

CLIPPINGS FOR THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2022

A. SEC. PBBM QUOTED

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

President Marcos visits the Kadiwa ng Pangulo outlet and job fair at the provincial capitol of Butuan City, Agusan del Sur where he also inaugurated the 24.9 – megawatt Lake Mainit hydro powerplant yesterday

B. DA FAMILY

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P35-M nabubulok na karne. Nadiskubre ng BOC

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Cloud seedling planned for Magat Dam, Bohol province

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Water levels in Luzon dams keep dropping: Farmers in Cagayan Valley Central

Luzon worry about their crops as Magat, Angat reduce irrigation supply

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P38 per kilo rice sold in certain MM areas

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DA eyes cloud seeding in Angat

Sorsogon, Cabanatuan to get RPS

Go Negosyo supports 'Tatak Pinoy'

UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION: Spoiled Imported meat worth around P35 million were found in an abandoned warehouse in Meycauayan, Bulacan on Tuesday, July 11, 2023.

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

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Senate to conduct hearing on bill seeking to develop bamboo industry

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DTI Trains Quirino tomato farmers on processing

PH Continues to lead SE Asia GM food market

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Russia's threat to pull out of Ukraine grain deal raises fears about global food security

Rice soars to two-year high in Asia on El Niño drought risks

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World's top fertilizer maker limits production

Soybeans. wheat rise

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'DA, local govt tie ups to boost agri production'



BUSINESSMIRROR FILE PHOTO

By CAI U. ORDINARIO

[@caiordinario](#)

IF the national government wants to improve agriculture production, the **Department of Agriculture (DA)** must forge partnerships with local governments nationwide, according to former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito.

In a forum at the University of the Philippines School of Economics on Monday, the former Secretary of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said that when agriculture services were devolved, the DA left municipal agriculture officers (MAOs) and Provincial Agriculture Officers "were left to fend for themselves."

This, he said, prevented them from delivering the much-needed assistance to farmers and fishers nationwide after the devolution through the 1991 Local

Government Code (LGC). This, in turn, led to the lackluster performance of the country's farm sector for many years.

"When it [agriculture services] was devolved back in 1991, their [DA] attitude should not have been 'bahala kayo sa buhay ninyo' because it's now devolved to you.' What they should have done was to deliberately make it their responsibility to capacitate, train the LGUs [local government unit] to handle agriculture," Habito told reporters on the sidelines of the event.

He said one concrete example

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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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of this is information he obtained from farmers in Zamboanga del Norte. When he asked the barangay chairman, who was also a farmer, what was the one thing he would like to ask from the government, the barangay captain replied "kalabaw" or carabao.

The country's former chief economist went to the MAO to ask why this request was not relayed to the DA Central Office. The MAO, Habito said, replied that the matter was already brought up with the DA but that the agency was

focused on sending only fertilizer and hybrid seeds, which was its national program.

Habito said this has been addressed only now through the Province-led Agriculture and Fisheries Extension System (PAFES) introduced by the previous administration. The program is already being expanded to other parts of the country.

"[In effect, this failure of the DA led to the] burdening of farmers. The biggest problem in the Department of Agriculture is

the institution itself. The devolution was not properly done," Habito said.

Apart from this, he said something has to be done to address the DA's "very low" absorptive capacity. He said that as far back as the 1990s when he was still Neda Secretary, the DA managed to spend only 60 to 70 percent of its annual budget by November 30.

The remainder, or 30 to 40 percent of the annual budget, Habito said was spent to finance the bonuses and other perks given to DA officials. He said these funds should have been downloaded to the LGUs to help the farmers.

"Everybody's arguing to death that the DA should get a bigger budget. How can you give a bigger budget to an agency that has not demonstrated to move the money? The way they can move the money quickly is to download it to the provinces but capacitate them also to use it well. Of course govern it with a tight memorandum of agreement para hindi gamitin sa basketball court ni governor," he said.

"In short, it has to be a package. And part of the performance indicators of the DA is

to determine if the provinces are better capacitated now to handle agriculture. It was never in their performance indicators, it was never in their KPIs [key performance indicators]."

Habito said these issues could only be solved by someone who does not fear any political backlash. He said at this time, it's only the President who fits this bill.

It can be recalled that the President won the last election with 31 million votes, one of the highest in the country's history.

"I am giving him [the President] a chance to recover kasi sabi niya I still want to hold on to it kasi nga supposedly he's determined to fix it. Privately, my friend Arsi Balisacan [current Neda Secretary Arsenio Balisacan] tells me, yeah talagang 'yan ang pag-iisip ni President," Habito said.

"I guess he just gets distracted by so many things. But when he gets around to doing it, hopefully, he listens to Arsi also because Arsi knows the agency very well, he used to be an [undersecretary] there. Sana ma-fix nila. It's really the institution that's very dysfunctional."



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Rice soars to two-year high in Asia on El Niño drought risks

RICE prices in Asia have surged to the highest level in more than two years as importers build up stockpiles on fears that the onset of El Niño will parch plantations and damage crops.

A benchmark grade in the region, Thai white rice 5 percent broken, has climbed about 15 percent in the past four months to \$535 a ton, the strongest since early March 2021, according to data from the Thai Rice Exporters Association.

El Niño conditions have developed in the tropical Pacific for the first time in seven years, according to the World Meteorological Organization, threatening to bring drought to Southeast Asia. That comes just as three days of record global temperatures last week increased concerns over the pace of climate change.

While monsoon rains have brought relief to rice fields in parts of India, the

top exporter, dry weather is threatening crops in No. 2 shipper Thailand, with the country facing widespread drought conditions from early 2024. The government has already asked farmers to restrict their planting to just one crop this year.

"With El Niño, we'll start to clearly see the effects of dry weather later around September and October," said Chookiat Ophaswongse, honorary president of the Thai Rice Exporters Association. "This being said, we'll see stockpiling continue as El Niño looks set to drag on into next year."

Indonesian purchases

IMPORTERS have started building inventories at aggressive rates. Vietnam expects rice exports this year to climb to the highest in about a decade, with shipments surging to buyers in the Philippines, China and Indonesia.

"The large buying from Indonesia and Philippines has pushed the market



HARVESTED paddy rice in jute sacks at the grain market in Ambala, India, October 9, 2022. Rice is a staple food for about half of the world's population, with Asia producing and consuming about 90 percent of global supply. T. NARAYAN/BLOOMBERG

higher," said Jeremy Zwinger, founder and chief executive officer of research firm The Rice Trader. Still, "weakness will return in the new year or even the fourth quarter, unless politics or weather changes direction."

Global rice supplies remain exceptionally large, Zwinger said. While the world's year-ending stockpiles have dropped for two years, they are coming off a record high, according to data from the US Department of Agriculture.

Heat waves are likely to persist in many areas of southern China in the next few days, with temperatures rising as high as 40C in parts of Hunan and Jiangxi, top rice-growing provinces, according to the China Meteorological Administration. There's a "high risk" that heat will force the premature ripening of some rice in these areas, it said.

India food prices

SPIRALING prices of tomato, onion

and pulses are emerging as new risks for India's retail inflation, reaffirming expectations of a hawkish hold from the central bank for the rest of the year.

After moderating for four months, consumer price inflation probably accelerated to 4.6 percent in June, according to a Bloomberg survey of economists. That compares with a 25-month low reading of 4.25 percent in May. Official data is due 5:30 p.m. local time Wednesday.

The gains are broadly in line with the Reserve Bank of India's projections, but an impact on supply chains and crops due to an erratic weather may fan the prices further.

That means the central bank will take longer to reach the mid-point of its 2 percent-6 percent target, delaying a pivot to rate cut to support growth. It left the rates unchanged in the last two meetings to see the impact of past hikes on inflation.

High borrowing costs may further dent demand in Asia's third-largest economy where growth has lost pace tracking a global slowdown. It may also pause the rally in India's stocks which have touched record highs, according to some market watchers.

Economists are crunching numbers to gauge the impact of the sharp acceleration in food prices on headline inflation in the coming months. A jump of more than 400 percent in the prices of tomato since the start of the year will likely push up inflation beyond the RBI's target ceiling in the July reading due next month.

"The weather-related price disruption has also been seen in other vegetables and most notably in onion prices," said Anubhuti Sahay, an economist with Standard Chartered Bank. She sees the risk of inflation touching 6 percent in July if the increase in food prices is sustained. *Bloomberg News*



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Senate to conduct hearing on bill seeking to develop bamboo industry

THE Senate will conduct a hearing on a proposed measure that aims to spur the development of the Philippine bamboo industry.

Senate Bill (SB) 605, or an "Act Institutionalizing the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Program," is up for discussion on July 19. It was authored by Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri.

Six other bamboo development-related bills will be deliberated in the Senate on July 19. All these bamboo bills, which aim to strengthen the functions of the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council (PBIDC), are seen to be consolidated

with SB 605.

These measures are SB 615 by Senator Cynthia Villar, SB 1044 by Senator Joel Villanueva, SB 1145 and SB 1552 by Senator Lito Lapid, SB 1118 by Senator Loren Legarda, SB 1145 by Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, and SB 2172 by Senator Jinggoy Estrada.

SB 605 fortifies PBIDC's policy-making role in creating community-based enterprises that will have sufficient supply of quality materials and produce new products from research and development-inspired technologies.

Manufacturers are mandated to use bamboo on at least 25 percent of their

raw materials inputs for furniture, lumber, and manufactured products that can use bamboo as an alternative to wood.

Under the proposal, plantations will be accepted as loan collateral in government-owned and-controlled financial institutions. Plantation developers and bamboo processors will have priority access to credit and guarantee. Bamboo plantations will be exempted from security cutting, harvesting, and transporting permits.

Also, markets will be created through aggressive trade promotion. Supply of trained and skilled labor will be stabilized. There will be a comprehensive

program on bamboo nursery expansion; bamboo propagation, breeding, site-specific bamboo species development; and sustainable planting, harvesting, soil and water conservation protocols.

Bamboo advocate and former House Deputy Speaker Deogracias Victor B. Savellano, currently vice chairman of PBIDC, said he hopes SB 605 will be ratified on or before the year ends.

The Philippines has the world's fifth largest bamboo industry. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the global bamboo market is currently at \$17 billion.



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Pilmico bags three awards at the Livestock Philippines 2023

PILMICO Animal Nutrition Corp. (Pilmico), part of the agribusiness subsidiary of the Aboitiz Group, received recognition for its excellence in feed mill and farm operations at the Livestock Philippines 2023 last July 5 at The World Trade Center in Metro Manila.

Pilmico's feed mills received the "Excellent Performance in Commercial Feedmill for Swine and Poultry," while Pilmico's Farms division accepted the "Environment-Friendly Corporation" award for its sustainable practices. Some of their practices include a wastewater manage-

ment system wherein the farms' by-products are treated to be recycled, which helps prevent pollution and odors.

The event was organized by Informa Markets and supported by the **Department of Agriculture (DA)**. In attendance were President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairperson Sen. Cynthia Villar. Representatives of the DA led the recognition, including Senior Undersecretary Domingo Pangani-ban and Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa.

"We're thrilled and grateful to receive three awards from

the Livestock Philippines, which recognizes our contributions to the growth and development of the agricultural industry. This recognition definitely motivates us further to continue fostering excellence in our products, services, and operations," said Norie Bermudez, Agribusiness Country Director-PH of Pilmico and Gold Coin Group.

In addition to Norie Bermudez, accepting the award on behalf of Pilmico were Farm Operations Technical Director Carlos Gerle, Vice President for Quality, Safety, Health, Environment, and Process (QSHEP) Ma. Cleo

Flores, and Senior Supervisor for Safety and Environment Christy Gawidan.

"We thank the organization for recognizing our efforts to become a more environmentally friendly and sustainable institution. We know we still have a long way to go, but we're proud of the steps we've taken to reduce our environmental impact, and this award is a confirmation that we are on the right track," said Gerle.

Pilmico is one of the leading agribusinesses in the Philippines, with operations in manufacturing feeds and managing poultry and swine farms.



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DA seizes smuggled frozen farm products worth P35M

THE Department of Agriculture-Office of the Assistant Secretary for Inspectorate and Enforcement (DA-IE) said it seized smuggled frozen agricultural products worth P35 million in Bulacan last Tuesday.

The DA said it will shut down the warehouses where the smuggled frozen food items were found.

"Its owners will also be held accountable for trading smuggled agricultural commodities," DA Assistant Secretary James Layug said in a statement on Wednesday.

Layug said frozen spoiled meat products, including pork feet, lamb and chicken skin, were found inside two makeshift cold storage facilities.

Authorities also discovered banned frozen meat products from Germany and India.

"Evidence of re-boxing of the spoiled meats was discovered. Thorough investigation is underway to probe deeper into the re-boxing operations," Layug said.

The DA said food safety is one of its major concerns. Selling smuggled meat and fishery products in the market, it said,

poses danger to public health.

"The seized commodities lack the sanitary and phytosanitary clearance from the appropriate Food Safety Regulatory Agency [FSRA]," Layug said.

"The department will initiate prosecution against those found responsible pursuant to Republic Act [RA] 10611, the Food Safety Act of 2013, and RA 10845, the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016."

Last March, the DA confiscated a shipment which arrived in Subic. It contained misdeclared agricultural products that were purported to consist of squid rings but instead contained dressed chicken, duck head, and duck neck, worth approximately P40 million.

"The vans were also reportedly lacking the necessary documents including the Phytosanitary Import Clearance," the DA said in a statement.

The DA conducted the operation in Subic in partnership with the Bureau of Customs, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, Philippine Coast Guard, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, and the Bureau of Animal Industry. *Raadee S. Sausa*



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Abante

UNA SA BALITA

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₱35M bulok na karne naawat pagkalat sa palengke

NAAWAT ng Department of Agriculture (DA) at Bureau of Customs (BOC) ang pagkalat ng P35 milyong halaga ng bulok ng karne sa mga palengke matapos salakayin ang pinagtataguan ditong

bodega sa Meycauayan, Bulacan noong Martes.

Sa ulat, nire-repack umano ang mga expired na karne ng baboy at baka na galing sa India at Germany at saka ito ibebenta sa mga palengke.

Mabaho na umano ang mga karne dahil nag-expire na ito noong 2021.

Walang tao sa bodega nang dumating ang grupo ng DA at BOC at nasa ibang bansa rin umano ang may-arinito.



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Bodega sa Bulacan ininspeksyon

P35-M nabubulok na karne, nadiskubre ng BOC

Nasa P35-milyong halaga ng nabubulok na karne ng baboy at baka ang nasamsam ng mga operatiba ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) katuwang ang Department of Agriculture (DAR) at National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) matapos nilang pasukin ang warehouse na sinasabing imbakan ng mga imported meat products sa Meycauayan, Bulacan kamakalawa ng hapon.

Natagpuan ng composite team sa pamumuno ng Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS) ang mga nabubulok na karne sa dalawang "improvised cold storage facilities" sa loob ng Meycauayan Industrial Subdivision, Brgy. Pantoc,

Nina OMAR PADILLA at DANILO GARCIA Meycauayan.

Pagbukas ng mga inspektor sa mga pasilidad, sumalubong sa kanila ang mabahong amoy mula sa mga nabubulok na karne ng baboy at baka.

Hindi naman inabutan ng composite team ang may-ari ng bodega kaya sa opisyal ng homeowner's association na lamang iprinisinta ang Letter of Authority (LOA).

Sinaksihan naman ang operasyon ng mga opisyal ng Department of Agriculture's Inspectorate and Enforcement (DAIE) at ng

National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS).

"Since the owners or building administrator were not present during the service and implementation of the Letter of Authority (LOA), raiding team proceeded to the subdivision's homeowners' association to effect the substituted service thereof," ayon kay CIIS Director Verne Enciso hinggil sa isinagawang inspeksiyon.

Sinabi naman ni Deputy Commissioner for Intelligence Group Juvymax Uy na nagsagawa ng inisyal na

ebalwasyon ang DAIE at NMIS sa mga meat products, at base sa pisikal na hitsura at mabahong amoy, ang mga meat products ay nadeterminang "unfit for human consumption".

Pinuri ni Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio ang close coordination sa pagitan ng BOC at DA, at pinasalamatan ang barangay at HOA officials na nakipagugnayan sa isinagawang pagsisilbi sa LOA at inspeksiyon sa warehouse.

Lumalabas na nanggaling ang mga frozen products sa bansang India at Germany na ibinebenta sa merkado.



Ang mga frozen meat products na nagkakahalaga ng P35-milyon na nadiskubreng nabubulok na sa improvised cold storage facilities sa Meycauayan, sa ikinasang inspeksiyon ng BOC sa Meycauayan, Bulacan kamakalawa. (Kuha ni Michael Varcas)



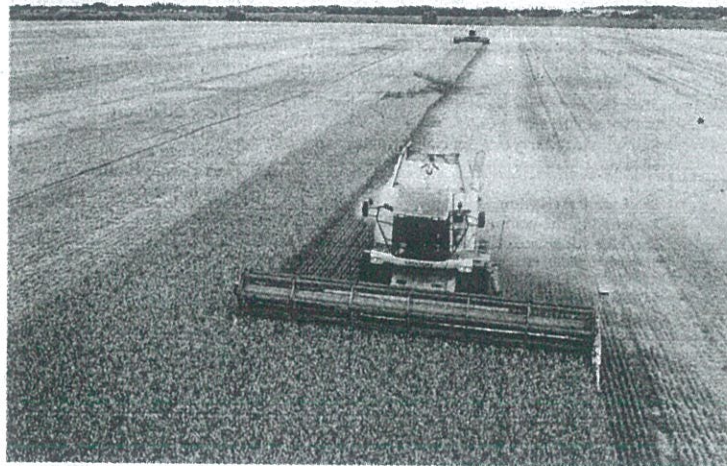
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Russia's threat to pull out of Ukraine grain deal raises fears about global food security

By COURTNEY BONNELL
AP Business Writer

LONDON—Concerns are growing that Russia will not extend a United Nations-brokered deal that allows grain to flow from Ukraine to parts of the world struggling with hunger, with ships no longer heading to the war-torn country's Black Sea ports and food exports dwindling.



HARVESTERS collect wheat in the village of Zghurivka, Ukraine on August 9, 2022. Concerns are growing that Russia will not extend a UN-brokered deal that allows grain to flow from Ukraine to parts of the world struggling with hunger, with ships no longer heading to the war-torn country's Black Sea ports and food exports dwindling. AP/EFFREM LUKATSKY

Turkey and the UN negotiated the breakthrough accord last summer to ease a global food crisis, along with a separate agreement with Russia to facilitate shipments of its food and fertilizer. Moscow insists it's still facing hurdles, though data shows it has been exporting record amounts of wheat.

Russian officials repeatedly say there are no grounds for extending the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which is up for its fourth renewal Monday. It's something they have threatened before—then have twice gone on to extend the deal for two months instead of the four months outlined in the agreement.

The UN and others are striving to keep the fragile deal intact, with Ukraine and Russia both major suppliers of wheat, barley, vegetable oil and other food products that countries in Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia rely on. It has allowed Ukraine to ship 32.8 million metric tons (36.2 million tons) of grain, more than half of it to developing nations.

The deal has helped lower global prices of food commodities like wheat after they surged to record highs following the invasion last year, but that relief has not reached kitchen tables.

Russia's exit would cut off a source for World Food Program aid for countries at risk of famine, including Somalia, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan, and compound food security problems in vulnerable places struggling with conflict, economic crisis, and drought.

"Russia gets a lot of good public will for continuing this agreement," said Joseph Glauber, senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute. "There would be a cost to pay in terms of public perception and global goodwill, I think, as far as Russia is concerned" if the deal isn't extended.

The amount of grain leaving Ukraine already has dropped, with Russia accused of slowing joint inspections of ships by Russian, Ukrainian, UN, and Turkish officials and refusing to allow more

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vessels to join the initiative.

Average daily inspections—meant to ensure vessels carry only food and not weapons that could aid either side—have fallen from a peak of 11 in October to just over two in June.

That has led to a decline in grain exports, from a high of 4.2 million metric tons in October to 1.3 million in May, a low for the year-old initiative. They rose to 2 million in June as shipment sizes grew.

If the deal isn't extended, "the countries that had relied on Ukraine for their imports are going to have to look at other sources for imports, very likely Russia, which is something that I imagine Russia was intending," said Caitlin Welsh, director of the Global Food and Water Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The UN has been negotiating with Russia to stick with the initiative, with spokesman Stéphane

Dujarric saying Monday that top officials are "doing whatever we can to ensure the continuation of all of the agreements."

Ukraine's Infrastructure Ministry said Tuesday on Facebook that the final two ships are loading grain—heading for Egypt—while 29 vessels are waiting in the waters off Turkey because Russia has refused to allow their inspection.

"Ukrainian agricultural products play a significant role in global food security," Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said. But "for the past few months, the grain corridor has been practically closed."

Russia insists the agreement hasn't worked for its own exports, blaming Western sanctions for hindering financing and insurance.

While sanctions don't affect food and fertilizer, Moscow is seeking carve outs from restrictions on the Russian Agricultural Bank, as well as movement on its ammonia,

a key ingredient in fertilizer, to a Ukrainian Black Sea port. But the ammonia pipeline has been damaged in the war, the UN said.

"There is still time to implement the part of the agreements that pertains to our country. So far, this part has not been fulfilled," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters last week. "And so at the moment, unfortunately, we don't see any particular grounds for extending this deal."

Russia, however, has increased its wheat exports to all-time highs following a large harvest. Shipments went from 33 million metric tons in 2021 to 44 million metric tons last year to expectations of 46 million this year, according to S&P Global Commodity Insights.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's shipments have fallen by around 60 percent, from 19 million tons in 2021 to predictions of about 7 or 8 million tons this year—a big hit to its agriculture-dependent economy.

With less from Ukraine and more from Russia, the world's available wheat stocks are the same as in 2021—and there is enough of it to go around, said Peter Meyer, head of grain analytics at S&P Global Commodity Insights.

Europe and Argentina are expected to boost wheat shipments, while Brazil saw a banner year for corn, of which Ukraine is also a major supplier. Meyer wouldn't expect more than a temporary bump to grain prices on world markets if the Black Sea deal isn't renewed.

"Markets just adapt extremely quickly," he said. "The fact of the matter is that the global grain markets, they balance each other out."

Ukraine can send its food by land or river through Europe, so it

wouldn't be completely cut off from selling grain, but those routes have a lower capacity than sea shipments and have stirred disunity in the European Union.

"We are a cat running out of lives in this situation," said Simon Evenett, professor of international trade and economic development at the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland. "It only takes one thing to go wrong before we're into trouble."

While the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's food price index has fallen below the record highs it hit when Russian troops entered Ukraine, food costs were already high because of Covid-19, conflict, and drought.

Then Russia's war helped push up the costs to produce food—including energy, fertilizer, and transportation.

In developing nations increasingly relying on imported food, from Kenya to Syria, weakening currencies are keeping local prices high because they are paying in US dollars.

"With approximately 80 percent of East Africa's grain being exported from Russia and Ukraine, over 50 million people across East Africa are facing hunger, and food prices have shot up by nearly 40 percent this year," said Shashwat Saraf, the International Rescue Committee's regional emergency director for East Africa.

"It is vital for the international community to not only forge a long-term deal but also build durable solutions to tackle food insecurity," he said.

AP reporter Daria Litvinova in Tallinn, Estonia, and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed.



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CoA cites NFA failure to build up adequate rice reserves

THE Commission on Audit (CoA) said the **National Food Authority (NFA)** failed to build up sufficient rice reserves despite receiving a P7-billion subsidy from the government.

In its 2022 audit report released on July 6, the state auditor said that in 2022, "the NFA did not meet the optimum level of national rice buffer stocking requirement of 300,000 metric tons (MT) at any given time... despite the full receipt of the P7-billion government subsidy."

CoA said the NFA did not comply with the implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act No. 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Act.

The law changed the role of the NFA, which used to hold a monopoly on rice imports, restricting it to purchasing domestically-harvested rice. Its purchases are then held in reserve for calamities and local shortages.

"The optimum level of rice buffer stocks to be maintained by the NFA, as approved by the NFA Council in its Resolution No. 999-2021-B dated Feb. 16, 2021, was fixed at 300,000 MT or equivalent to nine days of nationwide consumption," CoA said.

Citing the NFA's annual report for 2022, the agency's rice inventory ranged from 111,042 MT to 182,612 MT, for an average of 140,354 MT, equivalent to 4.18 days' demand, CoA said.

CoA also noted that only P5.75 billion of the subsidy was disbursed to procure 302,651 MT of palay (unmilled rice) or 63.05% of the NFA's procurement target of 480,000 MT for 2022.

It attributed the failure to meet palay procurement targets to typhoons, which dampened rice production areas. CoA added that private traders offering farmers attractive terms that outweighed the NFA's buying price of P19 per kilogram, including free delivery, advance payment, and free use of post-harvest facilities.

The NFA's palay procurement was equivalent to 1.54% of the harvest, which amounted to 19.77 million MT in 2022.

"The relatively low absorption rate of the NFA on local palay procurement is an indication that farmers are not aware of the NFA's palay procurement activities and program," according to the audit report.

"More farmers could have sold their harvests to the NFA through the mobile procurement teams in their localities at a higher price than the prevailing farmgate price without incurring additional delivery expenses," CoA added.

In response, the management "committed to continuously exert efforts" to meet the 300,000 MT minimum rice reserve level.

The NFA was asked to comment but had not replied at the deadline.

— Beatriz Marie D. Cruz



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Cloud seeding planned for Magat Dam, Bohol province

THE Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) said it is preparing to conduct cloud seeding around Magat Dam in northern Luzon to counteract the effects of El Niño.

In a virtual briefing on Wednesday, Ernesto B. Brampio, chief of the BSWM's Water Resources Management Division, said that the Magat River Integrated Irrigation System (MRIIS) requested the cloud seeding even before the onset of El Niño.

"Magat still has water but it's declining. So, they are thinking that if they do not move early, (the water level) could become critical," he said.

The Magat Dam is on the Magat River, a tributary of the Cagayan River, along the border of Ifugao and Isabela provinces. Its hydroelectric plant rated at 360 megawatts (MW).

As of Wednesday morning, the water level at Magat Dam was 162.89 meters, down from 163.60 meters a day earlier. It needs at least 160 meters to operate.

Bohol province has also requested cloud seeding to raise water levels at the province's dams.

The MRIIS and Bohol province are providing P9 million and P2.5 million, respectively, to support cloud seeding.

Mr. Brampio said cloud seeding costs about P50,000 per hour, and has an 80% success rate.

Mr. Brampio said that the agency is working with local government units and regional offices to seek out more funding. It was allocated P18.5 million for cloud seeding for next year.

Mr. Brampio said his bureau has yet to receive a request to seed clouds in the Angat Dam area, which has below minimum operating level of water.

Angat's water level was 178.21 meters on Wednesday, lower than the 178.80 meters a day earlier.

"Maybe we will send a team to evaluate the area to see if there are scenarios (that allow us) to forego cloud seeding," he said.

National Water Resources Board Executive Director Seville D. David, Jr. said that after discussions with the government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), further action will be taken after assessing the strength of the rainy season.

"With the *habagat* (southwest monsoon) and the thunderstorms we are experiencing, it's better observe and wait on this rainy season," he said by text. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

HANDTELL/COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Malaya Business Insight

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World's top fertilizer maker limits production

OTTAWA- The world's biggest fertilizer producer Nutrien Ltd cut production on Tuesday, citing the impact of an 11-day-old strike in Canada's Pacific ports whose cost has now ballooned to an estimated C\$5.5 billion (\$4.2 billion).

Some 7,500 dock workers represented by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) walked off on July 1 after failing to agree a new wage deal with the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association (BCMEA).

The union says the BCMEA is refusing to give a fair pay increase despite making billions of dollars in profits in recent years. The association says it is negotiating in good

faith while blaming the strike for damaging trade and the economy.

The strike has upended operations at two of Canada's three busiest ports, the Port of Vancouver and the Port of Prince Rupert - key gateways for exporting the country's natural resources and commodities and bringing in raw materials.

Nutrien blamed the Port of Vancouver work stoppage for lowering export capacity at its Cory potash mine in Saskatchewan and warned of further production impacts if the walkout is prolonged.

The strike could trigger more supply-chain disruptions and fuel inflation, economists have warned, just as the central bank is trying to cool the economy. The Bank of

Canada is widely expected to raise its key interest rate on Wednesday by 25 basis points to 5 percent.

More than half of Canadian small business owners say the strike at the Port of Vancouver will affect their operations, according to preliminary survey results from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) released on Tuesday.

The strike so far has cost an estimated C\$5.5 billion, based on industry body Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters calculation of about C\$500 million in disrupted trade every day.

The two parties met in person for the first time in more than a week on Monday night, a govern-

ment source not authorized to speak on the record said.

They were joined by Senator Hassan Yussuf, a former president of the Canadian Labor Congress who helped negotiate an end to the largest public sector strike ever in April and May, the source said.

In statements late on Monday, both sides blamed each other for failing to reach a new deal. The association said its proposals to address ILWU Canada's demand to expand the union's jurisdiction over regular maintenance work on terminals were rejected by the union.

The workers and their employers had walked away from negotiations last week, but resumed talks on Saturday. -Reuters

Malaya Business Insight

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Soybeans, wheat rise

SINGAPORE—Chicago soybeans rose for a third consecutive session on Wednesday, climbing to a one-week high as a widely-watched US government report due later in the day is expected to reduce its production and supply estimates.

Wheat edged higher, holding on to last session's strong gains with attention turning to Black Sea supply risks after a drone strike on Ukraine's Odesa port.

"The market is expecting lower soybean production and supply forecasts from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

because of dryness and lower planting," said one agricultural commodities analyst.

"But the weather has improved over the last couple of weeks which has reduced the impact of drought."

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) rose 1.1 percent to \$13.75-1/2 a bushel, after climbing to its highest since July 5 at \$13.76 a bushel earlier in the session.

Corn added 0.8 percent to \$5.05-1/4 a bushel and wheat gained 0.2 percent to \$6.61-3/4 a bushel. — *Reuters*



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Don't waste water, don't waste rice?

It was the **National Irrigation Administration (NIA)** that sounded the call last weekend for the public to stop wasting rice for there is a great likelihood of a shortage in the commodity. The threat of El Niño on palay production is more serious than initially thought. Sounding trivial, NIA appealed to rice eaters "that if we cannot consume the entire one cup of rice, we should only order half."

But neither climate change as an existential issue, nor water supply is trivial.

The Philippines in recent years has suffered enough the ravages of climate change. We see that in rising sea levels that have been claimed to be three times the global average. Yolanda is just too recent to be swept away to history books. Typhoons continue to assault us in greater frequency, even on Christmas Day. Climate advocates now observe the destruction of natural ecosystems and devastation of what remain of our forests.

No less than the Social Weather Stations reported in March 2023 that 93 percent of Filipinos polled in December 2022 have personally experienced the negativity of climate change. Five years earlier in 2017, some 87 percent felt the impact of climate change. That NIA call should resonate with many of us because even climate awareness has increased from 74 percent to 81 percent.

For we are no strangers to climate change in the Philippines.

Likewise, water can never be trivial as far as palay and other food production is concerned. The International Rice Research Institute documented that "the current way of growing irrigated rice in most Asian rice farms requires large amounts of water." In India and the Philippines, for instance, one kilo of rice would need around 3,000 liters of water. More water would be needed for land preparation.

True, the President announced as early as late April this year his government's efforts to mitigate the "looming dry spell" of El Niño. The approach is basically to convert the country's dependence on water supply from underground water to surface water.

To do this, the President created the Water Resources Management Office (WRMO). The Palace thinks this office should be senior to MWSS, Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) and the National Water Resource Board (NWRB). Its recommendations should be followed. How this is going to be executed with an office that is still a work in progress in the middle of El Niño is impossible.

The next problem with the office is that the premise of its mandate does not conform with what's on the ground. The President argued that "We have sufficient...there's enough water in the Philippines, we don't just use water, we also waste it."

If that's the case, how does one explain Senator Grace Poe's admoni-

Water can never be trivial as far as palay and other food production is concerned. The International Rice Research Institute documented that 'the current way of growing irrigated rice in most Asian rice farms requires large amounts of water.'

tion of MWSS to be more proactive in avoiding water crisis?

And we have one brewing. Some 600,000 Maynilad customers in the west concession zone in Metro Manila stand to suffer water service interruption up to nine hours nightly starting this week. This means that outside Metro Manila, residents of Rizal, Cavite and Bulacan will also be affected. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has admitted that Angat Dam's water level continues to decline below the minimum operating level of 180 meters.

Such an initial outcome should surprise no one because if indeed we have sufficient water supply, all we need to do is either to issue directives and advisories to the public to conserve water or prepare plans.

Obviously, the problem is much deeper, and more serious, one that cannot be licked by directives and advisories.

Even then, it is only now that orders have been actually issued to speed up the approval — yes, just the approval — of pipe repairs by Maynilad and Manila Water! We don't find it reassuring that WRMO should realize only now that it needed to conduct spot inspections of office building for "unwarranted use of water, leaks and faulty bathroom fixtures. The WRMO must have under its employ millions of inspectors to do this and advance water conservation.

We cannot stress enough that a concrete strategy for mitigating El Niño should be rolled out to the general public. Water is *sine quanon* to producing rice and other food commodities. And to do something about this prolonged drought is the responsibility of government. Otherwise, we paint ourselves in a corner for another season of food shortage and galloping inflation.

A presidential directive to government agencies to prepare for the possible impact of the dry spell, ensure "protocol-based and scientific" long-term solution, and information campaign is hardly game changing. It's even less than a nudge in today's context.

What we read in the papers and social media are essentially stop-gap: don't waste water, don't waste rice.

In the middle of the Asian Financial Crisis 1997-1998, we recall that we also struggled against an earlier El Niño. Its likelihood was flagged a couple of years earlier. Monthly advisories on the weather outlook were released. An Inter-Agency Committee for Crisis Wa-



**OF SUBSTANCE
AND SPIRIT**
DIWA C. GUINIGUNDO



P38 per kilo rice sold in certain MM areas

By **BELLA CARIASO**

A local traders' group has started to sell rice at P38 per kilo in certain areas in Metro Manila and nearby provinces amid the upward trend in retail prices of the staple.

Rowena Sadicon, lead convenor of the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement (PRISM), said her group sells local well-milled rice to retailers at P38 per kilo, which will be sold by vendors at the same price as part of their social responsibility.

"This P38 per kilo will be included in the regular orders. We have informed our retailers that we will sell them well-milled rice at P38 per kilo and they should sell it without added profit," Sadicon said.

She said the lowest retail price of the grain in the market is P40 per kilo for imported well-milled rice.

"We still want to sell at P38 per kilo as the lowest price of rice is now at P40 and these are imported broken rice," Sadicon said.

Among areas where the P38 per kilo rice will be sold are Las Piñas City, Marikina, Pasig, Quezon City and Parañaque as well as Bulacan and Pampanga.

Sadicon said each customer could avail of a maximum of five kilos of local well-milled rice.

"This is an initiative of a private NGO. At least five kilos a day will be the maximum for every household. We are now coordinating with the local government units and barangays so we can supply the depressed areas," Sadicon said, referring to a non-government organization.

She said the P38 per kilo rice would be available for three months as the country waits for the harvest in November.

"Based on our meeting, we will continue selling during the lean months until October. Hopefully, by the time the harvest season starts, the retail prices of rice will start to go down," Sadicon added.

Cathy Estavillo, spokesperson for rice watchdog Bantay Bigas, welcomed the initiative of the PRISM,

saying it showed the need to return the function of the National Food Authority (NFA) to import and sell rice at P27 and P32 per kilo.

"The initiative of PRISM in selling P38 per kilo of rice is a big help amid the spike in the retail prices of basic commodities. Poor consumers look for cheap rice in the market. PRISM has mentioned that their initiative will be good until October," Estavillo said.

She said it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that the retail prices of rice are affordable.

"Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Liberation Law should be junked and return the mandate of the NFA to sell P27 and P32 per kilo of rice. The NFA should also buy 25 percent of the local palay production of farmers at a farmgate price of P20 per kilo," Estavillo said.

Based on monitoring of the Department of Agriculture in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of local regular milled rice is P42 per kilo; well-milled rice, P46; premium rice, P50 and special rice, P60 per kilo.

The retail price of imported well-milled rice is P48 per kilo while special rice is P58 per kilo.

'Stop chicken imports'

Meanwhile, President Marcos has been asked to stop the importation of chicken as imported meat products are flooding the local market.

Gregorio San Diego, chairman of United Broiler Raisers Association and Philippine Egg Board, yesterday said he personally relayed to Marcos the problem of over importation during a recent meeting with local stakeholders at Malacañang. The meeting, which took place on July 10, was arranged by the National Agricultural and Fishery Council.

San Diego said he also raised the plight of the small and medium poultry raisers who were affected by the over importation of chicken products.

He said his concern on the over-supply of chicken was referred to Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban.

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President Marcos visits the 'Kadiwa ng Pangulo' outlet and job fair at the provincial capitol of Butuan City, Agusan del Sur where he also inaugurated the 24.9-megawatt Lake Mainit hydro power plant yesterday. Story on Page 12.

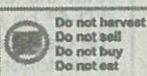
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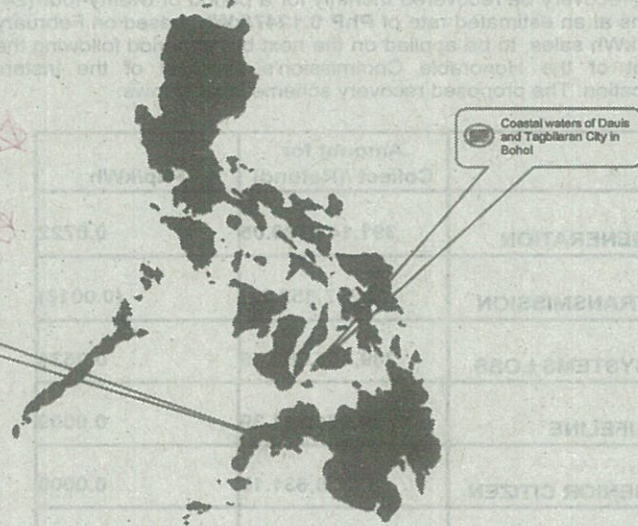
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Shellfish Bulletin No. 17
Series of 2023
11 July 2023

Shellfishes collected and tested from coastal waters of Dauls and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; and Dumanquilas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur are still positive for Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) or toxic red tide that is beyond the regulatory limit.




Do not harvest
 Do not sell
 Do not buy
 Do not eat




All types of shellfish and *Acetes sp.* or alamang gathered from the areas shown above are NOT SAFE for human consumption. Fish, squids, shrimps, and crabs are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking.

The following areas continue to be FREE from toxic red tide: coastal waters of Cavite, Las Pifas, Parañaque, Navotas, Bulacan, and Bataan (Mariveles, Umay, Orion, Pilar, Balanga, Hermosa, Orani, Abucay, and Samal) in Manila Bay; mariculture areas in Infanta, coastal waters of Bolinao, Anda, Alaminos, Sual, and Wawa, Bani in Pangasinan; mariculture areas in Rosario, and Sto. Tomas in La Union; coastal waters of Pampanga; Masinloc Bay in Zambales; Pagbilao Bay, Pagbilao, and coastal waters of Walay, Padre Burgos in Quezon; Honda, and Puerto Princesa Bays, Puerto Princesa City, and coastal waters of Inner Malampaya Sound, Taytay in Palawan; coastal waters of Milagros and Mandaon in Masbate; Sorsogon Bay, and Juag Lagoon, Matnog in Sorsogon; coastal waters of Gigantes Islands, Carles, and Borongan, San Dionisio in Iloilo; coastal waters of Roxas City, Panay, President Roxas, and Pilar in Capiz; Sapian Bay (Ivisan and Sapian in Capiz; Mambuquiao and Camanci, Batan in Aklan); coastal waters of Altavas, Batan, and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aklan; coastal waters of E.B. Magalona, Talisay City, Silay City, Bacolod City, Hinigaran, and Victorias City in Negros Occidental; Tambobo, and Silt Bays, Siaton; and Bais Bay, Bais City in Negros Oriental; coastal waters of Daram, and Zumarraga, Cambatutay, Irong-Irong, Maqueda, San Pedro and Villareal Bays in Samar; coastal waters of Guluan in Eastern Samar; coastal waters of Leyte, Calubian, Ormoc, Sogod, Carigara Bay, and Cancabato Bay, Tacloban City in Leyte; coastal waters of Biliran Island; Tantanang Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay; Mordelagos Bay in Zamboanga del Norte and (Sapang Dalaga, and Boliangao) in Misamis Occidental; Pangulub Bay, Tangub City, and coastal waters of Ozamiz City in Misamis Occidental; coastal waters of Baroy in Lanao del Norte; Taguines Lagoon, Benoni, Mahinog in Camiguin; Balite, and Pujada Bays, Mati City in Davao Oriental; Malalag Bay in Davao Occidental and Davao del Sur; coastal waters of Nasipit in Agusan del Norte; Litalit Bay in Surigao del Norte; and coastal waters of Hinatuan, Cortes, Uanga, and Bislig Bays in Surigao del Sur.



ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO
 Director



Masaganang Agrikultura, Maunlad na Ekonomiya



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DA eyes cloud seeding in Angat

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said that the government has to conduct cloud seeding operations at Angat Dam as its water level continues to dip.

The DA's Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) will evaluate the area.

"We might need to conduct cloud seeding in Angat. We will deploy a team to evaluate the area and look based on the criteria to forego cloud seeding operation," BSWM Chief En-

gineer Ernesto Brampio said during a press briefing on Wednesday.

He said that one of the requirements for cloud seeding is that the dam's water level should be below the operating level. There should also be at least 1,000 hectares with crops in a critical stage.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) reported that as of July 12, 2023, the water level in Angat Dam was at 178.21 meters, which is below the 180-meter minimum operating level.

Cloud seeding operation costs P50,000 per hour, and expenses could reach up to P45 million, depending on the operation, the official said.

Brampio said that the DA office in Region 2 allocated P9 million for the cloud seeding operation in the province, while Bohol requested a P2.5 million budget.

The official said that the success rate of cloud seeding operations is 80 percent.

"For the cloud seeding to be effective, we must look for the presence of seedable clouds,

and, of course, the wind direction," he said, emphasizing that 8 out of their 10 operations produced rain.

The BSWM has allocated P18.5 million for cloud seed-

ing operations next year.

"Pagasa projected that the effects of the dry spell could last until June 2024, so hopefully next year we have enough budget," Brampio said.



Sorsogon, Cabanatuan to get RPS

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

SORSOGON and Cabanatuan City will be getting rice processing systems (RPS) from the program spearheaded by the **Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech)** to modernize the country's rice sector.

PHilMech said the RPS for Sorsogon will benefit the municipalities of Juban and Gubat, and consists of two units of mechanical dryers with 6 tons drying capacity per batch and a state-of-the-art rice mill with 1.5-ton milling capacity per hour. The total worth of the RPS is P16 million.

The agency has already delivered 573 units of various agricultural machines to the province under the RCEF-Mechanization Program amounting to P301.6 million.

PHilMech said the RPS, to be established in Cabanatuan in Nueva Ecija, is composed of three units of 12-ton capacity recirculating dryers and one unit of 4 to 5 tons per hour capacity multipass rice mill. The total cost is P71 million.

The agency said it was able to deliver 23 units of various agricultural machines to the city under the RCEF-Mechanization Program amounting to a total of

P33.7 million.

On June 27, 2023, PHilMech's RPS Team also conducted a comprehensive training needs assessment for the three beneficiaries of the drying and milling facilities under the RCEF-Mechanization Program in Pampanga.

The team visited the Santa Ana Multipurpose Cooperative and Guran-Sapa Multipurpose Cooperative in Santa Ana, Pampanga that are beneficiaries of an RPS equipped with a 1.5 tons per hour multistage rice mill and two units of 6 tons recirculating dryers.

PHilMech said the team also assessed the Cruzian Multipurpose Cooperative based in Magalang town in Pampanga that was among the few select beneficiaries of the P72 million worth RPS that consisted of three units of mechanical dryers with a 12 tons per batch dual heat source capacity and a multistage rice mill with a



■ (From left) Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) Interim Director for Operations Joel Dator, PHilMech Director Dionisio Alvindia and Cabanatuan Mayor Myca Elizabeth Vergara show the agreement signed for the establishment of a rice processing facility in the city. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

capacity of 4 to 5 tons per hour.

The agency said the assessment will identify the specific requirements and

areas for improvement of the cooperatives' rice processing operations.

"The team's evaluation results

would be helpful in developing training programs that can address the beneficiaries' unique needs

and optimize the utilization of their advanced machinery," PHilMech said.



DTI trains Quirino tomato farmers on processing

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) office in Quirino province has launched the Tomato Development Project that will give a platform to farmers and processors to generate revenues through innovation and technology transfer.

Manilyn Ponce, DTI Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) information officer, said the project is jointly undertaken by the DTI-Quirino Provincial Office and

Quirino State University (QSU), and covers the conduct of a comprehensive capacity development program and skills training for entrepreneurs from the agriculture sector.

On July 3, 2023, the DTI and QSU conducted a training for the members of the Ihumanisi Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Multipurpose Cooperative (Darbenco), whose main produce is

surplus agricultural inputs like squash and tomato which led to the launching of the tomato development project to reduce the wastage of the vegetable crops.

Ponce said the initiative focused on equipping participants with essential knowledge and skills to enhance their involvement in the tomato development project, consisting of workshops and discussions on food safety and good

manufacturing practices (FS & GMP), product costing and pricing (PCP), and product packaging and labeling (PPL).

Jonalyn Abon, DTI junior business counselor, tackled PCP to enhance Darbenco members' financial management skills, and equip them and gain a deeper understanding of the factors involved in determining product costs, such as raw materials, labor and overhead expenses.

Abon explained that the participants through interactive discussions and practical exercises on PCP will learn how to calculate and analyze costs, set competitive prices and maximize profitability.

Trade Industry Development Specialist Marco Accad of DTI Region 2 Small and Medium Enterprise Development Division led the training on FS & GMP, the Philippine mandatory packaging

and labeling requirements and branding.

Accad explained the participants were provided with crucial insights on maintaining food safety standards throughout the production process for them to know the best practices in handling, processing and packaging tomatoes while ensuring compliance with national and international quality standards. **LEANDER C. DOMINGO**



Go Negosyo supports 'Tatak Pinoy'

**MOVING
FORWARD**

**WILLIAM
D. DAR**



ON July 6, 2023, I was given the privilege to represent Go Negosyo founder and President and Maria "Joey" Concepcion in delivering the group's position before the Senate Committee on Finance headed by Sen. Juan Edgardo "Sonny" Angara on Senate Bill 2218 or the "Tatak Pinoy (Proudly Filipino) Act."

Go Negosyo's initiatives for the agriculture sector are carried out through the Kapatid Angat Lahat Agri Program (Kalap) where I am the senior adviser.

Before the Senate, I stated that as a group, Go Negosyo welcomes the legislation on the government's industrialization and employment generation initiatives as this will help unlock the potential of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), especially those involved in producing local products including those bound for the export market.

Hence, there is a need to enable MSMEs to gain a competitive advantage for Philippine made products and services, so they can also effectively compete in the global market. If they are given

a boost, MSMEs manufacturing products for the local and global markets can generate more jobs, causing a positive domino effect as the MSMEs that expand eventually can pay more in taxes to the local and national governments. MSMEs that expand with government assistance also purchase more equipment ranging from office equipment, computers and vehicles, benefiting enterprises that sell those products.

So, we at Go Negosyo strongly believe that the Tatak Pinoy Strategy is a great initiative to empower and level up MSMEs.

This is very timely and as Concepcion said, he is fully supportive of this measure by Angara. In fact, this aligns with the priorities of the Private Sector Advisory Council where he serves as the Jobs Sector Lead.

Also, we at Go Negosyo see Tatak Pinoy as focusing on priority industries to enable them to

be competitive so the country can be a more attractive investment destination. We also suggest that Tatak Pinoy be pursued within the existing Innovation Council, and that a one-stop desk be put up in every department/agency of government.

Kalap as active partner

Through the leadership of Concepcion, Go Negosyo through Kalap will be an active partner in its full realization, so that together, we can contribute to the local economy, increase job opportunities, help our local farmers and fisherfolk, and uplift the lives of our fellow Filipinos.

Let me explain that Kalap of Go Negosyo aims to help the government in the transformation of major agricultural commodities and industries following Go Negosyo's inclusive business models. So, Kalap promotes the 3Ms as pillars of entrepreneurship: mentorship, money and market. And we aim to mobilize active partnership between government and the private sector — the "big brothers" — to create more job opportunities across the agriculture

value chain system.

Currently, the agriculture sector is the second-biggest job generator with a share of 23.5 percent, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Office as of March 2023. This is a clear indication that the agriculture sector is among the top job hubs alongside services and industry sectors. The agriculture sector serves as one of the bankable solutions to resolving unemployment in the country.

With Kalap's initiatives in fostering public-private sector engagement, we are expecting an increased involvement of the "big brothers" to encourage and integrate better business practices in the agriculture sector. So, we have been working with the government and various private companies in integrating the inclusive business models into government plans or programs, so that more farmers will be part of the value chain, especially of big agricultural industries. This has been our vision: the "big brother-small brother" partnership between smallholder agricultural producers on one hand, and the big agri-food com-

panies and government on the other hand.

Since its launch in January 2023, Kalap now has 23 partners coming from the private sector, such as Nestlé Philippines, Universal Leaf, Metro Pacific Agro Ventures, Dizon Farms, to name a few. We still have 28 more on our list of big brothers whom we are working with to get into Kalap in the coming days, weeks and months.

Similarly, Kalap has partnered with 16 government agencies in this pursuit, including the **Department of Agriculture**, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Cooperative Development Authority and government financial institutions such as the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Development Bank of the Philippines.

As of the latest, we are working on 18 industry commodities including rice, cacao, coconut, tobacco and coffee, among others, as we focus on the inclusive business

models into these commodities and eventually integrate these into the relevant roadmaps of our government partners.

As a result, we are looking into more job opportunities, as this partnership will bolster on-farm and off-farm employment across the value chain, from pre- to post-production, creating more ways to involve more people get into various agricultural economic activities.

We will keep the momentum going as more private agricultural companies join our roster of big brothers who have the resources to aid the government in upscaling agriculture. Meanwhile, the government designs policies that will provide a favorable business environment and make economies desirable for bigger and more sustainable investments ultimately benefiting all players across the agriculture value chain system.

Go Negosyo's Kalap is truly one of the biggest blessings for the country's agriculture sector, and the Tatak Pinoy, once signed into law, provides added impetus to move the sector forward.



UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION Spoiled imported meat worth around P35 million were found in an abandoned warehouse in Meycauayan, Bulacan on Tuesday, July 11, 2023. Agents of the Department of Agriculture and Bureau of Customs and the National Meat Inspection Service, escorted by the military, found repacked meat that expired as far back as 2021. PNA PHOTO



PH continues to lead SE Asia GM food market

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE Philippines continues to lead in the adoption of genetically modified (GM) crops in Southeast Asia, a Fitch Group unit said in a report.

"Philippines is a regional leader regarding GM adoption and production as it was the first market in Asia to plant GM corn in 2003," the Fitch Group unit BMI Country Risk and Industry Research said.

"Parts of Southeast Asia have been open to GM crops, with the Philippines leading the change," it added.

Globally, the Philippines ranked as 12th-biggest GM crop producer in 2019. The Fitch unit said that the country reached a total of 900,000 hectares of land planted to biotech or GM corn in 2019,

a significant increase from the 600,000 hectares in 2015.

The BMI said that the Philippines authorized a number of GM crops, including eggplant and rice in the third quarter of 2021, while also updating its biotech policies in the first quarter of 2022.

It also said that the government took food security concerns more seriously and aggressively because of the Covid-19 pandemic and started working toward long-term reform policies.

In 2021, the government approved the commercial propaga-

tion authorization for Golden Rice and also cleared propagation of Bt eggplant, both of which are GM crops.

Bt or *Bacillus thuringiensis* is a soil bacterium that can be inserted into plants to make them capable of producing an insecticidal toxin, making crops resistant to certain pests.

"Recently, the researchers are working on golden rice, [they] have also developed a variety of GM rice using gene editing technology inserting other traits like drought and pest resistance," it said.

In February 2022, the government approved the Joint Department Circular 1 that reforms the process of commercializing Bt crops.

"We expect the Philippines to remain at the forefront of Bt adop-

tion in the region over the coming years," BMI added.

However, the Fitch unit also noted that the country still faces concerns on the planting of GM crops, also known as genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

"While the Philippines are having the largest number of commercial planting of GMO, increasing prices of GM seeds and the dramatic decline of farmers' income, driving them deeper into indebtedness, are other major concerns against GMOs," it added.

According to the Fitch unit, Indonesia could be the next to adopt GM crops while Vietnam commercialized GM corn in 2015.

"Cambodia and Laos could potentially follow suit in the long term once adequate biosafety regulations have been established," it added.



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Shellfish Bulletin No. 17
Series of 2023
11 July 2023

Shellfishes collected and tested from coastal waters of Daus and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; and Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur are still positive for Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) or toxic red tide that is beyond the regulatory limit.

Do not harvest
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Dumanquillas Bay in
Zamboanga del Sur

Coastal waters of Daus
and Tagbilaran City in
Bohol

All types of shellfish and *Acetes sp.* or alamang gathered from the areas shown above are NOT SAFE for human consumption. Fish, squids, shrimps, and crabs are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking.

The following areas continue to be FREE from toxic red tide: coastal waters of Cavite, Las Piñas, Parañaque, Navotas, Bulacan, and Bataan (Mariveles, Limay, Orion, Pilar, Balanga, Hermosa, Orani, Abucay, and Samal) in Manila Bay; mariculture areas in Infanta, coastal waters of Bolinao, Anda, Alaminos, Sual, and Wawa, Bani in Pangasinan; mariculture areas in Rosario, and Sto. Tomas in La Union; coastal waters of Pampanga; Masinloc Bay in Zambales; Pagbilao Bay, Pagbilao, and coastal waters of Walay, Padre Burgos in Quezon; Honda, and Puerto Princesa Bays, Puerto Princesa City, and coastal waters of Inner Malampaya Sound, Taytay in Palawan; coastal waters of Milagros and Mandaon in Masbate; Sorsogon Bay, and Juag Lagoon, Matnog in Sorsogon; coastal waters of Gigantes Islands, Carles, and Borongan, San Dionisio in Iloilo; coastal waters of Roxas City, Panay, President Roxas, and Pilar in Capiz; Sapián Bay (Ivisan and Sapián in Capiz; Mambuquio and Camanci, Batan in Aklan); coastal waters of Altavas, Batan, and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aklan; coastal waters of E.B. Magalona, Talisay City, Silay City, Bacolod City, Hinigaran, and Victorias City in Negros Occidental; Tambobo, and Siit Bays, Siaton; and Bais Bay, Bais City in Negros Oriental; coastal waters of Daram, and Zumarraga, Cambatutay, Irong-irong, Maqueda, San Pedro and Villareal Bays in Samar; coastal waters of Guiuan in Eastern Samar; coastal waters of Leyte, Calubian, Ormoc, Sogod, Carigara Bay, and Cancabato Bay, Tacloban City in Leyte; coastal waters of Biliran Island; Tantanang Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay; Murcielagos Bay in Zamboanga del Norte and (Sapang Dalaga, and Baliangao) in Misamis Occidental; Panguil Bay, Tangub City, and coastal waters of Ozamiz City in Misamis Occidental; coastal waters of Baroy in Lanao del Norte; Taguines Lagoon, Benoni, Mahinog in Camiguin; Balite, and Pujada Bays, Mati City in Davao Oriental; Malalag Bay in Davao Occidental and Davao del Sur; coastal waters of Nasipit in Agusan del Norte; Litalit Bay in Surigao del Norte; and coastal waters of Hinatuan, Cortes, Lianga, and Bislig Bays in Surigao del Sur.

ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO
Director

(PDI-July 13, 2023)

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DA TARGETING NORTHERN MINDANAO

RULES FOR POST-ASF HOG REPOPULATION ISSUED

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has issued supplemental guidelines to accelerate the repopulation of hogs in Northern Mindanao.

The agency issued a memorandum order to provide the amended rules on the implementation of a community-based swine population, repopulation and expansion through the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (Inspire) program.

Implemented by the DA's National Livestock Program, the Inspire scheme aims to fast-track calibrated repopulation and production expansion through farm clustering and consolidation. It was introduced in 2021.

Under the additional rules, farmers' cooperatives and associations (FCAs) or local government units (LGUs) may tap up to P10 million to construct new biosecure facilities which help curb

the spread of animal diseases.

It has recommended two project packages for FCAs or LGUs planning to put up a new facility.

In option one, the recommended allocation is as follows: P6 million for biosecure facility, P2.55 million for piglets and P1.45 million for feeds/drugs and biologics, and other items such as disinfectants.

The funding coverage in option two has earmarked P3.14 million for biosecure facility, P1 million for feeds/biologics support, P800,000 for piglets and the remaining P60,000 for other items including test kits and disinfectants.

FCAs or LGUs which desire to undertake modernized swine raising compartments using the community swine clustering model may avail of the aforementioned funding package.

—JORDEENE B. LAGARE INQ

Water levels in Luzon dams keep dropping

Farmers in Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon worry about their crops as Magat, Angat reduce irrigation supply

By Villamor Visaya Jr.
and Carmela Reyes-Estrope
@InqNational

RAMON, ISABELA—Water levels at Magat Dam in Isabela province and Angat Dam in Bulacan province continue to drop to almost their critical levels as the dry spell brought about by the El Niño phenomenon persists.

On Wednesday, Magat Dam's water level registered 162.89 meters, slightly above its 160-meter critical level and the lowest level recorded at the reservoir in this town this year. Magat's lowest water level on record was 149 meters in July 1991.

Water inflow was recorded at 24.19 cubic meters per second (cms) and outflow at 147.22 cms, said Carlo Ablan, National Irrigation Administration-Magat River Integrated Irrigation System (NIA-MARI-IS) division manager, in an interview on Wednesday.

In Bulacan, water level at Angat Dam, the main source of water for Metro Manila households and businesses and for farms in Bulacan and Pampanga provinces, had dropped to 178.14 meters on Wednesday, which was almost 2 meters lower than the 180-meter minimum operating level. Its elevation on Tuesday was 178.76 meters, 179.19 meters on Monday and 179.54 on Sunday.

Rotational release

As a remedial measure, Magat Dam, which supplies irrigation to 88,000 hectares (ha) of palay farms, reduced its rotation-



HANGOUT SPOT Students on a break relax by Angat Dam at Barangay San Lorenzo in Norzagaray, Bulacan, on Monday, unmindful of the receding water level at the reservoir. Angat's water level on Wednesday dropped to 178.14 meters, below the 180-meter minimum operating level. —LYN RILLON

al water release from 150 cms to 112 cms this month, according to an advisory issued by Roldan Bermudez, NIA-MARIIS engineering and operations division acting manager, on Wednesday.

Supply for upstream farms will be limited for three days while downstream farms will also be irrigated for three days each week.

If the lack of rainfall persists in the coming weeks and the Magat reservoir hit its critical level, the dam would likely be unable to irrigate its service areas in three towns in Quirino province and in Cordon town and Santiago City in Isabela. The 11,000-ha area being serviced by the Baligatan diversion dam will also be affected.

Lack of irrigation water supply from Magat increases farm expenses as farmers turn to water pumps, according to farmer Simeon Danao of Gamu, Isabela.

"This is an additional expense. Why can't the government provide solar-powered

pumps and more subsidies to farmers? We are losing money," Danao said.

Gov't help sought

Palay farmer Lucito Preza of Barangay Lenzon, also in Gamu, rued the lack of priority of the government on irrigation expansion.

"We are so sad to hear the news. The government prioritizes agricultural commodities for Metro Manila but not [the need] for irrigation of farmers in the provinces," Preza said.

According to Narciso Edillo, Department of Agriculture regional executive director in Cagayan Valley, the government had been monitoring the impact of the El Niño weather phenomenon in places like Isabela and other provinces in Cagayan Valley as these areas are major sources of crops like rice.

But Edillo said the government was discussing the distribution of water pumps and seed subsidies and the conduct

of cloud-seeding operations to help farmers in the region.

Carlos Dimaapi, a farmer leader in Plaridel, Bulacan, said rice farmers on their second cropping season had no choice but to rely on the reduced supply from Angat Dam, now down to 28 cms from the 36 cms regular allocation from the National Water Resources Board (NWRB).

The NWRB reduced the allocation for the irrigation needs of the farmers to prioritize the water requirement of Metro Manila households and businesses.

Dimaapi said their farms could still tap stock water in irrigation canals, which were collected from previous rains in Bulacan, except those in the Sierra Madre ranges in the uphill areas of Norzagaray town.

Francis Clara, head of the Water Control and Coordinating Unit of NIA, said water in the 26-kilometer stretch of irrigation canals from Angat Dam to Bustos Dam, which the agency released on June 16 or a day after farmers started planting, would still be enough to supply farms during the second cropping season.

More than 20,000 farmers, tilling around 27,000 ha in four towns in Pampanga and 16 towns in Bulacan, depend on Angat Dam for their irrigation needs.

Clara said the 28 cms allocation for irrigation will continue until July 30. The NWRB has yet to announce the allocation for farmers for August and September before the harvest period in October. **INQ**