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## Vietnam offers rice price cut as DA urges India to lift ban

AGRICULTURE Senior Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban said on Friday that private traders have received lower price quotes for Vietnamese rice, while the Department of Agriculture (DA) is asking the government of India to relax its export ban on white rice.

"We are pleased to inform the public that upon the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to open talks with Vietnam, some Vietnamese exporters have quoted our private traders prices that are \$30-40 lower (per ton)," Mr. Panganiban said in a statement released by the Palace.

He added that the DA is working with India — one of the world's top rice exporters — to allow exports of white rice to continue on humanitarian grounds.

Last month, India banned exports of non-basmati white rice to ensure domestic availability and curb prices.

Vietnam, on the other hand, announced a plan to reduce rice exports to four million tons a year by 2030.

"We hope this will pave the way for the country to get better terms for the additional 300,000 to 500,000 metric tons (MT) in rice imports for this year," Mr. Panganiban added.

A farm industry official said a \$40 reduction in Vietnamese rice prices will result in Philippine rice prices that are still expensive.

"If it's \$40, landed cost will fall P3 per kilo," Raul Q. Montemayor, national manager of the Federation of Free Farmers, told *BusinessWorld* by phone.

"But it depends on (which part of the transaction) the \$40 will be reduced... Vietnam rice is now at \$630, \$640 per ton so even though you take out \$40, it will still be expensive," he added.

The Philippines needs to import at least 700,000 MT in the lean months of August and September to ensure adequate rice inventories, Mr. Montemayor noted.

Danilo V. Fausto, president of the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food, Inc., said the impact of the lower quotes from Vietnam could result in a retail price decline of about P2 to P3, which he described as small but welcome, he said via phone.

At any rate, consumers may have to wait until the harvest in September for domestic rice prices to decline. "When we harvest in September, the stock will be replenished and prices will go down because local supply will now be available," Mr. Fausto said.

Mr. Montemayor said the harvest may show up in markets by October due to delays caused by recent typhoons.

"The typhoons could have affected the crops that are to be har-

vested in September... (farmers) affected will harvest and replant around October," he said.

According to the DA, agriculture damage from Typhoon Egay (International name: Doksuri) was P4.66 billion, with lost volume estimated at 158,995 MT.

"By that time, (prices) will decrease as the new harvest comes but it will not go down to the previous levels of P38 because although stocks are ample, traders will be looking at the competing imports," Mr. Montemayor said.

According to DA price monitors domestic well-milled rice was sold for between P42 and P52 on Friday, while regular-milled rice fetched between P38 and P49.

Imported well-milled rice sold in Metro Manila markets for between P45 and P46. The Philippines does not import regular-milled rice. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

# REMATE

## ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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### EDITORIAL

## BIGAS, BIGAS BAKIT PRESYO'Y TULOY SA PAGTAAS?

**HINDI** nangangahulugang ang tanim na palay ang tuma-taas dahil sa pagtaas ng puno nito o uhay, tiyak na yuyukod naman ito lalo na kung ang mga bunga ay hitik at putok na putok o nangangahulugang malusog ang pananim.

Bigas ang pangunahing pagkain ng mga Pilipino lalo na ang mga manggagawa dahil ito ang ginagamit nilang pampalakas, pampatibay at pampalaki ng katawan.

Sa ating bansa, mas marami ang kumokonsumo ng bigas kay-sa ibang pamalit dito tulad ng mais, kamote at mga lamang-lupa o root crops dahil nakasanayan na ito.

Pero dapat pag-aralan na ng mga Pinoy kung paano magbabawas sa konsumo ng bigas dahil hindi lang nagdudulot ng hindi magandang pangangatawan ang pagkain ng maraming kanin na mula sa bigas subalit dahil napakamahal na rin naman ng kilo nito.

Kung ang presyo noong Disyembre 2022 ng isang sako ng bigas na may timbang na 25 kilos ay nasa P850 lang, ngayong buwan ng Agosto ay pumapalo na ito sa P1,280. Aba'y halos mahigit P400 ang itinaas ng presyo gayung wala pang isang taon.

Hindi naman yata makatarungan para sa mga Pilipino ang ganitong pagtaas ng presyo. Dapat may maayos at katanggap-tanggap na basehan kung bakit napakataas na nang presyo ng bigas sa panahong ito.

Basic na, o sasabihin ng mga bata ngayon na "para ka namang 'di nag-grade 2" kapag pilit nating inuunawa ang dahilan ng pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas.

Laging sasabihin, walang buffer stock, walang masyadong aning palay o kaya mataas ang presyo ng palay, mataas ang angkat ng bigas sa ibang bansa o imported rice, mahal ang gasolina o krudo at mataas ang ibinayad sa serbisyo.

Pero ano nga ba ang totoong dahilan at napakabilis tumaas ng presyo ng bigas? Pwedeng pakisagot nga ito ng mga eksperto dyan sa Department of Agriculture?

Hindi naman kasi iyyabang ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. noong nangangampanya pa siya na kaya niyang ibaba ang presyo ng bigas sa P20 hanggang P25 bawat kilo kung batid niyang hindi naman niya kayang tuparin ang kanyang pangako.

Kaya naman sana, ang mga dahilan sa pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas ay magawaan ng paraan ng mga taga-DA sa tulong na rin ng mga magsasaka, negosyante at importer ng mga bigas upang sa ganoon ay magkaroon naman ng pagkakataon ang mahihirap nating kababayan na maisakatuparan ang kinagawiang kumain ng tatlong beses sa isang araw.



# Ex-agri chief warns of rice shortage

By BELLA CARIASO

Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor yesterday warned of a looming shortage of rice if the needed volume of grains will not arrive before the next harvest in October.

Montemayor said at present, the country's rice inventory was only at 39 days.

"The stock is very thin before the main harvest in October, so the shortage will happen if there is a gap between the demand and the actual supply," he said.

Montemayor also described as desperation on the part of government its request for India to supply rice to the Philippines due to "humanitarian" consideration, and that even the commitment of India and Vietnam to supply rice between 300,000 metric tons and 500,000 MT is still not assurance that imported rice will come in.

"Maybe the idea is to help the private sector who want to import more. There were many statements issued recently, that there was assurance from India and Vietnam to sell rice \$40 cheaper but this is just word. They are on the negotiation stage,"

Montemayor noted.

He said even though the promised 500,000 metric tons of rice will arrive, the country is still short of at least 500,000 MT.

"Our estimate is that we need a minimum of 700,000 to one million metric tons of rice," he added.

He said even though the supply of rice will last through August, there is a big possibility of a shortage in September until the start of the main harvest in October 2023.

According to Montemayor, while the government does not want the public to panic, the Department of

Agriculture (DA) should provide President Marcos with a realistic projection on the rice supply.

"They say at the end of the year, we will have a carryover stock of 52 days, it can be true but the critical is now until September. The other issue is the limited carryover stock, the 52 days is still low. If that is the case, what we are experiencing right now will happen again, especially with El Niño expected in the first quarter of 2024," he said.

At the same time, Montemayor backed the observation that the high retail prices of the grains are comparable with the rice crisis during

the incumbency of former president Rodrigo Duterte.

"At the very least, it (spike in rice prices) is comparable to 2016 and it is worsening," Montemayor noted.

Based on monitoring in Metro Manila markets, the lowest retail price of rice was at P49 per kilo and the highest was at P65 per kilo.

Montemayor also contradicted the figures of the DA that based on its monitoring, the public can still buy rice at P38 per kilo.

"The actual situation can be seen in the markets, grocery, not the statements of the DA," he said.

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## letters

### Coco entrepreneurs, not farmers

I am a lawyer by profession, but a coco farmer by passion, and our family has been a coco planter since the 1920s in Zamboanga City. I feel the need to add to the discussion about the coconut industry.

First and foremost, I disagree with the idea of the PCA allocating P11 billion of our precious coco levy funds for purposes of a replanting, fertilization and hybridization program. By doing so, we continue the traditional industry direction of exporting coco oil to the world market, perpetuating our predicament as an agricultural nation.

For the past 30 years, palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia has continued to outbid and outperform the coconut oil in export by simply underselling or cutting the price of cooking oil. In short, we are in a losing position against palm oil. Let us accept the fact that *talo tayo dito* – we lose here.

Instead I suggest that we use the P11-billion coconut levy fund for national industry and manufacture of coconut-based products. We use the fund to establish factories that use coconut to produce coco fibers, coco peat, coco water, coco cream, coco milk, coco soap, coco meal, coco starch and activated charcoal. Then we export these products instead of exporting coco oil

as a raw material then afterwards importing from industrialized countries the products manufactured from coco oil – soap, toothpaste, creams, biscuits, ice cream, etc.

By investing in factories, the price of coconut will go up to P30-40 per copra equivalent, thus directly improving the lives of coconut farmers and they will no longer need incentives to keep on planting coconuts. We will increase employment, increase revenue and decrease importation, ultimately improving our trade balance. This will also give rise to secondary cottage industries in the communities where such factories will rise.

The PCA should stop thinking with a farmer's mindset of planting and harvesting coconuts, but should start thinking as an industrialist and entrepreneur of coco-based producers for local consumption and international export.

This is the way forward. Stop competing with palm oil. Stop exporting ordinary coco oil. Let us start making the Philippines an exporter of finished coco-based products. Let us use our money to build and operate coco-based factories in the countryside. – JUAN CLIMACO P. ELAGO II, Zamboanga City

# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

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## RICE IMPORTATION

### DA LAUDED FOR RICE TALKS WITH VIETNAM, INDIA

By Jeannette I. Andrade  
@jiandradeINQ

Speaker Martin Romualdez on Sunday lauded the Department of Agriculture (DA) for swiftly starting talks with Vietnam and India for the steady importation of rice, ensuring the Philippines' sufficient supply of the staple.

In a statement, the Leyte representative said, "I commend the Department of Agriculture's quick response to our efforts in securing a stable and affordable rice supply for our country.

"This is a significant step toward fulfilling our commitment to the Filipino to put food on their table at prices within their reach," he added.

Romualdez was referring to Agriculture Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban's announcement that the department started talks with the two countries upon the instructions of President Marcos.

"This will help lower the prices of rice as it will further beef up our national inventory which, even without importation, is expected to last for 52 to 57 days by end of 2023," Panganiban said.

He said Vietnamese exporters also gave prices that

were \$30-\$40 lower than those they quoted earlier.

Talks with India were more iffy because New Delhi announced last month that it would temporarily ban rice exports, so it could deal with its own problems with price inflation.

But Panganiban said there was still a possibility that rice sales to the Philippines would be allowed on humanitarian grounds.

Panganiban said that negotiations with Vietnam and India could pave the way for the country to get better terms for the 300,000 to 500,000 metric tons of rice the Philippines needs to import this year.

July data from the Food and Agricultural Organization show a 2.8 percent surge in rice prices, the highest in almost 12 years, following India's rice export ban and adverse weather conditions affecting production.

According to the Speaker, "With the current volatility in the price of rice in the world market amid projected supply constriction, the government must waste no time exploring all available options to ensure adequate supply and reasonable price of our staple food." INQ

## Speaker cites DA's tapping Vietnam, India for rice supply

BY JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

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**S**PEAKER Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez on Sunday commended the Department of Agriculture (DA) for beginning talks with Vietnam and India to guarantee the nation's adequate supply of rice. He emphasized, however, that the government must move quickly to explore all options to ensure supply and a fair price for the staple food of the Filipino people.

The Speaker was referring to the recent announcement of DA Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban that upon the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., to open talks with Vietnam, some Vietnamese exporters are offering prices that are \$30 or \$40 lower than before.

Apart from the talks with Vietnam, Panganiban said the Philippine government is also working with India to discuss the possibility of their selling the Philippines some rice on humanitarian grounds, despite its recent ban on all rice exports.

"I commend the Department of Agriculture's quick response to our efforts in securing a stable and affordable rice supply for our country. This is a significant step towards fulfilling our commitment to the Filipino to put food on their table at prices within their reach," Romualdez said.

It may be recalled that during Romualdez's bilateral meeting with the President of the National Assembly of Vietnam, Vuong Dinh Hue, in Indonesia last week, the latter gave assurances that Vietnam would provide the Philippines with a stable supply of rice at affordable prices.

Romualdez and Hue met on the eve of their participation in the 44th AIPA (Asean Inter-Parliamentary Assembly) General Assembly in Jakarta.

"With the current volatility in the price of rice in the world market amid projected supply constriction, the government must waste no time exploring all available options to ensure adequate supply and a reasonable price of our staple food," Romualdez said.

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## Speaker...CONTINUED FROM A1

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, rice prices for July surged by 2.8 percent to 129.7 points, the highest in almost 12 years, on the back of India's rice export ban and adverse weather conditions that could impact production.

Panganiban said the negotiations with Vietnam and India could pave the way for the country to get better terms for the 300,000 metric tons (MT) to 500,000 MT of rice it needs to import this year.

### Transparent

AS these discussions progressed, Romualdez emphasized the importance of maintaining transparent and open communication between friendly countries to foster a stronger partnership.

"Open dialogue and cooperation are key to ensuring the success of this endeavor. I look forward to

the positive outcomes that will arise from these talks, as we work together for mutually beneficial arrangements to achieve food security and stability," he added.

Romualdez said the assurance of supply from Vietnam could boost the country's rice supply and dampen possible price spikes fueled by speculation over possible shortages.

To reciprocate Vietnam's gesture, Romualdez said the Philippines is willing to provide Vietnam with specific products and materials it may need to meet the demands of its industries or consumers.

Likewise, the two leaders of parliament discussed opportunities for partnership and cooperation to improve the supply chain between the Philippines and Vietnam involving other agricultural products and construction materials, such as cement.



# Govt to traders: Stop hoarding red onions

By RAADÉE S. SAUSA

[@raadeebboy](#)

**T**HE government is appealing to traders to refrain from hoarding red onions as this can lead to an artificial shortage and higher onion prices.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Rex Estoperez also said the government would be forced to import onions if traders will not release their stocks.

"If the red onions will not be released from cold storages, that will be to their [traders] disadvantage," he told reporters in an interview.

"They should not force us to import red onions as it is detrimental to them. We are appealing to traders to cooperate with the government."

Estoperez said the government does not want to see another spike in onion retail prices, similar to what happened in December last year, when red onions were sold for as much as P720 per kilo.

"We will not allow that [P720 per kilo of onions] to happen. Last time, the traders promised to release their inventory but it did not happen and even caused the delay in the importation."

He also said the government



PHOTO BY NONOY LACZA

would have to allow the importation of white onions because of the increasing demand for it among restaurants and institutional buyers.

Based on the inventory of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), the country's stock for white onions would only last for 30 days.

Stocks of red onions in cold storage facilities are good for 100 days, according to BPI.

BPI Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban said at least 4,000 metric tons (MT) of imported white onions are expected to arrive in the country next week.

Estoperez said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. must issue a special order for the importation of onions.

Furthermore, Estoperez said "there is no need for President

[Ferdinand] Marcos [Jr.] or DA Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban to issue a special order for the importation of more white onions."

"We are doing this [importation] to sustain the current retail prices and prevent prices from spiking again."

Meanwhile, the DA said it is targeting to sell smuggled sugar in Kadiwa stores before the end of the third quarter.

"December is already far away. Ideally we are targeting within [the third] quarter," Estoperez said.

"We have already memorandum of agreement [MOA] signing that's 4,000 MT of confiscated sugar, but it has to be subjected to testing by the SRA [Sugar Regulatory Authority]."



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## Rice planters told to enlist in RSBSA to receive seeds

**T**HE Department of Agriculture (DA) is urging farmers to enlist in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) to obtain certified seeds through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

Citing a report from the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the DA said the RCEF budget allocation was evaluated based on the results from the quantitative and qualitative assessments using four criteria: quantitative impact on yield, inclusivity of the component, budget utilization and efficiency in achieving stated targets.

"The seeds component has high marks on all four criteria, which suggests overall efficiency of the program in meeting its goals and relevance for the individual farmers," the DA said.

"However, many farmers who could be recipients of CS [certified seeds] are not yet registered in the RSBSA during the period covered in the evaluation."

The Philippine Rice Research

Institute (PhilRice) has confirmed that 3 percent to 5 percent of farmers had experienced late delivery of CS based on surveys that were echoed by focused group discussions and key informant interviews.

The midterm evaluation as of July also brought up the need to establish a mechanism to identify locations where delivery is late, followed by synchronization of the timing of seed delivery with the cropping calendar in areas where late seed delivery was experienced, the DA said.

The agency noted that RCEF was designed to improve the competitiveness of rice production in the Philippines to increase the income of farmers.

Central to current efforts in promoting the competitiveness of rice farming is the creation of the RCEF made through the passage of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) in March 2019.

Section 13b. of Republic Act (RA) 11203 creating RCEF provides that PhilRice use 30 percent of the RCEF

(P3 billion) to implement the development, propagation and promotion of certified inbred rice seeds to rice farmers and the organization of rice farmers into seed grower associations/cooperatives engaged in seed production and trade.

IRRI said since the RCEF implementation in 2019, rice supply has become more stable with record production of 19.96 million tons (palay terms) in 2021.

"Rice production slightly declined in 2022 with 19.76 million tons, but this level is still much higher than rice output in the first two years of the RCEF program."

The DA said the midterm evaluation noted that rice yield went up to 4.11 tons per hectare in 2022 from 4.04 tons per hectare in 2019.

"Domestic rice production is also complemented by imports with an average volume of 3 million tons [milled terms] over the period 2019 to 2022."

Besides improvements in national rice output, prices of milled rice "declined much more rapidly following the RTL."

The DA said this enabled the country to compete with prices in its rice producing neighbors like Thailand and Vietnam. **Raadee S. Sausa**



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## LANDBANK approves loans worth over P8B for hog repopulation as of end-June

LAND BANK of the Philippines (LANDBANK) said it approved loans for hog repopulation worth P8.05 billion in the six months to June.

In a statement on Sunday, the bank said 36 borrowers took out loans from its Special Window

and Interim Support to Nurture Hog Enterprises (SWINE) Lending Program.

The projects to be financed include the purchase of hogs and feed, construction and expansion of piggeries. Some of the loans were also for working capital.

The bank said commercial hog farmers registered as cooperatives or farmer's associations, small and medium enterprises, and large enterprises or corporations may borrow up to 80% of the project cost.

Working capital loans are payable in a year, while permanent

working capital financing may be repaid over five years, the bank said.

"Loans for fixed assets and construction of facilities are payable based on project cash flow (over) its economic useful life," it added.

The SWINE Lending Program is a partnership with the Department of Agriculture.

LANDBANK said AJ Piggery Farm, which is among the beneficiaries of the program, was able to borrow P24 million for its startup commercial farm.

The loan covers construction of three piggery buildings, support facilities, a manure lagoon, wastewater treatment facilities, and the acquisition of young female hogs for breeding. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**



## Ayuda sa mga magniniyog



LRAY VILLAFUERTE

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**S**a araw na ito, atin naman pong bibigyang-pansin at tatalakayin ang isa sa malaki at importanteng industriya sa Pilipinas—ang industriya ng niyog. Meron tayong 69 mula sa kabuuang 82 probinsya sa bansa na nagpoprodyus ng niyog kaya malaki talaga ang saklaw ng industriyang ito.

Ika nga ni Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. sa kanyang nakaraang State of the Nation Address (SONA), “Sa ating pagtahak sa kaunlaran, walang mamamayang Pilipino ang maiiwanan.” Kaya malinaw na kasama lahat pati na ang sektor ng niyog sa pag-unlad na isinusulong ng ating pangulo. Kasama sila sa pag-angat na pinapangarap ni Pangulong Marcos.

Noon pa nangangailangan ng ayuda ang may 2.5 milyong coconut farmers o magniniyog natin at ang kanilang pamilya.

Gusto nating mapalakas ang industriya ng niyog at gawin itong muli na top export earner ng bansa. Para magawa natin ito, kailangan munang unahin ang malawakang replanting program gamit ang mga high-yielding varieties—matataas na puno na mas maraming bumunga. Marami pong coconut farmers ang nababawasan na ang mga output dahil matatanda na ang mga puno. Kaya kailangan natin silang asistehan para sa replanting.

Ang atin pong top coconut-producing areas ay Davao Region, Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao at sub-region ng CALABARZON (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon).

Sa mga huling datos, ang per-tree productivity sa mga niyugan sa bansa ay bumaba na sa 44 niyog bawat puno noong 2019 kung ikukumpara sa produksyon ng India at Indonesia na 80-100 niyog kada puno.

At ang masahol pa nga rito, doon po sa amin sa CamSur, kung saan, marami-

rami na ang bilang ng mga matatandang puno, ang kasalukuyang annual yield average ay mas mababa pa sa 34 na niyog kada puno. Kaya kawawa talaga ang mga magni-niyog sa amin.

Kaya bukod sa pagtatanim ng mga bagong puno, kailangan din pong matutukan ang ibang problemang nagpapa-hina sa coconut production tulad ng mga peste gaya ng cocolisap na sumisira sa mga dahon, bunga, bulaklak ng niyog kaya ang tanging naiiwan ay ang trunk nito na magagamit na lamang bilang coco lumber.

Kabilang din po sa may malaking impact sa industriya ang mga natural na kalamidad tulad ng tagtuyot at El Niño phenomenon at maging ang mga malalakas na bagyong dumadalaw sa Pilipinas. Tulad na lamang ng mga Bagyong Pablo noong 2012 at “Yolanda” noong 2013 kung saan talagang kitang-kita naman nating maraming punong niyog ang nabunot at nagliparan dahil sa malakas na bagyo.

Kailangan din ng mga magniniyog ng ayuda para sa modernong farming technologies. Dapat silang mabigyan ng access sa modernong processing facilities. Kailangan din ng mga coconut farmer ng tulong para sa multi-cropping at makapag-alaga ng mga hayop na maaaring magbigay sa kanila ng dagdag kita.

Bagama’t ang Pilipinas ang second largest coconut producer sa Southeast Asia, tayo naman po ang may pinakamababang produksyon kada ektarya na 4 metric ton (MT) kumpara sa ibang bansa na may per-hectare production record na 12.5 MT.

Ang mga negosyante na umaasa sa mga coconut product ay kailangan ding maasistehan para magabayan sila sa tamang marketing outlets upang mapabilis ang export ng mga produkto. Kung mabibigyan sila ng sapat na kaalaman ng mga eksperto, mas madali nilang maipo-promote at mai-export ang mga coco product.

Dapat may agresibong kampanya ang gobyerno upang ma-improve at maging mas competitive ang mga coconut product tulad ng virgin coconut oil o VCO na maraming tumatangkilik sa mundo. Iyong puwedeng makipagsabayan sa lumalaking global trend sa pagkakaroon ng healthy o “green” lifestyle, magkaroon ng pokus sa medicinal, nutritional at

therapeutic value ng VCO at iba pa nating mga processed coconut products.

Kapag tumaas ang export ay tataas ang demand, mas maraming papasok na mga foreign investors. Magdudulot ito ng mas malaking kita sa ating coco farmers. Makikinabang din ang buong bansa dahil makakatulong ito para mas maging masigla ang ekonomiya.

Sa amin po sa CamSur ay hinihikayat namin ang mga foreign investor na pumasok at makipag-partner sa mga local entrepreneur sa processing at export ng mga high-value coconut products. Nang bumisita kamakailan ang pangulo sa aming lalawigan ay pinasyalan niya ang P230 million Sustainable Agriculture and Fishery Enterprises (SAFE) Innovation Hub na nakapokus sa processing at marketing ng mga value-added coconut products para sa export.

Isa rin po sa mga nagiging kalaban ng anumang export industry ang mga hindi inaasahang pangyayari tulad noong pandemya at mga giyera tulad ng ginawang pananakop ng Russia sa bansang Ukraine. Pero ang pinakamalaking pahirap para sa coconut industry ay ang kawalan ng pondo.

Ang Republic Act (RA) 11524 o P75-billion Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act (CFITF) ay nagbibigay ng pondo para sa mga coconut-related programs pero ayon mismo kay **Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA)** Administrator **Bernie Cruz** hindi kasama sa mga tinutustusan ng coco levy ang pondo para administrative costs ng mga proyekto.

Kapag ginamit po ang coco levy funds para sa administrative cost ng mga proyekto, kukuwestyunin agad ito ng Commission on Audit (COA).

Sa puntong ito, nais po nating hikayatin ang mga kasamahan kong mambabatas sa Kongreso na siliping mabuti ang budgetary outlays para sa coconut industry sa panukalang P5.768 trilyong General Appropriations Act (GAA) para sa 2024 upang mabigyan ng mas angkop at mas sapat na pondo ang mga hakbang na kailangan para mapasigla ang coconut industry.

Ang coconut industry ay isa sa mga sektor na dapat tutukan at suportahan namin sa Kongreso. Wag nating sayangin ang potensyal na kaya nitong ibigay para sa buong bansa. Tandaan, sabi nga ni Pangulong Marcos, walang iiwanan!



## DA hailed for initiating rice talks with Vietnam and India

SPEAKER Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez has lauded the Department of Agriculture (DA) for its rapid response and proactive approach in opening up discussions with Vietnam and India to ensure adequate supply of rice for Filipinos at affordable prices.

Romualdez was referring to the announcement of DA Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban that upon the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to open talks with Vietnam some Vietnamese exporters are offering prices that are \$30 or \$40 lower than before.

Apart from the talks with Vietnam, Panganiban said the Philippine government is also working with India to discuss the possibility of their selling the Philippines some rice on humanitarian grounds, despite its recent ban on all rice exports.

"I commend the Department of Agriculture's quick response to our efforts in securing a stable and affordable rice supply for our country. This is a significant step towards fulfilling our commitment to the Filipino to put food on their table at prices within their reach," Romualdez said.

Just recently, Romualdez had bilateral meeting with the Pres-

ident of the National Assembly of Vietnam, Vuong Dinh Hue, in Indonesia wherein the latter gave assurance Vietnam would provide the Philippines with a stable supply of rice at affordable prices.

Romualdez and Hue met on the eve of their participation in the 44th AIPA (ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly) General Assembly in Jakarta.

"With the current volatility in the price of rice in the world market amid projected supply constriction, the government must waste no time exploring all available options to ensure adequate supply and reasonable price of our staple food," Romualdez stressed.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, rice prices for July surged by 2.8 percent to 129.7 points, the highest in almost 12 years, on the back of India's rice export ban and adverse weather conditions that could impact production.

Panganiban said the negotiations with Vietnam and India could pave the way for the country to get better terms for the 300,000 metric tons (MT) to 500,000 MT of rice it needs to import this year. **Jester Manalastas**



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## Solons push for end to age-old postharvest facilities lack

**LAWMAKERS are proposing the construction of postharvest facilities in every palay-producing city and municipality in the country to help raise farmers' incomes and lower rice prices.**

The proposal was in House Bill 7711 filed by Davao City Representative Paolo Duterte, Benguet Rep. Eric Go Yap and ACT-CIS Party-list Rep. Edvic Yap.

According to Duterte the construction of these postharvest facilities could begin with building a rice mill and a warehouse in every legislative district with at least one rice-producing town.

House Bill 7711, which aims to achieve this goal, provides that the construction of these postharvest facilities be later expanded to include every rice-producing municipality and city

in the country.

"While the government is focused on intervention programs to boost rice production, the impact of these initiatives will significantly be lessened if rice-producing areas lack the facilities they badly need to reduce post-production losses," Duterte said.

A study done by the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (Philmech), an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA), found that postharvest losses among major farm commodities in the Philippines range from 10 to 50 percent of production output. This means that at least 10 percent to about half of all land, inputs, and labor used to produce rice and other major crops go to waste.

"Equally focusing on preventing postharvest losses would not only turn this waste into higher profits for our farmers, but would also help bring down prices of locally produced rice," Duterte added.

Duterte said passing HB 7711 into law could later encourage the private sector to invest in modern storage solutions and new technologies to augment, or improve upon, the basic postharvest facilities constructed under the measure.

Under HB 7711, the DA and Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) are tasked to implement the measure, in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and in consultation with farmers' cooperatives.

The Department of Trade and

Industry (DTI), in consultation with the DA, DAR and farmers' cooperatives, shall provide the equipment and machineries, including transport facilities, necessary to complement and operate the warehouses and rice mill.

Warehouses and rice mills, including the equipment, machineries and transport facilities required to operate them must later be sold to the beneficiary farmers' cooperatives, HB 7711 likewise states.

The beneficiary cooperatives shall be given 25 years within which to amortize the cost of these facilities without interest.

HB 7711 provides for an appropriation of P1 billion for the initial implementation of the postharvest program.

*Jester Manalastas*

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## Fish deliveries down 21% in Q2

By **DANESSA RIVERA**

Fish deliveries in the country's nine regional fish ports (RFPs) fell by a fifth in the second quarter from last year mainly due to unfavorable weather conditions.

In its quarterly bulletin, the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) said the RFPs delivered a

total of 121,062.55 metric tons (MT) of fish to consumers in April to June.

The agency said this was a 2.23 percent improvement from 118,419.49 MT delivered in the first quarter.

However, this was 20.89 percent lower than the 153,049.37 MT of fish unloaded in ports in the same period last year.

**Turn to Page 5**

## Fish deliveries From Page 1

April and May unloading volumes were at 44,721.05 MT and 42,814.9 MT, respectively.

These were 11.84 percent and 1.2 percent lower compared to the 46,353.97 MT and 48,563.31 MT in the same months last year.

The PFDA had cited the early onset of the rainy season for the decline in fish deliveries for two months.

On the other hand, June figures improved by 12.69 percent to 65,513.42 MT from last year's 58,132.09 MT.

Meanwhile, the PFDA said six fish ports are undergoing upgrades in Davao, Iloilo, Zamboanga, Camaligan, Sual and Navotas.

The Davao fish port, which is 95.51 percent completed, moves closer to becoming the center of business in Davao region.

"Soon, the port can cater to more clients and stakeholders not only in the region

but also in nearby provinces," the agency said.

The Iloilo fish port complex continues its rehabilitation program and is 84.69 percent complete.

The Sual fish port upgrade has improved significantly at 74.51 percent completion.

At 42.24 percent completion, the Camaligan fish port in Camarines Sur will soon improve its fishery products processing capacities with better and stronger facilities, the PFDA said.

The upgrading of the Zamboanga fish port complex, one of the busiest port cities in the country, is 40.20 percent done.

Lastly, the two-phased rehabilitation of the Navotas fish port complex is underway, which will provide shelter to more clients and stakeholders in National Capital Region and nearby provinces, the PFDA said.



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## Slower growth impels call for accelerated gov't spending; industry, agriculture need to level up

**C**atch up and accelerate are the twin watchwords of the country's economic managers in the remaining four and a half months of 2023. This developed after the National Statistician announced that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 4.3 percent in the second quarter. To achieve the annual growth target, the economy must grow at between 6.6 to 6.7 percent in the second half of the year.

While noting the uptrend in tourism-related spending and commercial investments in the first half, they identified the factors that dampened economic growth, namely, "high commodity prices, the lagged effects of interest rate hikes, the contraction in government spending, and slower global economic growth."

The economic managers beamed the spotlight on the need to fast-track the execution and delivery of government programs and projects under the 2023 national budget.

During a hearing of the House Committee on Appropriations last week, the Secretary of Budget and Management cited the low level of spending of the following departments and offices: Department of Information and Communications Technology, 5.6 percent; Department of Migrant Workers, 10 percent; Department of Social Welfare and Development, 11.4 percent; Department of Agrarian Reform, 13.8 percent; Department of Labor and Employment, 14.1 percent; Office of the Press Secretary, 14.9 percent; Civil Service Commission, 18.4 percent; and Department of Tourism, 18.9 percent.

The economic managers directed all concerned government agencies, including local and regional government entities, "to formulate catch-up plans, accelerate, and even frontload the implementation of

said programs." They also reported that "fiscal stimulus activities are underway to increase the productive capacities of both the public and private sectors."

While government spending left much to be desired, the National Statistician highlighted the following major sectoral contributors to economic growth in the second quarter: transportation and storage, 17.3 percent; wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, 5.3 percent; and financial and insurance activities, 5.0 percent. Services grew by 6.0 percent, the highest among major sectors, followed by industry growth at 2.1 percent. Agriculture, forestry and fishing grew by a measly 0.2 percent.

Clearly, the productive sectors — industry and agriculture — continue to underperform, thereby slowing the pace of growth. While President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.'s various foreign trips have attracted significant amounts of investment pledges — and approved investments were nearly 30 percent higher in 2022 compared to 2021 — actual rollout of such investments has remained sluggish.

Amid this challenging scenario, the economic managers glean the proverbial silver lining. They foresee that "the improving outlook for inflation bodes well for the easing of interest rates and should pave the way for the expansion of activities of businesses, households, and the rest of the private sector."

Beyond aiming for higher growth rates, the economic managers are also focused on providing social safety nets to the most vulnerable sectors. This is demonstrated by the continuing support extended to marginalized farmers and fisherfolk, as well as to micro and small enterprises, by way of lower interest rates and credit facilitation to boost income and productivity.



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## Rice prices rising in Bataan market

**BALANGA City, Bataan:** Rice retailers in the public market here on Sunday, August 13, noted the continuous rise in prices of milled rice because of alleged lack of supply from dealers.

A check with the city's accredited rice sellers showed that the lowest price of rice was from P49 to P50 per kilo that used to be sold at P40 to P42.

"Sobrang taas ngayon ng bigas. Puhunan namin ngayon sa 25-kilo ordinary rice ay P1,200, na ibinebenta lang namin sa P1,250.

Dating puhunan P950 to P1,000 lang (Rice prices today are very high. Our capital for 25-kilo ordinary

rice is P1,200, and we sell for only P1,250. Our capital used to be P950 to P1,000 only)," rice retailer Marilou de la Rosa said.

She also said they get their rice supply from dealers from Pangasinan, Bulacan and Isabela.

Rice retailer Nico Villasenor's lowest selling price for the grain is P50 per kilo, from P40 per kilo.

Another rice retailer, Myrna Fernandez, sells at P48 a kilo of premium grade local rice, the lowest she can go.

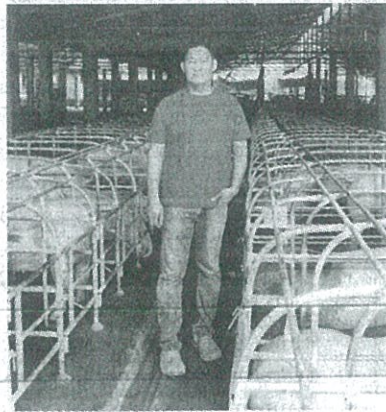
She said her rice supply comes from Bulacan and Nueva Ecija.

**ERNIE B. ESCONDE**

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**THIS undated photo courtesy of the Land Bank of the Philippines (Landbank) shows piggery farm co-owner Jerome Trofeo with his livestock. According to the Landbank, a P24-million loan line it opened allowed Jerome and spouse Anna to establish a commercial hog farm.**

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES (LANDBANK)

## Landbank-financed Batangas hog farm boosts local pork production

**L**IPA, Batangas—Spouses Jerome and Anna Trofeo were having trouble sourcing healthy hogs to meet their customers' requirements two years ago, with the African Swine Fever significantly affecting hog growers nationwide.

Determined to keep their "Annie & Jerome Trofeo" meat stall running, Anna decided to expand their business and establish their own commercial swine farm.

The couple turned to the Land Bank of the Philippines (Landbank) for financial assistance to make the business pivot that actually paid off.

Landbank approved a P24-million loan line to finance the requirements of their AJ Piggery Farm, under the bank's "Special Window and Interim Support to Nurture Hog

Enterprises," or "Swine," lending program.

Of the total amount, P20 million financed the construction of three piggery buildings to separately house nursery, farrowing and gestation pens, as well as support facilities that include an office and staff quarters.

The loan also covered the construction of a manure lagoon and waste water treatment facility to minimize the environmental impact of the farm, while the remaining P4 million financed the acquisition of young female hogs for breeding.

With the opening of AJ Piggery Farm, the couple's meat stall is able to sell around 900 kilograms of pork per day to accommodate the demand of meat retailers.

The stall is also able to supply around

1,650 kilograms of pork per week to two (2) local supermarkets in Laguna and Batangas, thereby increasing the meat shop's income to around P0.5 million to P0.6 million per month from the previous P0.3 million.

Landbank said it has approved a total of P8.05 billion in loans to 36 borrowers under the "Swine" facility as of end-June 2023.

The loans financed projects for swine production, including the purchase of hogs and feeds, construction and expansion of facilities such as piggery buildings, and working capital, among others.

Commercial hog raisers registered as cooperatives or farmers' associations, small and medium enterprises and large enterprises or corporations may borrow up to 80 percent of the total project.



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## Mountain Province capital Bontoc bans live hogs, pork from Ilocos Sur due to ASF

BONTOC, the capital of Mountain Province, is temporarily banning hogs and pork products from Cervantes, Ilocos Sur, after the detection of African Swine Fever (ASF) there.

Bontoc Mayor Jerome Tudlong, Jr. in a public advisory warned his constituents about cases of ASF spreading from Ilocos to adjoining areas.

"To prevent further spread of this disease and to help protect the livelihood of our swine raisers against the re-infection of ASF in our municipality, the entry of live swine/pigs, pork, locally processed pork products and by-products from the said area is hereby suspended," the mayor said.

ASF was detected in a barangay in Cervantes in July, prompting other towns in Ilocos Sur to erect barriers against pigs or pork products from that town.

On July 24, the government of Benguet province issued a temporary ban on the entry of hogs and swine products from Cervantes.

In the first week of August, Abra province and Bauko, Mountain Province did the same.

Checkpoints were set up at the border of Ilocos Sur and nearby provinces.

On Aug. 12, three hog traders were intercepted at the border transporting 11 pigs. —

**Artemio A. Dumlao**



# Can 'superfood' millet make a climate comeback?

**KAURIKALA, India/LAGOS** — Riding a red electric scooter on country roads in eastern India, Sanjulata Mahanta has become something of a poster girl for millet since she stunned fellow villagers by planting the hardy grain — and making a profit — three years ago.

"People laughed at me and said I was growing grass," Ms. Mahanta, 35, said on a humid morning as farmers from Kaurikala village in Odisha state gathered under a tree for a millet workshop mixing history, cookery and climate change adaptation.

Ms. Mahanta has now helped about a dozen other women farmers to sow millet, long a staple in Asia and Africa before rice, wheat and maize started to take its place in fields and on menus about six decades ago.

But the forgotten crop is making a global comeback riding on its high nutritional value and ability to grow on arid land — crucial to its appeal as climate change fuels more frequent and intense droughts.

Sitting beneath the tree's shady canopy, awaiting a reluctant monsoon, volunteers chopped curry leaves and green chillies into a finger millet batter to make fritters as organizers trumpeted its dietary benefits.

When Bhanumati Mahanta, 62, sowed millet on her farm for the first time last year, she did not aim to tackle the problems posed by the region's increasingly truant rains but to ensure her late husband ate healthy food to help his diabetes.

"My husband had encouraged me to grow millet but he did not survive to see the harvest," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, digging a finger into the dry soil to transplant millet seedlings under a harsh morning sun.

"For decades, we grew hybrid rice using fertilizers and pesticides. We consumed the same rice. I now understand it was all toxic," she added.

A farming revolution in the 1960s saw policies supporting rice and wheat crops and their sale at guaranteed prices, which shrank millet's share in India's grain basket to about 6% today compared with 20% in the 1950s.

But millet is now being dubbed a saviour crop as climate change impacts — including harsher heat, drought and floods, which can slash harvests, spur new pests and accelerate food waste — become a major emerging threat to global food security.

Efforts to rethink food trade, aid and speculation are needed alongside ways to balance nature protection, farming and climate-

smart dietary changes in a world where a growing number of people face hunger despite sufficient global food output.

With that in mind, the UN named 2023 as the International Year of Millet and the humble grain was included in the White House's vegetarian dinner for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he visited in June.

In Odisha, where a state initiative is promoting the crop, it is also returning to kitchens. A chef at the trendy Bocca Cafe in the state capital, Bhubaneswar, has been substituting rice with whole grain millet in a Mexican-inspired dish, while millet cookies are being served with tea in government meetings.

Back in Kaurikala village, Bhanumati Mahanta uses finger millet to prepare a sweetened porridge, replacing the rice that she had been using until now.

Odisha is not a top millet producing state in India or a big consumer like the western and southern states, but the Odisha Millet Mission that started in 2017 is being emulated in other parts of the country and has been hailed as an "inspiring example" by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Located on the coast of the volatile Bay of Bengal, Odisha is frequently hit by cyclones, floods and droughts that have impacted lives and incomes, fuelled migration and hunger.

The state's bet on millet aims to protect farmers' earnings, fight malnourishment and promote healthy food alternatives, as officials cite a "fork-to-farm" strategy to foster the consumer demand necessary for farmers to plant it.

"We have to inform the next generation that it is good for the environment and also for farmers," said Arabinda Kumar Padhee, principal secretary of Odisha state's Agriculture department who is heading the millet mission.

"We want to revive millet not only in farms but also on the plates of the consumers. We want it on their menu," he said.

Similar efforts are taking root in Africa's largest millet producing nation, Nigeria, where the government is including biskin gero, a couscous-like dish served with spicy fish sauce, in school menus for children in the northern region. — **Thomson Reuters Foundation**

## FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link <bit.ly/449YXlb>

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### Presyo ng sibuyas, dapat hanggang P120 lang kada kilo

Binigyang-diin ni House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez na dapat ay hanggang P120 lang ang presyo kada kilo ng sibuyas sa merkado dahil mura lamang itong nabibili ng mga negosyante mula sa mga onion growers.

Ang pahayag ay ginawa ni Speaker Romualdez sa isang panayam kamakailan matapos na makarating sa kanya ang impormasyon na sumisikad na naman ang presyo ng naturang panangkap sa mga pa-

milihan.

"Dapat hindi lalagpas ng P120 ang kilo ng sibuyas sa merkado," ani Speaker Romualdez.

Paliwanag pa ng mambabatas, "mura ang kuha ng mga traders sa mga onion growers natin at mura rin ang bili ng mga importers ng sibuyas sa labas ng bansa."

"Sa aming computation, dapat hindi na lalagpas sa P120 per kilo ang presyo ng sibuyas pagdating sa palengke dahil ang wholesale o puhunan ng mga traders diyan ay P90 a kilo,

kasama nariyan ang transport cost at kita nila," aniya.

Ayon pa sa lider ng Kamara, "may nagtatago na naman ng stock ng sibuyas kaya nagmamahal ito ngayon."

Sa ngayon, naglalaro ang presyo ng sibuyas sa P160 hanggang P190 ang kilo sa merkado.

"Wag na nila (hoarders) antayin na pasukin natin ang mga bodega o cold storage nila at kasuhan sila ng economic sabotage," babala pa ni Romualdez. (Doris Franche-Borja)

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### Kakainin ng mga Pinoy 'wag iasa sa ibang bansa – agri solon

Hindi umano dapat iasa ng gobyerno sa ibang bansa ang kakainin ng mga Pilipino, ayon kay AGRI party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee kasunod ng kahandaan ng Vietnam na magbenta sa Pilipinas ng bigas.

Sinabi ni Lee na, dapat na gumawa ng solusyon ang pamahalaan upang paramihin ang produksyon ng pagkain sa bansa upang hindi na kailangang mag-

import.

Nabatid na sa Vietnam nanggagaling ang 90% ng imported na bigas ng Pilipinas.

Ang India naman, na pangunahing pinanggagalingan ng imported na bigas sa mundo, ay magpapatupad ng rice import ban dahil sa inaasahang pagbaba ng kanilang produksyon dulot ng hindi magandang panahon.

Nauna ng nagbabala ang Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) ng pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas ng hanggang P4 kada kilo hanggang sa Setyembre, kung kailan inaasahang magsisimula ang anihan.

Ang pagtaas umano sa presyo ay bunsod ng pagmahal ng bigas sa ibang bansa. (Doris Franche-Borja)



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## Total damage from Egay, Falcon in C. Luzon now at P4.9B

**By Steve Gosuico**

**CABANATUAN CITY –** The combined amount of damage to agriculture and infrastructure caused by Typhoons Egay and Falcon and the southwest monsoon (Habagat) in Central Luzon has reached over P4.9-billion, the Office of Civil Defense Region 3 reported.

In its bulletin at 6 p.m. on Saturday, the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council 3 based in San Fernando City, Pampanga estimated the total damage to agriculture and infrastructure at P2.2-billion and P2.7-billion respec-

tively.

Damage to agriculture (rice, corn, high-value crops, livestock) was pegged at over P1.6-billion, excluding damage in fisheries and aquatic resources which reached P606-million.

Infrastructure damage was recorded at P2.5-billion, with amount of damage to agricultural infrastructure reaching more than P215-million.

The RDRRMC 3 said a total of 3,106,846 persons comprising 791,643 families were affected in 1,221 barangays across Central Luzon, with Aurora having one barangay, Bataan

(152), Bulacan (380), Nueva Ecija (91), Pampanga (303), Tarlac (187) and Zambales (107).

Some 2,456 families and 8,812 persons are currently housed inside evacuation centers while those outside evacuation centers totaled 8,883 families and 32,177 persons as of reporting period.

The Office of Civil Defense 3 also reported that over P216-million worth of assistance was provided by the regional office 3 of the Department of Social Welfare and Development and local government units to affected individuals and families.



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## Indian rice planting accelerates

NEW DELHI- Ample monsoon rains have accelerated the planting of summer-sown rice in India, according to the latest farm ministry data, after a slow start to the sowing season that began in June.

Crop-nourishing monsoon rains picked up in July and August, allowing farmers to plant 32.8 million hectares (81 million acres) with rice by Friday, up 5.1 percent from the same period last year.

An increase in rice planting in India, the world's second-biggest producer of the grain, will ease concerns that supplies could be squeezed after New Delhi, in a surprise move late last month, ordered a halt to its largest rice export category.

India's decision to ban overseas shipments of non-basmati white rice pushed prices to multi-year highs, as trade and industry of-

ficials believe shipments by the world's largest exporter of the grain could be halved.

Farmers typically start planting rice, corn, cotton, soybeans, sugarcane, peanuts and other crops from June 1, when crucial summer monsoon rains are expected to begin drenching the country where nearly half the farmland lacks irrigation.

India's monsoon rains were 5 percent above average over June and July as a whole, but had fallen 10 percent below normal in June before rebounding to 13 percent above average the following month.

The weather office defines average, or normal, rainfall as between 96 percent and 104 percent of a 50-year average of 87 cm (35 inches) for the four-month season.

- Reuters

# Malaya Business Insight

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## Soybean, corn drop

CHICAGO- Chicago soybean and grain futures turned lower on Friday as improving growing weather led investors to anticipate that US Midwest crop conditions will improve, traders said.

Corn and soybean futures had a particularly choppy trading session as a flurry of bearish signs prompted investors to shed risks at the end of the week.

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) settled 10-3/4 cents lower at \$13.07-1/2 a bushel. Corn settled 9 cents lower at \$4.87-1/4 a bushel and wheat closed down 11 cents at \$6.26-3/4 a bushel.

Soybean futures had been mixed earlier in the session and corn firmed, after the US government

forecast that dry conditions early in the growing season would mean smaller harvests of both this fall.

But forecasts from the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) monthly World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report fell below market expectations.

The corn crop, if realized, would be the second biggest on record due to large acreage and as growing conditions improved during the key development month of July.

Then traders shrugged off USDA news that farmers participating in US crop subsidy programs reported "prevented plantings" by Aug. 9 of 1,421,488 acres of corn, 458,915 acres of soybeans and 640,761 acres of wheat. - *Reuters*



## China faces early attack from crop pests

**C**HINA'S farmers are facing an earlier than expected assault on their crops this year as extreme weather accelerates the spread and growth of destructive diseases and pests such as the dreaded fall armyworm.

At risk are key crops including corn and rice, a globally important food staple that's already seeing threats to supply elsewhere in Asia. China is the world's biggest producer and importer of the grain that feeds billions.

Plant pests that ravage crops are becoming more destructive and posing a bigger threat to the world's food security due to climate change, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, a UN agency. China's government said heavy rains and winds, including those whipped up recently by deadly Typhoon Doksuri, have helped with the migration of insects and spread of disease.

Insects that devour rice paddies and corn fields have appeared earlier in major growing regions in China's north and south this year, according to a unit of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. Along with the recent rains and flooding, warmer weather has also aided the spread of pests.

"More extreme weather events, brought on by climate change, have a significant impact on migration and occurrence of crop diseases and insects," said Hu Gao, a professor at Nanjing Agricultural University. "It's getting harder to predict, as the incursion has become a bit irregular."

Hu's key focus is the planthopper and leaf roller, two common invaders of rice paddies. He says the occurrence of the insects in southern China—where most of the nation's crop is grown—is more severe than the past few years, although he added that the impact on production is so far limited.

Any significant damage to rice output would likely place additional strain on the global market should China need to import more. Prices in Asia jumped to the highest level in almost 15 years this week on supply issues.

Each year, plant diseases cost the global economy over \$220 billion and insects at least \$70 billion, according to the FAO. As much as 40 percent of the world's crops are lost to plant pests, the UN agency said.

Fall armyworm has been detected in 20 provinces in China so far in 2023, and has appeared in the nation's major growing

region in the north earlier than previous years, the government said. However, state-run Beijing News reported that control measures have prevented most of the insects from crossing the Yangtze river, reducing the impact on crops.

Corn rust, a fungal pathogen that can kill plants, is also causing headaches.

"It just started to emerge," said Song Quanyong, a farmer in the central province of Henan. "In previous years, it would come much later, near harvest time. All I can do is spray some pesticide and try to control its spread. Fall armyworm is here too, but not much."

The crop in Henan is typically harvested around October, meaning the earlier arrival of corn rust leaves plants more susceptible to damage. The province accounted for almost 8 percent of the national harvest in 2021.

China is bracing for more extreme weather following the heavy rains caused by Typhoon Doksuri, which destroyed some crops in the northeast, known as the nation's grain basket. Remnants of another storm—Khanun—is set to lash the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning, and Inner Mongolia region.

**Bloomberg News**



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## Raw sugar gains nearly 3% on the week; cocoa slips off peaks

NEW YORK — Raw sugar futures on ICE closed up on Friday and gained nearly 3% on the week despite record sugar production in top grower Brazil, while cocoa edged further away from recent multiyear peaks.

### SUGAR

October raw sugar settled up 0.38 cent or 1.6% at 24.33 cents per pound (lb). The contract gained 2.7% in the week. Dealers said the market is in consolidation around the historically high levels.

Raw sugar is seen ending the year around current levels but

marking a sharp increase over end-December 2022 as the global market looks set to record a second year of supply deficits, a Reuters poll of 11 traders and analysts showed.

Raw sugar demand fell 20% in the first half, but refiners are set to go back to buying to replenish stocks, Czarnikow said, which helps to put a floor on the market.

Singapore-listed agribusiness Wilmar reported a 50% slump in its first-half core net profit due to slowing Chinese sales.

October white sugar settled up \$6.10 or 0.9% at \$697.10 a ton.

### COCOA

December London cocoa settled up £24 or 0.9% to £2,637 per ton, after peaking at £2,759 on Monday — its highest since 1977.

Improved crop weather in top producer Ivory Coast has prompted some profit taking in cocoa, along with concerns that global economic woes could curb demand, but the market remains sustained by a tight near-term supply.

December New York cocoa ended little changed at \$3,357 a metric ton, having hit its high-

est in more than a decade on Monday at \$3,618.

### COFFEE

December arabica coffee settled down 1.95 cents or 1.2% at \$1.577 per lb.

ICE certified stocks fell to an eight-month low on Thursday.

Brazilian coffee farmers had sold 41% of their 2023/24 crop by early August, consultancy Safras & Mercado said, lagging the long-term average for the period of 46%.

November robusta coffee fell \$17 or 0.7% at \$2,517 a ton. —  
**Reuters**