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Editorial

Sampolan ang smugglers at hoarders ng bigas

HANGGA'T walang naipakukulong ang administrasyong Marcos na smugglers at hoarders ng bigas, ang pangakong pagbaba ng presyo nito ay magiging panaginip lamang. Hindi rin matutupad ang pangarap na magkakaroon ng sapat na pagkain sa hapag ang mga Pilipino. Hangga't may mga sukab na smugglers at hoarders, patuloy na magiging "ginto" ang presyo ng bigas at walang kawawa kundi ang mahihirap. Sa kasalukuyan, ang presyo ng bigas sa mga palengke ay mahigit P50 isang kilo. Dati, nakakabili ng limang kilong bigas ang mamamayan pero ngayong nagmahal, dalawang kilo na lang ang nabibili. Wala namang mabiling murang bigas sa Kadiwa stores. **Sabi ni President Marcos Jr.** noong nangangampanya pa lamang, ibababa sa P20 ang bawat kilo ng bigas. Hindi ito nangyari.

Isa sa mga dahilan kaya mahal ang bigas ay dahil sa patuloy na smuggling. Sa kabila na nagbabala si Marcos sa mga smugglers at hoarders na hahabulin ang mga ito, hindi sila natakot o nabahag ang buntot. Patuloy ang pagdagsa ng mga bigas na galing Thailand, Vietnam at Cambodia. Walang kahirap-hirap na nakalulusot sa Bureau of Customs ang daang libong sako ng imported na bigas. Sabi ni Marcos sa kanyang SONA noong Hulyo 24, hahabulin ang mga smugglers at hoarders. Hindi na raw maganda ang ginagawa ng mga ito na apektado ang mamamayan at ang mga lokal na magsasaka.

Isang buwan, makaraang magbanta ang Presidente, nadiskubre ang daan libong sako ng bigas sa warehouses sa Bulacan na nagkakahalaga ng P505 milyon. Nag-inspeksiyon ang BOC sa pangunguna ni Customs Commissioner Bien Rubio sa mga bodega noong nakaraang Huwebes kasama sina House Speaker Martin Romualdez at Reps. Erwin Tulfo, Wilfrido Mark Enverga, at Ambrosion Cruz Jr.

Natuklasan ang 202,000 sako ng bigas sa Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, San Pedro Warehouse, at FS Rice Mill Warehouse. Smuggled umano ang mga bigas sa Thailand at Vietnam. Hindi naman natukoy kung sino ang may-ari ng mga bodega at wala ring naaresto kaugnay sa smuggling at hoarding ng bigas.

Ayon sa report, naaktuhang isinasalin ang mga bigas sa mga sako para palitawin na local produce ang mga ito. Ilalabas ang mga bigas kapag kakaunti na ang nasa merkado para maltaas ang presyo. Ito ang dahilan kaya umabot sa mahigit P50 ang presyo ng bigas.

Hindi lamang ang mga "hayok" na smugglers at hoarders ang habulin kundi pati na rin ang mga korap na opisyal at empleyado ng Customs. Hindi maipapasok sa bansa ang sandamukal na bigas kung walang kasabwat sa BOC.

Sampolan na ang mga nagpapahirap sa mamamayan at bayan.



AGRI NAGHIHINGALO, 'DI KAKAYANING IBANGON

Kailangang baguhin ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang kanyang diskarte upang palakasin ang naghihingalong sektor ng agrikultura, ayon kay House Deputy Speaker at Batangas Rep. Ralph Recto.

Sa panayam sa telebisyon, sinabi ng mambabatas na kailangang amiyendahan ang mga batas na may saklaw sa sektor ng agrikultura upang maparami ang produksiyon ng pagkain sa bansa.

"I think we should think of agriculture differently already. The farmers, their children don't want to be farmers anymore. You know how hard it is to plant rice para

kang nagma-marathon araw-araw ng nakayuko," sabi ni Recto.

Mahalaga rin umano ang mechanization at magagawa lamang ito kung makapasok ang pondo ng pribadong sektor.

"You cannot rely on government alone. You need to do more corporate farming," dagdag pa ni Recto.

Isa umano sa mga amiyenda na kailangan ay hayaan na magkaroon ng mas malawak na lupa ang mga magsasaka.

"Let's say I'm a farmer and I'm very productive, I want to expand my farm from five to 10 hectares, by law I'm not allowed to do that,"

paliwanag ni Recto.

Ang average na laki umano ng sakahan sa bansa ay 1.2 hektarya lamang.

"I think we have to rethink our agriculture strategy, in fairness to the President, I think second quarter or first half (of the year) agriculture did grow but still below the growth of the population rate," sabi pa ng mambabatas.

Ipinunto rin ni Recto na ang sektor ng agrikultura ay nag-eempleyo ng 30% ng mga manggagawang Pilipino subalit nasa 8% lamang ang kontribusyon nito sa gross domestic product. (Billy Begas)



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When young people farm



NO FREE LUNCH

CIELITO F. HABITO

I didn't think apples could be grown in the Philippines until I visited an apple orchard in Barangay Kapatagan in Digos City, Davao del Sur, two weeks ago. It was part of work that has taken me all around the country to visit farmers, especially those who teach other farmers to improve their craft. Their farms serve as "learning sites for agriculture" (LSAs) accredited by the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) under the Department of Agriculture, and are a crucial component in the nation's agriculture and fisheries extension system. They are key to strengthening the country's agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sector, which I've long described to be the backbone of the Philippine economy (see "The economy's backbone," 4/4/23).

While his apple orchard has yet to achieve commercial-scale production, 31-year-old farmer/vlogger Benzzone Kennedy F. Sepe is showing how young people who think out of the box could, in due time, reshape our farm sector. From a traditionally rice-centric and poverty-perpetuating sector that has led our young to shun it as an occupation, Philippine agriculture can diversify and yield higher incomes if more young people like Benzzone are enabled to forge new paths. He is growing and propagating not only apples, but other fruits like pears, raspberries, blueberries, figs, and many more that have earned his orchard ATI's description as a "rare fruit farm and nursery" planted to hundreds of trees, and growing.

Benzzone recounts how on a trip to South Korea in 2015, he was struck at how his hosts were successfully propagating tropical mangoes in their cold climate, using proper techniques and technology. So he thought, why not try growing temperate fruits in our own tropical setting? Even before that Korea trip, he had planted three seeds in his backyard from a Fuji apple bought from a supermarket. All three

sprouted, but only one eventually survived—and that one lucky tree was the original source of the hundreds of trees he now has.

His strong interest and curiosity led him to enroll in a course in Agriculture Technology at the Davao del Sur State College (DSSC). As his interest grew further, he signed up for and earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture. His creative and innovative mind easily gained him the favor and support of his mentors, who continue to help and encourage him to improve on his enterprise and crusade. With DSSC's help to perform the standard Brix test for sweetness, he found his apples to have significantly higher sugar content than commercially available ones. He attributes this to our more abundant sunlight, which could also permit year-round fruit production here, unlike in temperate countries where winter limits them to one harvest per year. Having inspired many others to follow his lead, he is already doing good business selling planting materials, even as he sees commercial-scale fruit production to still be three to eight years away. By then, he expects to be selling apples by the thousands. And being the video techie that he

is, he has gained nearly 29,000 subscribers and over 1.8 million views to his now 190 video blog posts—and as digital buffs would know, that translates to more income for him as well.

Apples could very well follow the same story grapes have had in the Philippines. In the early 1970s, domestically grown grapes were virtually unheard of, save for some very limited production in Cebu. My father was working in Thailand then, and as a college student who spent my vacations visiting my parents in Bangkok, I already saw significant local grape production in that country, and even got to visit a large grape farm there. It was around that time that the young Avelino Lomboy started propagating grapes as a hobby in Bauang, La Union, starting with 20 cuttings from Cebu. In less than a decade, his grape vineyard had grown to nearly a hundred hectares, and he has since been dubbed the Grape King and father of the grape industry in the Philippines. Lomboy Farms is now the best known in the industry, and is also a popular agritourism site that attracts thousands of grape pick-and-pay tourists in a month.

Meanwhile, in far-off Asuncion, Davao del Norte, 37-year-old Koys Magno Solteo and wife Rodillyn are also now popularizing grape production in their area. Their vineyard is an ATI-accredited LSA that is teaching others to grow the crop and helping further widen the industry in Mindanao. What clearly came through to me in our visit with him was the same innovative mindset that the late Avelino Lomboy exemplified, as he preached during his time to "plant something nobody else has planted."

If many more of our youth take the cue from Benzzone, Avelino, and Koys, there is hope for Philippine agriculture.

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AS COUNTRY GRAPPLES WITH HIGH PRICES

LAGUNA HUB TO SPEED UP PRODUCTION OF NEW RICE VARIETIES

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

As Filipino consumers grapple with skyrocketing rice prices amid supply constraints, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is building a facility that will accelerate the period for growing the staple.

The speed breed facility (SBF), located at the institute's headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna, is expected to halve the growing period for new varieties from breeding up to the time it reaches farmers, allowing producers to introduce their product to the market at the fastest time possible.

According to IRRI, it usually takes eight to nine years to develop a new variety using only conventional methods. But with speed breeding, a new variety can be developed in two to four years.

Scheduled to be completed in March next year, the facility is situated on a 587-square meter area that has a capacity to house 120,000 plants.

IRRI said the SBF would operate on solar power, in line with its commitment to adopt eco-friendly practices.

"It is equipped with an advanced automated irrigation and control system and interconnected chambers to ensure improved reliability, precision, quality, environmental consistency and water efficiency in the breeding process," the IRRI said.

During the inauguration, a traditional coconut chopping

ceremony was done where fresh coconut juice was poured in the vicinity of the structure which, according to local culture, signifies new beginnings.

Prices of rice in Metro Manila have breached the P60 per kilogram level as of writing.

Hoping to stabilize prices and boost supply, the Marcos administration earlier announced plans to forge an importation deal with India. The latter currently bans exporting rice.

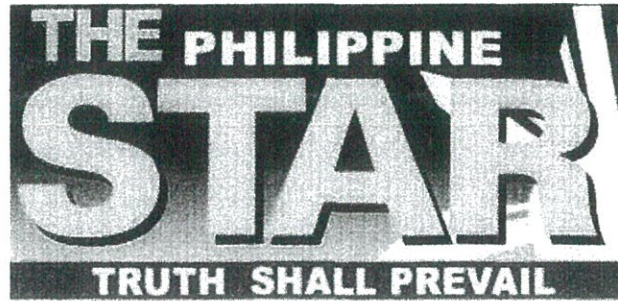
Based on the Department of Agriculture's price monitoring as of Friday, local rice is now selling at P41 to P65 per kg compared to last year's P38 to P50 per kg. Imported rice is sold at P43 to P65 per kg against last year's P38 to P50 per kg.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort earlier said local prices have increased due to higher input costs from fertilizer, pesticides and petroleum and the damage sustained by the rice sector from storms.

In the Philippines, it takes around three months to plant palay (unhusked rice). Dry planting season begins in late December and ends in early March the following year. Harvest season runs from February to April or early May.

Wet planting season is between June and August, with harvest beginning in late September till early December.

The planting month also varies from one area to another. **INQ**



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'DA can't commit that onion crisis won't happen for rice'

Officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA) have failed to commit that last year's crisis on onions, wherein the retail prices of the bulbs reached as high as P720 per kilo, would not be seen for rice this year amid the spike in the cost of the Filipino staple.

During the recent hearing of the

House of Representatives committee on appropriations on the DA's proposed budget of P167.5 billion for next year, Marikina 2nd District Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo asked officials to make a commitment that there would be no situation for rice similar to December last year, when onion became an expensive commodity.

sive commodity.

"What commitment can you give to us as we have remaining funds for 2023, there are available options like (rice) importation... What commitment can you give us to assure our fellow Filipinos that the experience for onions in 2022 will not happen to rice in 2023?"

Quimbo asked Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban.

Panganiban did not answer and instead tossed the question to Agriculture Undersecretary for rice industry development Leocadio Sebastian.

Quimbo repeated her question after

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DA From Page 1

the DA officials refused to give a categorical answer.

"Nobody wants to commit, afraid... Anyway, Usec (Agriculture Undersecretary for policy, planning and regulations Mercedita) Sombilla said that the thinnest stock is August, (which is) 44 (days); the rest of the months, (the stocks) are going up, so there are (supplies). The way I look at it, you should be ready to commit to us. Usec. Leo (Sebastian) said there is no cartel. Why are you afraid to commit to our people that the experience for onions in 2022 will not happen for rice?" the lawmaker said.

By way of a reply, Sombilla said, "Actually, for August, we are already expecting something - 150,000 (metric tons of rice imports)."

Quimbo reiterated that she wanted a direct answer from the DA officials.

"(Just a) simple (answer) as it's already getting late in the evening..." the lawmaker reiterated.

Sombilla said that the DA would continue to talk to the private sector.

"The President had already made an instruction to monitor the prices and to also monitor how the traders are getting their stocks out. I think with all of these pronouncements by the President,

we will probably be able to secure that amount of rice we need for August and September, before the peak harvest," she added.

Quimbo then inquired on the commitment of the DA on the retail prices of rice.

"The price... I don't think we can dictate it; it all depends on the world market," Sombilla replied.

Quimbo lamented the failure of the DA officials to provide a concrete answer on the expected prices of the grains.

Sombilla eventually provided a forecast wherein she said that the retail price of rice is expected to go down to as low as P45 per kilo once the peak harvest season starts in October.

"We expect local prices to be on the level of P45, P47, P50 for premium and special rice. Hopefully, with the coming of the harvest season, we would probably expect it to level off to lower prices," she said.

Data from the DA showed that 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.

Retail prices of local well-milled rice a month ago ranged between P40 and P49 per kilo, compared to the latest price of P57 per kilo or a difference of P8 per kilo

- Bella Cariaso



IRRI puts up new rice breeding facility

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) has inaugurated a rice breeding facility in Los Baños, Laguna to push for better production of the country's staple food.

IRRI said the Speed Breed Facility (SBF), which is targeted to be completed in March 2024, marks a significant milestone in rice breeding, as the facility aims to shorten the breeding cycle for increased efficiency and productivity.

"It is a testament to the IRRI's commitment to cutting-edge research and collaboration, solidifying its position in rice research," it said.

Once operational, the facility is expected to revolutionize the field of rice breeding by optimizing the breeding process and contributing to the development of innovative

solutions for global food security.

IRRI research director and rice breeding innova-

tions department head Hans Bhardwaj said the SBF aligns with the objective of reducing breeding cycle time to enhance genetic gains.

Occupying a 587-square-meter area, the facility will feature a remarkable capacity of 120,000 plants.

The IRRI said it would shorten the turnaround time for rapid generation advancement by targeting four to five generations in a year.

Equipped with an advanced automated irrigation and control system and interconnected chambers, the SBF will ensure improved reliability, precision, quality, environmental consistency, and water efficiency in the breeding process.

Additionally, the facility will prioritize sustainability by operating with solar power, furthering its commitment to eco-friendly practices, IRRI said.

To help advance the local rice sector, the Philippines is hosting this October the International Rice Congress (IRC) for the first time.

Convened by the IRRI every

four years, the IRC is a platform for rice-based food systems innovators to work towards shaping a food and nutrition secure future.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is co-organizing the sixth IRC, which expects 2,000 delegates throughout the rice value chain, with IRRI and the Consortium of International Agriculture Research Centers (CGIAR).

Taking centerstage is the development of hybrid rice in the country and other new technologies.

IRC brings together scientists, experts and decision makers from the government, public and private sectors to formulate evidence-based solutions to some of the biggest challenges of the global rice sector.

The main event is the gathering by the International Rice Research Conference of key experts and thought leaders from around the world to discuss emerging, current and future challenges of rice-based food systems and present exciting and innovative solutions.

— Danessa Rivera



Farming after retirement: Building the brand 'Once Tasted Always Wanted' products

By JAMES TABABA

After devoting their lives to raising a family, Ricarte and Dominga Ebare decided to establish a farm after retirement. Their ambition was to create a farm that prioritized organic and sustainable methods.

Ricarte is a licensed agricultural engineer and Dominga graduated with a degree in BS Agricultural Technology. After getting married, Dominga focused on homemaking and nurturing their garden while Ricarte worked in a private company. Their farming journey started in 2011 when they established OTAW (Once Tasted Always Wanted) farm in Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur that is planted to coconut, cacao, coffee, bamboo.

"Currently, since all our children have graduated and my husband has retired, we are now enjoying managing our farm," Dominga said.

Farming products and practices

Dominga cultivates dwarf coconuts as the main crop, with the native tall variety also thriving there. Their farm has more than 400 coconut trees.

"The coconut is known as the 'tree of life' because we can use every part of it, from the roots to the leaves," Dominga said.

Their product lineup predominantly features coconut-based essentials like tuba, coconut vinegar, and virgin coconut oil (VCO). They've also introduced staples like traditional coconut cooking oil, coconut water vinegar, and frozen coconut milk as well as non-coconut items such as spicy vinegar and tablea from cacao.

Their commitment to innovation led them to participate in VCO and cocosugar processing, refining their skills through education at a Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)-accredited farm school.

Their products are exclusively distributed through DTI Negosyo Centers and cooperative networks because the limited supplies are sold to primary customers in the nearby communities.

Dominga said they strongly support organic farming practices. This is important as commercial fertilizers are costly compared to more affordable and sustainable organic methods.

"We hope that by the name of our farm, those who will taste our products will always want them," Dominga said. "They will want them because they know that they are taking healthy products, that's why we



DOMINGA AND RICARTE EBARE, owners of OTAW (Once Tasted Always Wanted) farm in Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur. (OTAW Farm)

promote organic farming."

They focus on using natural fertilizers like salt and seaweed, especially sargassum, for their coconut and fruit trees. Additionally, they've crafted homemade foliar fertilizers from molasses and sargassum, a type of seaweed with over 70 nutrients.

In addition, Dominga shared that the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) in CARAGA is scheduled to conduct a final evaluation of their farm, specifically in relation to coconut hybridization efforts. Should everything proceed as planned, OTAW Farm will be the sole hybridization practitioner in the area.

Pivoting during the pandemic

It was during the pandemic when Dominga started processing virgin coconut oil using the natural fermentation method. This method, known as cold pressing, avoids the use of heat entirely. Unlike heat-based methods that require costly machinery, cold pressing relies on natural fermentation alone. This choice is crucial for preserving the integrity of lauric acid, a key component of VCO that is sensitive to heat.

This approach has earned recognition from the CARAGA Department of Agriculture Agricultural Training Institute, which just recently named their farm as a Learning Site for Agriculture (LSA).

The local community initially found it hard to believe that oil could be extracted without the use of heat. However, as the health benefits of VCO gained recognition during the peak of the pandemic, their community supported them. This support boosted their motivation to produce VCO.

In order to expand the accessibility of their VCO, the Ebare couple applied for a License to Operate (LTO) from the Food and Drug Administration. This document authorizes establishments to engage in various business activities related to food products, including manufacturing,

sale, distribution, and more. Obtaining this license was a significant step towards securing a certificate of product registration for their VCO.

Beyond being a plantita

"Some people would call me 'plantita' and I'm happy being called that way," she said. "But being a farmer is more than just a 'plantita' because it entails skills in managing crops that can contribute value to the community."

To Dominga, farming serves as a source of stress relief. She finds immense satisfaction in witnessing the growth of plants, a rewarding experience in itself.

Among the many fulfilling moments she cherishes, one stands out—the approval of their application for a Learning Site for Agriculture. While they await the official awarding of this document, Dominga envisions their farm becoming a hub for training programs, technology demonstrations, and various extension activities facilitated by the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) under the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Challenges and struggles

As a small farmer in the Philippines, Dominga faces a range of challenges. These include the need for more substantial financial assistance from the government, as well as striving for stability in the prices of agricultural products, particularly copra.

Another noteworthy challenge is the approval process of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). During an audit conducted by the FDA, they outlined a set of requirements to be met. However, due to limited resources, fulfilling these requirements remains a challenge. Despite this setback, Dominga remains hopeful that they will be able to address these compliance issues immediately.

A vision for community development

Dominga takes special pride in OTAW Farm's recognition as an LSA. This achievement marks a significant milestone, positioning their farm as a hub for training, visits, and hands-on learning experiences. Dominga is excited to share several upcoming initiatives aimed at enhancing their farm's offerings. The farm is in the process of launching initiatives such as buko pie production using coconut-based ingredients, balut making, crafting amakan (woven bamboo strips) bamboo products, and engaging in coconut hybridization.

Abante

UNA SA BALITA

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Abante NEGOSYO

Corporate farming hinirit sa agrikultura

HINIKAYAT ni House Deputy Speaker Ralph Recto ang gobyerno na baguhin ang estratehiya sa agrikultura sa pamamagitan ng pagpapahintulot sa investment ng pribadong sektor.

Ginawa ni Recto ang suhestiyon matapos hilingin ng Department of Agriculture sa Kongreso ang panukalang P108.5 bilyong budget para sa 2024.

"You have to mechanize... you have to get private sector money into agriculture. You cannot rely on government alone. You need to do more corporate farming," giit ng kongresista mula sa Batangas.

Aniya, dapat din silipin muli ng gobyerno ang batas hinggil sa 5-hectare limitation sa mga lupang pansakahan.

Kailangan din umano ng gobyerno na magkaloob ng karagdagang pautang sa mga magsasaka upang magkaroon sila ng karagdagang kapital at mapahusay ang produksyon.

"In fairness to the president, I think [during the] second quarter or first half, agriculture did grow but [it was] still below the growth of the population rate," wika ni Recto sa isang television interview



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Kamara tatalupan ₱50M ibubuhos kontra smuggling

Iginiit ng isang mambabatas na idetalye ng **Department of Agriculture (DA)** ang hirit nito na ₱50 milyon bilang confidential fund sa ilalim ng panukalang 2024 national budget na gagamitin umanokontra smuggling.

Sa deliberasyon ng panukalang budget ng DA, nagtanong si ACT Teachers Party-list Rep. France Castro kaugnay

ng confidential fund na nasa ilalim ng pondo ng ahensiya.

"This is the first time na ang DA ay nagkaroon ng confidential fund," sabi ni Castro.

Ayon kay DA Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban, ang confidential fund ay gagamitin sa 'anti-smuggling purposes'.

"Nandun po ba 'yan sa mandato ng DA?" tanong ni Castro.

Sinabi naman ni DA Assistant Secretary James Layug, ng DA Inspectorate and Enforcement na ang food security ay isang national security concern.

"Being part and member of the National Intelligence Coordinating Board which addresses 'yung anti-agricultural smuggling... food security being part of the national security concern that is a com-

ponent of that," sabi ni Layug.

Ayon kay Castro, dapat ay ilagay na lamang ang naturang pondo sa mga ahensiya na may kinalaman sa national security.

Hiningi ni Castro ang detalye ng paggagamitan ng confidential funds at nangako si Layug na isusumite ito.

(Billy Begas)



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SBF to shorten breeding cycle of rice seeds

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) earlier this month inaugurated a speed breed facility (SBF) in its headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna which is expected to shorten the breeding cycle for increased efficiency and productivity of rice seeds.

The facility, targeted for completion by March next year, will also enhance genetic gains of rice seeds.

The facility will occupy 587

square meters of space for a capacity of 120,000 plants. It will shorten the turnaround time for rapid generation advancement by targeting 4 to 5 generations in a year.

The SBF will be equipped with an advanced automated irrigation and control system and interconnected chambers to ensure improved reliability, precision, quality, environmental consistency and water efficiency in the breeding process.

IRRI said the facility will prioritize sustainability by uti-

lizing electricity from solar technology.

A midterm evaluation report conducted by the IRRI on the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) showed the seeds component of the fund has an overall high level of efficiency in meeting its goals and relevance for individual farmers.

The report cited the need to fully tap

the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) so that more farmers will benefit from

the seed distribution. RSBSA is part of the minimum requirement to obtain certified seeds through RCEF.

As of March 2022, there were 5.45 million farmers, fishers and farm workers registered under the RSBSA.

The report noted that despite the 95 to 97 percent utilization rate of certified seeds that farmers received from the RCEF seed component, the Philippine Rice Research Institute confirmed 3 to 5 percent of farmers received their seeds late.



The SBF will shorten the turnaround time for rapid generation advancement by targeting 4 to 5 generations in a year. (DA Photo)



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Soybeans, wheat climb

SINGAPORE- Chicago soybeans rose 1.5 percent on Monday to a one-month high, while corn gained ground after a US farm survey found that hot and dry weather conditions stressed both crops, which could result in smaller harvests than the government had predicted.

Wheat also rose amid concerns over global grain supplies.

"We have seen largely favorable crop weather for corn and beans in July and parts of August, but it has been dry over the last couple of weeks," said one Singapore-based trader.

The most-active soybean con-

tract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was up 1.4 percent at \$14.06-3/4 a bushel. Corn rose 1 percent to \$4.93 a bushel and wheat gained 0.4 percent at \$6.24-1/4 a bushel.

Soybeans climbed to \$14.10 a bushel earlier in the session, the highest since July 27. Prices are up nearly 10 percent from a low on Aug. 8.

There are forecasts of more hot and dry weather in the US Midwest, which could further reduce production. Soybeans are in a crucial stage of development and susceptible to damage from extreme temperatures. - Reuters



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India sets floor price for basmati rice after restricting non-basmati

MUMBAI — India has imposed a \$1,200 per ton minimum export price (MEP) on basmati rice shipments, the government said on Sunday, as the world's biggest exporter tries to calm local prices ahead of key state elections.

The south Asian country in July banned exports of non-basmati white rice and on Friday imposed 20% duty on the exports of parboiled rice.

But after the ban, some traders were classifying non-basmati white rice as basmati to over-

come the export restriction, the government said in a statement.

The MEP would help authorities ensure that non-basmati rice is not exported as basmati rice, they said.

India and Pakistan exclusively grow premium, aromatic basmati rice. India ships out around 4 million metric tons of basmati rice to countries such as Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. — **Reuters**