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## 30% CUT IN D.A. BUDGET COULD DERAIL MARCOS C.S.F. PLANS

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS  
@jearcalas

THE reduction in the agriculture department's budget for infrastructure program by almost 30 percent could derail President Marcos's plan of building more cold storage facilities (CSF) for commodities nationwide, according to a policy study.

The Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department (CPBRD) noted that the Agriculture Machinery & Equipment, Facilities and Infrastructure Program (AMEFIP) by the Department of Agriculture (DA) is anticipated to have a 27.2-percent budget slash next year.

In its latest Agency Budget Note

(ABN), the CPBRD, citing economists and experts, emphasized that the funding reduction could have negative implications on the state's goal of improving the country's agricultural value chains.

Under the 2024 National Expenditure Program, the budget for the AMEFIP would be at a three-year low of P8.299 billion, about P3.097 billion lower than its P11.396 billion budget this year.

With the reduction, the share of AMEFIP to the total value of programs of the agriculture department shrank to 8.6 percent from 12.5 percent this year.

The AMEFIP budget is lodged to the Office of the Secretary's total allocation.

The CPBRD cited a 2023 budget analysis report by a group of experts and analysts led by Finance Assistant Secretary Karlo Fermin S. Adriano in emphasizing the implications of the lower AMEFIP funding next year.

Former Agriculture Secretary Senen Bacani served as Senior Adviser for the budget analysis report titled, "Increasing Food Prices and its Impact on Food and Nutrition Security."

"Adriano, et al [2023] pointed out that the reduction seems inconsistent with the goal of strengthening the local supply chains through the enhancement of agricultural productivity and expansion of access of farmers and fisherfolk to markets in

the 2024 Budget Priorities Framework," the CPBRD report read.

The CPBRD noted that the funding for the establishment of CSFs and other post-harvest facilities could come from the AMEFIP.

"No less than the President who is the concurrent DA secretary has called for the building of more storage facilities for onion and for fish to reduce post-harvest losses," according to the report.

Adriano et al.'s report explained that while AMEFIP's funding has been mainly allocated for farm-to-market road projects, there has been a recent shift towards the provision of agricultural machinery, equipment, and support services.

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## Budget...

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"Decreasing infrastructure support may have implications on the provision of key machinery, equipment, and facilities to not only increase productivity in planting and harvesting, but also in prolonging food storage and improvement of food-processing," the report read.

Adriano et al.'s report emphasized that the need for CSFs and post-harvest facilities "has been repeatedly raised" amid transboundary animal diseases outbreaks in the country such as African swine fever and calls from industry groups like the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc.

"While a decrease in the DA's budget for infrastructure support does not necessarily withhold budgetary support from CSFs and post-harvest facilities, it is still worth noting that a substantial reduction in budget support would limit the capital outlays to support the agricultural sector—possibly forcing a trade-off between the machineries, equipment, and facilities provided," they said.

The report also noted that there is no specified amount for the establishment of CSFs and post-harvest facilities in the proposed 2024 budget. "That is, they are aggregated or taken together under more general infrastructure support programs—including those that may be less urgently needed," the authors said.

"In acknowledgement of the role of CSFs and post-harvest facilities to food security, perhaps special provisions or appropriations may be allotted for these facilities. Hence, even with the reduced infrastructure support budget, these may still be given priority," they added.

In March, Marcos Jr. ordered concerned agencies to prioritize the construction of cold storage facilities at 11 fish ports and modernize fishponds as well to reduce the country's dependence on fish imports. **(Related story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/03/14/pbbm-build-cold-storage-facilities-at-major-fish-ports/>)**



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## Amid reported plan to import rice anew from India, group presses NFA abolition

By RAADEE S. SAUSA

[@raadeebboy](#)

**T**HE Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) on Monday proposed the abolition of the National Food Authority (NFA) over the agency's alleged preference to import rice rather than buy from Filipino farmers.

In a statement, Rosendo So, president of Sinag, said that the latest "showcase" of NFA's "skewed preference" for imported rice was the ongoing negotiations with India for rice procurement.

"They're not buying from our farmers anymore. They're buying from Vietnam, India. They're negotiating on rice. What's this!" So said.

The Sinag official also expressed fears that funds for buying local produce might be diverted to the procurement of rice from India.

"The NFA power is to buy palay isn't it?" So asked. "What are they doing, negotiating with India to buy rice?"

"They might use the money allocated to buy domestically produced palay to acquire imported rice again," So added, referring to the agency's P8.5 billion available funds for procurement of rice.

Also, the NFA's tack seems to be contrary to the policy of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. who wants to ramp up domestic production in agriculture.

"For the past administration, the direction was to import," So said.

"In President Marcos Jr.'s administration, he wants local production, so a lot of Filipino farmers were encouraged to return to farming but then again the NFA's policy seems contrary to this," he noted.

If the NFA will not help the country's grain and farming industry by buying domestically produced rice then the agency should be abolished, he added.

"Since they are running contrary to the President, the NFA is not helping by buying 'palay,' then we should just abolish the NFA," So said.

The Sinag chair also questioned the NFA's decision to source Philippine rice stocks from

abroad when it could buy rice at a much lower rate in the country's other agricultural regions.

So cited Philippine Statistic Authority (PSA) data showing average buying rates for a kilogram of domestically produced palay was between P18.50 and P19.

The NFA can always look for prices lower than these in other regions, he said.

"Buying rates in other areas are lower, so they should have bought there, right? They should have bought there already," So said.

"If you are comparing price ranges, especially in Nueva Ecija, prices there are really high. But if you will check on Mindoro and other areas, prices there are lower," he said.

So also scored the NFA for justifying importation by announcing it only has 46,000 metric tons of rice left in its inventory, which is good for just 1.3 days.

But this is the fault of the NFA, So said, since it has not been buying locally-produced rice to add to its stock.

"That is their fault, why did they not buy more palay in the first place? That is their mandate, which is to buy locally produced palay," he said.

He recalled the NFA saying at a congressional hearing that it still has P8.5 billion left for rice procurement, which was enough to buy palay at P19 per kilo.

So said the amount of palay that can be bought with P8.5 billion translates into 290,789 metric tons of rice which is more than enough to boost the country's buffer stock.

The Philippines' daily consumption rate of rice is 35,000 metric tons.

"The NFA should have sufficient buffer stock if they bought 'palay' ahead of time, the problem is they did not buy any," So said.

Jayson Cainglet, executive director Sinag, for his part, said "we would rather hear it from the President that he wants NFA to import rice."

"What we heard from the President is that there is no rice shortage and he wants DA to increase local production," he added.

Cainglet said that some DA officials have long been misquoting the President.

One thing is clear though, there is a push by certain officials of the DA to call (in

the guise) for a "review of the RTL" with the single objective of allowing the NFA to import, Cainglet added.

### Seek addl budget—PRISM

THE Philippine Rice Stakeholders Movement (PRISM) urged the NFA to seek additional budget from Congress to strengthen the country's rice production capacity rather than pushing for importation of the staple grain.

"As farm gate cost [currently at P21 to P25 per kilo of palay- fresh palay] are affected by price fluctuations in the market, we urge the NFA, whose current support price of P19 per kilo [clean and dry] is far below the current farm gate price, to seize the ongoing budget season and approach the Congress for higher budget allocation that will benefit local farmers and strengthen the local industry instead of pushing for importation that will drain government funds in favor of foreign suppliers," PRISM said in a statement issued over the weekend.

The group also said that the NFA should focus on its role as mandated by the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) RA 11203 to build its buffer stock exclusively from local farmers and rice millers instead of imported sources.

"This move is also more consistent with the President's objective to support local farmers and strengthen our rice industry," PRISM said.

"It has reached our attention that the NFA Administrator [Roderico Bioco] was in India to negotiate on behalf of the government," it added.

"If this is true, we would like to ask for a clarification regarding this matter, which we believe runs counter to the provisions of the RTL which authorizes only the President to negotiate upon the recommendation of NEDA [National Economic and Development Authority] and the DA [Department of Agriculture]," PRISM said.

Moreover, the group said that any discussion about importation initiated by the NFA is obviously ultra vires, or beyond its mandated power.

The international rice market situation

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would reveal problems are beyond the control of local businesses and the government.

PRISM said Filipino private importers who have booked supplies from Vietnam as early as the first quarter are now faced with the dilemma of Vietnamese importers canceling their contracts in favor of other countries affected by India's rice export ban.

"We are thus urging that relevant authorities engage in diplomatic discussions with Vietnamese counterparts to find a mutually beneficial resolution and honor the contracts of our importers," it added.

"Complicating our rice situation, careless statement of a certain DA official has maliciously criticized our members' effort to subsidize a limited supply of P38 per kilo rice during lean months that was intended for our indigent 'kababayans,'" the group said.

On July 7, PRISM launched the P38 per kilo Tulong sa Bayan Bigas para sa Mamayan in various areas in Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao through its rice retail networks, barangay and local government caravans and Kadiwa outlets.

"Since then until this time, we still continue selling the P38 per kilo rice in the respective channels chosen by our stakeholders," PRISM said.

Recently, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has instructed the NFA to focus on the local production of rice to augment the country's supply.

"The President instructed the agency to continue exploring other ways in prioritizing rice production other than importation, such as contract farming and other means that will guarantee an increase in the NFA's volume production," a statement said.

Furthermore, Bioko briefed Marcos about measures that have been carried out to ensure that the country has sufficient supply of rice.

## Improved rice output this year

FOR his part, DA Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban, citing a Philippine Statistics Authority report, said that palay (unhusked rice) output from January to June rose to 9 million metric tons (MMT), from 8.7 MMT produced during the same period in 2022 and in 2021.

He said that the 9 MMT palay is equivalent to 5.9 MMT milled rice (200,000 MT more than the PRISM estimate of 5.7 MMT).

PRISM is a monitoring and information system for rice production in the country.

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## Local rice prices still rising—new DA data

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

@sam\_medenilla

**L**OCAL rice prices continue to rise amid market concerns on the potential impact of the El Niño phenomenon on agriculture, according to new data from the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In a statement issued by the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), DA said its Philippine Rice Information System showed that the average prices from January to June this year for palay or unhusked rice were P19.5 per kilo for dry and P17.4 a kilo for fresh.

These were higher compared to the average prices of palay in the same period last year, which was P18.3 per kilo for dry and P15.9 a kilo for fresh.

Last April, the price for dry palay reached even as high as P20.39 per kilo, while for fresh palay it was at P17.66 a kilo.

This after the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported the country's rice inventory in April dropped by 26.5 percent compared to the same period in 2022.

Sebastian noted the trend has led to more profit for farmers.

"For the longest time, Filipino farmers have always been at the losing end of the rice sector. But now, Filipino rice farmers are enjoying better prices from their fresh harvest, perhaps sparked by global fears of a shortage resulting from the adverse impact of El Niño forcing world suppliers to tighten supply in the world market," the DA official said.

Consumers, however, had to shoulder additional expenses because of the high rice prices.

Based on the price monitoring of DA in Metro Manila markets, the price of local commercial rice last July 29 ranged from P37 to P60 per kilogram (kg), which was higher compared to the P38 to P50 per kg in the same period in 2022.

As of August 21, the price of local commercial rice has risen to between P55 to P62 per kg.

Malacañang and DA have been issuing statements assuring the public the country will have sufficient rice supply until the first quarter of 2024 especially with the ongoing harvest season, which is expected to peak by late September to October.

The additional rice supply is projected to help in stabilizing the price of the food staple in the coming weeks.



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## Chicken demand expected to remain weak in coming quarters

CHICKEN DEMAND is expected to remain weak for the next few quarters as households grapple with increased expenses, including the cost of other food items, a poultry industry official said.

"Demand is very poor," according to Elias Jose M. Inciong, president of the United Broiler Raisers Association (UBRA).

Speaking to *BusinessWorld* by phone, Mr. Inciong added: "I do not think demand will recover given (other expenses like) electricity, transportation, staples like rice, etc. It will certainly have an impact on the demand for meat, chicken, and pork," he added.

The consumer price index slowed for a sixth straight month to 4.7% in July from 5.4% in June, for a year-to-date average of 6.8%. This exceeds the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas estimate of a 2023 average of 5.4%.

Rice prices rose 4.2% year on year in July, the highest growth rate since 2019.

"Definitely, there's an improvement (in demand) but I don't think we are back to pre-pandemic levels in terms of being able to absorb... supply. Farmgate prices remain unstable. One moment it can go very high, another moment it can go very low," he said.

UBRA estimates that as of Aug. 18 the average farmgate price of regular-sized and prime broiler chicken fell 9.6% month on month to P113 and 13% to P118, respectively.

However, even though demand has a chance of strengthening in the following quarters, he said import volumes will likely remain high.

"Generally, everyone will be conservative because demand is expected to increase during the last quarter of every year and the first quarter of the following year. Importers will also be aggressive (in shipping in products) during this period," he said.

Mr. Inciong said that the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and the industry held final consultations before guidelines on the vaccine against avian influenza are issued.

"We just want to be able to use the vaccine... because based on world experience, this (new strain) is different, very persistent," he said.

The BAI data lists eight barangays across two regions as having active infections as of Aug. 11.

The bureau drafted vaccination guidelines in collaboration with the Philippine College of Poultry Practitioners. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**



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## Farmers back rice law review

By **Sheldeen Joy Talavera** and  
**Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza** *Reporters*

THE FEDERATION of Free Farmers is getting behind the government's move to review the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) of 2019, citing "serious infirmities" that should have long been amended.

However, some stakeholders are alarmed that the amendments to Republic Act 11203 are aimed at restoring the National Food Authority's (NFA) power to import rice, while others believe the law should be scrapped altogether.

"Essentially, the Rice Tariffication law has left food security and farmers' and consumers' welfare to the vagaries of the so-called free market and the 'humanitarian graces' of rice-exporting countries," the federation said in a statement.

"It has tied government's hands in addressing spiraling rice prices and export bans, among others. We therefore expect and demand that the review and amendments of the RTL look deeply into its basic assumptions, objectives and major provisions," it said.

The law deregulated rice imports that allowed private parties to import with few restrictions at a 35% tariff on grains brought in from South-east Asia. This provides allocation for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund intended to help farmers.

It also removed the NFA's authority to import, restricting it to buying domestic harvests to maintain an emergency inventory of rice for use during calamities.

But Agriculture Assistant Secretary Rex Estoperez said President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. had told agriculture and fishery stakeholders during a meeting in Malacañang last week that he supports the review of the law to "empower the NFA" with its previous functions.

The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura said the NFA should focus on procuring more unmilled rice from local farmers instead of reverting to its regulatory powers to import rice.

"There is no rice shortage," group Executive Director Jayson H. Cainglet said as he scored certain Agriculture officials whom he accused of misquoting the president who is also the Agriculture chief.

### FULL STORY



Read the full story by  
scanning the QR code  
or by typing the link  
< [bit.ly/BWTheNation](https://bit.ly/BWTheNation) >



# DA readies mechanization plan for agri-fisheries for 2023-2028

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has issued an order implementing the national agricultural and fisheries mechanization program until 2028.

Administrative Order No. 7 series of 2023 signed by Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban

on August 15 aims to formulate a National Agricultural and Fishery Mechanization Program (NAFMP) for years 2023 to 2028.

The Agricultural and Fisheries Mechanization Law mandates DA to formulate an NAFMP every six years.

The NAFMP 2023 to 2028 has five main components: local assembly and manufacture; research, development and extension; standards and regulations; support services and institutional

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development; and human resource development.

Specific goals of the program include the establishment of regional manufacturing networks and hubs to efficiently supply the machinery

needs of the industry; strengthening of regional research and development networks to effectively address mechanization needs of the industry; and the improvement of welding, machining and other

manufacturing methods to improve quality of agri-fishery machineries.

The program also bats for the forging of joint ventures and licensing agreements with foreign manufacturing firms to

speed up localization of priority agri-fishery machinery; provision of research grants; establishment and operation of agricultural and fishery machinery service centers; and the push for contiguous farm-

ing and farm land levelling and reconstruction.

NAFMP seeks to improve the adoption of renewable energy program for the agri-fisheries sector; fuel assistance program; credit and

marketing support; upgrading of laboratory facilities and equipment; and the push for welfare, benefits and social protection of agri-fishery mechanization workers, among others. -Jed Macapagal

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## Palay prices rise; RTL review pushed

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said global fears of a rice shortage resulting from the adverse possible impact of El Niño phenomenon has pushed palay prices higher benefitting Filipino farmers.

This developed as local farm groups yesterday called for the comprehensive review of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) as prices of the staple food grain continue to increase.

Leo Sebastian, DA Undersecretary for rice industry development, in a statement cited data from the Philippine Rice Information System which showed average dry palay prices rose 6.6 percent to P19.5 per kg in the first half of the year from P18.3 per kg from in the same period in 2022.

Fresh palay prices went up 9.4 percent to P17.4 per kg from P15.9 per kg.

Sebastian also cited data from the DA national rice program which showed palay prices in March 2023 rose to P17.69 per kg for fresh and P19.73 per kg for dry compared to P15.99 per kg for fresh and P18.41 per kg for dry the same month last year.

Sebastian added for April, the price of fresh palay was at P17.66 per kg and P20.38 per kg for dry palay compared to April 2022's P15.57 per kg and P17.95 per kg, respectively.

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Sacks of NFA rice are seen in this file photo. Senators have supported a call for the abolition of NFA for its alleged preference to import rice rather than to buy from local farmers.

### RTL review

Ronnie Manalo, secretary-general of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) said the pronouncement of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., concurrent agriculture secretary calling for a review of RTL is "just an empty statement meant to appease the public over skyrocketing rice prices" as he has not stopped the planned importation of 500,000 metric tons of rice.

KMP said the RTL calls for a mandatory review at the end of its sixth year of implementation to determine whether or not the collected fund from tariffs and its use shall be continued, amended or terminated.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said it also welcomes the government's push to review the

RTL and its effects to the local rice sector.

"Essentially, RTL has left food security and farmers' and consumers' welfare to the vagaries of the so-called free market and the humanitarian graces of rice-exporting countries. It has tied government's hands in addressing spiralling rice prices and export bans, among others. We therefore expect and demand that the review and amendments of the RTL look deeply into its basic assumptions, objectives and major provisions," said Leonardo Montemayor, FFF chairman, in a separate statement.

The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) said the review of the RTL is being pushed by incumbent DA officials to restore the National Food Author-

ity's (NFA) capacity to import rice.

Jasyson Cainglet, SINAG executive director, said there was no direct order from the President on the importation of rice and is being pushed by some DA officials.

Cainglet said the RTL does not mandate the DA to pursue an unimpeded rice import policy and is also not stopping the NFA to increase its palay buying price.

"The problem is not the RTL but the penchance of DA and NFA to promote and support importers," Cainglet said.

### NFA abolition backed

Senators yesterday backed the earlier call of SINAG to abolish the NFA for relying too much on importation rather than buy rice from local farmers.

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Senate minority leader Aquilino Pimentel III and Senator Francis Escudero said if NFA does not keep up to its mandate of having ample rice supply for the country, then the call of the agri group should be heeded by the government.

"If NFA is filling up its buffer stock with imported rice, then NFA has a lot of explaining to do. And if NFA really turns out to be an agency which cannot fulfill its role, then I am open to the idea of abolishing," Pimentel said in a Viber message to the media.

"It is basically a statement that the NFA has become inutile and that government is simply relying on imports...without investing enough on agriculture with a view to increasing production and thereby providing food security for

our country," Escudero said.

SINAG president Rosendo So in a statement issued the abolition call after reports said NFA prefers to import rice from India and Vietnam.

So said funds intended to buy local produce might be used to purchase imported rice from India and Vietnam, which is against the administration's aim to boost local rice production.

## Up by P15

Based on public markets monitoring by the DA in the National Capital Region as of yesterday, the per kg price of imported rice ranged from P50 to P65 for special variety; P47 to P56 for premium and; P40 to P46 for well milled.

No data is available on the price

of regular milled.

For local rice, special variety was at P54 to P62 per kg; premium at P48 to P60 per kg; well-milled at P45 to P57 per kg; and regular milled at P55 per kg.

Compared to the earliest monitoring of the DA for the year, the price of some rice varieties are now higher by P15 per kg at most.

DA's monitoring as of January 2, price range of imported rice for special variety is at P46 to P54 per kg; premium at P43 to P48 per kg; well-milled at P40 to P44 per kg; and P37 to P38 per kg for regular milled.

Meanwhile, for local rice, special variety is at P48 to P60 per kg; premium at P40 to P48 per kg; well-milled at P38 to P44 per kg; and regular milled at P35 to P40 per kg.



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## Govt to embark on 'Bamboo Villages' project

THE government is embarking on a flagship multibillion peso "Bamboo Villages" program that will uplift the livelihood of Indigenous peoples in ancestral lands.

Newly appointed Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary Deogracias Victor Savellano has spearheaded the "Buong Bansa Magtanim (BBM) ng Kawayan" which is expected to generate income for the people residing in the area.

"With bamboo growing abundantly in the Philippines, we can tap a rich economic resource if we only have a national program to develop it as an industry as what our neighbors have already invested in," said Savellano in a statement on Friday, August 18.

The program will use bamboo as a climate change mitigation tool.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has cited during the United Nations General Assembly that the climate challenge is a major policy goal of his administration.

Savellano has been leading consultations on the concept of Bamboo Villages which he has been pushing for as an inclusive, community-based approach to jobs creation and agricul-

tural development.

Last week, Savellano led a consultation in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, on a proposed legislation allocating five percent of the budget of various government agencies for bamboo propagation.

He also asserted at a Senate hearing last August 9 that an institutionalized bamboo program will be needed to consolidate different government projects on bamboo that are now scattered across agencies.

"We need to harmonize our programs that are now uncoordinated. We need to obtain the cooperation of each individual and harness all economic resource to attract private sector investment in bamboo," Savellano said.

The said program is expected to generate foreign exchange from the bamboo global market which could grow to a \$90 billion industry by 2030.

Bamboo bills filed in Congress, primarily Senate Bill 605 and House Bill 7941, have provided for a P100-million budget for the institutionalization of the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Program.

While P100 million yearly may be a heavy yearly budget for the government, Sen. Maria Lourdes "Nancy" Binay said the legislature should review the huge economic potential offered by bamboo as against costs.

Department of Trade and Industry regional director Leah Ocampo said during the same Senate hearing that bamboo market value is expected to grow to \$88.43 billion in 2030. This is from \$61.69 billion in 2022.

"Asia Pacific led the largest revenue

share of 78.8 percent in 2021. It is expected to grow at over 4 percent compound annual growth rate," Ocampo said.

As of 2022, the bamboo industry generated a total of P89.2 million in investment and domestic sales P143 million.

The sector generated 10,898 jobs, 5,012 micro, small and medium industries, and 92 community-based enterprises.

**JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL**



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## Mango industry to benefit from pectin technology

MANGO industry stakeholders in the Davao Region have made an assessment of the benefits of the pectin-based edible technology to further improve the region's mango industry.

The pharmaceutical grade mango pectin-based technology was developed by the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) and is gaining potential adopters in Davao's mango industry.

In a statement on Monday, PhilMech said the technology gained attention through a

technology forum and demonstration organized by the PHilMech-Technology Management and Training Division on Aug. 8, 2023.

Davao Regional Integrated Mango Agribusiness Council (Drimaco) also cited the benefits of this technology.

"The use of pectin in this manner [as coating] is surprising. However, we have to explore how far we can make use of this intervention, specifically with the process of its application," said Drimaco President Benedicto Alves.

"Processors like us who already have the resources [mango peels] are also at an advantage as long as we can invest on the machinery needed in order to make the pectin," Alves added.

Extracted from mango peels, the pectin coating can reduce postharvest losses as it can delay the ripening stage of mangoes and prevent deterioration. It can also extend mangoes' shelf life by up to 21 days.

Participating in the forum were other stakeholders, including Southern Philippines Fresh Fruit Corp. together with representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI),

Department of Science and Technology, and the provincial agriculture offices of Davao Occidental and Davao del Norte. They all assessed the potential benefits of the technology that could contribute to the growth of the region's mango industry.

DTI Davao del Sur Provincial Director Maria Victoria Placer also expressed interest in promoting PHilMech's technology.

"In terms of business aspect . . . I can really see that it is market-driven since Davao del Sur (Davao del Sur) is a major producer of mango in the region. The application itself is also very easy and, most of all, safe," Placer said.

**JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL**



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## Groups have mixed views on RTL review

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

**F**ARMERS' groups have mixed views on the government's support of a review of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) or Republic Act 11203, amid price hikes and export bans on the commodity.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Rex Estoperez has said that President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., the concurrent Agriculture chief, backs a review of the RTL.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said in a statement that this was a long-overdue recognition of the serious infirmities in the law, while the militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) remained firm in its position that the law should be junked.

"Essentially, RTL has left food security and farmers' and consumers' welfare to the vagaries of the so-called free market and the 'humanitarian' graces of rice-exporting countries," said FFF.

The group added that the law has tied the government's hands in addressing spiraling rice prices and export bans, among others.

"We therefore expect and demand that the review and amendments of the RTL look deeply into its basic assumptions, objectives, and major

provisions," the group said.

For the KMP, RA 11203 only wreaked havoc on Filipino farmers.

"Even without a review, it is already evident that the Rice Tariffication Law, enacted under [former president Rodrigo] Duterte and pursued under Marcos Jr., wreaked havoc on the lives and livelihoods of Filipino rice farmers," said Ronnie Manalo, secretary general of the KMP.

Manalo said they warned against the passage of the RTL in 2018.

"After it was enacted in 2019, we were proved right in our arguments that massive importation will severely hurt rice farmers and the local rice industry," the farmer leader said.

He added that rice farmers lost some P85 billion in just one year since the law was implemented.

"And more than four years of its implementation [has] resulted in

more than P265 billion in losses and 40 percent of income lost for rice farmers," he said.

Enacted into law in 2019, the RTL liberalized the importation, exportation and trading of rice. It also transformed the role of the National Food Authority into a buffer stocking agency.

The law was also intended to protect local rice farmers by imposing tariffs on imports of the commodity.

The tariff collections also go to the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), also referred to as the Rice Fund, to be utilized for programs and projects to increase crop yield and boost the income of rice farmers. Under RA 11203, RCEF gets annual funding of at least P10 billion from 2019 to 2024.



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## Pimentel, Escudero open to NFA abolition

SENATE Minority Leader Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel 3rd is "open" to proposals to abolish the National Food Authority (NFA) if the agency fails to fulfill its role in ensuring ample supply and affordable rice to consumers.

"If NFA really turns out to be an agency [that] cannot fulfill its role, then I am open to the idea of abolishing it," Pimentel said in a text message.

On Sunday, the Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) called for the abolition of NFA, alleging that the agency is heavily "reliant" on rice importation instead of buying from local farmers.

"If NFA is filling up its buffer stock with imported rice, then it has a lot of explaining to do," Pimentel said on Sunday when asked to comment on Sinag's call.

Pimentel added that the NFA "should make sure that its stock, especially the oldest ones, are still fit

for satisfying human consumption."

Asked to comment on the same issue, Sen. Francis Joseph "Chiz" Escudero said, "I think their call for the abolition of the NFA is their way of saying that 'it's useless anyway, so why not just abolish it.'"

"I believe that what is really needed is to strengthen the power and capacity of the NFA to do its mandate," Escudero said.

"With a measly funding of only P8.5 billion, how can it procure enough palay (unmilled rice) from local farmers at a higher price and sell it at a lower price to consumers," he pointed out.

"It is basically a statement that the NFA has become useless, and the government is simply relying on imports, without investing enough in agriculture with a view to increasing production and thereby providing food security for our country," Escudero said.

**BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO**

## Rice and life

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do Pascual must have underestimated the love affair of Filipinos with rice when he suggested that we modify our diet and use other alternatives such as camote and corn as sources for our carbohydrate intake. Instead of taking this as a sensible suggestion to deal with the shortage of the supply of rice that is used as a justification for its importation, he was met with collective outrage. He was even accused of being insensitive.

► **ContrerasA5**



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In my honest opinion, it was just a case of misunderstanding, where Secretary Pascual spoke on a different page compared to many Filipinos. It stems from a fundamental difference in how people interpret the word "diet." Pascual used the word to mean changing our eating behavior, by replacing rice with camote and corn, while ordinary Filipinos must have interpreted "diet" in its common usage as *diyeta*, which means not eating at all. No wonder many, like Cathy Estavillo, the spokesman for Bantay Bigas, were offended. Indeed, taking Pascual's use of "diet" to mean not the former but the latter would be so offensive in the face of people who barely eat, or are confronted with the rising price of rice.

But Pascual's suggestion that we just adjust our diet and use alternatives to rice such as camote and corn may not be that offensive. In fact, it was already proposed by scientists as one of the strategies to promote rice self-sufficiency. Reducing the demand for rice can help stave off shortages, and can have the effect of stabilizing its price and in easing our reliance on importation. The issue here, thus, would no longer be the offensiveness and insensitivity of asking people who can hardly afford rice to be on a "diet," that is, eating less of it, but the practicality of changing our diet by eating less rice and using alternatives that may even turn out to be more expensive and whose supply may not necessarily also be stable and reliable.

Pascual should have known better to familiarize himself with the different nuance of the word "diet" among ordinary Filipinos. But more importantly, he should have been more sensitive to the reality that rice is life for many Filipinos. Not only that, for many, there is an emotional attachment to it but also because the Filipino palate would find it unusual, even unacceptable, to eat some dishes without rice. There are also many Filipinos, particularly those who are income-challenged, who survive only on rice. It is in these that Pascual can be called out for being insensitive, but not because he asked Filipinos to be on a diet, or to eat less, because that is not what he actually meant. What he actually proposed was for people to adjust their diets.

However, for a people who have an intense relationship with rice, Filipinos appear to be wasteful. A study recently published in the BMC Public Health journal, written by Imelda Angeles-Agdeppa, Marvin Bangan-Toledo and Jezreel Ann Taruc Zamora, revealed that the average household plate waste of rice is  $49.6 \text{ g} \pm 4.7$ . They also found that female-headed households were 0.82 times less likely to have plate waste of rice and rice products compared to male-headed households. Urban wastage of rice was 0.83 times higher than rural wastage, while rice wastage in richer

households was 1.38 times higher compared to poorer households.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (Philrice) estimated that rice wastage amounts to P7.2 billion a year, enough to feed 2 million individuals. The average amount of rice wastage daily is about 2 tablespoons. Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture has estimated a shortage of about 80,000 metric tons of rice from July to the end of September.

These empirically established facts come in the face of people who consider rice as life and who are so enamored with it that they would consider as culturally insensitive any suggestion that we reduce our consumption of it and shift to other staples, even if it is actually a rational strategy to enable rice self-sufficiency.

We waste rice every time we leave some portions uneaten on our plates. We are in the habit of taking so much from buffet tables, whether in restaurants or during parties and fiesta celebrations. Our cultural practice of celebrating with others in a boodle fight has a tendency to result in rice leftovers.

And yet, we complain when rice prices soar beyond our means without thinking that prices are affected by shortages of supply, and that rice wastage aggravates the problem. The same people who oppose importing rice are also the very same people who rail against Pascual, even misconstruing what he said, for suggesting that we eat camote and corn, if we can, to help address the shortage.

Wasting P7.2 billion worth of rice, which deprives 2 million Filipinos of the staple, is a serious problem. It is simply inconsistent for us to have a romance with rice without caring for it to the point that we waste it. It's about time drastic measures are adopted to promote rice self-sufficiency in addition to modernizing our agriculture.

For those who are willing, and can afford it, shifting to other staples should be encouraged, considering, based on the study cited above, that richer households tend to have higher rice wastage. Food outlets must now allow people to order rice according to their preferences and capacities, not in fixed measurements such as by the cup. Unlimited rice should be regulated, and any leftover would be levied with a surcharge or a rice-wastage tax or penalty. Restaurants offering boodle fights and buffets should be stricter in implementing their no-leftover policies.

Pascual may have sounded insensitive. But what he was in fact directing us to do is have a serious reexamination of our own contribution to the problem and reflect on our own part in crafting a systemic solution. We cannot just expect government to solve all our problems without doing our share. We want our rice. So, we should eat it all of it.



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# Pinoy farmers benefiting from high palay prices — DA

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

**A**n official from the Department of Agriculture (DA) said that Filipino farmers were reaping benefits from global fears of a rice shortage due to the adverse effects of the looming dry spell.

Agriculture Undersecretary Leo Sebastian of the Rice Industry Development said this as world

suppliers tighten their supply of rice in the world market due to the possible adverse impact of the El Niño phenomenon that might start early next year.

In a statement, the DA official said that, because of the situation, Filipino farmers were no longer at the losing end of the rice sector.

"Now, Filipino rice farmers are enjoying better prices from their fresh harvest, perhaps sparked by global

fears of a shortage resulting from the adverse impact of El Niño forcing world suppliers to tighten supply in the world market," he said.

Data from the DA National Rice Program (NRP) showed palay prices in March 2023 rose to ₱17.69 a kilo for fresh and ₱19.73 for dry. Compared to the same month last year, palay prices were ₱15.99 for fresh and ₱18.41 for dry palay.

In April 2023, the price of fresh palay was ₱17.66 per kilo, while it was ₱20.38 for dry palay. The prices were ₱15.57 for fresh and ₱17.95 for dry during the same period last year.

The highest posted palay price was in Central Luzon at ₱22 for fresh palay and ₱25 for dry, the DA-NRP data showed.

Separate data from the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement

(PRISM), comprising rice millers and palay traders, showed both fresh and dry palay prices for the 2023 dry season:

Isabela: ₱18.50 (fresh) and ₱22.50 (dry)

Nueva Ecija: ₱19.50 and ₱23.50

Bulacan: ₱20 and ₱24

Tarlac and Pangasinan: ₱18.50 and ₱22.50

Mindoro: ₱19 and ₱23

Leyte: ₱17.50 and ₱21.50

Caraga: ₱19 and ₱23

Iloilo: ₱18 and ₱22

Davao: ₱19.40 and ₱23.40

Last week, President Marcos, who holds the DA portfolio, expressed optimism that the price of rice in the country would soon stabilize as harvest had already started in some major palay-producing regions, including Nueva Ecija, Isabela, and North Cotabato.



## 'Low sugar prices possible for coming milling season'

By GILBERT BAYORAN

BACOLOD CITY – Sugarcane planters may brace for possibly lower sugar prices in the coming milling season, according to a lawmaker.

Negros Occidental 5th District Rep. Emilio Yulo, a former board member of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA), yesterday disclosed that sugar prices may not reach P2,400 to P4,000 per sack, which occurred last year.

Yulo told radio *dyHB* radio that this is because the SRA still has a huge stock balance of sugar, as he

also stressed that it will be challenging for small sugar planters.

The lawmaker advised sugarcane farmers to increase their productivity to combat the expected lower prices of sugar.

In compliance with the order of the SRA, two sugar centrals in northern Negros are expected to start their milling operations for crop year 2023-2024 on Sept. 4.

The Lopez Sugar Corp. and Sagay Central Inc. have announced that they would start accepting canes in their respective transloading stations on Sept. 1.

Sugar mills which open first usually get more farmer customers, according to SRA head Pablo Azcona.

The SRA earlier rejected calls from three sugarcane planter federations to start the milling season this month, which was started in the same month last year.

Azcona pointed out that sugar production is lower in August, amid the rainy season.

Through this schedule, Azcona said farmers would have the opportunity to choose their sugar mill based on efficiency, incentive offers and assistance that the mill extends to farmers.

## Farmers benefitting from high palay prices - DA

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Worldwide fears of a rice shortage triggered by the possible effects of El Niño are benefitting Filipino farmers as palay prices have increased because of tighter supply, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said yesterday.

"For the longest time, Filipino farmers have always been at the losing end of the rice sector. But now, Filipino rice farmers are enjoying better prices from their fresh harvest, perhaps sparked by global fears of a shortage resulting from the adverse impact of El Niño forcing world suppliers to tighten supply in the world market," DA Undersecretary for rice industry development Leo Sebastian said in a statement issued by the Presidential Communications Office (PCO).

Palay prices reached P17.69 a kilo for fresh and P19.73 for dry in March, higher than the P15.99 for fresh and P18.41 for dry palay in the same period last year, according to the DA National Rice Program.

The following month, the price of fresh palay was at P17.66 per kilo while that of dry palay was P20.38, also higher than the April 2022 prices of P15.57 for fresh and P17.95 for dry.

The highest recorded palay prices were in Central Luzon at P22 for fresh palay and P25 for dry.

The agriculture department's Regional Field Office 3 has reported that palay prices were at P20.46 for dry and P17.64 for fresh palay last April, higher than the P18.20 for dry palay and P15.67 for newly harvested grains in the same month in 2022. The

office covers the province of Nueva Ecija, the Philippines' rice granary.

Data from the Regional Field Office 2 showed that palay prices in March rose to P20.47 for dry and P16.52 for fresh palay, from P18.48 for dry and P15.1 for fresh in the same period last year.

Citing data from the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement, the PCO statement said fresh and dry palay prices for the 2023 dry season were P18.50 and P22.50 in Isabela; P19.50 and P23.50 in Nueva Ecija; P20 and P24 in Bulacan; P18.50 and P22.50 in Tarlac and Pangasinan; P19 and P23 in Mindoro; P17.50 and P21.50 in Leyte; P19 and P23 in Caraga; P18 and P22 in Iloilo and P19.40 and P23.40 in Davao.

Nueva Ecija Rice Millers Association president Elizabeth Vana said retail prices of rice are expected to drop by at least P2 to P3 per kilo with the start of palay harvest.

She added that Nueva Vizcaya farmers were first to harvest, and will be followed by Cagayan, Isabela and Nueva Ecija.

For his part, Bongabon East Farmers and Fisheries Service Cooperative chairman Dan Alfaro said the harvest in Nueva Ecija would be delayed as many farmers were affected by the flooding brought by Typhoon Egay and the southwest monsoon.

Last week, President Marcos, also the agriculture secretary, said the Philippines' rice supply is sufficient but prices are "very variable."

He has ordered the DA and the trade department to closely monitor rice prices in the wake of reports that prices

of the food staple are climbing to as high as P56 per kilo.

### Importation

President Marcos should issue a categorical statement on whether he wants the National Food Authority (NFA) to import rice following a trip of officials of NFA and DA to India, farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) said on Monday.

"We have talked to lawyers, and we will push through in hailing these officials to court if proven that they have been negotiating for rice imports," SINAG executive director Jayson Cainglet said.

"We would rather hear from the President that he wants NFA to import rice. What we heard from the President is that there is no rice shortage and he wants the DA to increase local production. The DA officials have long been misquoting the President," Cainglet added.

Meanwhile, rice watchdog group Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy Estavillo said the government should restore the powers of NFA so that it can directly buy palay from the farmers.

She added that NFA should resume the selling of P27 and P32 per kilo of subsidized rice.

### Abolish NFA

Senators yesterday expressed mixed reactions on calls to abolish the NFA for heavily relying on rice imports over buying produce from local farmers.



Sen. Francis Escudero said he thinks their call for the abolition of the NFA is their way of saying that "it's useless anyway, so why not just abolish it... I believe that what is really needed is to strengthen the power and capacity of the NFA to do its mandate."

Escudero noted that "it is basically a statement that the NFA has become inutile and that government is simply relying on imports... without investing enough in agriculture with a view to increasing production and thereby providing food security for our country."

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel III said "if NFA is filling up its buffer stock with imported rice, then NFA has a lot of explaining to do."

"And if NFA really turns out to be an agency that cannot fulfill its role, then I am open to the idea of abolishing it. Also in the meantime, the NFA should make sure that its stock, especially its oldest stock, is still fit for satisfying human consumption," Pimentel noted.

## Repeal

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas upheld their call for the immediate abandonment and repeal of the Rice Tariffication Law as they asserted that Marcos' recent endorsement of reviewing the legislation is a "mere symbolic gesture aimed at pacifying the public amidst soaring rice prices."

"The rice tariffication law, enacted under (former president Rodrigo Duterte) and pursued under Marcos Jr., wreaked havoc on the lives and livelihood of Filipino rice farmers and as it pushes further the domestic rice industry into decimation," they said.

KMP secretary general Ronnie Manalo claimed that within the year of the law's enact-

ment, farmers suffered losses amounting to P85 billion, and within four years since its implementation resulted in about P265 billion in losses and a 40 percent reduction in rice farmers' income. - With Bella Cariaso, Mark Ernest Villeza, Cecille Suerte Felipe



# AS RICE PRICES SOAR, NFA TOLD: PROVE YOUR WORTH

STORY BY MELVIN GASCON, JORDEENE B. LAGARE AND JEROME ANING

**Senators Aquilino Pimentel III and Francis Escudero challenge food agency to prove it is doing its mandate after farmers' group accuses it of preferring rice imports over local produce and calls for its abolition.**

**A2**

**FROM A1**

**By Melvin Gascon,  
Jordeene B. Lagare  
and Jerome Aning  
@Team\_Inquirer**

As a farmers' group called for the abolition of the National Food Authority (NFA) over its supposed preference for rice imports, two senators on Monday challenged the agency to prove its worth by helping farmers and buying their produce at higher prices.

"If the NFA is filling up its buffer stock with imported rice, then [it] has a lot of explaining to do. And if NFA really turns out to be an agency that cannot fulfill its role, then I am open to the idea of abolishing (it)," Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel III said.

Sen. Francis Escudero, a member of the Senate committee on agriculture, also called on the NFA to belie reports it has become useless and ineffective.

"It is basically a statement that the NFA has become inutile and that the government is simply relying on imports... without investing enough on

agriculture, with a view to increasing production and thereby providing food security for our country," he said.

"I think [the farmers' group] call for the abolition of the NFA is their way of saying that 'it's useless anyway, so why not just abolish it,'" Escudero noted.

## **Measly funding**

But the senator, whose late father, Salvador Escudero III,

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served as agriculture minister under the administration of then President Ferdinand Marcos Sr., also defended the agency from allegations that it has been underperforming.

"With a measly funding of only P8.5 billion, how can it procure enough palay from local farmers at a 'higher price' and sell it at a 'lower price' to consumers?" he asked.

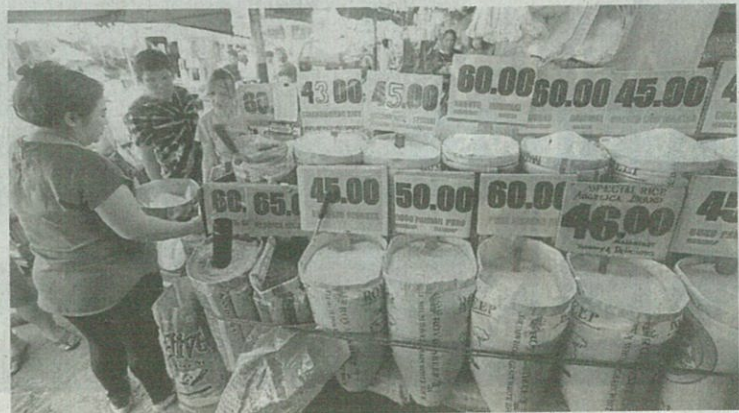
Instead of studying its abolition, Congress may need to revisit Presidential Decree No. 4, the NFA's charter, Escudero said, adding, "I believe that what is really needed is to strengthen the power and capacity of the NFA to do its mandate."

The Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag) claimed on Sunday that instead of buying rice from local farmers like them, the NFA was favoring importers like India and Vietnam.

"[It's] not buying from our farmers anymore. [It's] negotiating [with Vietnam and India] on rice," Sinag president Rosendo So said in a statement as he also expressed concern that the agency may already be using its P8.5-billion fund for local rice procurement this year on imports.

So added in a phone interview that they would write to President Marcos, also the Department of Agriculture (DA) secretary, and ask him to abolish the NFA should it fail to fulfill its mandate.

But earlier this month, Agriculture Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban said in a statement that upon the directive of Mr. Marcos, the DA was in talks with Vietnamese rice exporters to beef up the country's national rice inventory which would



**BUYER'S CHOICE** Prices of assorted varieties of rice are displayed at Trabajo Market in Sampaloc, Manila, in this photo taken on Aug. 10, to guide consumers on a tight budget. Earlier, the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. warned that the price of the staple would increase until the mid-September harvest amid the continued hike in the buying price of palay. —NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

last just 52 to 57 days without imports.

He added that the department was also working with India to allow the importation of rice on humanitarian grounds.

"This will hopefully pave the way for the country to get better terms for the additional 300,000 to 500,000 metric tons of rice importation for this year," Panganiban said.

As of Friday, local rice was priced at P55 to P62 per kilo, up from P38 to P50 per kilo, based on the DA's price monitoring.

#### Agri groups back agency

If Sinag wanted the NFA abolished, two agricultural groups were opposed to it.

"Definitely, we are against it (abolition) and we know fully well who are pushing for this and why," Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul

Montemayor said.

"This is the counteroffensive of the pro-liberalization pro-RTL (rice tariffication law) groups reacting to calls for a review of the RTL and the reinstatement of NFA's regulatory and price stabilization functions in light of the current rice crisis and the legal constraints that RTL has imposed on the government in responding to the crisis," Montemayor claimed.

For Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. president Danilo Fausto, the government should increase the agency's budget and restore its previous directive.

"We do not agree with the abolition of NFA. What we are suggesting is to expand the powers of NFA for our food security," he said.

Under Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication

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Act, the NFA is responsible for maintaining the optimal level of rice inventory in the country to be sourced solely from local producers.

In particular, it is tasked to "manage efficiently and effectively the acquisition, quality maintenance and disposition of the buffer stock during emergencies and calamities."

Before the enactment of RA 11203 in 2019, the NFA had the sole authority to import rice and regulate their entry. Private traders were allowed to participate, provided they secured import permits.

#### **Spike in palay prices**

Malacañang, meanwhile, noted that despite rice retail prices remaining high in many parts of the country, there has been a corresponding spike in palay prices that has benefited farmers.

"For the longest time, Filipino farmers have always been at the losing end of the rice sector. But now, Filipino rice farmers are enjoying better prices from their fresh harvest, perhaps sparked by global fears of a shortage resulting from the adverse impact of El Niño, forcing world suppliers to tighten supply in the world market," the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said on Monday, quoting Agriculture Undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Leocadio Sebastian.

The PCO cited data from the DA's National Rice Program (NRP) showing that palay prices in March rose to P17.69 a kilo for fresh and P19.73 for dry. In the same month last year, palay prices were P15.99 for fresh and

P18.41 for dry palay.

In April this year, the price of fresh palay was at P17.66 per kilo and for dry palay, it was P20.38, while in April 2022, the prices were P15.57 for fresh and P17.95 for dry.

The highest posted palay price was in Central Luzon region at P22 for fresh palay and P25 for dry, according to the DA-NRP.

The DA said its Central Luzon office, which covers Nueva Ecija, the rice granary of the country, reported that palay prices in April this year were at P20.46 for dry and P17.64 for fresh. These prices were higher compared to the same month in 2022, which were at P18.20 for dry and P15.67 for newly harvested grains.

On the other hand, the DA's Cagayan Valley office, which covers Isabela, another major rice producing province in Luzon, showed the prices of palay in March 2022 were at P18.48 for dry and P15.10 for fresh. For March this year, palay prices were at P20.47 for dry and P16.52 for fresh palay.

The PCO said that monitoring done by the Philippine Rice Research Institute's (PhilRice) Philippine Rice Information System (PRISM) showed that average dry palay prices were at P18.30 a kilo from January to June last year and P19.5 per kilo for the same period this year.

For fresh palay, prices from January to June 2022 were at P15.90 a kilo compared to P17.40 for the same period this year, the PCO quoted Darlynnne Kaye Matias, PRISM field operations chief and senior research specialist of PhilRice-Isabela, as saying. INQ



## Dagdag kita ng mga magsasaka



KUYA NG BAYAN

PULONG DUTERTE

**N**akatuon ang pansin ngayon ng gobyerno sa pagpapataas ng produksyon ng palay para matupad ang pangako nito at hangad nating lahat na mapababa nang husto ang presyo ng bigas. Bukod diyan, kapag lumaki ang ani ng mga magsasaka ay tataas din ang kanilang kita.

Isang mahalagang aspekto para matupad ang hangaring ito ay ang pagtitiyak na hindi masasayang ang pinaghirapan ng ating mga magsasaka. Tumaas man ang kanilang produksyon, ito ay mawawalan ng saysay kung ang malaking bahagi naman nito ay natatapon lamang.

Sa pag-aaral na ginawa ng Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (**Philmech**), napag-alamang mula 10 porsyento hanggang kalahati ng tinatawag na "production output" ng palay at iba pang pangunahing produktong pangsakahan sa bansa ay nasasayang lamang. Ibig sabihin ay ang lupa, mga input tulad ng pataba at ang labor ng mga magsasaka para makapag-ani ng palay at iba pang pangunahing farm commodities ay nauuwi lang sa wala.

Ang nakakapanghinayang na sitwasyong ito ay sa kadahilanang kulang sa mga postharvest facility tulad ng rice mill at warehouse na dapat sana ay ginagamit ng mga magsasakang Pilipino para hindi masira ang kanilang mga ani.

Kaya naman para matulungan ang ating mga magsasaka, ang inyong Kuya Pulong ay nag-file ng House Bill (HB) 7711 na ang layunin ay makapaglaan ng pondo para sa pagpapatayo ng rice mill at warehouse sa mga legislative district na may rice-producing municipality.

Kapag naipatupad na ang pagkakaroon ng mga postharvest facility sa mga legislative district, papalawakin pa ang programang ito para mabigyan na rin ng rice mill at warehouse ang lahat ng lungsod at bayan na nag-aani ng palay.

Kasama sina Benguet Congressman Eric Yap at ACT-CIS party-list Cong. Edvic Yap, pinanukala natin sa HB 7711 na maglaan ng P1 bilyong piso para sa pagpapatupad ng postharvest program. Sa mga susunod na taon, isasama na ang pondo para rito sa national budget para matiyak na maipagpapatuloy ang programa.

Hindi lamang rice mill at warehouse kundi maging mga kagamitan, makinarya at mga pasilidad sa pagta-transport ng bigas ay kasama rin sa ating panukalang postharvest program.

Kapag naipatupad ito nang maayos, mahihikayat ang pribadong sektor na tumulong sa ating mga magsasaka sa pamamagitan ng pamumuhunan

sa mga makabagong pasilidad at teknolohiya para umulad ang sektor ng agrikultura sa bansa.

Bago pala tayo magtapos ay gustong pasalamatan ng inyong Kuya Pulong ang ACT-CIS party-list sa kanilang pakikipag-partner sa atin para makapamahagi ng mga pagkain at mga mug sa karamihan ng dumalo sa nakaraang 38th Kadayawan Festival sa Davao City.

Kasama ang ating mga kapatid na katutubo sa mga nabigyan ng snacks at mugs. Sila ay mula sa mga grupo ng Ata, Matigsalug, Maranao, Maguindanaon, Bagobo Klata, Obo Manuvu, Bagobo-Tagabawa, Tasug, Sama, Iranun at Kagan.

Ang Kadayawan Festival ay ang pinakapopular at pinakamalaking pista sa Davao City. Nagsisilbi ito bilang pista ng pasasalamat sa mga kaloob sa atin ng Diyos na mula sa kalikasan. Ito ay bilang pasasalamat din sa yaman ng ating kultura at sa masaganang ani.

Isang pagpupugay din ito sa ating mga kapatid na katutubo.

Hango ang katagang 'Kadayawan' mula sa salitang 'Madayaw', ang magiliw na pagbati ng mga Dabawenyo na ang ibig sabihin ay mabuti at maganda.

Katatapos lamang ng Kadayawan Festival nitong August 20. Kung hindi ka nakabisita ng Davao para makisaya sa Kadayawan ngayong taon ay meron pa namang next year. Pagplanuhan n'yo na ng inyong pamilya o mga kabarkada dahil siguradong mas exciting, mas masaya at mas makulay ang Kadayawan sa 2024.



## Filipino farmers now enjoying good prices -- DA

FILIPINO farmers are benefiting from global fears of a rice shortage resulting from the adverse possible impact of El Niño phenomenon, which forced world suppliers to tighten supply in the world market, an agriculture official said on Monday.

"For the longest time, Filipino farmers have always been at the losing end of the rice sector. But now, Filipino rice farmers are enjoying better prices from their fresh harvest,

perhaps sparked by global fears of a shortage resulting from the adverse impact of El Niño forcing world suppliers to tighten supply in the world market," said Agriculture Undersecretary Leo Sebastian of the Rice Industry Development.

Data from the Department of Agriculture (DA) National Rice Program showed palay prices in March 2023 rose to P17.69 a kilo for fresh and P19.73 for dry. Compared to the same month

last year, palay prices were P15.99 for fresh and P18.41 for dry palay.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. concurrently holds the DA portfolio.

In April 2023, the price of fresh palay was at P17.66 per kilo and for dry palay, it was P20.38, while in April 2022, the prices were P15.57 for fresh and P17.95 for dry.

The highest posted palay price was in Central Luzon at P22 for fresh palay and P25

for dry, the DA-NRP data showed.

The DA Regional Field Office 3 covering Nueva Ecija, the rice granary of the country, reported that palay prices in April 2023 were at P20.46 for dry palay and P17.64 for fresh. These prices are higher compared to the April 2022 rates, which were at P18.20 for dry palay and P15.67 for newly harvested grains.

PCO



## DA embarks on 'Bamboo Villages' program to create jobs for poor, IPs

By Joel dela Torre

INSPIRED by the huge value of bamboo programs from Asian neighbors China, Indonesia and Vietnam, the Marcos administration is embarking on a flagship multi-million "bamboo villages" in the countryside.

Newly-appointed Agriculture Undersecretary Deogracias Victor Savellano spearheaded the "Buong Bansa Magtanim" (BBM) ng Kawayan, seen to raise income and uplift the livelihood of the poor and Indigenous People in ancestral lands while generating foreign exchange from bamboo's \$90 billion global market by 2023.

This far, Savellano has been leading consultations on the concept of bamboo-raising similar to the approaches of Indonesia's 1,000 Bamboo Villages and Vietnam's 100-hectare vast plantation.

China on the other hand, generates the biggest bamboo revenue at \$35 billion yearly.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. himself cited the program during the United Nations General Assembly as a tool to mitigate the effects of climate change which is a major policy goal of his administration.

According to Savellano, in all consultations he has been attending about the concept of Bamboo Villages, he has been pushing for an inclusive, community-based approach to jobs creation and agricultural development.

"With bamboo growing abundantly in the Philippines, we can tap a rich economic resource if we only have a national program to develop it as an industry as what our neighbors have already invested in," he pointed out. Isidro Alcantara, a bank and mining executive who pioneered bamboo planting in a mining area at the Marcventures in Surigao del Sur, said that Thailand just allocated \$10 billion for the next 10 years to develop its bamboo industry.

Savellano led a consultation in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon on a proposed legislation allocating 5% of the budget of various government agencies for bamboo propagation.

He however, asserted during a

Senate hearing last August 9 that an institutionalized bamboo program will be needed to consolidate different government programs on bamboo that are now scattered across agencies.

"We need to harmonize our programs that are now uncoordinated. We need to obtain the cooperation of each individual and harness all economic resources to attract private sector investment in bamboo," Savellano said.

Former Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr., an investor now at Florida-based Rizome which produces world-class engineered bamboo as an alternative to hardwood lumber, said bamboo can be the biggest agriculture industry that the Marcos Administration can build.

Bamboo has become a raw material for a wide range of products including lumber as an alternative to hardwood (beams, engineered wood, tiles), textiles, carbon composites for windmill turbine blades, large diameter water pipes and sewage mains, and bamboo pellets to replace coal in power generation.





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## Agri-tech investment seen critical in shedding dependence on imports

THE GOVERNMENT needs to promote investment in new agriculture and manufacturing technology to raise domestic production and reduce import dependency, analysts said.

"Government with the help of private sector must find ways to increase production by investing in technology that will transform the country's production," John Paolo R. Rivera, chief economist at Oikonomia & Research, Inc., said in a Viber message.

"Prioritizing these would spur new ways of doing things."

Last week, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan told the Senate finance committee that the government was working towards raising domestic production, calling imports a temporary measure to stabilize prices.

He said the government should invest in logistics and provide technological support to farmers.

"Our trade policy is used to enhance the workings of the economy in such a way that we can stabilize prices, create employment, and make our local products more competitive," Mr. Balisacan said.

Mr. Rivera said importing agricultural products is not sustainable, adding that new technology needs to be introduced to boost domestic production.

"(Reliance on foreign firms is) among the reasons why there is a weak domestic multiplier effect and why manufacturing employment chronically lags behind reported manufacturing gross domestic product growth," Jose Enrique A. Africa, executive director of the think tank IBON Foundation, said in a Viber message.

He said the government should provide more subsidies for domestic agriculture and manufacturing.

China Banking Corp. Chief Economist Domini S. Velasquez added that importing cannot be avoided to stabilize prices during shortages, but cited the need for a plan to boost production.

"The government should also give clear-cut steps and a comprehensive plan to boost production," she said in a Viber message.

"Import dependence can only be sustainably reduced if Filipino industries are built," Mr. Africa said. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**



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## Negros Occidental has enough rice

**BACOLOD CITY:** Amid concerns of a possible rice shortage in the country, Negros Occidental Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson assured his constituents that there is enough supply of rice in the province.

"We are only 84 percent rice sufficient, definitely we will need rice to come to our province," said Lacson, who added that the province needs more rice production to cushion the looming shortage due to global demand and calamities.

But Lacson said he is not worried.

"If we listen to the President, we are okay this year, we will have to address it next year," said the governor, referring to the statement from President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. the price of rice will stabilize soon, as harvest starts in major palay-producing regions in the country.

"I think the President was

very clear that there will be no rice shortfall. If it's short of production, I think the resort is to import rice."

Lacson, however, pointed out that if India decided to stop exporting rice, it "will affect us."

"Although there are other countries that we get rice from, if India closes, those depending on India will now go to countries where we get our rice. I am afraid the Philippines may not be able to compete with bigger countries," he added.

Negros Occidental is known as the sugar capital of the Philippines but has recorded a higher rice yield in the past year.

Data from the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist on Tuesday showed that production increased to an average yield of 97.92 cavans per hectare, from 89.02 cavans in the past year.

**EUGENE ADIONG**



# Inflation seen slowing to 3.4% in Q4

BY NIÑA MYKA PAULINE ARCEO

**I**N SPITE of the raised projections, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) sees inflation slowing down and approaching the central point of the target in the last quarter of this year.

In the August Monetary Policy Report, the central bank said that inflation is projected to slow down in the fourth quarter of 2023, reaching 3.4 percent on a quarterly basis.

It is expected to gradually approach the lower limit of the target, reaching 2.4 percent in the first quarter of 2024.

"Estimated negative base effects until January 2024 will be favorable for the inflation path," the central bank said in a statement. "This can be attributed primarily to the normalization of global commodity prices after the sharp uptick in March 2022."

However, the BSP anticipates inflation will pick up pace in the second to third quarter of 2024, reaching approximately 3.6 percent and 3.7 percent, respectively,

which is closer to the upper band of the target range.

This increase is attributed to positive base effects, elevated crude oil costs, and the delayed influence of minimum wage changes. Eventually, by 2025, inflation is expected to stabilize just above the midpoint of the targeted range.

"Base effects are estimated to turn positive from February to July 2024," the central bank said.

Inflation slowed to 4.7 percent in July after reaching an unforeseen 14-year peak of 8.7 percent in January.

Although inflation is currently decreasing, the Monetary Board has revised its 2023 inflation projection to 5.6 percent from the

initial 5.5 percent.

The forecasts for the following year and 2025 have also been revised to 3.3 and 3.4 percent from the original figures of 2.8 percent and 3.2 percent, respectively.

BSP Governor Eli Remolona said that the balance of risks to the inflation forecast remains largely tilted to the upside.

"The potential impact of additional transport charges, higher domestic prices of key food items facing ongoing supply constraints, a higher-than-expected minimum wage adjustment in areas outside the NCR (National Capital Region), the impact of El Niño weather conditions on food prices and utility rates, and higher electricity rates are the major upside risks to the inflation outlook," the BSP said.

## Inflation survey findings

Meanwhile, in the latest survey conducted by the central bank in August 2023, private-sector econo-

mists maintained their prediction of 5.5 percent as the average inflation rate for the year 2023, consistent with the findings of the previous month's survey.

Moreover, the projections for the years 2024 and 2025 indicated a decrease, with the mean inflation forecast for 2024 dropping from 3.6 percent to 3.5 percent and for 2025 declining from 3.6 percent to 3.4 percent.

Analysts predict that inflation will likely keep decreasing in the coming months, primarily due to the influence of unfavorable base effects.

However, they noted that prospects for inflation could still lean toward an increase due mainly to disruptions in the supply chain, especially the possible adverse consequences of El Niño.

Based on the probability distribution of forecasts given by 22 out of 26 participants, analysts attributed a slim probability of 1.7 percent, down from 2.8 percent, that the average inflation for 2023 will fall within the range of 2.0 to

4.0 percent.

Conversely, there is now a significantly higher confidence level, at 98.3 percent, up from 97.2 percent a month earlier, that inflation will surpass the 4 percent mark.

Meanwhile, the probability of inflation aligning with the target range for 2024 has risen to 80.5 percent, up from 76.7 percent, while the likelihood of inflation comfortably staying within the target range for 2025 has increased to 77.5 percent from 71.6 percent.

The consensus among most analysts is that the central bank will likely halt its process of raising interest rates for the remainder of this year.

However, a few analysts are considering the likelihood of a final 25-basis-point rate hike in the third quarter of 2023, followed by a potential 25-basis-point reversal in the fourth quarter of the same year.

As for the outlook in 2024, all analysts foresee the central bank opting for a reduction in the main

policy rate, with the range spanning from 50 to 225 basis points.

Moreover, there is an expectation of further easing, ranging from 25 to 200 basis points, throughout the year 2025.

For the third consecutive time this August, monetary policymakers have opted to keep interest rates steady at 6.25 percent. This decision comes as the latest underlying predictions suggest a return to the desired inflation rate by the fourth quarter of 2023.

During the previous March meeting, the Monetary Board implemented a small 25-basis-point rise. This move led to a total increase of 425 basis points since May of the prior year, reaching its highest point in nearly 16 years.

"All respondent analysts expect inflation to breach the upper end of the government's 2- to 4-percent target range in 2023," the central bank said. "For 2024 and 2025, most analysts are expecting inflation to decelerate to within the 2- to 4-percent target range."



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## Farm conversion blamed for high food prices

THE conversion of agricultural lands is also a factor in the prevailing high food prices that, in turn, cause malnutrition and stunting among children, especially among poor families, the dean of the Ateneo School of Government told *The Manila Times*.

Philip Arnold Tuaño said in a Viber message that the issue of low agricultural supply is also due to the conversion of agricultural lands to meet the rising demand in the services industry.

"The issue of agricultural supply has actually been decreasing significantly these past 15 to 20 years. And there may be a lot of reasons for this; one of them is the size of the country's agricultural lands that is actually decreasing," he said.

"Because it is the services industry that is growing, which includes real estate, malls, etc., as well as the conversion of agricultural lands to residential or commercial areas," he added in Filipino.

Based on the recent survey conducted by the Management Association of the Philippines Campaign Against Malnutrition and Child Stunting, the high prices of nutritious food were the main reason for the rising cases of malnutrition and stunting among Filipino children.

It said that the majority, or 48.4 percent, of the respondents said they could eat vegetables and fruits only two to six times a week, while 36.3 percent said they could do so on a daily basis and 10.7 percent only once a week.

As for meat consumption, 52.1 percent said they could afford to eat meat two to six times a week, while 28.5 percent answered they could afford to eat meat only once a week.

The poll found that 36.5 percent consumed processed food once a week, while 34.5 percent said they consumed fast food two to six times a week.

For Tuaño, the high price of nutritious food is also a factor in the worsening malnutrition and stunting among Filipino children, which can have an impact on the country's economic growth.

"It is actually true because one of the reasons for the high levels of malnutrition, especially among children between 0 and 5 years old, is because of high food prices and low-income households," he said.

Malnutrition and stunting can result in intellectual and cognitive development constraints, leading to low productivity in the economy.

**JENICA FAYE GARCIA**



## Inflation to hit low of 3.4% by Q4 – BSP

By LEE C. CHIPONGIAN

**T**he country's above-target inflation will fall within the two percent to four percent target range by the fourth quarter of this year to 3.4 percent, according to forecast by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

The BSP said that by the first quarter of 2024, the inflation rate will be around 2.4 percent but will "accelerate near the upper end of the target range" in the next two quarters, or the second and third quarters.

The expectation is that by the second quarter of 2024, the consumer price index (CPI) will average at 3.6 percent and by the third quarter next year, at 3.7 percent.

The factors behind the forecast levels are positive base effects, higher crude oil prices, and the lagged impact of minimum wage adjustments, before settling slightly above the midpoint of the target in 2025, the BSP said Monday, Aug. 21.

"Estimated negative base effects until January 2024 will be favorable for the inflation path," the BSP noted

in August 2023 Monetary Policy Report (MPR), citing the normalization of global commodity prices after the sharp uptick in March 2022 amid the Ukraine war.

On the domestic front, the BSP said the waning impact of transport fare hikes in the last six months of 2022 were the negative base effects for the same period this year, hence the decelerating inflation. "However, base effects are estimated to turn positive from February to July 2024," it also noted.

The CPI, currently at 6.8 percent as of end-July year-to-date, will return to the target range in the last quarter of the year "in the absence of further supply-side shocks."

The 3.4 percent inflation projection for the fourth quarter is however higher than the May 2023 MPR forecast of a flat three percent.

At the time, back in May, the BSP was presenting the same upside risks to inflation that it showed on the August 2023 MPR, but excluding the CPI data of the lower June and July actual inflation.

Upside risks still include more

transport fare hikes and minimum wage adjustments, as well as higher prices of key food items and the impact of El Niño weather conditions on food and electricity prices which could lead to renewed second-round effects.

As of its Aug. 17 Monetary Board policy meeting, the BSP forecasts CPI of 5.5 percent for this year which is still way beyond the target, while the projection for 2024 is 3.3 percent and 3.4 percent for 2025 – both are within the target band.

The latest headline CPI number which was 4.7 percent for the month of July, was a significant decline from June's 5.4 percent. The core CPI has also started to slow down to 6.7 percent in July from 7.4 percent in June. The difference between headline and core inflation is that the latter does not include certain items with volatile price pressures to allow inflation-targeting central banks such as the BSP to see the underlying trend in consumer prices.

Meanwhile, as of its August analysis, the BSP said inflation expectations for 2023 has remained steady while factors indicate further easing

of inflation for 2024 and 2025.

This was shown in the latest survey round on private sector economists' inflation expectations which the BSP said showed unchanged mean inflation forecast from the July survey of 5.5 percent for 2023.

The mean inflation forecast for 2024 was also lower at 3.5 percent from 3.6 percent in the July survey. For 2025, analysts also predicted a lower inflation of 3.4 percent from the previous 3.6 percent estimate.

Analysts expect inflation to continue easing in the near term due mostly to negative base effects. However risks to the inflation outlook are still tilted to the upside in 2024 and 2025.

In July, inflation decelerated because most food items such as fish and sugar, showed slower price hikes. Meat prices also declined with lesser consumer demand.

Non-food inflation also slowed last month amid lower electricity rates, LPG prices, and slower increases in rents. Base effects also slowed the year-on-year transport inflation in July.



## Accountant runs farm to supply her mushroom products

By YVETTE TAN

**T**he Covid-19 pandemic was a traumatic global event, bringing the whole world to a halt as a virus threatened humanity. But despite the many challenges the virus brought, the forced pause was a blessing in disguise for many people, who found the time to discover what was truly important to them.

For Grace Pascual-Holganza, the pandemic became a chance to finally launch the business she had set aside in 2018.

Pascual-Holganza is the owner of MUMshroom, a company that sells products such as chips, patties, and sig made from mushrooms cultivated on her family farm. "MUMshroom is like a baby because I'm a proud mom and accountant by profession, so to put emphasis on being a mom, I put 'M' in the word mushroom, so it's MUMshroom," she said.

Her interest in cultivating mushrooms began in 2018, when she got to try street food in Taiwan. "What stood out to me was mushrooms," she shared.

Aside from its taste, she appreciated mushrooms' health properties and how they can be relatively easy to cultivate. She remembered that her family had a warehouse from a previous business sitting empty on their farm in Nueva Ecija, and she thought these would make perfect grow houses.

She attended training sessions, bought about 3,000 fruiting bags of white oyster mushrooms, and hired three full-time employees to man her farm.

She balanced what was then a hobby with her full time job, visiting the farm every weekend to check on her greenhouses and meet with the staff while also working with food technicians to develop her mushroom chips, her first product.

### A mushroom farm

At first, she would buy fruiting bags, grow the mushrooms from them, and turn the harvest into mushroom chips. But even then, Pascual-

Holganza felt that the fruiting bags they were buying weren't of the quality she required.

She also tried buying mushrooms from nearby farmers, but was dissatisfied with the uneven quality and lack of consistency in terms of supply, so she decided to produce her own.

It took two years of trial and error for Pascual-Holganza to get the fruiting bags to the quality she desired. "...my target is we should not go below 50,000 fruiting bags because of the demand that I [currently] have."

They harvest anywhere from 30 to 100 kilos a day depending on the number of orders needed.

### Seeking the help of experts

While she was securing her mushroom supply, Pascual-Holganza was also perfecting her product line.

She utilized the contacts she made in one of her early jobs in a food manufacturing company to find consultants who could help her develop mushroom chips according to her specifications.

Her biggest concern was that most mushroom chips in the market were fried, and she didn't want to produce something like that. Taste was equally important, because customers weren't going to buy a product that tasted bad, no matter how healthy it was. "I want[ed] to come up [with] something healthier, something that my family can eat as well and I'm comfortable that my daughter can eat it as well," she shared. "I contacted some friends and they linked me to some professionals who can make my flavorings."

Because she valued efficiency, she was able to launch Mumshroom mushroom chips by December 2018. "I visited Taiwan in October and then I introduced the 10 chips [at the] end of 2018 also."

### Luck and perseverance meet

When the Covid-19 pandemic swept the world in 2020, Pascual-Holganza suddenly found the time to turn her hobby into a successful side



MUMSHROOM'S PRODUCTS, among them, mushroom chips, gourmet bottles in savory variants, chili garlic mushroom paste, pickled mushroom, fritters/ kropek.

business. When the country went into lockdown to curb the spread of the virus, she began to aggressively market her chips on social media.

Many people bought the chips, but sales really picked up when celebrity couple Derek Ramsey and Ellen Adarna included MUMshroom mushroom chips in their giveaway bag during their highly publicized wedding. "...I post[ed] a lot on Facebook and Instagram, that's where the celebrities noticed my product. It started [in] 2021."

Other celebrities followed, posting about how much they enjoyed the chips. "That's when our sales peaked."

The brand now has a loyal clientele, though sales have been decreasing as pandemic protocols have been lifted and people have started going out again.

This led her to develop a line of frozen mushroom-based dishes that include burger patties, dumplings, and empanada. "All vegan, no meat at all," she said. "...it tastes like meat, especially if it's farm produced, freshly harvested, [and] processed immediately, the taste is really, really good."

### Overcoming challenges

All businesses encounter hurdles, and MUMshroom certainly had its fair share of interesting challenges.

For example, while many new businesses struggle from a lack of demand, her experience was the opposite. "The biggest challenge for me, fortunately, my brand was, in a way, being patronized by some celebrities. If celebrities boost your product, OMG the demand is really high and if you're not prepared, there's a lot of custom-



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ers that get frustrated that they're not getting their orders on time," Pascual-Holganza shared.

She also experienced the realities of doing business, such as unscrupulous suppliers who would water their mushrooms to increase its weight before delivering it to her, only for her to realize that she had been cheated when the mushrooms were processed and they lost all the water weight.

All of these have become learning experiences. "Now I can manage my costs... I'm [self] reliant. As compared with them that they're relying on other producers, I rely solely with my produce for now [so] I know the quality of my product," she said. "[MUMshroom's] target market is middle class [upwards] because of the price because it contains no preservatives at all. We don't [use] flour. The process is actually dehydration and then baking.

### A household name

Pascual-Holganza knows that a key to keeping MUMshroom relevant is through constant and creative marketing. This includes partnering with like-minded people and educating current and potential customers on the benefits of mushrooms,

"because not everyone is aware of how mushrooms taste and the benefits of mushrooms to our body."

MUMshroom products can be purchased through their social media accounts. They also have online stores in Lazada and Shopee, as well as a stall in the Ortigas Market that is set up every Saturday along Emerald Avenue in Ortigas Center.

Her family has been very supportive of her venture. For example, MUMshroom items can be bought in a branch of her husband's family business.

"My main project is to have my own mushroom burger store and restaurant," she said. "You see, I already have sisig, patties, so I'm looking forward to coming up with more dishes made of mushrooms."

She's also looking forward to developing more products and collaborating with professionals in different fields. "I want [to be like Cafe] Mary Grace, [which] started from a bazaar," she said. "I just realized that a passion project can be a main source of income. It entails a lot of perseverance and hard work... Connections are important, especially if you're building up a business."



Ngayong araw na ito ay is-share ko sa inyo ang natatanging farm na aking binisita nitong Sabado na makikita sa loob ng isang gusali sa Makati City.

Ang aking tinutukoy ay ang Urban Greens sa makikita sa ikatlong palapag o 3rd floor ng JM Building 2, Pres. Sergio Osmeña Highway corner Rockefeller St., Makati City.

Napaganda at organized ang set up ng Urban Greens na nasa sentro ng kalakalang siyudad sa Metro Manila.

Kung kayo ay dumadaan sa Skyway at patungo ng Southern part ng Metro Manila, paglampas ng Cash & Carry at Hypermark ay makikita na ninyo ang

Manila at mga karatig na probinsiya.

All year round, kahit ano ang panahon, mainit man, malamig, may unos, kalamidad at bagyo ay may gulay na produce ang Urban Greens.

Don't panic, It's Hydroponics. Eat Healthy Feel Happy, ilan laman ito sa mga magagandang slogan ng Urban Greens.

Sa pagbisita ng Magsasakang Reporter sa Urban Greens ay dinatnan ko ang kanilang magagandang mga tanim na sweet basil, Thai basil, lettuce, arugula, red garneth amaranth, mint, spearmint, rosemary, kale swiss chard at iba pang gulay.

Sinabi ni Becher,

**"Eat Healthy, Feel Happy"...**

## URBAN GREENS SA PUSOD NG MAKATI

Urban Greens dahil sa maraming ilaw na nakasindi sa loob ng gusali.

Ang mga nasabing

kung ano ang demand o pangangailangan ng kanilang mga kliyente o kostumer ay kanilang

Urban Greens.

Sa aking pananaw at obserbasyon, kung nais ng Pangulong Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos Jr., na matuldukan ang kakulangan ng supply na pagkain sa bansa ay i-adopt nito ang teknolohiya ng Urban Greens para magkaroon ng sustainability ng iba't ibang green leafy vegetables sa ating bansa.

Sa darating na September 3, 2023, ganap na alas-7:00 ng umaga

halaman.

Para sa iba pang tips at sikreto sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman ay maaari po kayong manood at makinig ng aking TV at Radio program na Masaganang Buhay tuwing Linggo, alas-7:00 hanggang alas-8:00 ng umaga sa OnePH Signal TV, Channel 1 ng TV-5. Mapapakinggan din po sa Radyo Singko 92.3 News FM.

Maaari rin kayong



Ang Magsasakang Reporter at si Mr. Ralph Becker, CEO at Founding Urban Greens.

ilaw ang nagsisilbing araw para lumaking maganda at malulusog ang mga tanim na iba't ibang uri ng halaman sa loob ng Urban Greens.

Isang vertical at indoor garden ang Urban Greens na Hydroponics ang pamamaraan ng pagtatanim ng iba't ibang green leafy vegetables.

Ayon kay Mr. Ralph Becker, CEO at Founder ng Urban Greens, noong 2017 nagsimula ang kanilang operasyon na ang layunin ay tuloy-tuloy na mag-produce ng sariwa at masustansiyang gulay sa Pilipinas.

"From our farm to your tables. We hand-pick produce as you order. Order your new supply of fresh Greens from Urban Greens," ani Becher.

Nabatid na ang Urban Greens ang siya ring kauna-unahang indoor farm-to-table dining sa Pilipinas.

"We deliver fresh produce at the comforts of your home na pawang naturally grown ang aming mga tanim at ani," sabi ni Mr. Becher.

Ayon kay Becher, karamihan sa kanilang mga kostumer ay mga hotel, bar at restaurant sa Metro

itinatanim.

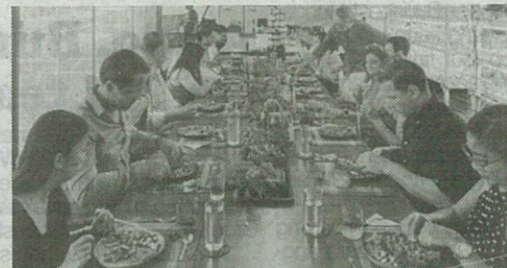
Nagka-conduct din ng onsite hydroponics 101 workshop sa Urban Greens at twice a month na nagsasagawa ng Pop Up dinner.

Sa mga nagnanais na bumili ng mga sariwang produce na green leafy vegetables sa Urban Greens, ang kanilang



store hour ay Monday to Friday, alas-9:00 ng umaga hanggang alas-3:00 ng hapon. Maaari rin kayong mag-inquire sa kanila sa pamamagitan ng text at tawag sa kanilang number na 0928-904-22-04 o bisitahin ang kanilang website at facebook page na Urban Greens.

Napabilang at naimbitahan pa ni Mr. Becher ang Magsasakang Reporter sa kanilang spectacular na Pop Up Dinner nitong Sabado ng gabi kung saan ay ipinatikim ang iba't ibang luto at pagkain mula sa mga harvest na tanim sa

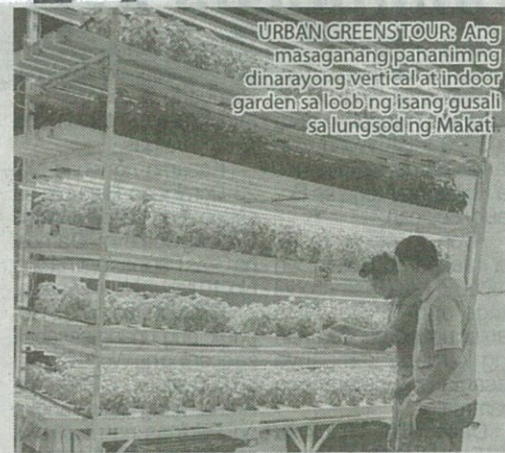


Ang pop up dinner sa loob ng Urban Greens. Nasa ibabang lalarawan naman ang iba't ibang nasyonalidad ang pumupunta sa naturang indoor garden.

manood at mag-subscribe sa aking Youtube Channel na ANG MAGSASAKANG REPORTER para sa iba pang kaalaman at impormasyon sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman sa pamamagitan ng organikong pamamaraan.

Tuwing araw ng Martes ay regular ninyong mababasa ang aking kolum dito sa **Pilipino Star Ngayon (PSN)** ng Star Group of Publications.

Sa mga tanong at komento ay maaari ninyo akong i-text, huwag po tawag, sa 09178675197. STAY SAFE, HAPPY FARMING, GOD BLESS US ALL.



URBAN GREENSTOUR: Ang masaganang pananiming dinarayong vertical at indoor garden sa loob ng isang gusali sa lungsod ng Makati.





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## Soybeans rise to three-week high; corn up 1%

SINGAPORE- Chicago soybeans rose 1.5 percent to on Monday, climbing to their highest levels in more than three weeks, while corn gained more ground as concerns over hot and dry weather conditions in the US Midwest buoyed agricultural markets.

Wheat advanced for a second session, supported by escalating tensions in the Black Sea region that are likely to further reduce world supply.

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was up 1.4 percent at \$13.72-1/4 a bushel, having earlier risen to \$13.81 a bushel - its highest since July 28.

Corn rose 1.1 percent to \$4.98-1/2 a bushel, after climbing earlier in the session to its highest since Aug. 11 at \$5.06-1/4 a bushel, while wheat added 0.3 percent to \$6.40-3/4 a bushel, after jumping to \$6.46-1/4 a bushel, the highest since Aug. 9.

Weather forecasts are showing little rain and hotter temperatures for the rest of August in the US Midwest, raising worries over crop

yields. Soybeans are more vulnerable to potential damage because August is the crop's critical month for development.

"The US Crop Watch corn and soybean fields last week endured one of their driest collective weeks of the last couple months, though the increasingly familiar theme of cooler temperatures prevented any sizable decline in yield expectations," Karen Braun, a market analyst for Reuters, wrote in a column.

"But unseasonably hot weather, especially in western areas, is going to test the crops' resilience in the next several days. Minimal to no rain is forecast this week for most areas of the Corn Belt."

This week, the market will assess findings of the annual Pro Farmer crop tour, which will examine corn and soybean fields across the Midwest.

In China, the world's biggest soybean importer, soymeal prices jumped almost 3 percent.

China's soybean imports from the United States tumbled 62 percent in July from a year earlier



A crop scout walking through a soybean field to check on crops in Allen County, Indiana, US. (Reuters Photo)

while shipments from Brazil, its top supplier, surged 32 percent, data showed on Sunday, spurred by a bumper crop and lower prices in the Latin American country.

Russia said Ukrainian drones had attacked four separate regions in a flurry of attempted strikes on Sunday, injuring five people and forcing two of Moscow's airports to briefly divert flights.

Grain traders have been nervous amid escalating tensions between

Russia and Ukraine which could disrupt Black Sea crop shipments since Moscow quit the UN-backed export deal for Ukraine in July. Both countries are major grain exporters.

India is set for its driest August in more than a century, with scant rainfall likely to persist across large areas, partly because of the El Niño weather pattern, two weather department officials told Reuters on Friday. - Reuters