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## Traders: Palay prices rise as supply still tight

**L**OCAL rice traders said over the weekend that unmilled rice prices went up by P1 per kilogram as the supply of the staple remains tight.

Traders in Intercity Industrial Estate also said palay prices may continue to go up until next month, or just before the peak harvest season.

"This is because of the supply of rice in warehouses is still thin and also because there are only a few farmers who are harvesting the staple."

Rice traders also noted that

other countries are already preparing for the possible impact of El Niño on production, particularly after India banned the export of non-basmati white rice and Vietnam and Thailand raised prices.

Meanwhile, Bantay Bigas is urging the government to buy at least "20 [percent] to 25 percent" of the fresh rice harvests of Filipino farmers.



FRESHLY harvested rice in the Philippines is shown in this file photo. BLOOMBERG NEWS

Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy Estavillo said the government can buy the crop of farmers during harvest.

"The government should consider selling subsidized rice to make it affordable," she said.

Subsidies to farmers should be

the "immediate" solution of the government for now, besides tasking farmers to continue planting rice to augment the production losses in previous typhoons.

Estavillo also added that President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as an agriculture secretary should also give "at least P50,000" to farmers whose crops were destroyed by previous storms.

"He should scrap the policies that allow the flood of imported rice. Really when it comes to food, especially rice, the government should not leave the trade of rice to the private sector."

Rice may again be the cause of higher inflation in the coming months as Philippine Statistics



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Authority (PSA) data showed that prices returned to levels that were seen prior to the implementation of a law that sought to bring down the price of the staple.

PSA data showed rice inflation averaged 4.2 percent in July 2023, the highest since February 2019 when the increase in the commodity's prices was at 4.5 percent. The Rice Trade Liberalization Act was implemented in March 2019.

"*Ngayon, hindi pa siya* [rice prices] *ganun kataas* but I agree [the] observation *na pwedeng ito ang magiging source ng future inflation natin*," National Statistician Claire Dennis S. Mapa said in a press briefing. **Raadee S. Sausa**





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## Marcos taps ex-NTA head as NIA deputy administrator

By **FREDDIE G. LAZARO**

CANDON CITY, Ilocos Sur – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has appointed former National Tobacco Administration (NTA) Administrator Robert Victor Seares Jr. as deputy administrator for the administrative and finance sector of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

Seares was recently sworn in by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin in Malacanang.

Appointed as the youngest NTA administrator by then President Rodrigo Duterte at the age of 40, Seares succeeded his father, former NTA Administrator Robert Lizardo Seares Sr., after he died of illness.

During his term as NTA administrator, Seares Jr. implemented the Agriculture department's twin objectives of "Masaganang Ani, Mataas na Kita" by increasing the productivity and income of farmers by five percent and 11 percent per annum, respectively.

He also spearheaded the construction of the first solar-powered irrigation system in the Cordillera region in Barangay Kimmalaba in Dolores, Abra, where he was mayor at the age of 30 from 2010-2019.

Seares also developed the Sustainable Tobacco Enhancement Program, a five-year industry development roadmap in line with the OneDA Strategy to accelerate the modernization and industrialization of the tobacco industry.





The ASEAN Economic Ministers join the ASEAN Business Advisory Council at the meeting last August 19 to 20 in Semarang Indonesia. The meetings are in preparation for the ASEAN Business Investment Summit in September, which will be attended by leaders of the ASEAN member states.

## KALAP-INSPIRED AGRI-MSME DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM GAINS TRACTION IN ASEAN

Kapatid Angat Lahat sa Agri Program, the Agri MSME development program of Go Negosyo, is starting to gain traction in the ASEAN region. ASEAN Business Advisory Council Philippines chair Joey Concepcion shared this as the 55th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting was concluded last August 19, 2023 in Semarang, Indonesia.

In his speech before the ASEAN Economic Ministers, Concepcion said that the ASEAN BAC Philippines is now starting to forge partnerships among ASEAN member states to expand the KALAP initiative to address agricultural productivity in each country and ultimately contribute to the region's food security.

"KALAP is an agri MSME development program that builds on proven private sector block-farming models to enhance food security, boost farm productivity, and raise farmer incomes by enabling them to become entrepreneurs," he said in his speech.

KALAP signed the first of these agreements with Malaysia last July 27 during President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s state visit. Since then, five more member states have shown interest in participating, and Concepcion is confident that more ASEAN member-states will soon come onboard.

In addition, Concepcion said a region-wide implementation of the Agri-MSME development initiative might be a good time to revisit and expand the logistics ASEAN RO-RO Network Initiative, which was co-launched by President Joko Widodo during ASEAN50 in 2017.

"We are working towards bringing in as many ASEAN countries to collaborate, and we are grateful for the help of Indonesia, especially ASEAN BAC chair Arsjad Rasjid," he said.

Concepcion noted the synergy between ASEAN BAC Indonesia and ASEAN BAC Philippines in its prioritization of food security, as well as the need for the ASEAN to strengthen regional supply chains. Specifically, he noted the ASEAN BAC Indonesia's own agri-MSME development program which shares similar principles and objectives as KALAP.

The Inclusive Closed Loop Model is being implemented as one of the legacy programs of ASEAN BAC Indonesia to mark its chairmanship. The program aims to empower MSMEs and farmers with finance, knowledge, technology, and market access, and aligns with KALAP's aim of raising

farm productivity by integrating them into the value chain of large agriculture companies, also called big-brother companies.

The ASEAN BAC chair emphasized inclusiveness as a goal that is embodied in its chairmanship's theme of ASEAN Centrality. In previous interviews, Rasjid noted that ASEAN economy's great potential, and the importance of being innovative in its approaches to ensure that no one is left behind.

For his part, Concepcion reiterated the importance of private sector working side by side with government, as reflected in the ASEAN BAC's mandate to provide private sector feedback and guidance to boost ASEAN's efforts towards economic integration. "The region's bright economic future can be fully realized when government and private sector work together," he said.

Along with the KALAP agriculture MSME partnership, ASEAN-BAC Philippines also called on the ASEAN Economic Ministers to support the strengthening of the ASEAN Creative Economy Working Group and institutionalize its legacy project of its chairmanship, the AMEN mentorship program. The AMEN program has already completed Phases 1 and 2, and is readying the implementation of Phase 3.

The ASEAN-BAC meetings are in preparation for the ASEAN Business Investment Summit, which is scheduled to be held in Jakarta in September 2023. At this event, the results of the previous meetings will be communicated to the leaders of ASEAN countries.







## PBBM GINIGIBA NG RICE CARTEL

NAKARATING sa kaalaman ng mga kongresista ang umano'y plano ng cartel na siraan si Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. sa publiko sa pamamagitan ng pagtaas sa presyo ng bigas.

Ayon kay ACT-CIS party-list Rep. Erwin Tulfo, sapat ang supply ng bigas sa Pilipinas pero iniipit ng cartel ang supply upang mapataas ang presyo at mapahiya si Pangulong Marcos sa mga Pilipino lalo pa't ipinangako nitong ibababaniya sa P20 ang presyo ng kada kilo ng bigas.

"Iyan ang sisilipin ng committee on agriculture ng House sa pangunguna

ni Congressman Mark Enverga sa mga darating na araw," wika ni Tulfo sa isang radio interview.

"May naririnig kami sa House na ganong grupo na gustong magkagulo, magalit ang tao sa administrasyon kaya dito nila pinapadaan sa pagkontrol ng mga pagkain. Siyempre nga naman kapag kumalam ang sikmura ng tao, magagalit doon sa gobyerno," pagsiwalat ng kongresista.

Nanindigan pa si Tulfo na hindi kasalanan ng administrasyong Marcos kung sumirit ang presyo ng bigas dahil malinaw naman na may nagho-hoard nito.

"Hindi kasalanan (ng gobyerno) kasi itinatago ang bigas," diin ni Tulfo.

Tinukoy ng kongresista ang ginawang pag-salakay ng mga operatiba ng Bureau of Customs, kasama sina Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez at siya (Tulfo) sa tatlong warehouse sa Bulacan noong nakaraang Huwebes.

Doon nakita ang higit 200,000 sako ng bigas na nagkakahalaga ng P500 milyon. Ang bigas na nanggaling sa Vietnam, Cambodia at Thailand ay nire-repack upang palabasin na inani sa Pilipinas upang mas mataas ang presyo sa pamilihan.





## Group urges govt to rethink palm oil import policy

**T**HE Department of Agriculture (DA) should rethink its proposed changes to the palm oil import policy of the government, according to a non-government organization.

Bantay Palengke said restricting palm oil imports will trigger a surge in cooking oil prices and make it less accessible particularly to poor households.

The group urged the government to conduct "thorough consultations" with consumers before enacting changes in its import policy.

"We are deeply concerned that the proposed restriction [on palm oil importation], if implemented, could have significant adverse effects. It's likely that such limitations on free trade could cause palm oil prices to spike, along

with the broader vegetable oil industry—including coconut oil," said Bantay Palengke Convenor Lester Codog.

"This, in turn, might have a direct impact on the collateral-free micro-financing provided by traders, while simultaneously rendering backyard compound feed producers uncompetitive in comparison to larger multinational corporations."

Codog also said that the revenue being envisioned by the government in the imposition of value-added tax (VAT) on imported palm oil may not materialize.

"What could transpire is the shift of VAT-exempt volumes toward multinational feed mills, who would subsequently mark up prices before selling to lower-income Filipino consumers."

The group alleged that Coconut Oil Refiners Association Chairman Jesus Arranza is the main proponent of the change in palm oil importation policies.

"It is our position that Mr. Arranza's lobbying efforts for a competitor sector should be dismissed based on the fact that his business will gain undue competitive advantage once his proposals are implemented. In fact, it is the height of irony that Mr. Arranza is lobbying against palm oil and palm olein importation when his company had been importing palm oil and palm olein in the past."

The group had warned against imposing "unnecessary restrictions" on the importation of palm oil, saying this will lead to higher food prices.

"We had been informed that the DA is considering some policy proposals that will surely hurt Filipino consumers," Codog said.

"We have been monitoring issues being raised by various sectors including some quarters that are competing with the palm oil industry and we are wary that they have misguided our policymakers on this issue."

Codog said that among the proposals include the prohibition of palm oil trading, which is necessary for backyard feed producers to continue operating.

"If we allow this prohibition on palm oil trading, palm oil importation will now solely be the domain of large scale feed manufacturers. This triggers monopoly pricing and a potential abuse of dominant position." *Raadee S. Sausa*



*A broader look at today's business*

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## Rice imports down 42% on higher international prices

THE PHILIPPINES imported 2.19 million metric tons (MT) of rice in the year to date, down 42.8% from a year earlier due to higher international rice prices, the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) said.

The BPI said rice imports in August up to Aug. 24 fell 56.4% year on year to 188,933.9 MT.

Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said that rice importers were greatly affected by the higher market prices.

"It has become too expensive and risky for some importers to bring in rice specially after the India export ban," Mr. Montemayor said in a Viber message.

Ateneo de Manila economics professor Leonardo A. Lanzona said in a Messenger chat that the rice export curbs by Vietnam have also affected rice imports.

"As a result, world rice prices have increased, thus resulting in lower imports," Mr. Lanzona said.

India announced in July that it had imposed an immediate ban on exports of non-basmati white rice to ensure domestic availability of the commodity.

Vietnam also announced that by 2033 it plans to reduce rice exports to four million tons a year.

In the year to date, Vietnam remained the Philippines' top source of rice, shipping

1.97 million MT or 91.2% of total Philippine imports.

Thailand and Myanmar shipped 90,459 MT and 85,545 MT, respectively.

Rice imports from India hit 13,187.39 MT in the year to date, equivalent to 0.6% of the total.

The Department of Agriculture's price monitors placed the price of domestic well-milled rice on Aug. 24 at between P45 and P57, while regular-milled rice was selling for P41 to P55.

Imported well-milled rice was selling in Metro Manila markets at between P46 and P52. The Philippines does not import regular-milled rice. — **Adrian H. Halili**





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## DA to set up fruit, veggie processing facilities in CamSur

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has issued an order for the establishment of processing facilities for fruits and vegetables in Camarines Sur.

Under DA memorandum order number 57 series of 2023 signed by Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban on August 18, the facility is being pushed as Bicol region is one of the suppliers of agricultural goods in Metro Manila.

The order also aims to cover processes and procedures on the use and release of funds allocated

for the establishment the facility in Camarines Sur. The General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2023, a P290 million has been allocated for the project.

Of the amount, P240 million will be for the purchase of equipment for dry fruits and vegetable line; puree line; storage; and canning line while the remaining P50 million will for the construction of a building for the facility.

DA said among six provinces in Bicol, the province of Camarines Sur has the largest production area which is about 50 percent of the region's production area

equivalent to 40,114.60 hectares with an average production of 163,015.16 metric tons of fruits and vegetables.

The agency added since farming is one of the primary sources of income for 18,000 farmers in the province, the establishment of processing facilities will help local producers to have a steady access to market with high farm gate price and help boost the local economy.

Apart from increasing farmers' income, the project is also seen to increase the supply of food as it will improve food shelf-life to

resolve food wastage and make seasonal food available throughout the year.

The order added that proponent of the facility should have no unliquidated balance from the DA and must have owned at least a hectare of agricultural land in Barangay San Jose in Pili, Camarines Sur.

A project evaluation and assessment and monitoring technical working group will also be created for the facility as the guideline is set to be effective during the entire duration of the project or until Dec. 31, 2024.





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## Rice imports up month on month

THE Philippines' rice imports went up in August from a month earlier but were still lower reckoned from the start of 2023, data from the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed.

As of August 24, inbound shipments of the grain totaled 188,933.89 metric tons (MT), 20.56 percent higher compared to July's 156,711.75 MT.

For the year so far, the highest volume for rice imports was in April at 513,425.17 MT.

Year to date, meanwhile, the country's rice imports totaled 2.18 million MT, down 21.17 percent from the 2.77 million MT recorded in January-August last year.

Vietnam remained the country's top source of rice, having shipped 1.96 million MT and accounting for 89.96 percent of total imports.

Thailand followed with 90,459 MT, Myanmar with 85,545 MT and Pakistan with 25,520.89 MT.

India, which announced an export ban on their non-basmati white rice in July, supplied the country with 13,187.39 MT or about 0.60 percent of the country's rice imports.

The remaining 4,570.72 MT came from Cambodia, China, Japan, Italy and Spain.

Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor said that rice imports to date had been "relatively small."

"A comparatively low starting inventory on January 1, 2023 and only a slight improvement in the first semester output all lead to the current tight supply situation and explains the rise in rice prices," he added.

According to the DA's latest price monitoring report, imported well-

milled rice was being sold at between P46 and P52 per kilogram (kg), up by P5 from the highest price of P48 a month ago.

Imported special rice, meanwhile, was priced between P52 and P65 per kg, higher by P7 in relation to July's price at P58.

Montemayor said the tight supply was likely to continue until new harvests enter the market in the latter part of September.

"We will have a respite until the end of the year but if imports do not expand significantly, high rice prices will prevail in the first half of next year," he claimed.

If the El Niño weather pattern also negatively affects the dry season crop in the first semester next year, Montemayor added the country will be in an "even worse situation come the lean months in 2024."

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL





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## Seaweeds top second quarter fishery output

SEAWEEDS accounted for the biggest share of the total production of the country's fishery sector in the second quarter of the current year, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

Seaweed production in April to June 2023 reached 365,775 metric tons (MT), accounting for 33.8 percent of the production of the fishery sector. The figure was, however, lower by 4.9 percent from 384,729 MT posted in the same period last year.

According to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), seaweed has been one of the top commodities exported by the Philippines, adding it intends to further increase local seaweed production.

The seaweed industry roadmap of the Department of Agriculture showed that Mindanao accounted for 65 percent of nationwide production of the commodity. Luzon accounted for about 25 percent and the Visayas 10 percent.

Based on PSA data, fish species that recorded high volume output during the second quarter of this year include bali sardinella (tamban) with 98,302 MT; milkfish (bangus) with 81,858 MT; and tilapia with 79,030 MT.

Round scad (galunggong) logged 76,324 MT; skipjack (gulyasan) at 38,844 MT; Big-eyed scad (matangbaka) with 30,956 MT; frigate tuna (tulingan) with 17,232 MT; yellowfin

tuna (tambakol/bariles) with 16,490 MT; and squid (pusit) with 14,722 MT.

According to PSA, fisheries production during the second quarter of this year reached 1.082 million MT, contracting by 11.3 percent from the 1.219 million MT output in the same quarter of the previous year.

Annual declines in production were noted in commercial fisheries, marine municipal fisheries, and aquaculture subsectors, with only the inland municipal fisheries subsector recording an annual increase in production.

Commercial fisheries production was estimated at 235,240 MT during the quarter, down 14.5 percent from the 275,190 MT in

the same quarter of 2022.

The volume of production for marine municipal fisheries was recorded at 234,900 MT during the quarter, lower by 16.8 percent from the 282,410 MT during the same period last year.

Aquaculture production also decreased by 8.3 percent to 573,850 MT compared to the 625,720 MT output in the same period of 2022.

Meanwhile, inland municipal fisheries production reached 38,230 MT. This volume is a 4.4-percent increase from the same quarter of the previous year's estimate of 36,610 MT.

**JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL**





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## PCCI supports need to uplift Mindanao agri sector

THE Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) supports the further development of the agricultural sector of Mindanao, which is a major source of the country's farm and fishery products.

In an email sent on Saturday to *The Manila Times*, PCCI President George Barcelon emphasized the need to further uplift Mindanao's agricultural sector as it helped the country attain food security,

including during the pandemic.

"Mindanao continues to make substantial contributions to the country's agriculture output despite the adverse effects of the pandemic that pulled down production in some sectors," he said.

"Even if there was a decline in the livestock and poultry industries, selected industrial crops and fruit crops in Mindanao such as rubber, pineapple, banana, coconut, corn and cassava have fared

well in their production output as highlighted in the Department of Agriculture's latest Philippine Agriculture performance report," Barcelon added.

As such, prioritizing sustainable agriculture in Mindanao is necessary "to preserve the region's natural resources and enhance their quality and marketability."

This includes promoting eco-friendly farming methods such as organic farming and integrated pest management that will also enhance the quality and marketability of agricultural products from Mindanao.

The adoption of modern technology in agriculture is also crucial, as it will help farmers employ techniques for better decision-making.

"Embracing modern farming techniques, precision agriculture, and advanced technologies can significantly boost productivity and efficiency," Barcelon said.

"Introducing smart irrigation systems, using drones for crop monitoring, and employing data-driven decision-making will empower farmers to make informed choices, leading to increased yields and reduced resource wastage," he added.

Furthermore, food processors and agribusiness firms can add value to raw agricultural products and help the farmers in Mindanao have better earnings and market access. More food products on the domestic market will also benefit consumers.

"Beyond primary production, there is significant potential in developing value-added products.

Encouraging food processing and agro-industrial ventures can create additional income streams and employment opportunities," Barcelon said.

Infrastructure also plays a big role in improving logistics to move farm and food products, and Mindanao is well positioned to be the gateway to a number of markets in Southeast Asia.

"Developing the transportation and logistics infrastructure can unlock new opportunities for businesses, encouraging both domestic and international trade. This, in turn, will lead to job creation and a boost in economic growth across various sectors," Barcelon said.

"With its strategic location, Mindanao becomes an attractive gateway for trade between the Philippines and the neighboring countries of Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia," he added.

Mindanao is a key contributor to the country's economic development, posting 7.2 percent gross regional domestic product (GRDP) growth in 2022.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), among the regions in Mindanao, the Davao Region is the leader in growth, posting an impressive 8.15-percent increase in GRDP, while Caraga was behind with 5.9 percent.

Other areas in Mindanao, such as Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Soccskargen, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, recorded positive growth rates ranging from 6.59 percent to 7.5 percent in 2022.

JENICA FAYE GARCIA





## Rice price impact balance needed

BY JENICA FAYE GARCIA

**T**HE ability of consumers to access food at affordable prices must also be considered amid higher prices of palay (unmilled rice) benefiting local farmers, a top official of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (AmCham) said.

AmCham Agribusiness Committee Chairman Christopher Matthew Ilagan also told *The Manila Times*

that the key to providing affordable food for consumers is for farmers to produce more volume from the

same area of land.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) reported last week that palay prices nationwide have risen to as high as P25 per kilo (kg), benefiting producers of the staple.

"The recent rise in rice prices has seen the farmer benefit in the short term, while the consumers have started feeling the pinch on their wallets," he said in a Viber message.

PhilRice-Philippine Rice Information System data showed that from July 31 to Aug. 6, 2023, the average

price of fresh palay stood at P17.83/kg while dry palay was priced at P19.33/kg, benefiting early planters this 2023 wet season.

In June, the peak price of dry palay per kilogram reached P25 in Nueva Ecija; P24 in Bataan; and P23 in Bulacan.

Data from the Department of Agriculture (DA)-National Rice Program also showed that palay prices reached P17.69/kg for fresh and P19.73/kg for dry in March, higher than the P15.99/kg for fresh

and P18.41/kg for dry palay in the same period a year earlier.

For Ilagan, the interest and welfare of consumers must also be considered amid higher palay prices, as their ability to purchase agricultural products is a food security consideration.

"Finding that balance between farmer livelihoods and consumer well-being is what should be pursued, but it takes time," he said.

He emphasized that enhanced productivity of the rice sector is required in the medium to long-term.

"In the medium to long term, that requires enhanced productivity of the rice sector where farmer livelihood improvement is driven more by volume increases using the same hectare while being able to sell their produce to consumers at still affordable rates," Ilagan said.

"A sustainable agriculture sector is one where farmers are provided their fair livelihood while at the same time ensuring the larger consuming public has affordable, accessible and available food supplies," he added.



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## BFAR confirms red tide in 10 coastal areas in Panay

By TARA YAP

ILOILO CITY – The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)-6 (Western Visayas) confirmed the presence of red tide in 10 coastal areas in Panay Island following the death of a boy after eating “tahong” or green mussels.

“To safeguard human lives, the

public is strongly advised to stop from eating, gathering or harvesting, transporting, and marketing all types of shellfish and shrimp species locally known as ‘alamang’ or ‘hipon,’” the BFAR-6 said in a shellfish bulletin released on Saturday, August 26.

Capiz has the most number of coastal areas on Panay Island that

tested positive for red tide.

These areas were the coastal waters of capital Roxas City, Panay, Pilar, Ivisan, President Roxas, and Sapián.

Aklan province had three coastal areas with red tide – the towns of Altavas, Batan, and New Washington.

In Iloilo province, waters in

Gigantes Island of Carles town also tested positive for red tide.

“(But) fish, squids, shrimps, and crabs are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking,” said BFAR-6 Director Remia Aparri.





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## Oriental Mindoro OKs transport of hogs to Panay Island

By JERRY ALCAYDE

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro – The provincial government has allowed the transport of live hogs from this province to Panay Island which is still under a state of calamity due to the contagious African Swine Fever (ASF).

Gov. Humerlito A. Dolor issued Executive Order No. 57 approving the new hog transport agreement on August 24 with emphasis that traders from Oriental Mindoro should sell their products at not less than the farm gate price of P150 per kilo.

Under the order, only livestock haulers from Oriental

Mindoro who are duly licensed by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) shall be allowed to transport hogs to Aklan, one of the four provinces in Panay Island.

The delivery trucks will just drop or transfer the pigs in Barangay Sambiray in Malay, Aklan and should not proceed to piggery farms and production areas declared or undeclared as ASF-infected areas.

Prior to their return to Oriental Mindoro, assigned veterinary or agricultural personnel in Aklan should ensure that these transport vehicles are cleaned and should issue disinfectant ticket to show that the cleaning process was performed.

Dolor said that Oriental

Mindoro still implements a total ban on the entry of live pigs from other provinces either in transit or with a final destination in the province.

"In 2022, we have delivered a total of 340,000 live hogs outside our province which made Oriental Mindoro as one of the biggest exporters of pigs in the country," Dolor told a group of hog raisers during a meeting at the capitol on Thursday.

Dolor stressed in the meeting that the prevailing price of P150 per kilo or more should be maintained to avoid manipulation of hog prices and protect local farmers.

One of the conditions imposed by the governor is the submission of a proof of purchase to

the Veterinary Office of Oriental Mindoro to show compliance.

Capiz and Aklan and some parts of Antique and Iloilo were placed under the state of calamity due to the ill-effects of ASF.



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Department of Agriculture  
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**Shellfish Bulletin No. 20**  
Series of 2023  
26 August 2023

Shellfishes collected and tested from coastal waters of Daus and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; and Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur are still positive for Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) or toxic red tide that is beyond the regulatory limit. Moreover, Sapian Bay (Ivisan and Sapian in Capiz; Mambuquiao and Camanci, Batan in Aklan); coastal waters of Panay; Pilar; President Roxas; Roxas City in Capiz; coastal waters of Gigantes Islands, Carles in Iloilo; and coastal waters of Altavas, Batan, and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aklan are now positive for PSP.

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

Coastal waters of Roxas City in Capiz  
Batan Bay in Aklan  
Sapian Bay in Capiz and Aklan  
Coastal waters of President Roxas in Capiz  
Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur  
Coastal waters of Panay in Capiz  
Coastal waters of Pilar in Capiz  
Coastal waters of Gigantes Islands, Carles in Iloilo  
Coastal waters of Daus and Tagbilaran City in Bohol

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

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

**ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO**  
Director

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## Red tide alert up in VisMin areas

Harvest and consumption of shellfish in eight areas in the Visayas and another in Mindanao are prohibited due to the presence of algae that produces red tide, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

In an advisory released over the weekend, the BFAR identified these areas as Batan Bay in Aklan; Pilar, President Roxas and Roxas City in Capiz; Sapián Bay in Aklan and Capiz; Gigantes Islands in Iloilo; Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol, and Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur.

"All types of shellfish and *Acetes sp.* or *alamang* gathered from affected areas are not safe for human consumption," the BFAR said.

Fish, squid, shrimps and crabs sourced from these areas are safe for consumption provided these are fresh and washed thoroughly, and their internal organs such as gills and intestines removed before cooking.

A person who ingests shellfish contaminated with red tide can suffer from numbness, drowsiness and respiratory paralysis.

– Bella Cariaso





# DA exec admits Phl experiencing rice shortage

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The Philippines is experiencing a rice shortage amid an insufficient buffer stock, as the total stock is pegged at 39 days in August and 44 days in September compared to the 60 to 90-day buffer stock needed.

"That is why we are trying to import a little bit more," Agriculture Undersecretary for policy, planning and regulations Mercedita Sombilla told the House committee on appropriations during a recent hearing on the Department of Agriculture (DA)'s proposed P167.5-billion budget in 2024.

"In other words, we have three months for the remainder of the year where we have shortages," Marikina Rep. Stella Quimbo said as she urged officials to issue a categorical answer on the country's current rice situation.

The expected rice inventory for October is 63 days, 80 days for November and 59 days for December, according to Sombilla.

The DA expects at least seven million metric tons of local palay production for the rest of 2023, which includes 2.3 million metric tons for the third quarter and 4.7 million MT for the fourth quarter, she added.

"We expect local prices to be in the level of P45, P47, P50 (per kilo) for premium, and special rice. Hopefully, with the coming of the harvest season (in October), we would probably expect it to level off to lower prices," Sombilla noted.

Retail prices of local regular milled rice ranged between P36 and P44 per kilo a month ago compared to the latest prevailing price of P55 per kilo or a difference of P11 per kilo,

according to data from the DA.

Local well-milled rice ranged between P40 and P49 per kilo a month ago compared to the latest P57 per kilo or a difference of P8 per kilo.

Local premium rice ranged between P42 and P49 per kilo a month ago compared to P60 per kilo or a difference of P11 per kilo, while local special rice is between P48 and P60 per kilo compared to the latest prevailing price of P54 to P62 per kilo.

## 'RTL a failure'

The Duterte administration's Rice Tariffication Law is a failure, according to former agriculture secretary Emmanuel Piñol.

"(The RTL is a) failure. Rice is not like tomatoes. If you flood the market, you need to sell them in the afternoon at all costs to prevent rotting.

On the contrary, you can hoard rice, you can control the supply of rice, you can control the prices, especially so that these big businessmen dealing with rice trading will agree among themselves informally, 'hey let's peg the price of rice,'" Piñol said in a radio interview over the weekend.

"The supervisory power of the National Food Authority was removed. It can no longer conduct inspections on the quality of rice sold in the market. The NFA cannot intervene in the retail prices in the market. The P27 (per kilo) of NFA rice is no longer available, simply because of the idea that if you flood the market with rice, the cost will go down" he added.

Piñol, Duterte's agriculture secretary from 2016 to 2019, said he had opposed the RTL's passage but former finance

secretary Carlos Dominguez pushed for the measure.

"It was from... Dominguez where the crazy idea of free market (came). What they (proponents) did not understand, once you let go of the rice industry, it will go to the cartel. They (rice cartel) control the rice industry," he added.

Piñol urged President Marcos to issue an executive order directing local government units to form localized rice sufficiency programs, noting that urban cities can engage with rice farmers' cooperatives.

## More inspections

Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez gave assurance yesterday that the Bureau of Customs' recent "surprise inspections" of warehouses in Bulacan suspected of hoarding rice to reduce its price was "not

a one-hit wonder."

"We need to carry out more of these inspections and I trust the Commissioner to do so in order to keep rice traders obedient to the law," Romualdez said, referring to Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio.

He vowed that rice would not face the same issue as last year's onions, when it reached the absurd price of P700 per kilo.

The inspection of warehouses in Bulacan on Aug. 24 resulted in the Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, the San Pedro Warehouse and the FS Rice Mill's owners being restricted from retrieving goods pending submission of required documents on their rice importation.

The price of rice is projected to reach P60 to P65 per kilo in the coming days.

- With Delon Porcalla



# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

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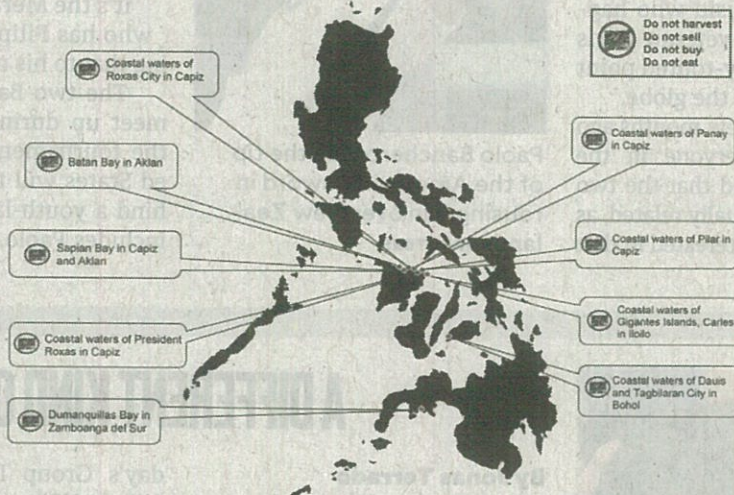


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ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO  
Director



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(PDI - Aug. 28, 2023)





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## Agri usec inalarma sa ₱60 per kilong bigas

Ipinaalala ni Ako Bicol Party-list Rep. Zaldy Co kay Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian ang kanilang pagpupulong noong Marso at Abril kung saan tiniyak nito na hindi aabot ang presyo ng bigas sa ₱60 kada kilo.

Inihayag ito ni Co, chairperson ng House committee on appropriations, kasabay ng kanyang mungkahi na magkaroon ng mekanismo upang makapag-angkat ang gobyerno ng bigas sa panahon na mababa ang presyo nito sa pandaigdigang merkado.

Iginiit ni Co ang pangangailangan na matiyak na maraming suplay ng bigas sa bansa upang malimitahan ang epekto ng pagtaas ng presyo sa pandaigdigang pamilihan.

"If we have enough supply then the price will not go up even though the world market is very high," sabi ni Co sa nakaraang pagdinig ng panukalang budget ng Department of Agriculture (DA) kamakailan.

"There must be a mechanism, hindi naman puwedeng pabayaang na lang natin mag-fly 'yung presyo. Unang-una pinangako ng ating Pangulo na bababa ang presyo 'di ba?' dagdag pa ni Co.

Ang presyo noon sa pandaigdigang merkado, ayon kay Co ay nasa ₱31 per kilo o \$395 kada metriko tonelada.

"You assured us up to May sinabi mo imposibleng mangyayari 'yan," sabi ni Co kay Sebastian.

"During that time we have an opportunity to buy at \$395 per metric tons," punto ng mambabatas.

Sinabi naman ni Sebastian na noong magkaroon sila ng pagpupulong ay wala pang nakakaalam na magpapatupad ng rice import ban ang India.

Iginiit naman ni Isabela Rep. Tonypet Albano na dapat ikinukonsidera ng DA ang mga ganitong senaryo upang mapaghandaan.

Sinabi rin ni Sebastian na sa ilalim ng Rice Tariffication Law ay hindi maaaring mag-angkat ng bigas ang National Food Authority. **(Billy Begas)**



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## FAO: Efforts to safeguard biodiversity receive welcome boost

**T**HE Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) said the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund has been launched during the Seventh Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Assembly in Vancouver, Canada.

The newly established fund will facilitate financing for developing countries—which are often the most biodiverse—to enhance their ability to protect, restore and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, as established through The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted by 196 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at COP15 in December 2022.

“The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework places agri-food systems at the forefront of an enormous challenge that will require important financial resources,

coordination, and commitment to implement win-win solutions for people and the planet. The new Fund is also an essential part of climate action, and a critical step towards making these solutions a reality,” FAO Deputy Director-General Maria Helena Semedo said in a statement.

The fund, uniquely dedicated to supporting the Framework and its action towards halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030 and putting nature on a recovery path by 2050, provides an opportunity to receive funding from all sources. Two countries have announced initial contributions to start its capitalization: Canada pledged 200 million Canadian dollars and the United Kingdom 10 million pounds.

FAO said biodiversity is the variety of life at genetic, species and ecosystem levels. It is essential for food and agriculture and

indispensable to food security and sustainable development. It includes the domesticated plants and animals that are part of crop, livestock, forest or aquaculture systems, harvested forest and aquatic species, the wild relatives of domesticated species, and other wild species harvested for food and other products.

Over half of the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework are directly related to agri-food sectors, and FAO is the custodian of four of the Framework’s headline indicators: ecosystem restoration, fish stocks, areas under productive and sustainable agriculture, and sustainable forest management.

“The transformation of agri-food systems to make them more sustainable can unlock solutions that generate multiple benefits, including safeguarding biodiversity which

can help address the challenges posed by diverse and changing environmental conditions and socioeconomic circumstances.”

Actions such as diversifying production systems, for example by using multiple species, breeds or varieties, integrating the use of crop, livestock, forest and aquatic biodiversity, or promoting habitat diversity in the local landscape or seascape, increase resilience, tackle the climate crisis, improve livelihoods and support food security and nutrition.

FAO is a member of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert group on Global Biodiversity Framework Indicators and is also co-leading, with the UN Environment Program, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration which actively contributes to the monitoring and reporting of Target 2 of the Kunming-Montreal GBF related to restoring degraded areas.





## Slow is good when it comes to food



**Atty. Jose Ferdinand M. Rojas II**

### **RISING SUN**

**T**HERE are dishes and delicacies that we remember from our childhood but that we cannot find anymore today, or they may still be around but are more difficult to find. For example, a tamarind-based dessert that our grandma used to make, or a sweet treat that used to be popular in the local market.

Once in a while, we discover a unique local ingredient in a specialty dish that we happen to order while dining out. Something we've never heard before like, say, *kayumanis* or *katuk*. "What is that?" you ask your companion. And then: "It's good, I wonder where I can buy it." And yet sometimes it's an entire dish, most likely cooked following an heirloom recipe. It is, of course, very good but you can't find it anywhere else.

These are just some of the issues

or concepts attached to the slow food movement. But it's just one slice of the pie, so to speak. Slow food is also about knowing the source or origin (place and farm/farmer) of every food product or dish, and being familiar with the chef or cook as well as the process of making it. It's also about eating and using produce and ingredients in season, making sure it's organic or high quality, clean, and fairly priced. It is about eating mindfully and enjoying the flavors and

**In the 1980s when McDonald's was planning to put up a huge outlet in Italy, close to a historic site, there were chefs and food activists who opposed the idea. That was the beginning of the slow food movement, which now has a presence in more than 150 countries, including the Philippines.**

textures of the food. It's about preserving a place's culinary tradition, ecosystem, and heritage, at the same time sharing the know-how and resources with members of the community.

If you think about it, the slow food movement is trying to embrace so many things—from production and sourcing to cooking and consumption. This is probably why it is sometimes referred to as a *revolution* and shows the breadth and depth of the concepts surrounding it.

In the 1980s when McDonald's was planning to put up a huge outlet

in Italy, close to a historic site, there were chefs and food activists who opposed the idea. That was the beginning of the slow food movement, which now has a presence in more than 150 countries, including the Philippines. There are various Slow Food communities in the country—farmers and food producers linked with chefs, restaurant owners, consumers, and other personalities in the various local food and culinary industries.

It is already a given that the Philippines is blessed with diverse resources as far as agriculture, food production, and culinary traditions are concerned. We have passionate farmers, skilled culinary experts, and progressive restaurant owners and entrepreneurs who are all working towards a common goal—to preserve our local cuisine and culinary heritage, protect our natural resources, and make sure that traditions and practices are not forgotten, but are rather passed on to the next generations so they can continue or even enrich it further.





## RICE WAREHOUSE INSPECTIONS A SUSTAINED DRIVE—SPEAKER

**S**PEAKER Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez has assured Filipino consumers that the surprise inspections at warehouses holding rice stocks last week were not a one-hit wonder and that the Bureau of Customs (BOC) would continue to carry out more inspections.

Romualdez, in a statement, said the House of Representatives will also ensure that rice will not experience the same fate as onions, which went out of style last year when they hit ludicrous costs of over P700 per kilo.

Romualdez said he agrees with the remark of House Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairman Wilfrido Mark Enverga, that “rice hoarding is economic sabotage in its highest degree.”

“Shame on us, the officials in government, if we let that happen again, especially to our staple food. Thanks to the hearings in aid of legislation led by Cong. Enverga, we already know exactly how a cartel works. We’re going to stop them, we’re not going to let them score again,” the Speaker said.

Last August 24, the joint contingent from the House and BOC swooped down at warehouses in Bulacan and found over 200,000 sacks of

rice that were seemingly being purposely held.

“I thank Commissioner Bienvenido “Bien” Y. Rubio for his initiative of peering into these suspicious warehouses at a time when Filipinos are grappling with rising rice prices. This will make hoarders think twice about their schemes,” Romualdez said.

“We need to carry out more of these inspections, and I trust the commissioner to do so in order to keep rice traders obedient to the law,” Romualdez said.

During the inspection, the BOC, armed with letters of authority, barred the owners of the Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, the San Pedro Warehouse, and the FS Rice Mill from retrieving the goods pending submission of the required documents on their rice importation.

Romualdez stressed that the discovered supply of rice should be released to the local market in order to mitigate the rising prices of the staple grain.

For the past few weeks, the price of rice has been steadily rising, with retailers selling it at P50 to P62 per kilogram in Metro Manila. If left unaddressed, it is projected to reach P60 to P65 in the coming days.

*Jovee Marie N. Dela Cruz*





## Higher costs holding back chicken production

CHICKEN production growth was at the lower end of the expected range in the second quarter as poultry farmers grapple with higher production costs, an industry official said.

"The usual growth for the poultry sector is 3% to 7% a year. The 3.3% posted for the second quarter is at the low end of the range. It's not a big deal in term of achievement but a cause for concern," United Broiler Raisers Association President Elias Jose M. Inciong said.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported last week that chicken production

rose 3.3% to 477.76 thousand metric tons on a liveweight basis.

The factors affecting production intentions, Mr. Inciong said in a phone interview, are the higher cost of inputs.

"The cost of production is high, because the raw materials for feed remain costly," he said.

He added that feed ingredients like corn, soya, and feed wheat were at record levels, while coconut oil remained expensive.

Additionally, Mr. Inciong said competition from imports was also discouraging domestic producers.

In the seven months to July, imports of chicken rose 17.4% to 249.37 million kilos, accounting for about 35% of all meat imports during the period.

Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food, Inc. President Danilo V. Fausto said in a Viber message that the farmgate price of chicken needs to rise to encourage farmers to produce more.

For the second quarter, the farmgate price of chicken averaged P134.13 per kilogram, up 2.4% from a year earlier. — **Adrian H. Halili**





## More rice warehouse raids set

BY WENDELL VIGILIA

SPEAKER Martin Romualdez yesterday assured the public that the Bureau of Customs (BOC) will conduct more surprise inspections of warehouses holding rice stocks in the government's continuing bid to stop agricultural hoarding and price manipulation.

Romualdez thanked Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio "for his initiative of peering into

these suspicious warehouses at a time when Filipinos are grappling with rising prices of rice."

"This will make hoarders think twice about their schemes," he said. "These rice warehouse inspections won't be a one-hit wonder. We need to carry out more of these inspections and I trust the commissioner to do so in order to keep rice traders obedient to the law."

Last August 24, a contingent

from the House led by Romualdez joined a BOC raid of different warehouses in Bulacan and found over 200,000 sacks of rice worth P505 million.

Before the day was over, the BOC, armed with letters of authority, barred the owners of the Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, the San Pedro Warehouse, and the FS Rice Mill from retrieving the goods pending submission of the required documents on their

rice importation.

The House leadership has vowed that the rice won't go the way of onions, which reached absurd prices of over P700 per kilo.

"Shame on us, the officials in government, if we let that happen again, especially to our staple food," said the Speaker, who has ordered the House committee on agriculture and food to probe the possible hoarding of rice to manipulate prices.





## Bamboo industry takes leap of faith



Laguna has 95 varieties of bamboo, indicating the huge potential of the province in developing the industry.

**BY PAUL ICAMINA**

IT'S a long leap of faith. Bamboo growers and businesses in Laguna are confident they can pole vault over the challenges.

That starts with the establishment of a Laguna Bamboo Industry Development Council proposed by Dr. Florentino O. Tesoro, chair of the industry group Bamboo Professionals, during a forum organized by the Forest Products Research and Development Institute (FPRDI) recently.

The forum – attended by 28 bamboo enterprises and 70 representatives from local governments, as well as bamboo growers, manufacturers, artisans and traders in Laguna – sought ways to strengthen the province's bamboo industry.

"There are 95 bamboo-based businesses in the province," said Romulo T. Aggangan, FPRDI director. "This number alone suggests how much potential the province has in terms of developing its bamboo industry."

The FPRDI has an ongoing P2.1-million research project to map out the industry and analyze the constraints facing different bamboo stakeholders – from farmers and suppliers, to the

market and end users.

The project has so far looked at the current status and prospects of each bamboo enterprise, and consequently identified firm-level and industry-wide interventions based on their needs.

Led by Dr. Ma. Cecile Zamora and Dr. Carl Anthony Lantican, it is funded by the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD).

PCAARRD estimates that with some 53,000 hectares of bamboo stands, the Philippines is the world's sixth largest exporter of bamboo.

These are not commercial farms but rather backyard, riverbank and forest stands. Still, PCAARRD estimates that the potential production from these stands averages about 36 million culms a year.

There are many challenges to the bamboo industry: pests and diseases; low supply of bamboo raw materials, quality poles and planting materials; low survival rate for propagation; limited technology for shoot production and marketing strategies; high cost of processed products; and weak transfer of technology.

PCAARRD recommends incentives for value-adding activities to fully develop the bamboo

value chain. Pests and diseases of bamboo stands should be managed. There is a need to develop new products such as high-quality charcoal, textile, nano crystalline cellulose; and processed bamboo shoots.

According to the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council (PBIDC), the Philippines now has an estimated bamboo area of around 104,000 hectares. It generates a value of \$60 million yearly.

The PBIDC believes that with 5.59 million hectares of arable land, the Philippines can expand its bamboo area to 400,000 hectares. That can yield a whopping \$3 billion (P150 billion) and employ one million, it said.

Its value goes beyond money. Bamboo sequesters 12 metric tons of carbon per hectare annually, more than other plants. It releases 35 percent more oxygen than other trees.

Bamboo is a non-timber forest product, belonging to the family of grasses. It is a high-value crop used as food and as material for buildings, bridges and furniture.

September 18 is World Bamboo Day.

The FPRDI and PCAARRD are agencies of the Department of Science and Technology.





# PH is 2nd top exporter of pineapples

PHILIPPINE export volume of pineapple grew 5.6 percent in 2022, according to a tropical fruits market review by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The report said the Philippines shipped 580,000 metric tons (MT) of pineapples from 549,000 MT in 2021.

This makes the country the second leading exporter of the fruit after Costa Rica.

This also marks a recovery from 2021's 7 percent fall in pineapple exports caused by pandemic-related difficulties and typhoon damage.

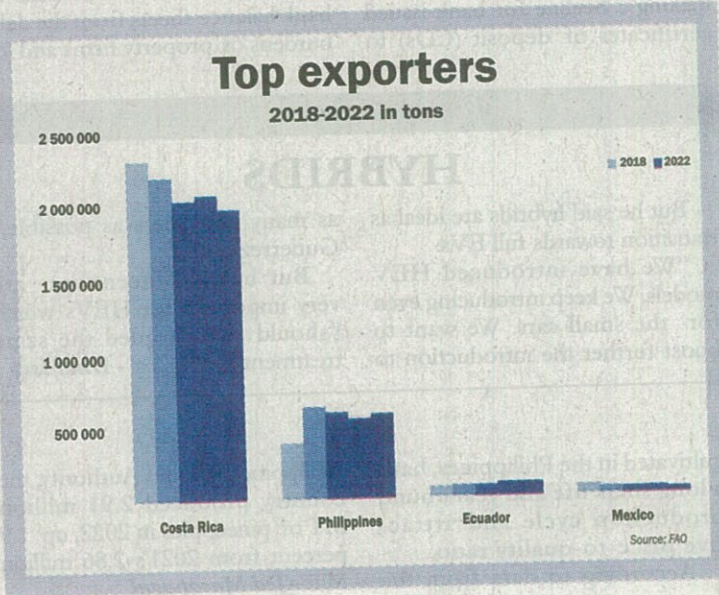
The report added based on available trade data by destination for 2022, Philippine pineapple exports to China jumped 16 percent year-on-

year but no volume was provided. China is the top market of Philippine pineapples with a 43 percent share followed by Japan, 30 percent and South Korea, 13 percent.

The report also cited industry sources which said imports of pineapples from the Philippines to China benefited from the logistical difficulties experienced by supplies coming from Costa Rica and South America as transport routes from the Philippines remained relatively unaffected by disruptions.

FAO said contributing to the increase is the fact that MD2 pineapples, the main variety

See PH > Page A2



## PH

cultivated in the Philippines, have a long shelf life and year-round production cycle and attractive price-to-quality ratio.

According to data from the

Philippine Statistics Authority, the country produced 2.91 million MT of pineapples in 2022, up 1.9 percent from 2021's 2.86 million MT. - *Jed Macapagal*





UP 5.6% VERSUS 7% CONTRACTION IN 2021

## PINEAPPLE EXPORTS REBOUNDED LAST YEAR

**By Jordeene B. Lagare**  
[@jordeenelagare](#)

The Philippines' pineapple exports increased by 5.6 percent to some 580,000 metric tons (MT) in 2022, in contrast to the downturn in global shipments, as the country managed to capitalize on the logistical challenges of exporting this tropical plant.

In its market review, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations said the country's pineapple exports marked a "strong recovery" from the 7-percent decrease registered in 2021.

The FAO said the country, the second largest exporter of the fruit worldwide, delivered

more pineapples as the impact of COVID-19-related difficulties and typhoon damage tapered off.

Citing available trade data, the Philippines registered a 16-percent increment in exports to China year-on-year—the leading recipient of pineapples cultivated in the archipelago, equivalent to a quantity share of 43 percent.

"Industry sources reported that imports of pineapples from the Philippines to China benefited from the logistical difficulties experienced by supplies from Costa Rica and South American origins, as transport routes from the Philippines remained relatively unaffected by disruptions," the FAO said.

"Another supporting factor was quoted as being the long shelf life, year-round production cycle and attractive price-to-quality ratio of the MD2 pineapples, the main variety cultivated in the Philippines," it added.

Likewise, the Philippines retained quantity shares of about 30 percent and 13 percent, respectively, in terms of pineapple shipments to Japan and South Korea in the previous year.

The country made headway in selling pineapples abroad even though global exports of pineapples dropped by 2.2 percent to 3.1 million MT in 2022, largely attributable to reduced supplies from Costa Rica. **INQ**





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**Mga rice warehouse  
halughugin - Romualdez**

Paiigtingin umano ang mga surprise inspection sa mga warehouse upang mahanap ang mga suplay ng bigas at iba pang produkto na sadyang iniimbak ng matagal upang magkaroon ng kakulangan sa suplay at mapataas ang presyo nito.

Ayon kay House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, masusundan pa ang isinagawang inspeksiyon sa

mga warehouse sa Bulacan noong Agosto 24.

Sa pamamagitan ng pagsasagawa ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) ng mga surprise inspection sa mga kahina-hinalang warehouse ay mahahanap ang mga iniipit na suplay.

Umaasa rin si Romualdez sa patuloy na suporta ng Bureau of Customs upang mabantayan ang mga pasaway na rice trader. **(Billy Begas)**





## Climate change is helping pests and diseases destroy our food

**P**ESTS and diseases are exacerbating crop shortages that have sent prices for goods like cocoa, olive oil and orange juice soaring. That's set to become even more prevalent as extreme weather events multiply.

Already, plant diseases cost the global economy over \$220 billion every year, and invasive insects at least \$70 billion, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization. Pests adapt easily to the changing climate, with warmer temperatures allowing them to generate more quickly and migrate faster, in turn reducing crop yields, according to Leah Buchman, an entomologist at Georgetown University.

"As temperature rise, you have this expanded geographic range and this expanded range of insects that will just increase those diseases that insects spread," Buchman said.

As a result, destructive moths native to the Americas have been found devouring corn and other grains across Africa and Asia. A whitefly associated with tropical and subtropical climates has been destroying tomato plantations in Europe. Below are some of the crops that are struggling as the enemies that destroy them increase.

### Cocoa

WEST Africa, home to two-thirds of global cocoa supply, has seen serious difficulties with its crop in recent seasons, causing wholesale prices to soar near historic highs this year.

Two diseases in particular have compounded the problem. Black pod disease is caused by fungal-like organisms that spread rapidly on cacao pods under humid conditions, turning them black or brown. It has caused destruction of up to 30 percent of annual cocoa crops, according to several studies. Prolonged periods of heavy rain combined with irregular patterns have increased opportunities for it to spread.

Swollen shoot virus is transmitted via mealybugs that feed on the sap of cocoa plants, and significantly reduces crop yields before eventually killing the plant. Mealybugs thrive in warmer temperatures, and can spread the virus quickly even if only a single seedling is infected. Uprooting infected trees is the only way to control the disease, according to World Agroforestry. About 20 percent of the cocoa crop in Ivory Coast is infected with swollen shoot, said Steve Wateridge, head of research at Tropical Research Services.

### Tomatoes

THE price of tomatoes in India soared 700 percent last month, an increase so out of the ordinary that it has sparked social media memes comparing the cost of the essential ingredient with anything from petrol to political influence.

The crop's output took a hit amid delayed monsoon, heavy rains in some growing areas and hotter-than-normal temperatures in June. But it has also suffered because of the so-called silverleaf whitefly. The sap-feeding insect has the ability to transmit hundreds of plant viruses, crimping production of key crops like tomatoes, but also cassava, beans and sweet potatoes. In India, the highly infectious tomato leaf curl virus transmitted by the insect contributed to devastating losses. The virus was recently introduced to Europe, possibly from India and has been causing outbreaks in several European countries. The insects have shown high adaptability to changes in

agro-ecosystems, with a combination of hot weather and high humidity resulting in the insects' buildup.

### Olives

SPAIN, the world's largest olive oil producer, is facing its own type of oil crisis as drought has caused output to dwindle, more than doubling wholesale costs in the past year. But it's not only extreme heat and dryness that's biting into European olive farmers' production.

With temperatures in the region rising, fending off certain diseases has become more difficult. *Xylella fastidiosa* is "one of the most dangerous plant bacteria worldwide," according to the European Commission, and has the potential to cause an annual production loss of €5.5 billion in the EU. The bacterium kills plants by clogging vessels that carry water from roots to leaves, slowly choking them to death.

Temperatures below -5C (23F) can reduce the disease viability, but with winter seasons reaching those temperatures less frequently, the distribution of suitable areas for the bacteria may change. In Italy, at least 20 million of the country's 150 million olive trees have already been infected, mostly in the region of Puglia, which used to contribute up to 50 percent of Italy's total annual olive oil production.

### Grains

THE global grains trade has faced trouble for a number of reasons, not least due to recent escalations in Russia's war against Ukraine. While prices have remained more or less in check, unfavorable weather and pests have sparked local production issues in some countries.

That's true in China, one of the world's top growers of corn, where pests like the fall armyworm are attacking plants earlier than usual. Native to the Americas, the destructive pest is now found across various continents including Asia and Africa. Fall armyworms can migrate hundreds of kilometers in a single night during their moth stage, and produce many eggs, raising their chances of survival. Warmer and humid weather supports survival and reproduction of the pest, allowing larvae to begin their assault much earlier in a crop cycle.

### Orange juice

DAMAGE from hurricanes, frost and diseases have decimated orange groves in Florida, pushing US orange juice futures to record highs this month. Orange growers across Brazil and the US are struggling to battle the citrus greening disease, a fatal illness that causes fruits to get smaller, fall off trees and produce bitter juice, causing a global shortage.

The disease, transmitted by a insect known as the Asian citrus psyllid, is considered the most serious threat to citrus plants. In Brazil, nearly one in four orange trees in Sao Paulo State and western Minas Gerais have the disease, according to research group Fundecitrus.

An increase in average temperatures in parts of the country's citrus belt can benefit the spread of the insect that carries the bacteria, according to a study by Brazilian Agricultural Research company Embrapa. Citrus crop output in Brazil, the world's top exporter, has also dwindled due to the disease.

Bloomberg News



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## Chocolate makers' prospects sour as cocoa prices spike

LONDON/NEW YORK — Chocolate makers like Hershey and Mondelez face tougher trading conditions over the next year as they attempt to pass on soaring cocoa costs to cash-strapped consumers who are cutting back.

The industry has enjoyed bumper profits over the past couple of years as demand for chocolate held up despite price hikes, but data seen by Reuters shows this trend may be breaking just as prices for cocoa hit 46-year-highs and sugar prices are near their highest in more than a decade.

Consumers in Europe and the United States have already seen price increases of 13% and 20%, respectively, over the past two years and are starting to cut back on the amount of chocolate they buy, data pulled for Reuters by market researchers Nielsen IQ shows.

Consumers are "shopping around more, hoping to find deals," Mondelez Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dirk Van de Put said last month.

Cadbury-maker Mondelez expects inflation in cocoa and sugar to continue. In response, the company said it is ensuring it is significantly hedged and continuing to drive productivity.

"The increase in sugar and cocoa specifically is material," Mondelez Chief Financial Officer Luca Zaramella said in July. "We are talking about most likely a 30-plus percent (increase) if you look at the last 12 months, or even more, particularly in cocoa."

But after more than two years of higher prices, retailers are pushing back, analysts said, resulting in a battle that puts chocolatiers' margins and profitability at risk.

One such battle resulted in Mondelez previously pulling Cadbury and Milka bars from Belgian supermarket chain Colruyt's shelves after failing to agree on prices.

"I don't know if it's going to be as clear cut as being able to take pricing wherever they want," Barclays analyst Patrick Folan said.

### STARTING TO TRADE DOWN

Chocolate makers are banking on the traditional resilience of their product to price increases. Mondelez raised its annual revenue growth forecasts last month while Hershey hiked its profit forecast.

"Now that pricing is 100% secured, we expect volume and revenue growth, as well as

margin improvement for Europe," Mr. Zaramella said, after Mondelez resolved its spat with Colruyt.

However, Mondelez' chocolate sales volume growth has weakened substantially this year — from 14.8% in the four weeks to Feb. 25 to 3.2% in the four weeks to July 15 year-on-year — even as it kept its price rises in the low double digits, according to a Bernstein analysis of Nielsen IQ data seen by Reuters.

The data showed Hershey's sales volumes increasingly declined during the period as the company hiked prices.

"We are seeing consumers starting to react more than before, I'd be very cautious with price increases," said Dan Sadler, a candy expert at US-based market researcher IRI. "We're seeing consumers starting to trade down."

Barry Callebaut, the world's biggest chocolate maker supplying most major brands including Nestlé, doesn't expect any growth in sales volumes this year. It reported last month that volumes fell 2.7% in the nine months ended May 31.

Meanwhile, lower priced 'private label' chocolate continues to pick up market share.

In the US, private label sales volumes grew nearly 9% in the year to mid-June despite near double-digit price rises, IRI data shows.

Hershey's already-announced price hikes for the rest of 2023 are in the "high single digits," while those for next year are "low single digits," CEO Michele Buck said in July.

Pennsylvania-based Hershey, is hoping that as it eases off the rate of price hikes, its sales volumes will reverse their current downtrend. It is planning to lean on automation to keep its costs of production down, it said.

Rabobank says those cost pressures could continue into next year due to the El Niño weather event in West Africa and the lack of alternate producers who can ramp up output quickly.

Top cocoa producers Ivory Coast and Ghana have faced drought, excess rains and disease for the past two years. They produce two thirds of the world's cocoa and officials are struggling to help farmers cope with climate conditions. A 2019 'living income' scheme has been largely ineffective. — Reuters





## Soybeans climb, wheat falls

CHICAGO- Chicago soybeans climbed on Friday, bolstered by extreme heat and mixed results on the final day of a Midwest crop tour.

Corn traded much of the day mixed, ending just under even as crop production remains robust, despite recent yield-eroding weather.

Wheat fell as global supplies remain plentiful, though signs of concern have crept into some key growing regions.

The most active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) ended up 16 cents at \$13.87-3/4 a bushel, after reaching a one-month high of \$13.90-1/2, its

highest since July 28.

For the week, soybeans added 2.48 percent, its second consecutive weekly gain.

CBOT corn eased 1/4 cent to \$4.88 a bushel, finishing the week down 1.22 percent.

CBOT wheat fell 10 cents to \$6.21-3/4 a bushel, ending the week down 2.97 percent.

US 2023 soybean production could total 4.110 billion bushels, advisory service Pro Farmer said after the market close, below the USDA's most recent estimate of 4.205 billion bushels. Pro Farmer pegs yield at 49.7 bushels per acre. - Reuters