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Bagong Pilipinas for the swine industry

No less than President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. (PBBM) himself – who is concurrently the acting secretary of the Department of Agriculture – acknowledged the need to support and enhance the country's swine industry. In a speech delivered during the opening ceremony of the Livestock Philippines 2023 trade fair held a few weeks ago, he underscored that "it is imperative to highlight the role of this sector in our nation's pursuit of food security and global competitiveness. This sector not only puts food on the table for millions of Filipinos; it also provides a means of livelihood for countless farmers and other ancillary service providers."



The President also reminded those in attendance about the current – and very significant – threat facing the entire industry, namely the continued spread of the African swine fever (ASF) in our local farms.

It is both noteworthy and reassuring that the President is fully aware of the gravity of the situation, and has thus prioritized a well-mapped response. As frequently reported in the news, hundreds of billions in economic

opportunities have already been taken from our farmers by ASF. This means the loss of livelihood for countless Filipino families, putting their welfare, health care, education and more at risk.

To make matters worse, when the production of one food source is threatened, it creates a ripple effect that affects the rest of the supply chain. Because of rising pork prices caused by ASF, consumers will naturally lean toward substitutes. This demand surge will exert upward pressure on the cost of commodities like livestock and poultry, as well as fish and vegetables.

With the goal of detecting and preventing the spread of diseases like ASF, PBBM spearheaded the Department of Agriculture's Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion, which is also known as the INSPIRE program. To date, more than 430 farmers' cooperatives and associations with more than 13,000 members and an estimated 27,500 individual farmers have benefitted from this project.

More importantly, during the same speech, the President made a truly momentous revelation: "We are also happy to announce the completion of Phase One of the safety and efficacy trials for the ASF vaccines. The Bureau of Animal Industry has found it to produce sufficient antibodies and to be safe for use.

And as it stands, the Philippine FDA is on track to issue a certificate of product registration for these vaccines while Phase Two trials are underway."

Nearly all groups and associations involved in the swine industry lauded this announcement (with some members literally jumping for joy), particularly because it came straight from the very top, namely the President himself. This put the final nail in the coffin to a recent spate of fake news and disinformation about the forthcoming vaccine, which unfortunately misled even some of our scientists.

If only there was a vaccine against bitter fake-news peddlers, right? Imagine sabotaging a legitimate vaccine – and consequently, the entire country's food supply – for no good reason.

There was a previous attempt to register another vaccine from another country but it was not considered for the most basic (and glaring) reason: the other vaccine was not even registered and sold in the country that it was manufactured in.

Be that as it may, I am glad that PBBM, the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Animal Industry and the Food and Drug Administration have brought a definitive ray of hope to our embattled swine farmers. We are certainly looking forward to the arrival of the first batch of ASF vaccines.

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Kadiwa stores to rise soon across PH

BY JERRY M. HERNANDEZ

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has signaled the start of bringing the Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) program to all towns and cities across the country as he witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MoA) for its expansion.

Held at the Pampanga provincial capitol grounds, the agreement was signed by government agencies such as the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Presidential Communications Office and Presidential Management Staff.

In his message, Marcos said the KNP is part of his eight-point socioeconomic agenda on food security, job creation and poverty reduction.

"The Kadiwa program is very simple. What we do is we bring the market closer to our farmers. This is why we lessen the added cost from the middlemen. In this way, we will be able to sell our products at lower prices," he added.

The KNP aims to make fresh agricultural and fishery commodities accessible at affordable prices to consumers and establish addition-

al markets for farmers, fisherfolk and micro entrepreneurs in selling their products.

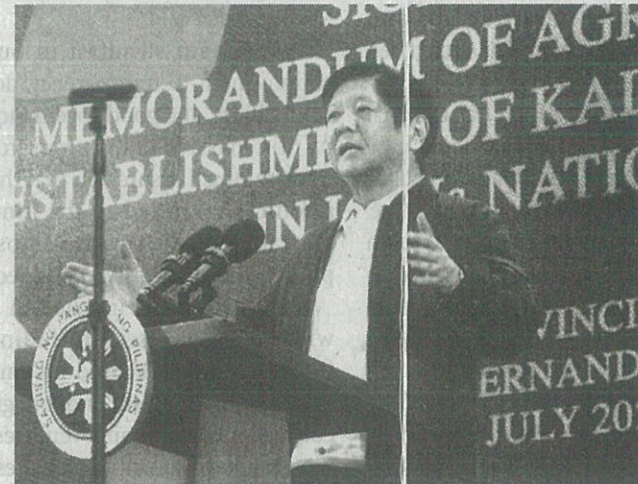
Marcos said the agreement will be a shared responsibility between the agencies and local government units (LGUs) to continue working together to provide cheaper and ample food to Filipino families.

"This [MoA] is one example of how when we help each other, not only the various agencies of the national government but with our local governments, we will be successful in our plans, and in the programs that we design," he noted.

The President urged the agencies and the LGUs to continue their collaboration and partnership to give a comfortable life to the people.

He said the national government, through the DA, is conducting various initiatives to boost production to sustain the Kadiwa program and maintain affordable prices of basic commodities.

"That is what we've been working on in the DA and with all the



HELPING FARMERS, LOWERING PRICES Soon, Kadiwa stores selling agricultural produce at prices lower than those in commercial markets will rise throughout the country. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has made the assurance in Pampanga to kick off the 'Kadiwa ng Pangulo' program. The program is 'very simple' because it brings the market closer to farmers, marginalizing middlemen. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

attached agencies who are helping us in expanding and improving our production of rice, corn, fish, and find a solution to our problem about African swine fever, and our problem in avian flu," Marcos added.

The President is also the Agriculture secretary.

For fishermen, the government provided cold storage facilities near fishing areas to lessen the probability of spoilage of aquatic foods.

It is working on the development of fishing grounds to increase the catch.

The President said the government is determined to improve the

country's exports to support local businesses and bolster economic growth.

"We are able to lessen the prices of some of our products, but we have to maintain this while increasing our production. If we have a surplus, we must export. We have to be competitive exporters by packaging our products before exporting them," he added.

Marcos pledged that his administration will continue to design programs for the improvement of product packaging; marketing, especially in the digital hive, and buyer-supplier linkage.

During the event, Marcos led the

distribution of various assistance from Kadiwa partner national government agencies.

The DoLE distributed a total of P1.38 million worth of financial assistance to 301 beneficiaries of the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers program.

It gave a total of P611,000 worth of stipend to 114 government interns under the Government Internship Program.

The agency distributed 11 Nego-syo sa Kariton amounting to P30,000 each; and seven Kabuhayan Starter Kits also amounting to P30,000 each.

The DoLE provided P1.2 million

and P1 million worth of livelihood assistance to the municipalities of Minalin and San Simon, respectively.

The DSWD released a total of P1.5 million and family food packs to 500 beneficiaries of its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations program.

It handed out a total of P180,000 to 12 beneficiaries of the Sustainable Livelihood Program.

The DTI distributed a total of P190,400 to 26 beneficiaries of its Pangkabuhayan sa Pagbangon at Ginhawa program.

A total of P6.35 million was given to a total of seven borrowers of its micro multipurpose loans.

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Scale up agri production; be more competitive in ASEAN — Concepcion

By RAYMUND ANTONIO

For Philippine micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to compete with its neighboring countries, they must first scale up their agricultural production.

Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion stressed this on Thursday,

July 20, as he admitted that "it's very clear that we cannot compete right now in agriculture with our neighboring ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries."

However, he is confident that with **President Marcos** at its helm, the Department of Agriculture (DA), will find ways to achieve ►6

Scale up agri production; be more competitive in ASEAN — Concepcion 1◀

economies of scale for MSMEs, especially in the agricultural sector.

"Scalability is very important to be able to compete. We will never be able to compete against the big companies in ASEAN because we don't have scale," he said during the Laging Handa public briefing.

Concepcion, who is also a representative of the ASEAN Business Advisory Council, explained that Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam have huge tracts of lands that they were able to utilize for large-scale farming.

"Because without scale, you cannot bring down your cost to produce, that's very clear—not whether it's agriculture, or any product," he said, adding that rice and sugar are sold at a low cost in the three aforementioned countries.

He expressed confidence in both Marcos and Agrarian Reform Secretary Conrado Estrella III, saying that such

a team "is very critical at this point in time."

Concepcion also underscored the role of both DA and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to "really determine the amount of land that's available, leasable to the big brothers and to other farmers, cooperatives that can own more lands or lease more lands so that they can plant more and be more competitive."

He likened scalability to the way fast-food chains grew—through franchising.

"Even in putting up (a) restaurant, sometimes one restaurant is not enough and sometimes—that's why you see Jollibee, McDonalds, they have business bonus, they franchise out and they create scale," he said.

"So this franchising concept that is being done for restaurants and services can be adopted in agriculture which will create scale," he added.

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First PH agricultural import inspection hub rising in Bulacan

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

ANGAT, BULACAN—The Philippines' first border inspection facility located in this province will be completed in less than a year, bolstering the country's ability to fight smuggling and animal diseases.

The government and the private sector partnered to establish a cold examination facility in agriculture (Cefa) in this part of Bulacan, a first of its kind in the country.

This facility, situated in a 10-hectare property, will house

an inspection area as well as state-of-the-art testing laboratories and an incinerator to examine all imported animals, fish, plants and other commodities.

The project will be funded by the P2.3-billion allotment made by the government this year for the development of such facilities.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and Pacific Roadlink Logistics Inc. (PRLI) signed a memorandum of agreement on Thursday to establish Cefa.

Based on the accord, PRLI will contribute the resources and a suitable property for the

first border facility. PRLI will build the inspection area while the DA will develop the laboratories for the inspection of agricultural products with perceived risk.

"We expect the construction to commence immediately," said Bureau of Animal Industry Director Paul Limson in a media briefing, adding the construction would be concluded in six to eight months.

Particularly, the Cefa will thoroughly check all imported agricultural products depending on risk level, such as those coming from banned countries

with existing disease/pest outbreaks, unaccredited/unregistered agricultural imports, misdeclared or smuggled agricultural goods, as well as those involved with suspected agricultural regulatory violations and other food items that are deemed high-risk.

Scalable design

"The involvement of PRLI is to provide a facility for the government because the primary issue was ASF (African swine fever). Smuggling, I will say, will be secondary. Now, we've seen the effect of ASF and avian in-

fluenza on the industry. That's the primary reason," PRLI president Edgar Dominic Milla said.

According to Milla, the design of the facility is scalable. The number of refrigerated containers coming from the Bureau of Customs and the DA can be increased to about 250 containers a day.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary James Layug said the Cefa would not only strengthen efforts to combat agricultural smuggling but also improve the process of examining imported food items.

"Right now, what happens is

that we are only given a designated examination in the ports of entry, for example, at MICT (Manila International Container Terminal) and the Port of Manila," Layug said.

At present, Layug noted that local authorities were only able to inspect about 10 percent of the entire shipment as the process of inspecting the imported goods was limited to opening and closing the containers.

After Bulacan, the DA is looking for other potential sites to put up other cold examination facilities in Cebu and Davao. **INQ**



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SRA DIRECTIVE TO EASE HIGH PRICES

SUGAR FOR EXPORT MAY NOW BE DIVERTED FOR LOCAL USE

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is allowing the reallocation of unused sugar originally intended for the global market for domestic use to address the growing demand for this commodity.

The SRA issued two different guidelines on the reinstatement of so-called homeless "A" (sugar for export to the US) and "D" quedans (for the world market) and the reclassification of such for the local market, subject to certain conditions.

It promulgated Sugar Order (SO) No. 8 and SO No. 9, respectively, to "augment the volume of sugar to be made available for domestic consumption" and "help alleviate the tightness in the domestic sugar supply for crop year 2022-2023."

According to the SRA, it saw the necessity to stabilize the supply and selling prices in the local market.

It has received requests for the conversion of sugar intended for US and world markets which have remained unshipped—called homeless in the industry—and "could be utilized to alleviate the perceived tightness in domestic sugar balance."

Likewise, the agency re-

ceived various queries and requests for reinstating homeless "A" and "D" sugar quedans. Some 11,432 metric tons (MT) for "A" sugar and 5,478 MT for "D" sugar have remained outstanding, based on the SRA's final report on raw sugar balances as of Nov. 20, 2022.

The actual raw production inched up by only 0.37 percent from the last crop year.

Under the first SRA guideline, only its board holds the authority to approve requests for reassigning sugar for export to local consumption.

Traders need to pay a fee of P15 per 50-kilogram bag upon filing the request for the reinstatement of homeless "A" and "D" sugar quedans.

The SRA has set a deadline of Aug. 4 for accepting applications for reinstatement.

In another order, the SRA said any verified unshipped "A" and "D" sugar quedans issued for crop year 2020-2021 and previous crop years can be reclassified or converted on a voluntary basis.

This is valid only for crop year 2023-2024.

Holders of verified unshipped "A" and "D" sugar quedans may lodge their application for conversion to "B" sugar not later than Aug. 15. The SRA will not be accepting late applications. INQ



SRA eyes unused sugar exports for domestic use

By DANESSA RIVERA

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is eyeing to convert unused sugar for export to the US and the rest of the world to B classification or for domestic use, to boost current supply.

The SRA issued Sugar Orders No. 8 and 9 detailing guidelines for the "reinstatement" and eventual conversion of "homeless" A sugar for the US and of D for the rest of the world market to classification B or domestic sugar.

The orders – dated June 30 but published only last July 17 – were issued following requests from the sugar industry for a guarantee that supply and prices of the commodity

in the local market will remain stable.

"The SRA has received requests for the conversion or reclassification of verified unshipped A and D sugar quedans to B sugar quedans considering that the reclassification of A and D sugar quedans was authorized in crop year 2014-2015 and crop year 2013-2014, respectively," the sugar regulator said in SO 9.

During consultations, planters and millers said the conversion of these sugar for export would "augment the volume of sugar to be made available for domestic consumption, and help alleviate the tightness in the domestic sugar supply for crop year 2022-2023."

As of June 11, actual raw sugar production only inched up by 0.37 percent from the previous crop year.

Meanwhile, records showed significant volumes of A and D sugar still unshipped, which "could be utilized to alleviate the perceived tightness in domestic sugar balance," it said.

"SRA records show that there are 11,432 metric tons for A sugar and 5,478 MT for D sugar remaining as per final report on raw sugar balances as of Nov. 20, 202," it said.

Under SO 8, the SRA said previous SOs declared all unshipped A sugar quedans as "homeless," non-negotiable and non-marketable.

Meanwhile, previous SOs

also provided rules to dispose of D sugar for export or for consumption of sugar-based food exporters, as well as instructions on declaring them as "homeless."

With the new omnibus guidelines, the SRA said the Sugar Board – chaired by President Marcos as concurrent agriculture secretary – has the sole authority to approve requests to reinstate A or D sugar quedans.

To reinstate A and D sugar, applicants need to settle a reinstatement fee of P15 per 50-kilogram bag upon filing.

The sugar industry is given until Aug. 4 to apply for reinstatement of homeless A and D sugar.

Under SO 9, the SRA said

all verified unshipped A and D sugar quedans issued for CY 2020-2021 and previous crop years can be reclassified "on a voluntary basis."

Holders of these sugar stocks can apply for conversion to B sugar quedans until Aug 15.

They also need to have these sugar verified on or before July 15 so the SRA can decide on the final volume of sugar that can be converted.

Apart from the reinstatement fee, holders also need to settle reclassification fee of P33 per 50-kilogram bag, and revalidation fee of P5 per quedan. The SRA said SO 9 is only valid for crop year 2023-2024.

Earlier this month, the SRA issued SO 7 which called

for the importation of a maximum of 150,000 MT of refined sugar by mid-September to address the supply shortfall and ensure stable prices. This was the second importation program for this year and the third for calendar year 2022-2023.

As of June 25, refined sugar production was at 640,908 MT, down 10.99 percent from 720,062.55 produced a year earlier.

Based on DA's latest monitoring in Metro Manila wet markets, refined sugar retails at P85-110 per kilo while raw sugar is sold at P82-90 per kilo as of yesterday. A year earlier, refined sugar retailed at P90 per kilo while raw sugar was sold at P70 per kilo.

Backward

SCHOLARS, politicians, media commentators and just plain policy kibitzers all wail about the backward nature of our agricultural sector. Recently, opinion pieces from highly respected economists like Gerardo Sicat and Cielito Habito stressed the need of improving the performance of our agriculture sector if the economy is to attain high and sustained growth, and successfully address the widespread malnutrition among our people, particularly kids.

While there is a universal consensus on the



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backward status of the sector, conflicting ideas on how to make our countryside efficient and competitive vary from sector to sector depending on the interest they represent. The Left and local producers want to maintain perpetual protection for the sector through high tariffs and massive subsidies to enable it to become efficient and competitive with foreign counterparts.

On the other hand, liberal economists believe the market should be allowed to operate

➤ **Finer B3**

more freely by allowing quality and cheap imported products to enter the country to promote competition and allow the general public to access more affordable, nutritious and quality food. They note that more than half a century of protecting our local producers and providing dole outs to our tillers never resulted in a more robust agricultural sector.

The Left and local producers want greater state intervention in agriculture. They thus lobby for the perpetual implementation of agrarian reform even if it results in the fragmentation of our farm-lands into miniscule sizes devoid of economies of scale. They want to impose an array of regulations to limit the entry of imports to the minimum. They want to restore the power of the **National Food Authority (NFA)** to import rice once again so that it can offer supposedly lower rice prices to the poor consumers.

Their set of policy recommendations assumes that the government is efficient, and it can fulfill all the things that they want it to do without a hitch. But in the same breath, they complain about how slow the government is in its land distribution activities and the extension of support services to the agrarian reform beneficiaries.

They protest against rampant smuggling of agricultural commodities, which over-regulation promotes ironically because the high prices of food commodities make smuggling a profitable venture. Similarly, the same over-regulation that they favor leads to rent-seeking activities as government regulators are not saints.

They advocate for the restoration of the power of NFA to import rice despite knowledge

that the agency has never been successful in stabilizing the buying price for farmers and the selling price for consumers. Decades of NEA intervention in the rice market has resulted in the accumulation of more than P140 billion in debt by the government, not to mention that it promoted rent-seeking activities along the rice value-chain.

On the other hand, liberal economists have been arguing that if we allow the science of economics and business instead of politics to determine how national resources are allocated in the country, the main driving force of the economy will be a market tempered only by government rules that guarantee a level playing field for all players. If the market is allowed to freely operate in the agricultural sector, they say that it will induce greater efficiency and competitiveness.

They note that good economics and business sense dictate the application of modern farm machineries, technologies and knowledge as a way of significantly increasing the productivity of a business venture. However, it is obvious that adopting modern farm practices will be hindered if the average farm size of a tiller is a hectare or less. This is why they advocate for farm clustering or consolidation. It is meant to consolidate production to attain economies of scale but not necessarily land ownership as the propaganda from the Left alleges.

In addition, liberal economists argue for minimum state intervention in agricultural ventures as they believe that the state is not an efficient entrepreneur. Thus, they abhor too many regulations because these only result in rent-seeking activities. They believe that if regulations are to be applied, they should be based on solid scientific basis, not the whims of the regulators. They stress that arbitrariness only leads to mar-

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ket uncertainty and greater risks for the investors, in the process discouraging more private sector investments in agriculture.

Like entrepreneurs, liberal economists believe that the best way to allocate one's resources is to anchor it on the country's comparative advantage or even competitive advantage. A business person will not invest in a venture that he or she will not excel in because it will likely lead to bankruptcy. The best investments are in areas where one will have the greatest return per peso investment made.

The Left does not subscribe to this because it treats government

money like manna falling from heaven. It has no qualms in distributing massive subsidies to the poor because it believes that business enterprises and the rich should be taxed heavily for these dole outs regardless of its economic and financial consequences.

Liberal economists have fought for the liberalization of rice trading since the 1980s and only realized their advocacy in 2019 with the passage of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL). The primary reason for this advocacy was that NFA was ineffective in intervening in the rice market, that the over-regulation of rice trading only

resulted in massive corruption along the entire rice value chain, and that government indebtedness reached the staggering amount of more than P140 billion just for a single agency.

The RTL's — particularly its Rice Competitive Enhancing Fund — review is overdue as provided by the law. Whether it should be retained because its benefits far outweigh its costs or vice versa can be easily determined if the review is accomplished. Before I left the Department of Agriculture (DA), I made sure that funds were available for this purpose and that the best team was assembled for the

evaluation.

Unfortunately, not much progress has been made by the current DA leadership to see through the completion of this study so that any future decision on the fate of the RTL and the NFA is based on solid scientific findings. With the absence of a scholarly review, the public is now victimized by anecdotal evidence, generalizations, and worse, fake news, from those who benefited immensely from the workings of the previous NFA and the protectionist regime which they now want to restore.

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DA to build examination facility for agri goods in Bulacan

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Pacific Roadlink Logistics Inc. (PRLI) for the establishment of a cold examination facility in agriculture (CEFA) in Angat, Bulacan for P2.3 billion.

Under the MOU, PRLI will develop 10 hectares for the CEFA, including its staging, laboratory, incinerator, container yard and truck parking.

A portion of the property will be used by the DA solely for its examination and laboratory area at no cost to the government.

The agreement said the facility will serve as the first 24-hour off-dock facility that will exclusively process agricultural importations from major ports in the Philippines, including but not limited to the port of Manila and the Manila

International Container Port.

The MOU also authorizes the DA to use a certain portion of the property for a term of 25 years, renewable for another 25 years.

PLRI will also construct the physical and structural framework of the CEFA in accordance with the specifications and guidelines set forth by the DA but exclusive of equipment, fixtures, and other laboratory supplies, which will be for the account of the government.

The company will also assume responsibility for the maintenance against ordinary wear and tear arising from the normal operations of the CEFA. The company will maintain CEFA as an off-dock customs facility for the duration of the agreement.

The DA, however, is not allowed to introduce any major renovation or improvement on the property without the prior written consent of PRLI.

The DA is tasked to ensure its personnel and processes will comply with and be consistent with all standards.

The agency will also issue, formulate and carry out policy procedures and deploy personnel for the continuous and efficient operations of CEFA to effectively reduce costs for storage, demurrage, and delay in the release of containerized agricultural product importations.

The DA is also expected to allocate a budget for the procurement of equipment, fixtures and supplies to be utilized for its examination processes to be conducted in its laboratory.

PRLI is a local logistics company headquartered in Bulacan which currently offers trucking, container depot, inter island and warehouse cross docking services, among others.



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Agri hubs to rise in idle penal colony lands

By AARON RECUNCO

The plan to transform idle penal colony lands into productive agriculture hubs will serve as a blueprint to achieve food security in the country, a senior official of the **Department of Agriculture (DA)** said.

Gerald Glenn Panganiban, director of the DA's Bureau of Plant Industry, said the success of the DAXDOJ (Department of Justice) Reformation Initiative for Sustainable Environment for Food Security (RISE) will also serve as a model to achieve the ambitious goal of zero hunger set by President Marcos.

"Through the DAXDOJ RISE Project, idle prison lands will soon be transformed into booming agriculture hubs with bustling vegetable farms, rice and corn fields, dairy pastures, fisheries, and agricultural support facilities," said Panganiban. "This project can serve as a blueprint for developing similar agri-hubs to feed communities across the Philippines."

The signing of the tripartite memorandum of agreement recently concluded between DA, the DOJ, and the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) was

witnessed by the President himself.

In his remarks at the event, Marcos underscored food security and zero hunger as twin policy priorities of his administration.

One of the main objectives of the DA X DOJ RISE Project, according to the agreement, is to develop land areas and resources into productive agricultural camps or food production centers to contribute to the country's food security.

The first agriculture hub under the RISE Project will be built on a 501-hectare plot of the Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

The food staples to be grown on-site include rice, corn, cashews, and assorted vegetables. Likewise, the project will also include a tilapia fishery and a dairy production area.

"The way to achieve food security and zero hunger in the Philippines is to modernize our farming tools and processes and boost agricultural production," said Panganiban.

"RISE agri-hubs will serve as important incubators of agricultural innovation and progress towards achieving the priority agriculture objectives of the President," he added.

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SRA channels 17K MT of sugar for export to domestic market

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) has issued an order reclassifying for domestic use sugar originally intended for export in a move to increase local supply.

Sugar Order (SO) number 9 series of 2022-2023 dated June 30 said any verified unshipped A and D sugar quedans issued for crop year 2020-2021 and previous crop years are eligible for reclassification or conversion on a voluntary basis. SRA classifies sugar as A type if it is intended for shipment to comply with the United States exports quota and D type if it is intended for export to other parts of the world.

SO 9 said based on current records, there are significant volumes of A and D type sugar that remain unshipped and can be "utilized to alleviate the perceived tightness in domestic sugar balance."

SRA added there are at least 11,432 metric tons (MT) of A

sugar and 5,478 MT of D sugar that has not yet left the country for exports as of end-November 2022.

SRA said the conversion of the said volume will be charged with P15 per 50 kg bag as reinstatement fee, P33 per 50 kg bag as reclassification/conversion fee and P5 per quedan as revalidation fee.

Quedans are warehouse receipts showing the ownership of a sugar volume in a warehouse or sugar central that can be used by farmers as a trading document.

Based on Department of Agriculture's latest monitoring of public markets in the National Capital Region as of yesterday showed prevailing retail price of sugar ranged from P85 to P110 per kg for refined sugar, P82 to P90 per kg for washed sugar and P78 to P90 for brown sugar.

Meanwhile, SRA millsite monitoring showed composite price of raw sugar as of July 2 was P3,000 per 50 kg bag.



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Inspection facility for imported farm produce rising in Angat

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it signed an agreement with Pacific Roadlink Logistics, Inc. (PRLI) for the construction of the Philippines' first cold examination facility in agriculture (CEFA) in Angat, Bulacan.

"Our quarantine officers are more than ready to integrate this infrastructure in developing mechanisms to protect our agricultural borders," Senior Agriculture Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban said at the groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday.

The CEFA project is funded from the P2.3 billion received from the national budget this

year. It is expected to be completed up to eight months.

The facility will feature an integrated laboratory to inspect for transboundary pests and diseases.

"The 2023 national budget provides funds once again for the establishment of such a facility not only in Bulacan, but also in Cebu for the Visayas and Davao City for Mindanao," according to Senator Cynthia A. Villar, who chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food.

Former President Rodrigo R. Duterte approved the establishment of designated cold examination areas in Manila,

Batangas, Cebu, and Davao to contain the spread of African Swine Fever.

"The previous funding allocated for the previous project was not implemented as the DA failed (to proceed) because of the lack of space in the port of Manila," Ms. Villar said.

"We don't have first border facilities; that is why diseases easily enter the country to the detriment of the agri sector. All the developed countries have these facilities as part of their food safety and quality in inspection regimes," she said.

PRLI will be responsible for the construction of the CEFA, in

accordance with specifications set by the DA.

All imported agri-fishery products are to undergo a 100% examination by the various food regulators like the Bureaus of Animal Industry, Plant Industry, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, as well as the National Meat Inspection Service.

"From the port of entry, the commodities are brought to the various cold storage facilities, which are beyond our supervision... the CEFA makes it easier to secure the borders," Agriculture Assistant Secretary James A. Layug said. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**



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US retains sugar export quota for Philippines

By **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**
Reporter

THE UNITED STATES retained the Philippines' export quota for raw cane sugar for the coming crop year, the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) said.

On its website, the USTR said that the Foreign Agricultural Service of the US Department of Agriculture kept the Philippines' export quota of 145,235 metric tons raw value (MTRV) of raw cane sugar under the tariff rate quota (TRQ) scheme of the World Trade Organization.

This is the third-largest quota after those of the Dominican Republic with 189,343 MTRV and Brazil with 155,993 MTRV.

The TRQ sets a volume limit for goods which can enter the US at a lower tariff.

However, the **Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA)** is not sure if the Philippines will be able to fulfill the quota.

Sugar, SI/8

Sugar,
from SI/1

"If the quota is retained then we will plan how to supply the sugar because the (US) buying price is lower compared to our domestic price," SRA Acting Administrator and Chief Executive Officer Pablo Luis S. Azcona said in a Viber message.

Based on his estimate, the US buying price of sugar is at around P2,500 per 50-kilo bag, which is 20% lower than the domestic price of P3,000.

Aside from the lower price, Mr. Azcona said that the Philippines was not able to fulfill the export quota in recent years due to the shortfall in the domestic production of sugar.

"It's hard to defend sugar exports to the US at a cheaper price if we have a shortage here," he said in mixed Filipino and English.

National Federation of Sugarcane Planters President Enrique D. Rojas welcomed the US decision to retain the sugar quota allocation as it shows the Philippines is still a valued trade partner.

"Maintaining access to the US sugar market is ideal for the Philippine sugar industry, because we will have a ready market when our production exceeds our domestic consumption," he said.

"Unfortunately, our production in the past years and the years to come falls short of our domestic consumption, prompting us to be a net importer of sugar," he added.

As of July 2, the SRA supply and demand situation report showed raw sugar production for crop year 2022-2023 inched up by 0.42% to 1.799 million MT.

The production of refined sugar declined by 11.5% to 640,980 MT during the crop year.

The Philippines continues to experience a shortage in the supply of sugar, which has driven up prices.

To address the supply shortfall and stabilize prices, the Philippines is importing another 150,000 MT of refined sugar by mid-September.

Date: July 21, 2023 Page: 4



GOVERNMENT TO TRANSFORM IDLE PENAL COLONY LANDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY INTO BOOMING AGRICULTURE HUBS

EDITORIAL

PH agri hubs

PEOPLE get this feeling that the Philippines may finally achieve food security and win the battle against hunger, with the launching of a highly ambitious project.

It's the "Reformation Initiative for Sustainable Environment (RISE)" for food security project of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Under the multi-pronged project, idle penal colony lands across the country will be transformed into booming agriculture hubs as a blueprint of achieving food security.

The first agriculture hub will be built on a 501-hectare plot of the Iwahig Penal Colony in Puerto Princesa City, according to the DA, which is concurrently headed by President Marcos.

Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban said the food staples to be grown there include rice, corn, cashews and assorted vegetables. "RISE agriculture hubs will serve as important incubators of agricultural innovations...towards achieving the priority agriculture objectives of the President," said Panganiban.

We share the view of Panganiban that the way to achieve food security and zero hunger is to modernize our farming tools and processes and boost agricultural production.

Bureau of Plant Industry Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban said idle prison lands will be transformed into booming agriculture hubs with bustling vegetable farms, rice/corn fields and dairy pastures.

RISE Project, he said, is a model to achieve the ambitious goal of zero hunger set by President Marcos' administration.

Other concerned government agencies and offices must follow suit and come up with programs and projects aimed at addressing hunger and poverty in the Philippines.

Higit 50 kilo ng 'frozen meat product' kinumpiska sa NAIA

KINUMPISKA ng mga opisyal ng Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) ang may 51.5 kilo ng iba't-ibang 'processed meat product' sa dalawang pasahero nang dumating ang mga ito sa Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) mula Indonesia kahapon.

Dumating ang dalawang pasahero sa NAIA Terminal 1 sakay ng PAL flight PR-536 ng alas-siyete nang umaga kahapon.

Sa ulat, hinarang ni Bureau of Customs (BOC) examiner Norman Penaflor ang dalawang pasahero nang makita ang mga dala nilang hot-dog, marinated na chicken nuggets at iba pang processed meat products at saka itinurn-over ito sa BAI.

Wala umanong maipakitang certifi-

cate at import permit sa dalang mga produkto na mahigpit na ipinagbabawal na makapasok ng Pilipinas dahil sa pinangangambahang sakit na dala nito.

Dadalhin sa pasilidad ng BAI ang mga kinumpiskang processed meat product para sa disposal.

Samantala nasa 4.1 kilo ng sari-saring halaman ang kinumpiska ng Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) sa NAIA na dala ng isa pang pasahero mula Jakarta, Indonesia sakay ng PAL flight PR-536 na lumapag sa NAIA terminal 1. (Otto Osorio)



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More than just planting and harvesting: We need to understand what working in agriculture can mean

What does it mean to work in agriculture? To most people, working in agriculture means farming or fishing, and then only specifically just the planting and harvesting part or just the fishing part.

Folks who actually work in the agriculture industry know that this is not the case.

For one thing, agriculture encompasses more than just planting and harvesting, and fishing involves more than pushing a boat out to sea. When you ask someone what they think aquaculture involves, the usual answer will only go as far as raising fish and har-

vesting it. Nothing about how the fingerlings get into the pond, nothing about making sure that the pond is the optimum environment for growing fish or seafood.

Aside from getting people to understand that being a successful farmer or fisher or fishpond owner also means being a businessman, we must also remind people that agriculture



AVANT GARDENER
YVETTE TAN

work extends way beyond these fields.

A common question I get as an agriculture editor is “do you farm,” oftentimes from industry insiders themselves. Most people think that only farmers are interested in, allowed to be interested in, and are allowed to participate in agriculture. The more we allow this erroneous way of thinking to pervade public perception, the more we should not be surprised when the industry continues to decline.

We have to educate and remind the public that one does not have to be a farmer or fisher to work in agriculture. One can be a scientist, a journalist, an educator, or an entrepreneur. One can work in tech, in retail or wholesale, in food and hospitality, or in import export. One can be a lawmaker, a driver, a porter, a market vendor.

The more we understand that the agriculture industry is wide and encompassing, the less pressure people will feel in supporting it, and the easier it will be for them to incorporate it into their daily lives.

Life is hard and it’s not getting any easier. Because of this, it’s only natural for many people to live in survival mode, caring only for themselves, not understanding or not caring to understand how

bigger processes affect them. Because of this, we have to tailor our message to make it simple to understand while being careful not to oversimplify the message, and to make it relatable to even someone who has never set foot outside the city.

A lot of problems in our agriculture industry are systemic, but a bulk of it comes from public misconceptions as well. While it’s extremely important to pressure lawmakers to correct the broken food system and push for transparency, this should be done side by side with education the public on why doing so is important and that whether they know it or not, this affects their daily lives. We need all the people who eat on our side, so it’s in everyone’s — the agriculture industry and the eating public’s — interest to correct widespread misinformation about the agriculture industry.

It’s unfortunate that everyone seems to have an opinion on agriculture, and that most of it is wrong. Only people who are actually involved in the industry have the power to correct this. Whether we like it or not, if you belong in the agriculture industry, you have to make educating others part of your repertoire.



Asian wheat buyers to seek alternative supplies after attacks on Ukraine ports

SINGAPORE- Asian millers, which have bought more than 1 million metric tons of Black Sea wheat for shipment in coming months, will seek alternatives as attacks on Ukrainian ports after the collapse of a safe passage deal spark longer-term supply risks, traders and analysts said.

Indonesia, the world's second-largest wheat importer, Malaysia and Vietnam have bought Black Sea cargoes for milling into flour for making products such as noodles and bread. South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines take Ukrainian wheat mainly for animal feed.

Supply constraints from the key Black Sea region add further uncertainty amid the prospect of dry El Nino weather threatening crops across Asia, exacerbating worries over food inflation.

Chicago wheat futures climbed more than 2 percent to hit a three-week high on Thursday as infrastructure damage following Russia's attacks on Ukrainian ports buoyed prices.

"Traders and mills will be looking for alternative sources of supply," said one Singapore-based trader at an international trading company.

"They are going to be potentially looking at Europe and cargoes

from other Black Sea exporters like Romania and Bulgaria. Australia still has wheat to sell from its harvest last year."

Russian strikes on Ukrainian port areas continued on Thursday, local authorities said, after Moscow warned that ships heading to Ukraine's Black Sea ports could be considered military targets.

Russia attacked the Odesa region on Monday and Tuesday nights. The attack on the southern Ukrainian port of Chornomorsk damaged grain export infrastructure and destroyed thousands of tons of stored grain.

"The market was hopeful that navies of other countries might escort shipment of goods in and out of Ukraine regardless of Russia not renewing the grain corridor," said Rabobank senior grains analyst Dennis Voznesenski.

"But the attack on Odesa port and subsequent statement from Russia that any ship sailing to Ukraine's Black Sea ports would be seen as carrying military cargoes has made that very unlikely," he said.

Millers in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, which are heavily reliant on Black Sea supplies, have bought millions of metric tons of wheat and corn from the region, which is entering its peak export

season with freshly harvested crops reaching the market.

"It is hard to put an exact number as traders have signed private deals but mills in Asia have easily booked more than one million tons of Black Sea wheat for shipment in July, August and September," said a second trader in Singapore.

Prices of Black Sea wheat offered in Asia are expected to rise as supplies tighten, traders said.

"As of now not many exporters are quoting prices but before the attacks, mills in Indonesia bought Black Sea wheat at around \$275 a ton, including cost and freight," the first Singapore trader said.

Meanwhile, Russian strikes on Ukrainian port areas continued on Thursday, local authorities said, after Moscow warned that ships heading to Ukraine's Black Sea ports could be considered military targets.

As concerns grew over Russia pulling out of a deal that has protected global shipments of Ukrainian grain, authorities in the Mykolaiv and Odesa regions reported some 20 people injured in the strikes.

With Russia's exit from the year-old threatening to worsen global food supplies, Ukraine said on Wednesday it was establishing a tem-



Turkey-flagged bulk carrier TQ Samsun leaves the sea port of Odesa, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine. (Reuters Photo)

porary shipping route via Romania, a neighboring Black Sea country.

"Its goal is to facilitate the unblocking of international shipping in the north-western part of the Black Sea," Vasyl Shkurakov, Ukraine's acting minister for communities, territories and infrastructure development, said in a letter to the UN's International Shipping

Organization.

Ukraine and Russia are among the world's top grain exporters. US wheat futures jumped 8.5 percent on Wednesday, their biggest daily gain since days after Russia's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of its neighbor.

Russia's Defense Ministry said flag states of ships travelling to Ukrainian ports would be con-

sidered parties to the conflict on Ukraine's side.

After the last ship left Ukraine on Sunday under the Black Sea Grain Initiative, Russia attacked the Odesa region on Monday and Tuesday nights. The region's three ports had been the only ones operating in Ukraine under the grain deal. - Reuters



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Cocoa hits fresh 12-year peak; sugar up

NEW YORK — New York cocoa futures on ICE rose to a fresh 12-year peak on Wednesday, with crop concerns partially offset by signs the recent run-up in prices could curb demand.

COCOA: September New York cocoa settled up \$26 or 0.8% at \$3,433 a metric ton, having hit the highest price since mid-March 2011 earlier in the session at \$3,439.

The recent rise in prices has been driven by crop concerns in the key West African-producing region where wet weather has led to outbreaks of the blackpod disease.

The International Cocoa Organization, in a report issued on Wednesday, said heavy rains in top grower Ivory Coast could reduce production "during the latter part of the 2022/23 mid-crop, and even further extend the

detrimental effects to the main crop of the 2023/24 season."

High prices appear, however, to be beginning to lower demand, with last week's European second-quarter cocoa grind down 5.7% year on year. North American grind data is due on Thursday.

September London cocoa rose £52 or 2.1% to £2,584 per metric ton.

A crackdown by Cameroon on the sale of cocoa beans to unlicensed buyers from Nigeria has left farmers in two border regions with tons of beans piling up in warehouses ahead of the start of the main harvest, a producers' union and farmers told Reuters.

SUGAR: October raw sugar settled up 0.35 cent or 1.5% at 24.21 cents per pound (lb). Dealers said

the market was choppy but lacked a clear overall trend, with prices underpinned by concerns that an El Niño weather event could curb output in India and Thailand.

Favorable weather in Brazil, however, was boosting cane harvest progress in the key Centre-South region.

A proposal to increase Brazil ethanol blending in gasoline to 30% from 27% currently would lead to using an additional 3.5% of the country's recoverable sugar to make ethanol, a study showed.

October white sugar rose 1.5% at \$675.80 per metric ton.

COFFEE: September arabica coffee fell 0.5% to \$1.555 per lb.

September robusta coffee rose 2.8% to \$2,604 a metric ton. —

Reuters



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Wheat, SI/8

Wheat, from SI/1

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