Occ ships out 10,000 hogs amid ASF scare

BACOLOD CITY – Amid the spread of African swine fever (ASF) and other hog diseases, Negros Occidental has shipped out 10,000 healthy pigs to other provinces and cities in the country, Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson said yesterday.

Lacson noted a major increase in hog sale, from 5,000 to 10,000 heads, when ASF was first reported in the province.

Data from the provincial veterinary office showed hog fatalities at 16,361, representing 9.96 percent of the 164,334 total pig population in Negros Occidental.

The province's hog industry incurred losses amounting to P186.6 million as hog cholera and ASF affected 3,536 hog raisers.

ASF cases were detected in the cities of Bacolod, Silay and Victorias as well as in the towns of Pulupandan and Hinigaran.

No hog deaths were reported in the first district of Negros Occidental, which is composed of the cities of San Carlos and Escalante, and the municipalities of Calatrava, Don Salvador Benedicto and Toboso.

While he acknowledged the high number of hog fatalities, Lacson said the province has sufficient supply of hogs for local consumption.

"I'd like to think we've somehow slowed it down," Lacson said, referring to hog mortalities, which decreased to 104 per day as of July 9 from 400 in the past months.

– Gilbert Bayoran



# Malaya Business Insight

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## Corn, soybeans climb

SINGAPORE- Chicago corn and soybean futures ticked higher on Monday, after losses in the previous session, although gains were limited due to expectations of further rains in the US Midwest.

Wheat prices slid for a third consecutive session to a one-week low due to ample supplies from newly harvested Russian crop.

The most-active corn contract on the Chicago Board of Trade

(CBOT) was up 0.1 percent at \$4.95 a bushel while soybeans was 0.3 percent higher at \$13.21-1/2 a bushel. Wheat fell 0.6 percent to \$6.45-3/4 a bushel.

Grain traders are monitoring shifts in weather as more US corn enters its critical pollination stage. Two-thirds of corn and 60 percent of soybeans were affected by drought as of July 4, according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). - Reuters