CLIPPINGS FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

A. SEC. PBBM QUOTED

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Phl now world's top rice importer – USDA

THE MANILA TIMES
Price caps, resignations and decorum
Price cap must be lifted eventually

BUSINESS MIRROR
Govt forms team to monitor rice prices in NCR

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON
Editoyal: Wish sa DA

REMATE
Misteryosong Rice Price Cap
Editoyal: Mas kailangan ng mga magsasaka

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
Marcos' Birthday wish: a better agri sector

B. DA FAMILY

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Sugar industry receives P314-M grant from Japan
First Person: Sacrificed
Eyes wide open: Supply and demand problems, from molasses to chicken
The price of rice

MANILA BULLETIN
PH ships fresh mangoes to Australia
10 hectares at NBP compound allotted for vegetable production

THE MANILA TIMES
PH to start exporting avocados to S. Korea
Ilocos Norte coops to get rice centers
Stingless bee farming gaining ground

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
SRA to deploy Japanese-funded farm machineries for sugar growers

BUSINESS WORLD
PHL to start avocado exports to South Korea this month

BUSINESS MIRROR
DA livestock Usec: Subsidy possible, but first vaccines vs ASF must hurdle trial
USAID, Seafood Industry Partners to Hold 1st Responsible Seafood Summit..
COMP exhibit to feature coco coir, activated carbon – DTI

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
P7.5M cash grant already received by rice retailers

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Rice imports held off amid high global prices

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
'Tariff cut, price ceiling to pull down palay prices'

MANILA BULLETIN
Photo: **'Ayuda'**
Traders back tariff reduction on imported rice

THE MANILA TIMES
Plant-based food may reduce greenhouse gas emissions – study
Pork supply shortage looms in Negros
Fishermen oppose construction of seawall
Cebu kicks off urban farming

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Tariff cuts backed

BUSINESS WORLD
Filipino – Chinese chamber support rice tariff reduction

BUSINESS MIRROR
Manila begins review of anti-dumping duty on flour

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
Rice millers, traders commit 30k sacks for 'Rice on Wheels' program

D. FOREIGN STORY

MANILA BULLETIN
Meat, milk alternatives could slash food system emissions a third – study

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Sugar output in India's Maharashtra set to fall to lowest in 4 years
Ukraine increase farm exports by rail and truck as Black Sea ports blocked
Soybeans, corn slips

BUSINESS MIRROR
FAO: More public, private investments needed to transform agrifood systems
Poland to extend Ukraine grain-import ban, pressuring EU

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Phl now world's top rice importer – USDA

More than 400 rice retailers receive P15,000 each during the payout of government subsidy to help them cope with the impact of the price cap on rice in Marikina City yesterday.

WALTER BOLLOZOS

By DANESSA RIVERA

The Philippines has overtaken China as the world's top importer of rice, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In its latest "Grain: World Markets and Trade" report, the USDA projected that Philippine rice importation will reach 3.8 million metric tons in marketing year 2023-2024 while China's imports will drop to 3.5 million MT.

Farmers' group Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) agreed with the USDA's forecast.

"I can see the need for a large volume of imports next year, probably in the range of the USDA forecast, because domestic supply is not catching up with demand. More imports are needed next year to offset the decline in imports in the third quarter of this year," FFF national manager Raul Montemayor said when sought for comment.

In the same report, the USDA said the Philippines is holding off its rice importation this year due to skyrocketing rice prices resulting from India and Vietnam's rice export ban.

"In 2008, the Philippines continuously bought larger volumes as prices escalated; this year, it is delaying purchases, awaiting lower prices. In the past week, prices started to decline from their peaks," the USDA said.

Global rice prices have reached their highest in 15 years after the latest export ban policy of India, the report noted.

India, which supplies

Turn to Page 4

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: Sept. 14, 2023 Page: 1 & 4

Phl

From Page 1

around 40 percent of the global rice trade, banned the export of non-basmati white rice in July, leading to higher global prices and tighter global supply.

"Top rice exporter India has sent shockwaves through the global rice market since its July export ban on milled white rice and subsequent August export tax on parboiled rice and minimum export price for basmati. Global importers have shifted to the next largest suppliers, Thailand and Vietnam, sending their export quotes surging to the highest levels since 2008," the USDA added.

Thailand and Vietnam are the top two sources of imported rice in the Philippines in 2023.

Based on the Bureau of Plant Industry's Sept. 7 data, rice imports have already reached 2.33 million MT, with 4.46 percent sourced from Thailand and 89.85 percent from Vietnam.

No to Balisacan in DA

Farmers' groups yesterday opposed the possible appointment of Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan as chief of the Department of Agriculture.

Balisacan has doused speculation that he is being tapped to replace President Marcos as DA secretary.

"He has long been an advocate of unlimited imports, tariff cuts, easing of subsidies that will lead to the demise of the Filipino farmers. He has never sided with local producers, case in point, he is one of the proponents of the reduction of rice tariff," Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura executive director Jayson Cainglet told **The STAR.**

Marcos should appoint a pro-farmer, not "market-oriented and pro-liberalization like Balisacan," Montemayor said.

"Balisacan thinks like (Finance) Secretary Benjamin Diokno. They always resort to importation," he noted.

FFCCCII backs tariff cut

The Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. (FFCCCII) supports the proposal to temporarily reduce tariffs on rice imports.

On Sept. 7, the Foundation for Economic Freedom filed a petition to temporarily reduce imported rice tariffs from 35 percent to between zero and 10 percent. This proposal was endorsed by the Department of Finance and the National Economic and Development Authority.

"We believe that the temporary lowering of tariff, coupled with other calibrated measures to be taken by this administration's economic team, will result in the long-term stabilization of the prices of rice and improve the inflation situation," FFCCCII president Cecilio Pedro said in a statement.

Earlier this week, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) also expressed support for the removal of import duties for rice.

"Since we're short of rice, when we import, we hope there won't be tax so you lower down the cost of rice," said PCCI president George Barcelon.

– With Bella Cariaso, Catherine Talavera

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: A1 & A5

Price caps, resignations and decorum

ON THE CONTRARY

ANTONIO CONTRERAS

THE thing with neo-liberal economics is that there is much faith placed in the forces of supply and demand. This is the ground from which criticisms are being hurled at the emergency policy measure adopted by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in placing a price cap on rice. To blue-blooded neoliberal economists, any price restriction that would restrain the rising price of a commodity would disturb the market and lead to a shortage. ➤ContrerasA5

This is due to the possible refusal of sellers to sell at a price lower than what they would have sold otherwise, thereby depressing supply. In addition, restricting the price to a lower level can stimulate higher demand.

The thing is, neo-liberal economics assumes that the market is ideal and price controls would lead to its distortion, which can trigger a shortage. The reality, however, is that the market is already distorted by artificial shortages brought about by hoarding engendered by the speculative rent-seeking behavior of opportunistic traders. It is in this context that putting a cap on the price of rice in the short term may be a bitter pill to take to stave off the further increase in its price. It is in situations like this that limited government intervention may be beneficial in the short run.

However, putting a price cap in place should only be a temporary remedy and should not be a standalone response. It should be lifted as soon as farmers begin harvesting their crops. More importantly, government should really crack the whip on hoarding.

It is simply unconscionable that hoarding remains a problem, and hoarders appear like invisible phantoms. It is simply unbelievable that these distorters of markets who profit from the misery of consumers cannot be identified, and their storage facilities cannot be located. If there is a more valid use of intelligence and confidential funds, it would be in hunting and taking them down. It is simply enraging that the government appears helpless in dealing with hoarding. It would not be wrong to suspect that the failure may be because hoarders have political protection.

Imposing price caps, albeit temporary and short-term, would benefit consumers in the short run. Losers include rice traders who will be forced to sell at a lower price. Government should devise mechanisms to ensure that no immediate shortage would ensue due to sellers opting out of the market. While farmers may be affected, the impact may be minimized if their harvests are already bought by traders and they are waiting for their next harvest.

One of the casualties of the price cap policy decision appears to be former finance undersecretary Cielo Magno, who was forced to resign after she publicly posted online what appeared to be a subtle dig opposing the measure. Many have joined in the spinning of her resignation as another condemnable act by the Marcos Jr. government. On the contrary, Magno should have known that while she can express her disagreement with official government policy in internal meetings and discussions, where she can even write a dissenting memorandum, she cannot publicly contradict official government policy. She was technically working as an undersecretary for the alter ego of the President. It can be said that she violated the standards of decorum expected of her.

But it seems Magno acted willfully and with knowledge of the consequences. She has been quoted as saying: "I knew when I posted the supply and demand graph that my boss would receive a call from Malacañang to remove me. But I did it anyway." In hindsight, she would have made a stronger political statement if she tendered her resignation on the day she posted her statement on social media, without waiting to be asked to resign. Doing so could have bestowed on her act a stronger air of righteous defiance without violating the decorum expected from civil servants and political appointees.

A collateral injury to the Marcos government was, however, self-inflicted. Instead of dealing with Magno's departure as quietly as possible, Malacañang had to publicly disclose her resignation and even release a statement to the media. And it was not just a statement, but one that effectively threw Magno under the bus. The statement read: "The termination of her appointment could only be expected as she clearly does not support the administration and its programs for nation-building." The statement further stressed that while the right to free speech is respected, "it would be counterintuitive to have someone be part of the administration who was clearly set on maligning it to begin with."

These are fairly strong words. What is strange is that the statement alleged that Magno "has been against the policies of this administration and made it known to the public on social media long before the President assumed office." It behooves us to ask, even defying logic, how can Magno be faulted for criticizing the policies of an administration that has not even started yet. Besides, if they already knew that Magno was against the would-be policies of the yet-to-be seated Marcos administration, it begs the question of why she was appointed undersecretary in the first place.

But what is most egregious about Malacañang's castigatory tone toward Magno was its utter selectiveness when compared with the other departures from the Marcos administration. We did not see anything comparable when former executive secretary Victor Rodríguez or former press secretary Rose Beatrix Cruz-Angeles left their posts. The departure of the controversial former presidential adviser for creative communications, Paul Soriano, was just as discreet as it was obviously stage-managed, despite the noise generated by rumors of his alleged involvement in the rebranding fiasco of our tourism slogan.

What happened to Magno is a lesson for those who may be drawn in by the call to unity by the President, and think that it has room for disagreement. It has none. And worse, if you happen to have a history of being critical of Marcos or even of his predecessor, you will definitely not be accorded the courtesy of being gracefully, in Malacañang's word, "terminated."

The Manila Times®

Date: Sept. 14, 2023 Page: B4

Price cap must be lifted eventually

MOVING FORWARD

WILLIAM D. DAR

I HAVE been keeping abreast on developments over the price cap the government has imposed on the retail prices of rice to protect consumers and discourage hoarding.

Executive Order 39 mandates that the price of regular milled rice (RMR) is P41 per kilogram and well-milled rice (WMR) at P45 per kilogram. Prior to the imposition of the rice cap, I observed that the prices of RMR was from P45 to P50 per kilo, and WMR up to P55 per kilo.

To cushion the effects of the price cap on rice retailers, the government is distributing P15,000 in cash aid to them.

There is also a proposal to lower the tariffs on imported rice from the current 35 percent to 10 or zero percent, which may reduce the retail prices of rice. A number of the members of Congress are also favoring the reduction of rice tariffs.

And if the tariff reduction is implemented, I highly recommend that the rice price cap be lifted immediately.

The rice price cap and lowering of tariffs on imported rice are but short-term measures to ensure the staple remains affordable to more consumers, especially the poor. And it is high time we get most if not all the possible long-term measures in place, so the challenges we are currently facing when it comes to rice supply won't happen again.

I am also aware of the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program (MRIDP) and its objectives, and believe this program can level up the country's rice industry. And I believe there are three major areas that we must focus on to make sure all Filipinos will have access to affordable and quality rice in the next years ahead.

Three major areas

The three major areas are: attaining economies of scale; "Build, Build, Build" for the countryside targeting production of rice and other crops; and applying relentlessly technology and innovation.

For attaining economies scale, initiatives should be focused on clustering farms and organizing farmers into cooperatives, and getting the private sector involved.

At present, most farmland holdings in the Philippines are more or less 1 hectare in size, making it impossible for traditional farmers to engage in crop production efficiently and profitably. I have heard stories of farmers attaining high yields and handsome profits with one or less than a hectare of land. But these farms are utilizing numerous technologies like hybrid seeds, mechanization, digitalization, among others, to ramp up production. I wish this would be the norm nationwide in a few more years.

For its part, the private sector already has vast experience in clustering farms and organizing farmers, allowing cultivators to easily adopt various technologies also from the private sector. And I must state that the private sector has made great strides in developing technologies and good practices for ramping up farm production.

It is also vital for the private sector that their clustered farmer-partners attain economies of scale, as private companies also seek the best, but not lowest, price for their raw material needs. And the best prices can be attained when production volume is increased and the cost of production is lowered.

For the "Build, Build, Build" component, the long-term solution is to irrigate an additional 1 million hectares of rice farms. According to the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), it can irrigate around 1.3 million hectares of rice farms nationwide. So imagine the result if another 1 million hectares could be added to that.

To complement the expansion of irrigated rice lands, we must also build more dams and rainwater catchments. This will allow the saving of water, especially during the rainy season where much of the water from the rains cause floods and flow out to the seas.

The other infrastructure we need to make the country's rice sector more resilient are farm-to-market roads (FMRs) and trading posts that will allow farmers to sell their produce at better wholesale prices. And with more FMRs, farmers will be encouraged to troop to the trading posts to sell their produce.

The third component is applying relentlessly technology and innovation in rice farming and the agriculture sector as a whole. I believe that there is already an abundance of applicable technologies and innovation available to ramp up local rice production such as high-yielding hybrid seeds and balanced fertilization strategy.

Research for development on rice cultivation should also be fervently pursued and funded, with research institutions like the Philippine Rice Research Institute, and state universities and colleges taking the lead. And I am sure that the private sector also has their own research initiatives to improve rice production that they are sharing with their farmer-partners.

While there are a number of external factors that we cannot control, like India banning the export of non-basmati rice and conflicts that have hiked the price of oil and food, I still believe that concerted and focused action among all actors and stakeholders in the country's rice industry will prevent in the future the situation we are experiencing now.

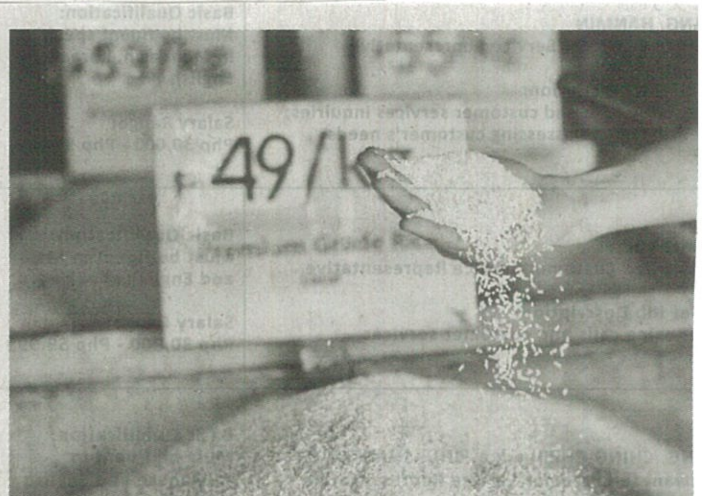
And I also believe that President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos is setting the right direction in ramping up local rice production and supply. Let us rally behind him.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A10

Govt forms team to monitor rice prices in NCR

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas
@jearcalas

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has formed a 48-person team that would monitor the implementation of the mandated price ceiling on rice in wet markets and supermarkets in the National Capital Region (NCR).



A MAN checks rice at a store in Quezon City, Philippines, on Monday, August 14, 2023. AP/AARON FAVILA/FILE

Senior Agriculture Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban issued Special Order (SO) 1125 series of 2023 which authorized the 48 personnel from the DA and the National Food Authority (NFA) to monitor the implementation of Executive Order (EO) 39.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., who is also concurrently the country's agriculture chief, issued EO 39 which imposed a price ceiling on regular-milled rice at P41 per kilogram and well-milled rice at P45 per kg.

"The following personnel from the DA operating units are hereby directed to conduct monitoring activities on the implementation of EO No. 39 including monitoring and investigation of abnormal price movement in all public and private markets, supermarkets, and grocery stores in the National Capital Region [NCR]," Panganiban said in the SO published recently.

Under the SO, 29 of the inspectors would come from the DA Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service (AMAS) while 8 are from the DA Field Operations Service (FOS). An additional 11 NFA personnel will join the team as deputized by the DA's Memorandum Order 62 series of 2023.

The monitoring team would conduct its activity daily from Monday to Sunday. The team would be exempted from their regular official time of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and from using biometric bundy clocks, according to the DA.

"They are entitled to compensatory time offsetting for work rendered during the weekend," the SO read.

SO 1125 stipulated that the monitoring team is entitled to a travelling allowance amounting to P350 per day per staff or P150 per day per staff if they will use government vehicles for their monitoring activities.

The budget would come from the funds of DA-AMAS or the Office of the Secretary, subject to budget availability and usual government accounting and auditing rules and regulations, according to the document.

The SO will only be revoked upon the lifting of EO 39, according to the DA.

The agriculture chief earlier said the implementation of the rice price ceiling is "going well." ***(Related story: https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/09/13/after-initial-supply-crunch-rice-price-cap-eo-going-well-pbbm/)***

Pilipino Star
NGAYON
Diyaryong disente ng masang intelihente

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: 4

Editoryal

Wish sa DA

SA ika-66th birthday ni President Ferdinand Marcos kahapon, nahiling o na-wish niya na maging matatag na ang suplay at presyo ng bigas at iba pang agricultural products. Si Marcos din ang nanunungkulang Agriculture secretary na hinawakan niya mula nang maupong Presidente noong Hunyo 1, 2022. Nabanggit niyang dahilan sa pag-upo bilang DA chief ay sapagkat napapabayaan ito. Wala raw sistema. Gusto raw niyang magkaroon ng sistema na titiyak sa seguridad ng pagkain sa bansa. Gusto rin daw niyang makalasap ng murang pagkain ang mamamayan, food security at murang pagkain sa bansa. Sinisikap rin daw niyang mabigyan ng tulong ang mga magsasaka.

Ang pangako ni Marcos noong nakaraang taon at ngayong nagdiwang siya ng kaarawan ay walang ipinagkaiba. Pawang ang pagpapabuti at pag-stable ng supply at presyo ng bigas at iba pang agri products ang kanyang minimithing matupad. Wala siyang ibang hangad kundi ang magkaroon ng sapat na pagkain sa hapag ang mga Pilipino.

Subalit mahigit isang taon na ang nakararaan mula nang pamunuan niya ang DA, wala pang nalalasap na pagbabago ang mamamayan. Hindi pa nakakalasap ng murang presyo ng bigas at tumaas pa nga—P60 per kilo. Para mapigilan, nag-isyu ng Executive Order 39 si Marcos na nagtatakda sa P40 hanggang P45 ang kilo ng bigas. Umaray naman ang rice retailers dahil lugi sila. Binili nila ng mahal ang bigas at saka ibibenta nang mura. Ang solusyon: binigyan ng ayuda ang rice retailers.

Ang nakapagtatakang pagmahal ng bigas ay hindi naman mabatid kung ano ang dahilan. Habang nagmamahal ang bigas, marami namang nakaimbak na mga bigas sa bodega na hinihinalang smuggled. Hanggang ngayon, isang buwan na ang nakalilipas mula nang i-raid ang mga bodega, walang report kung legal ang mga nakaimbak na bigas.

Ang nakababanas namang suhestiyon mula sa ilang opisyal ng DA, para raw masolusyunan ang pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas ay dapat umangkat. Wala nang ibang paraan na nakikita ang DA kundi umangkat ng bigas. Sabi ng kapatid ng Presidente na si Sen. Imee Marcos, para raw matigil na ang pagdurusa ng magsasakang Pilipino todo-import na lang ang gawin! Nababanas na rin ang senadora dahil sa bawat kibot ng DA, ang pag-angkat ng bigas ang namumutawi sa labi.

Minsan, nasabi ni Marcos Jr. na masakit para sa kanya ang mag-angkat nang mag-angkat ng bigas. Sinabi niya ito noong kauupo pa lamang. Pero ang tanong, kung masakit sa kalooban, bakit patuloy pa rin ang pag-angkat. Bakit sa halip na mag-angkat ay pagtuunan ang pagpaparami ng sariling ani.

Sana, magawa ito ng DA. Sana maisakatuparan ito ng DA.

REMATE
ANG DIARYO NG MASA

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: 4

MISTERYOSONG RICE PRICE CAP

HABANG pinalalabas ng gobyerno na nilalabanan nito ang hoarders at mga nagmamanipula ng presyo, ang totoong napupuruhan sa problema ay ang mga nagtitinda patingi-tingi ng bigas, mga magsasaka, at mga ordinaryong mamamayan na matagal nang hirap magdelihensiya nang pagsasaluhan sa mesa.

At ang reyalidad sa usapang ekonomiya, ramdam ng mga rice retailer ang epekto ng price cap na ipinatutupad ng administrasyong Marcos. Tumataginting na P7,500 kada araw – ito ang nalulugi sa kanila dahil sa polisiyang ito, at ramdam nila ang 7,500 dahilan para madismaya. Hindi ito maliit na halaga, dahil kung susumahin, aabot ito sa kabuuang P49,000 kada linggo.

Dagdag insulto pa nang binigyang-katwiran ng administrasyon ang taas-presyo ng bigas na epekto raw ng hoarding at pagmamanipula sa presyuhan. Puring-puri naman ng National Economic and Development Authority ang price cap, sinabing ang pagtataas ng presyo ng bigas ay bahagi raw talaga ng isang sabwatan.

Marahil siguro nga.

Pero ano nga bang ginagawa n'yo, Finance Secretary Ben Diokno, na sumuporta pa talaga sa kalokohang price control na ito? Sinabi ni Diokno na isa itong panandaliang remedyo laban sa mga naghahari-harian sa merkado sa paggawa ng mga non-competitive practice. Mr. Diokno, minsan, ang panandaliang remedyo ay nagreresulta sa pangmatagalang sakit ng ulo.

Baka lang nakalimutan ni Diokno ang itinuturo ng economic theory: ang pagtatakda ng mandatory price cap ay magpapalaki ng demand at magbabawas sa supply, na nauuwi sa kakulangan.

Napapailing na lang sa pagkadismaya ang mga ekonomista. Si Finance Undersecretary Cielo Magno, na ang Facebook post ay may patama sa maling desisyon ng Pangulo na magpatupad ng rice price cap, ay napataas ng kilay. Ayon sa insiders, pinagbitiw raw siya sa puwesto dahil lang sa pagpo-post ng isang simpleng chart ng law of supply and demand.

Bagama't isa lamang itong pangkaraniwang academic discussion, malinaw na hindi ito matanggap ng administrasyon sa paraan ng isang edukado. Isa raw iyong insulto sa Punong Ehekutibong nag-aral sa Wharton! Ito marahil ang dahilan kaya hindi niya kinonsulta ang sariling economic team bago niya bitiwan ang price control bomb. Kahit mismong si Diokno, aminadong nagulat siya!

Ano kaya ang tunay na agenda ng lahat ng ito?

Isang matalinong trade official ang nagbigay ng clue: siguro raw, may posibilidad na ang paandar na price cap na ito ay isa lamang set-up para sa ibang bagay. Buksan kaya natin ang floodgates para sa rice imports? Bagama't totoong agarang remedyo ang hatid ng pagpapababa sa taripa at pagpapahintulot na dumagsa sa merkado ang mga bigas mula sa ibang bansa, hindi sasapat ang mga ito para maresolba ang totoong problema.

Tanungin natin ang Presidente. Ay, nalimutan ko, 66th birthday pala niya, at iniwan na naman niya tayong nagaabang, dahil may mas importante raw na dapat niyang pagtuunan ng pansin kaysa tugunan ang problema ng ating ekonomiya at supply ng pagkain: ang 30-minutong speech na nakatakdang ilahad niya sa Milken Institute sa Singapore.

SHORT BURSTS. Para sa mga komento o reaksiyon, mag-email sa firingline@ymail.com o mag-tweet sa @Side_View sa X app (dating Twitter).

REMATE
ANG DIARYO NG MASA

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: 5

EDITORYAL

MAS KAILANGAN NG MGA MAGSASAKA

SINIMULAN na ng Department of Social Welfare and Development ang pamamahagi ng P15,000 cash assistance sa maliliit na nagtitinda ng bigas o iyong nagtitinda ng patingi-tingi na naapektuhan ng ipinatutupad ng pamahalaang rice price cap bunga ng biglang pagsirit ng presyo nito.

Noong Sabado nga base sa ulat ay umabot na sa mahigit 200 ang grains retailers na nakatanggap ng ayuda sa Metro Manila pa lamang. Nabatid na maliliit na magtitinda ng bigas sa buong bansa ang makikinabang sa ayudang mula sa DSWD sa pamamagitan ng kanilang Sustainable Livelihood Program.

Ang local government units ay nakipagtulungan sa DSWD sa pagtalima sa kautusan ni Pangulong Bongbong Marcos kaugnay sa pagbibigay ng ayuda sa mga naapektuhan ng rice price cap.

Ang mga economic manager ng pamahalaan, nagpahayag ng suporta sa ginawang hakbang ng Pangulo kaugnay sa pagtatakip nito sa presyo ng bigas. Sinasabi na ang mga nagtitinda ng tingi sa bigas ang higit na naapektuhan nang pagsirit ng presyo ng bigas sa merkado dahil sa kakulangan.

Inihayag ng gobyerno na nilalabanan nila ang pagtatago o hoarding ng bigas na nagresulta sa biglang pagtaas ng presyo nito bunga nang pagdami ng nangangailangan. Kaya nga napilitan umano ang gobyerno na ipag-utos ang rice price cap o ang pagpigil ng pamahalaan para sa mga nagbebenta na magtaas ng presyo.

Pinayagan lang ang mga retailer na magbenta ng bigas sa halagang P41 kada kilo sa regular milled rice at P45 bawat kilo ng well miled rice. Pero totohanan ba ang pagbebentang ginawa nila? Merong nagbebenta na kontrolado ang ginagawang pagbebenta sa mga mamamayang nagpakahirap pumila para lang makabili ng isa o dalawang kilong bigas.

Natural, negosyante ang mga iyan at hindi papayag na malaki ang malugi sa kanila. Nilimitahan nila ang kanilang binili at ibinentang bigas matapos mabalitaang makatatanggap sila ng ayuda mula sa pamahalaan.

Sino ba talaga ang dapat makinabang sa mga ayuda kaugnay sa bigas? Ang mga magsasaka sa bansa! Sila ang higit na dapat makinabang sa tulong mula sa pamahalaan sa usapin ng tulong pinansyal. Kung ang ipinamahagi sana ng DSWD na ayuda sa retailers, eh nakabili sana ng magagandang punla at abono ang mga magsasaka.

Ang mga magsasaka ang nagpapakahirap sa buong maghapon na magtanim at mag-alaga ng palay para maging bigas na isasaing sa bawat tahanan pero sila yata ang nakakalimutan ng gobyerno. Sila ang madalas na biktima ng kalamidad pero sila rin ang madalas mabiktima ng mga mapagsamantalang mga negosyante na pumapakyaw este, nambabarat ng kanilang palay bago pa man mag-anihan.

Mag-isip dapat ang pamahalaan o mga ahensiya ng gobyerno na nasa ilalim ng pamamahala ni Pangulong Marcos tulad ng Department of Agriculture at DSWD, Department of Finance at maging ang National Economic and Development Authority.

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
Everybody's Newspaper

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: 2

MARCOS' BIRTHDAY WISH: A BETTER AGRI SECTOR

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. hopes for a better agricultural sector in the Philippines in order to sustain the livelihood of Filipino farmers.

"(Sana) maging maayos na ang agrikultura at malaman na natin kung ano ba talaga ang weather – wet season ba? o dry season para naman matulungan natin 'yung mga farmer natin," remarked President Marcos, when asked if he has any birthday wish as he turns 66 years old on Thursday, September 13.

President Marcos was greeted by the employees of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and guests at the sidelines of the presentation of the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the New Agrarian Emancipation Act (Republic Act No. 11953) and the signing of the Executive Order extending the moratorium on agrarian debt on Tuesday.

The chief executive, who is also the concurrent secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA), emphasized that ensuring the welfare of Filipino farmers, and praying to protect their crops and abundant harvests have always been his birthday wish.

As the DAR presented the IRR of RA 11953, the President announced, "I have also signed just now Executive Order (EO) for the two-year extension of EO No. 4, s. 2023."

The ARBs need continuous economic relief due to the disruptive effects of the pandemic, climate change, and the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. The extension of EO 4 aims to include ARBs not covered by the NAEA, which only covers ARBs who have been indebted to the government as law took effect last July. *PCO*

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: 2

Sugar industry receives P314-M grant from Japan

By DANESSA RIVERA

The Philippines' sugarcane industry has received a P314-million grant from the Japanese government as part of the farm mechanization program.

"(The grant is) very timely as we just started the new milling season and we in the industry are grateful to both the Japanese government and our own for this initiative that will go a long way in helping our sugar farmers become more efficient and productive," said Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) administrator Pablo Azcona.

The grant is part of a 2021 agreement between the Department of Finance (DOF), the SRA and Japan.

Funded under the Japan Non-Project Grant Aid, 80 tractor units and other farm equipment will be provided. Of that number, 15 units will be deployed to sugarcane areas in Luzon, 51 units in the Visayas and 14 in Mindanao.

There will be 24 units sent to Negros Occidental in the Visayas, 11 in Negros Oriental, six in Iloilo, four in Leyte and three each in Cebu and Capiz. Also included are 48 sugarcane planters, 48 lateral flair mowers and five power harrows.

Under the 2021 deal, the SRA will own the farm machinery and implements. They will submit an impact assessment report to the DOF and Japan three years after the program's implementation.

The farm machinery and implements will be consigned to select farmers' groups for a fee proportional to maintenance costs to ensure the program's sustainability.

No imports

The Philippines has a two-month buffer stock of sugar so there will be no sugar importation for the rest of the year, according to the SRA.

"There may be more, but the administration has two months or more buffer stock. We have a stable supply," Azcona said in Filipino in a radio interview.

At least 550,000 metric tons of sugar were imported this year, including the controversial 400,000 MT awarded to three importers that were not approved by the SRA and 150,000 MT buffer stock.

For crop year 2023-2024 or from Sept. 1 to Aug. 30, 2024, the total sugar production will reach an estimated 1.85 million MT, according to SRA.

"The milling started on Sept. 1 as we delayed the start. Last year, it was August. We already saw the effect of delaying milling to Sept. 1, there is an increase in the yield," Azcona noted.

He said the current weather is still favorable.

"What we are afraid of is in Negros, where majority of production comes from. The soil is a bit dry in November to January and then if there will be severe El Niño, the growing sugarcane for harvest may be sometime in March, April, May will be affected," he added.

If the country will not experience severe El Niño, there would be a slight increase in sugar production, Azcona said.

In its Sugar Order No. 1 S-2023-2024, the SRA said sugar production is expected to be around 1.85 million MT, which shall be quedanned by mill companies as "B" or for the domestic market.

Despite a sugar oversupply, Azcona said retail prices remained high at P110 per kilo in supermarkets.

"As of now the prevailing price (in the markets) is P85 (per kilo) and then it is high in the supermarket at P110 (per kilo) depending on brand. Personally, I feel it's a bit high, it should be P85 (per kilo) only. It (differs) on packaging and branding," Azcona noted.

Consumers have complained of high sugar prices, which have refused to come down to the P50-P55 a kilo in 2021 despite several importations and harvests.

– With Bella Cariaso

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: Sept. 14, 2023 Page: 6

FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

Sacrificed

At the end of this useless controversy over rice price capping, our farmers will find themselves at the sacrificial table. As usual.

The business community has now reached a consensus that cutting the tariff on imported rice is a more sustainable way of dealing with the price spikes than the imposition of price caps on retailers. This policy path was first proposed by the Foundation for Economic Freedom and has since been endorsed by the Department of Finance – the agency that was not consulted when the executive order was framed.

At present, tariffs of imported rice is pegged at 35 percent. The economists want this brought down to near-zero.

Bringing down the tariffs will have immediate and palpable effects on rice prices. But it will have two adverse consequences: it will depress farm gate prices for domestic rice and it will deprive government of a sizable source of revenue earmarked for "modernizing" our rice sector. Over time, this will deplete domestic rice production.

The second adverse consequence will still boomerang on our farmers. It will reduce the flow of government support to the sector. Eventually, it will hamper the adoption of higher-yield hybrid varieties dependent on expensive fertilizer inputs.

There will, no doubt, be some political profit to be made from arresting the spike in rice prices. This is what the price caps are all about in the first place: it is meant to conserve the approval ratings of the administration. It is not meant to cause any structural improvement in our agriculture. This is a political game.

Bringing down tariff rates on imported rice will likely be countervailed by rising regional prices for the commodity because of expectation that climate change will eventually tell on each country's food security. The rice we import tomorrow will be more costly than what we imported yesterday.

At any rate, a dramatic reduction in tariffs will leave our farmers naked before market forces. Many of them might abandon their farms, as many have already done in the past years.

Our rice production is simply unprepared to compete in an unprotected market. For decades, we expected the same farm system and subsistence production technology that provided for the nation when our population was only 20 million to feed all 120 million of us today. That is an impossible mission.

We now live in an age of vertical farming and the widespread use of artificial intelligence in agriculture. Yet our farmers are still drying out their harvest by appropriating national roads – leading to a loss of about 20 percent of the crop. Electric rice driers ensure uniform moisture content. But they are far too expensive for subsistence rice farmers to acquire, especially as energy costs have spiked as well.

Without the high rate of spoilage and spillage, we must have been self-sufficient for years. But we invested in subsidies intended to help a backward agricultural system survive than in reconfiguring our production system.

Rice is a politically-charged commodity in this country. For decades, our agricultural policy has been geared to make rice as affordable as possible – even if this meant compressing farmer incomes. The result is to make rice cultivation a poverty trap. Among rice farmers, income from cultivating the crop is becoming a smaller and smaller share of total family income. The average age of our rice farmers is getting much older. No one wants to be a rice farmer if they can help it.

Yet our agricultural policy has not shifted. We are still aiming to conserve the old subsistence system through free irrigation and fertilizer support. This makes self-sufficiency such an elusive goal.

The rice price caps is simply an extension of the old arrangement that produced unspeakable rural poverty. It does not address the structural problem that burdens the national effort to feed ourselves.

This policy will probably become the final blow that drives our rice farmers to extinction.

Excise taxes

The usual suspects at the Department of Agriculture deny playing a role in crafting this crazy policy of capping the retail price of rice now wreaking havoc in the supply and distribution chains – as the basic law of supply and demand might have forewarned us.

If the economic management team was not consulted on this policy and if the agriculture technocrats did not initiate it, we are left with the last possible suspect: House Speaker Martin Romualdez, a constant presence in every presidential entourage. The Speaker has mysteriously materialized in raids conducted on rice warehouses. Clearly, he sees managing rice prices a strong platform for his political future.

In the raids so far conducted, no hoarding has been established and no hoarders arrested. The convenient bogeyman for the most simplistic diagnosis of our agricultural failure is quickly turning out to be fake.

The other day, the office of Speaker Romualdez announced he would convene a meeting of players in the oil industry in an effort to curb price increases. Oil, like rice, is a politically explosive commodity.

We all know that oil prices are dictated by global supply constraints caused by the effort of Saudi Arabia and Russia to choke production. If the administration decides to adopt the same heavy-handed bureaucratic approach used against rice retailers, we would have an oil crisis in no time.

The only way to bring down oil prices in the near-term is to cut the excise taxes imposed on the imported commodity. But government will lose a reliable source of revenue.

★

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: Sept. 14, 2023 Page: 6

EYES WIDE OPEN

IRIS GONZALES

Supply and demand problems, from molasses to chicken

Supply and demand. Supply and demand. It's the most overused phrase in economics, equivalent perhaps as when your beloved softly whispers "I love you" in your ears and you echo the words right back at him or her. It's not surprising though because this three-word term provides the answer to every economic puzzle – supply and demand, I mean; not I love you.

Why are vegetable prices so high now? Supply and demand.

Why are oil prices skyrocketing? Supply and demand.

Why are wages so low? Supply and demand.

It's true now as it was true ages ago and it's perhaps the reason why the Victorian era British philosopher Thomas Carlyle came up with the famous humorous quote: If you teach a parrot the terms "supply and demand," then you've got an economist.

This age-old comical glib comes to mind now as all eyes and ears are on the developments surrounding the rice crisis of our time, supposedly caused by an artificial shortage created by misbehaving rice hoarders who want to keep prices high by curbing supply.

But did you know that aside from rice, supply and demand problems are also affecting many of our local industries – from molasses to chicken and many other commodities?

Ethanol producers on a bitter fight for molasses

The Ethanol Producers Association of the Philippines (EPAP), for instance, is having a hard time securing molasses for their bioethanol production because the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) does not allow the regulated importation of the product.

Molasses, a by-product of extracting sugar from sugarcane, is used by distilleries to produce ethanol.

It's a problem that's been hounding the industry for years now but in a recent chat, EPAP chairman Gerry Tee hopes that while the Marcos administration has put the spotlight on the rice industry, it would also take a serious look at the plight of ethanol producers.

Ethanol producers lament that they are not allowed to import molasses for biofuels even if local supply – approximately 1.1 million metric tons (MMT) – is not enough to meet the demand of 1.5 MMT per year. There is a shortage of 500,000 MT.

But the SRA does not allow regulated importation of molasses for ethanol production, saying that the Biofuels Act of 2006 mandates that all liquid fuels sold in the Philippines must contain locally sourced bioethanol.

However, EPAP argued that it is only the raw material, which is molasses, that is imported; the biofuel itself is still locally produced.

The situation has been a source of frustration for ethanol producers.

Tee believes the SRA may not be able to appreciate the plight of ethanol producers for the very simple reason that it is mandated to promote the growth of the sugar industry and whose board includes sugar millers and planters.

Naturally, he explains, sugar industry players will benefit when imported molasses do not compete with their produce and of course, when prices go up. Molasses is now at P15,000 per metric ton from just around P2,800 in 2011.

EPAP believes that instead of the SRA – which could inevitably be beholden to the sugar industry – the ethanol industry is better off under the regulatory supervision of the Department of Energy, whose mandate is to ensure energy security in the country, which ethanol producers can play a big role in.

Biofuels Act

The landmark Biofuels Act, which mandates that all liquid fuels for engines sold in the Philippines be blended with biofuels, is a good law and if implemented well, translates to environmental and economic benefits.

A study conducted by the University of the Philippines Los Baños showed that from 2019 to 2020, the Philippines has so far avoided 268,091.15 carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) per year, which translates to savings of P683.63 million – which could mean the cost of long-term damage on agriculture, transport infrastructure, etc., if greenhouse gas emissions were not avoided.

Local vs imported chicken

Now while ethanol producers need imported molasses, the situation is different for the local chicken industry.

Competition from cheap chicken imports continues to hurt poultry players because even big food businesses in the Philippines are turning to imports.

But this is not necessarily good. Some imported chicken meat, we hear, are usually injected with more water and additives to make them plump and heavier to adhere to standard size and weight when shipped. British newspaper *The Guardian* published an investigative report on this years ago.

The downside of this is that these chicken parts inevitably lose their flavor when cooked in hot frying oil.

On the other hand, local chicken remains fresh and tastier because they are not injected with as many additives as a product may need when it needs to be shipped.

Could this be the reason why a Filipino chicken favorite has been the subject of complaints online as consumers noted that chicken servings have become smaller in size and that they are not as juicy as they used to be?

We don't really know for sure but I'm sure this chicken favorite and perhaps other chicken chains in the country can support our local producers if they buy domestically instead of importing chicken from abroad.

Competence

So yes, clearly, some of our local industries are in big trouble. They badly need all the support they can get. But why does it sometimes feel there aren't enough competent policymakers and regulators helping them?

The answer is simple – supply and demand. But that's another story.

* * *

Email: *eyesgonzales@gmail.com*. Follow her on Twitter @*eyesgonzales*. Column archives at EyesWideOpen on FB.

★

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: Sept. 14, 2023 Page: B4

The price of rice

The government recently ordered to set the retail market ceilings for rice prices in an effort to bring down rice price inflation.

Rice price ceilings. As far as I know, this is the first time in decades that the government has decided to set direct price ceilings for rice being traded at retail at a national level. It is true that in times of emergency (especially natural disasters), price controls are imposed in localities affected by local disasters and emergencies. It is different to do so at a national level.

CROSSROADS
Toward Philippine Economic and Social Progress

GERARDO P. SICAT

The government has been using indirect measures of to influence the price of rice: imports, tariff protection, adjusting the prices paid to farmers for their harvests through the operations of the National Food Authority.

Executive Order 39 set the price ceilings on regular and well-milled rice in the whole country, which took effect on Sept. 5. The government price order is justified under the Price Act, a law passed in 1992 (R.A. 7581) as further amended in 2013 (R.A. 10623).

The price ceiling for "regular milled" rice is P41 per kilo while for "well-milled" rice at P45/kilo.

According to data from the Department of Agriculture, the average price per kilo of regular milled rice in 2022 was P38 and for well-milled rice, P42. But the price in August last month was in the range of P42 to P45 for regular milled rice and P47 to P55.

The rice order was justified under the Price Act. In general, the provision of the Price Act is that price ceilings are designed to cover special emergencies and are temporary in character. As far as it seemed, the order was reacting to price developments that were being influenced by global price changes. But there is no imminent national emergency.

The general provision on price control under the Price Act is sufficiently well-stated in the law: Unless sooner lifted by the President, price control of basic necessities shall remain effective for the duration of the condition that brought it about, but not for more than 60 days.

In short, the price control ceilings under the EO were intended to be temporary. But it is a very sharp order, designed to be followed by traders, with heavy penalty provisions for infractions.

Since costs are changing, such an order could even worsen the market situation. Traders dependent merely on distributing goods could be severely caught in heavy losses. Big traders could protect their interests, but not the myriad small traders in the land.

And explanations undertaken by the Department of Agriculture about future harvests expected and import supply contracts executed were designed to reassure the general public.

Setting price ceilings on a national level caught the nation by surprise. There is no national emergency calling for it, and there are gentler and more effective ways of dealing with the impact of such price movements.

It is unfortunate that – as revealed by a statement of Finance Sec. Ben Diokno – that the economic managers were not consulted on the matter of the price ceiling order. (They were on mission abroad when the order was signed.)

Our country is a rice deficit country in production. Thus, we are not insulated from global price developments because we are a major importer of rice. In order to satisfy our national consumption needs, some supply needs to be bought as imports.

However, there are alternative remedies for short-run actions that are less disruptive to the market for rice than setting price ceilings.

For instance, the external tariff on rice is very high. Reducing the tariff on rice imports would help reduce the price of rice. Domestic measures to help the production sector become more highly productive needs to be put in place as a development measure.

This is part of the program that is designed to introduce greater efficiency in the matter of domestic rice agriculture.

Such a program, however, is the more challenging component of raising the capacity of the nation in agriculture and in the rice industry in particular.

Why rice prices have risen recently. For most of the years between 2010 and 2021, the level of grain prices – and that of rice – was relatively steady despite their occasional volatility.

Recently, rice prices have gone upward and threatening. These developments are part of the inflation story that many other countries are also experiencing. External factors have been dominant in explaining price developments.

Two major external forces have combined to make grain prices move upward.

(1) The Ukraine war has been a major source of grain market developments since February 2022 when Russia started the war. Ukraine and Russia are two major exporters of wheat (and fertilizer inputs) to the world. The disruption to the global supply of wheat is large and is a major cause of the current price turmoil in grains. The impact of wheat supply disruption also tightens the demand for rice.

(2) Climate change events have been very severe in the last year and have continued in intensity. The recent dry seasons and heavy rains have caused disruptions in the harvests of rice-growing areas within East Asia and elsewhere.

Recently, the announcement of rice export restrictions by India to protect domestic consumption has added uncertainty to the supply of grain in the global context. Such actions have heightened global tensions in rice and grain prices.

Price controls, as a matter of economic policy, never work well. They lead to greater economic scarcities because they influence the behavior of the affected economic agents – producers, consumers, traders – in unpredictable ways. Price controls can become a breeding ground for market disruptions.

The government needs to device a better approach to the rice price problem for the moment.

* * *

For archives of previous Crossroads essays, go to: https://www.philstar.com/authors/1336383/gerardo-p-sicat. Visit this site for more information, feedback and commentary: http://econ.upd.edu.ph/gpsicat/

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: 2

PH ships fresh mangoes to Australia

The Philippines exported its first batch of fresh mangoes to Sydney and Perth, giving Australians a taste of the Guinness Book of World Records' "sweetest mangoes in the world."

Local farms in the Davao del Sur municipalities of Malalag, Digos, Bansalan, and Magsaysay harvested the first shipment of the most popular mango type, Carabao, and shipped it to Australia on Sept. 8.

Mangoes are the most popular tropical fruit in the Philippines, where they are grown all year.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the production of mangoes in the Philippines for the first quarter of 2023 was expected to climb by two percent from the 94 thousand metric tons produced in the same quarter of 2022 to 95.86 thousand metric tons.

Meanwhile, data from the Philippine Department of Agriculture's High-Value Crops Development Program revealed that the country's fresh mango exports climbed from 8,804 MT in 2018 to 11,498 MT in 2022, with Hong Kong being the main market and Korea and Japan following closely behind.

The Department of Agriculture (DA), Fisheries, and Forestry (DAFF) approved trade to begin on Aug. 30, 2023, after months of planning and ensuring that the Specific Commodity Understanding (SCU) for the Importation of Fresh Mango Fruit from the Philippines to Australia is strictly complied with.

The Philippine Export Development Plan (PEDP) was introduced by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in connection with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) entering into force last June to maximize the nation's latent export potential.

In a news conference at Malacanang, DTI Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual stated that PEDP strives to address difficulties the Philippines faces in several economic sectors, particularly the exports sector, by maximizing the prospects for the nation's export growth.

Together with the Australia Philippines Business Council (APBC), the Philippine Trade and Investment Center (PTIC) - Sydney Commercial Counsellor Alma Argayoso hails this encouraging trade progress between the two nations. (Ma. Joselie C. Garcia)

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: SEPT. 14 2020 Page: 2

10 hectares at NBP compound alloted for vegetable production

BY JEFFREY DAMICOG

Ten hectares of land inside the New Bilibid Prison's (NBP) reservation in Muntinlupa City have been allotted for vegetable production, the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) said on Tuesday, Sept. 13.

In statement, BuCor said that "the land being develop in partnership with the DA (Department of Agriculture) will augment the agricultural production inside the NBP wherein persons deprived of liberties (PDLs) were tasked to plant vegetables."

The NBI has 200 hectares of vacant land in its 375.61-hectare reservation.

Last Tuesday, BuCor said that it opened another Kadiwa Pop-up Store at the NBP as birthday gift by the bureau of and the DA to President Marcos who celebrated his 66th birthday also last Tuesday.

Kadiwa is a "marketing initiative of DA, implemented through the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance (AMAS), which seeks to empower the farming community by providing a direct and effective farm-to-consumer food supply chain."

"Actually some of the vegetables sold at the Kadiwa were planted and harvested by our PDLS tulad ng talong, okra, ampalaya, kalabasa, patola, pechay, kangkong at saging na saba," BuCor Director General Gregorio Pio P. Catapang Jr. said.

"With the guidance of our Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin C. Remulla, this project is our way of bringing the government closer to the people," Catapang said.

Aside from the planting of vegetables, Catapang previously revealed that the Pambansang Bagsakan ng Bigas para sa Mamamayan (PBBM) will be launched at the NBP in October.

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: B2

PH to start exporting avocados to S. Korea

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE Philippines can now export Hass avocados to South Korea for the 2023-2024 season, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday.

Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban said the South Korean government had approved market access for the country's avocado exports, with commercial shipments expected to start later this month.

Panganiban made the announcement following the receipt of a letter from the Korean Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs-Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency.

"We thank the Korean government for finally approving the market access of our Hass avocado exports," he said.

The avocado exports are expected to be sourced from DA-BPI-accredited orchards and packing houses of Dole Philippines in Davao, Bukidnon and South Cotabato.

"Hass avocados have become popular in Korea as the main nutritional ingredients for salad and sandwiches," the DA said.

The protocol on "Plant Quarantine Import Requirements of Fresh 'Hass' Avocado fruits from the Philippines into the Republic of Korea" was signed and agreed by both countries on June 19, 2023 and became effective last September 8.

The DA said that market access of Hass avocado to South Korea was first requested by the Philippine government in 2009 but was put on hold due to the one-at-a-time policy for pest risk analysis. The request resumed after the Philippines secured market access for okra exports to South Korea in 2021.

The Agriculture department said that South Korea is a lucrative market for Philippine agricultural exports as it is one of the largest food-importing countries.

In 2022, South Korea was the fourth-largest destination of Philippine agri-food exports worth $574.27 million.

The Philippines also recorded a 9-percent increase in agri-fisheries exports to South Korea in the same year despite challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The country generated about $307.47 million in trade surplus with tropical fruits making up the majority, or 56 percent, of the agricultural exports.

"The increasing demand of Korean consumers for agricultural products with preferences for food with health and wellness benefits bodes well for Philippine agricultural exporters," said Aleli Maghirang, head of the Philippine Agriculture Office in Seoul.

The Philippines supplies 75 percent of fresh bananas; 100 percent of fresh pineapples and papayas; 5 percent of fresh mangoes; and is the sole exporter of fresh okra to South Korea.

The country also exports high-value seafood products such as abalone, sea cucumber, octopus, blood cockle, eel and fish to South Korea.

Maghirang said that this presents an opportunity for the DA to encourage the higher production of tropical fruits and high-value agricultural products to meet the growing demand of the South Korean market for healthy food choices.

Page ____ of ____

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: B4

Ilocos Norte coops to get rice centers

■ PhilMech Director Dionisio Alvindia speaks to the recipients of the two farmer cooperatives in Ilocos Norte who will be getting rice processing facilities under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund. PHOTO FROM PHILMECH FACEBOOK PAGE

TWO farmers' cooperatives and associations (FCAs) in Ilocos Norte signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) for the establishment of rice processing system (RPS) facilities under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Mechanization Program.

The FCAs include the Piddig Basi Multipurpose Cooperative and the Bacarra Zanjera Irrigators Multipurpose Cooperative, both operating in Ilocos Norte.

The RCEF-RPS project aims to reduce postharvest losses, boost farmers' income, improve the quality of milled rice and maximize the use of rice mechanization in the province.

"We are committed to assisting you in adopting mechanized farming techniques to achieve self-sufficiency in rice production because the farmers are the unrecognized heroes of our nation," PHilMech Director Dionisio Alvindia said.

Facilities under RPS Type 2 include two units of 12-toner mechanical dryers and a 2- to 3-ton per hour state-of-the-art rice mill worth P62 million.

Meanwhile, the RPS Type 3 includes three units of 12-toner mechanical dryers and a 4- to 5-ton per hour state-of-the-art rice mill worth P75 million.

Alvindia and PHilMech-Facility Management and Field Operation Division Acting Chief Mayville Castro, together with the municipal agriculturists and various government officials, were present during the MoA signing for the project early this month.

A total of 25 FCAs in the province and nearby rice-producing areas are expected to benefit from the project.

THE MANILA TIMES

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: B4

Stingless bee farming gaining ground

THE Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) has successfully pushed the propagation or farming of stingless bees as the market for bee products continue to expand.

The partners of BAR, an agency under the Department of Agriculture (DA), are various local government units, and state colleges and universities, and the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) Bee Program.

"Various communities in the Bicol Region, as well as in Batangas, Laguna and Quezon learned to propagate stingless bees for pollination and production of honey, pollen and propolis," BAR said.

The quality of bee products were also improved as the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards, another agency under the DA, consulted with stakeholders in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao. This led to the establishment of the standard for organic honey, allowing locally sourced wild honey to land a niche in the local and foreign markets, and provide opportunities to the Indigenous peoples in Mindoro to earn additional income.

BAR said in the past three years, the following farms have adopted the beekeeping technologies developed by the UPLB Bee Program: Balay Buhay sa Uma in Bulusan, Sorsogon; Yumi Farm in Tayabas, Quezon; Sayonora Farm in Majayjay, Laguna; Paradiso Farm in Mabitac, Laguna; Guimaras Mango Farm in Guimaras, as well as three municipalities in Lanao del Norte and Mangyan community in Loyal, Oriental Mindoro. Except for the latter, the aforementioned farms have also been developed as agritourism destinations.

In 2020, just before the pandemic, a project implemented by the UPLB Bee Program was funded by BAR to commercially propagate stingless bees for honey, pollen and propolis production by establishing a meliponary in Barangay Loyal, Victoria, Oriental Mindoro. This included establishing a bee product processing facility, and standardizing and packaging bee products for the local and international markets.

BAR said that what makes the project unique is it is implemented in collaboration with Pulot Tadyawan Association (PTA) that has 90 percent of its members belonging to the Mangyan communities. They initially received training on native bee management and sustainable way of harvesting honey in the wild from the UPLB Bee Program in partnership with the ABS-CBN Bantay Kalikasan, local government unit of Victoria and the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

"Further intensive training and facilities are needed to improve their skills on beekeeping and production of bee products. De-

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: B4

Stingless bee propagation are also helping far-flung communities earn income from the growing market for bee products. PHOTO FROM BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

spite the movement restrictions during the lockdown, PTA was able to receive stingless bee hives to serve as starter colonies. A bee product processing facility was also established in the barangay (village)," BAR said.

The facility was also used for storing raw propolis, harvested honey and pollen, and byproducts such as soaps, lip balms and repellents.

THE MANILA TIMES

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A3

SRA to deploy Japanese-funded farm machineries for sugar growers

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is set to deploy 80 tractor units and other farm equipment acquired through the Japan Non-Project Grant Aid to boost efficiency and productivity in sugarcane areas nationwide.

SRA said the Philippines received a total of 80 tractor units as well as 48 units of sugarcane planter, another 48 units of lateral flair mower and five units of power harrow amounting to a total of P314 million.

Pablo Azcona, SRA administrator, said in a statement 51 units of tractors will be deployed to sugarcane areas in the Visayas with Negros Occidental getting the bulk at 24 units, Negros Oriental,11; Iloilo, six; Leyte, four while Cebu and Capiz will be getting three each.

Azcona said Luzon sugar areas will be getting 15 tractors as Mindanao will have 14 units.

Under the Japan Non-Project Grant Aid that was entered into by the Department of Finance and the SRA with the Japanese government in 2021, SRA will be the owner of these farm machineries and implements procured through the grant and will submit an impact assessment report to the DOF and the Japan government three years after its implementation.

SRA said to ensure the sustainability of the program, the farm machineries and implements will also be consigned to select farmers group for a fee proportional to the cost of maintenance and upkeep of these.

Azcona said the distribution of the machineries is in time with the start of the new milling season.

BusinessWorld™

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: 2/S1

PHL to start avocado exports to South Korea this month

THE Philippines will start exporting Hass avocados to South Korea by the end of September, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

The DA said that the initial shipments will come from orchards accredited by the DA's Bureau of Plant Industry and the packaging operations of Dole Philippines, Inc. in Davao, Bukidnon, and South Cotabato.

"We thank the Korean government for finally approving market access for our Hass avocado exports," (DA) Senior Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban said in a statement.

The DA said that the initial agreement was signed on June 19 and took effect on Sept. 8 for produce harvested during the 2023-2024 season.

"Hass avocados have become popular in Korea as the main nutritional ingredients for salad and sandwiches. They are available at leading retail stores and online markets, in fresh and frozen form, but are mostly from Latin America," the DA said.

The government initially requested export access for Hass avocados in 2009 but was blocked due to pest concerns.

"The PRA (Pest Risk Analysis) for Hass avocado resumed after the Philippines' success in securing market access for okra exports to Korea in 2021," it added.

Additionally, the DA will promote Philippine avocados through its agriculture office in Seoul, in collaboration with Dole Korea Ltd.

Aleli Maghirang, the agriculture attaché in Seoul, said that there is an increasing demand for agricultural products in South Korea, especially those items associated with healthy lifestyles. — **Adrian H. Halili**

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A14

DA Livestock Usec: subsidy possible, but first, vaccines vs ASF must hurdle trials

NEWLY installed Agriculture Under-secretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor "DV" Savellano delivers his message during a "meet and greet" session with the National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. which invited him as guest at their General Meeting at Luxent Hotel in Quezon City on Wednesday. ROY DOMINGO

By Reine Juvierre S. Alberto

THE Philippine government is mulling over subsidizing the commercial rollout of African swine fever (ASF) vaccine in the future—assuming those under trial are proven effective, a high-ranking agriculture official said.

"Dapat 'yung vaccine *na sinasabi nila, dapat tapusin muna yung* protocols. *Ayusin muna lahat bago natin gawan ng* proposal for additional benefits *kung pwedeng tumulong yung gobyerno.* (The vaccine must finish first the protocols. They must fix it first before we make a proposal for additional benefits if the government can help)," the newly installed Agriculture Undersecretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano told the BusinessMirror on Wednesday on the sidelines of the National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc.'s general meeting.

Savellano also told reporters that the three major planks of the DA's agenda for livestock are biosecurity measures, repopulation, and reducing the prices of feeds, even as stressed the critical need to ensure the first measure.

When asked about the current situation of the biosecurity measures, he said they are consolidating every comment and suggestion of stakeholders, departments, and bureaus so that there will be a more coherent and cohesive direction.

"Biosecurity *'yung kailangang tignan kasi 'yan 'yung magpoprotekta sa* livestock industry *natin at dapat mas mahigpit* (Biosecurity must be looked into because it will protect our livestock industry and it must be strict)," Savellano added.

Savellano told the members of NatFed that the DA will find ways and craft programs to persuade agribusinessmen, agripreneurs and rural farmer families to engage in any kind of livestock farming where it will be their primary or secondary form of livelihood.

The DA's directions, according to Savellano, are to produce more livestock products locally in large volumes; balance more productions with minimal importations as only necessary to keep consumer and market prices low; and ensure enticing profit for livestock farmers to create more livelihood and jobs for Filipinos nationwide.

"These are inputs we need to work on together with your federation of swine farmers of our country, on how can we successfully inspire more federation members to repopulate amidst the continuing threat of ASF—until and unless the vaccines under trial can be proven to be safe, sterile, and effective following all standards and universally-acceptable protocols," he added.

Under their watch, Savellano admitted it may look ambitious, but he expressed confidence it is doable. Together with other livestock groups, he said they "will make things happen for the increasing local livestock production toward a robust and sustainable growth by moving in one direction."

The DA has been undertaking vaccine trials in its bid to salvage the country's hog industry which has been devastated by the dreaded pig disease since 2019, when the first outbreak started in Rodriguez, Rizal.

Despite the lingering ASF, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) database for livestock and poultry, the production of swine has increased for the first half of the year at 860,712 metric tons compared to January to June of last year's 835,125 MT in volume production.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: B6

USAID, Seafood Industry Partners to Hold 1st Responsible Seafood Summit in the PHL

A GROUNDBREAKING event will bring together over 170 participants from various sectors to champion responsible seafood sourcing (RSS) and combat illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Philippines. The 1st Responsible Seafood Summit aims to foster greater awareness, recognition, demand, and support for responsible seafood sourcing across the seafood industry value chain in the Philippines.

Organized with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Fish Right Program, the Summit will be held today, September 14, 2023 at the Novotel Manila Araneta City and kickstart the official celebration of the 60th Fish Conservation Week in the Philippines.

USAID Fish Right is a seven-year, $33 million initiative that promotes resilient and sustainable fisheries management across various regions in the Philippines. The program focuses on areas such as Palawan, Southern Negros, Visayan Sea, and Fisheries Management Areas 5 and 6 in the West Philippine Seascape.

The Summit will feature a technical workshop on Responsible Seafood Sourcing principles and practices, followed by an afternoon session celebrating milestones and industry partnerships under the Better Seafood Philippines (BSP) Program, which was established through the USAID Fish Right Program.

BSP is led by the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) and aims to enhance supply chain development efforts and industry partnerships on RSS. This program seeks to transform market-based approaches to address IUU fishing through the seafood supply chain.

Attendees will include representatives from USAID Philippines, the Philippine government (Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, and Department of Science and Technology), private sector seafood industry, local government units (LGUs), community-based organizations, USAID implementing partners, and other sectors.

Ryder Rogers, Director of the Environment Office at USAID Philippines, and Dr. Drusila Esther Bayate, Undersecretary for Fisheries at the Department of Agriculture, will deliver remarks during the Summit. Notable private sector participants include JT Solis, CEO and Co-Founder of Farm to Mayani Inc., and Nanette Cadutdut, President of the Bogtong Fish Processors Association.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A10

COMP exhibit to feature coco coir, activated carbon–DTI

THE Department of Trade and Industry-Export Marketing Bureau (DTI-EMB) will feature non-food coconut products such as coco coir, coco geotextile, and activated carbon in the upcoming Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) 19th Mining Philippines International Conference and Exhibition.

The event will be held on September 19-20 at the EDSA Shangri-La Hotel Manila in Mandaluyong City with the theme "Seeing Green: Shaping a Sustainable Minerals Development Industry."

As part of this initiative, 7 coconut-based companies will showcase their products during the Mining Philippines 2023 exhibition. These companies are 3 Kings Export, Lamac Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Agrisolution Marketing Cooperative, Coco Technologies Corp., Gubat Agritech Industries Co., Hung Coconet and Hydroseeding Inc.

Their products include a variation of coconut-based products like twines, ropes, logs, nets/geotextiles, and pot mats. These products are used in civil engineering, erosion control, landscaping, and horticulture, all playing essential roles in mining operations and rehabilitation efforts.

Moreover, Mapecon Green Charcoal Philippines Inc. (MGCPI) will also highlight activated carbon. Activated carbon boasts versatile applications, including its use in gold recovery processes and water treatment. Its significance extends to gold mining operations and community development, making it integral to the mining industry's sustainable practices.

"This collaborative effort between the coconut and mining industries aligns with the Philippines's strategic objectives to bolster the economy, create job opportunities, and foster cooperation among stakeholders among various sectors," DTI-EMB said in a statement.

During the event, stakeholders from the mining industry are invited and encouraged to engage with experts in coconut coir/geotextile and activated carbon to explore possible collaborations and partnerships on current and future projects locally or internationally.

"Furthermore, this event serves as a platform to raise awareness and generate interest among the general public and mining stakeholders regarding non-food coconut-based products," DTI-EMB said.

"These products can be used in a wide range of consumer and industrial settings, and their use encourages the use of locally sourced natural materials and promotes alternatives and solutions that are better for the environment."

The DTI said the participation of coconut-based firms was made possible through the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan launched by the Department of Agriculture, through the Philippine Coconut Authority in June 2022.

"This initiative aims to harness the P11.25-billion coconut levy trust fund to enhance farmers' productivity and income. As part of this effort, the DTI has been allocated 5 percent of the coco levy funds to promote coconut-based products."

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
Everybody's Newspaper

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: 7

P7.5M cash grant already received by rice retailers

MORE than 400 rice retailers from six areas in the Philippines affected by rice price caps have already received a cash grant from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) amounting to at least P7.5 million.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian said they have already distributed cash grants to 474 small and micro rice retailers in the cities of San Juan, Caloocan, Navotas, Parañaque, and Quezon City and in the province of Zamboanga del Sur.

Gatchalian said they expect the number of beneficiaries to increase in the coming days as they target to fast-track the distribution of cash assistance by September 14, or before the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) ban on public spending.

With the President's directive, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) have started identifying the qualified beneficiaries of the government's cash grants.

The DSWD, on the other hand, is responsible for the distribution of cash assistance through its Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP).

As the distribution of cash grants continues, Gatchalian clarified that small rice retailers who were disqualified from receiving cash grants may file an appeal online where the details and other information were posted.

Meanwhile, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) has approved the DSWD request to allow the nationwide release of cash assistance to rice retailers amid the spending ban during the election period.

In a decision released Tuesday and addressed to Gatchalian, Comelec chairperson George Erwin Garcia approved the disbursement of funds for the economic relief subsidy to small retailers affected by the implementation of mandated rice price ceilings.

Under Memorandum 23-05923 issued Monday, the Comelec law department recommended the approval of Gatchalian's request to authorize the release, disbursement and expenditure of public funds for the cash assistance for micro and small rice retailers.

The DSWD was reminded to ensure that its approved request will not "in any manner influence the conduct of the 30 October 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections."

PCO, PNA

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: B1

Rice imports held off amid high global prices

PH avoiding 2008 redux when it pushed prices to record highs

By Jordeene B. Lagare
@jordeenelagare

The Philippines is holding off its purchases of imported rice, moving along with its global peers, owing to the steep prices in the world market, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) said.

The USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) retained its estimate of the country's rice importation at 3.8 million metric tons (MT) for marketing year 2023 to 2024.

This was 2.6 percent lower than the 3.9 million MT recorded for marketing year 2022 to 2023.

"In 2008, top importer the Philippines continuously bought larger volumes as prices escalated; this year, it is delaying purchases, awaiting lower prices," the report said.

Sought for comment, Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) national manager Raul Montemayor said traders are waiting on the Marcos administration's next move following the implementation of rice price ceilings.

"Importers are adopting a wait-and-see attitude because of uncertainty over government policy and movement in international prices," Montemayor said in a message.

According to the USDA-FAS, global prices had been increasing before India imposed a moratorium on exporting rice due to strong importer demand and lower production in several exporting countries.

It said Vietnam's export quotes rose by $31 to $643 per ton in the previous month while in Pakistan, quotes climbed by $45 to $610 per ton on the back of strong demand following India's export restrictions.

Thailand's prices decreased by $13 to $643 per ton "as traditional buyers hold off purchases, awaiting lower prices."

The report said India's export quotes on white rice have been unavailable following its export ban on July 20.

"In the past week, prices started to decline from their peaks," the USDA-FAS said.

Lower global supply

On a global scale, the USDA-FAS is anticipating exports to decline following India's ban on exporting basmati white milled rice and Burma's sluggish export pace.

"Imports are forecast down due to less demand from China and Burkina Faso," it added.

The Philippines imported 2.33 million MT of rice as of Sept. 7, data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed, equivalent to almost 61 percent of the 3.82 million MT of imported rice that entered the country last year.

The majority of rice imports came from Vietnam which supplied 2.1 million MT or nearly 90 percent of the total. Pakistan and India came next with 25,520.888 MT and 13,187.385 MT, respectively.

To date, the tariff rate for imported rice stands at 35 percent but there have been proposals to slash tariffs on this commodity or reduce them to zero.

This Friday, the Tariff Commission will hold a hearing to deliberate on the Foundation for Economic Freedom's petition to reduce the most favored nation tariff rates on rice to 10 percent from the current 35 percent both for in-quota and out-quota. INQ

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: 2

'Tariff cut, price ceiling to pull down palay prices'

By BELLA CARIASO

The proposed tariff cut on imported rice combined with the rice price ceiling implemented on Sept. 5 will result in the farmgate price of palay further plummeting to P6 per kilo, according to farmers' group Federation of Free Farmers.

The Foundation for Economic Freedom on Sept. 7 filed a petition to temporarily reduce imported rice tariffs from 35 percent to between zero and 10 percent. This proposal was endorsed by the Department of Finance and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

"The timing (of the proposed tariff cut) is wrong as the harvest season has already started. The farmgate price of palay went down because of the price ceiling and it will be further aggravated by the proposed cut in the tariff," FFF national chairman Raul Montemayor said in a radio interview yesterday.

Executive Order 39, which imposed a price ceiling of P41 and P45 for regular and well-milled rice, resulted in the decline of palay prices from P23 to P17 per kilo, he noted.

"I don't know if they even thought about it or if they really want the farmgate price of palay to fall to bring down the retail prices of rice, but the farmers will suffer. They always resort to importation if there is a problem with the prices. They did not learn," he said.

The tariff reduction will not ensure lower retail prices of rice.

"What will be the assurance that the tariff reduction will benefit the consumers, especially since most of the imported grains are premium grade and not cheap rice for the poor? It will instead benefit customers of five-star hotels, expensive restaurants, those who buy jasmine rice and Japanese rice. Traders do not import regular milled rice and well-milled rice as they will have more revenues when they import premium grades," Montemayor explained.

The government should focus on local production instead of resorting to importation, and "if the local production is still not enough, that's the only time the tariff reduction should be considered," he said.

"The economic team complained that they were not consulted in the price cap but they did not also consult us in the tariff reduction. They act on their own without talking to each other. They did not consider the effect on the farmers," he added.

The NEDA called for a review of the existing rice tariffs.

– With Ric Sapnu

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: 1

'AYUDA' – Hundreds of qualified rice retailers from Marikina City wait for their turn to receive financial aid of as much as ₱15,000 on Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023, at a covered court in Barangay Concepcion Dos, Marikina City. (Mark Balmores)

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: Sept. 14, 2023 Page: B1 & B-4

Traders back tariff reduction on imported rice

CECILIO K. PEDRO

By BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT

The Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. (FFCCCII), which groups the Filipino-Chinese business organizations in the country, has strongly called for the reduction in tariffs on rice imports amid high prices of the staple food in the country.

In a statement, FFCCCII President Cecilio K. Pedro said they support Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno's proposal to reduce the tariff rates on imported rice temporarily to zero percent or a maximum of 10 percent amid the current supply gap and high prices of rice. "We support government efforts to stabilize rice prices and supply," he said.

"The FFCCCII believes that Secretary Diokno's proposal to temporarily reduce the said rates from the existing 35 percent to zero percent or maximum of 10 percent would not only translate to a decrease in rice prices and temper the increasing inflation in food prices, but also address the demand-supply gap in this sector," the group said.

According to the group, reducing the rice import tariff will "undeniably mitigate the pinch our countrymen are feeling due to the sharp increase in the price of rice, our staple food."

"We believe that the temporary lowering of tariff, coupled with other calibrated measures to be taken by this administration's economic team, will result in the long-term stabilization of the prices of rice and improve the inflation situation," Pedro said.

Already, the Tariff Commission has announced that it will conduct a public hearing on a petition filed by the Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) seeking to reduce the most favored nation (MFN) tariff rates on rice from 35 percent to 10 percent instead of the price cap on rice.

In an advisory, the Commission scheduled an online hearing on Friday, Sept. 15, that all interested parties are required to register online via a QR code provided by the agency.

During the public hearing, interested parties shall be afforded opportunity to be present and present evidence in support of their positions on the

▶B-4

Traders back...

B-1◀

subject matter. Parties, who intend to make presentations during the hearing are also required to submit copy of their presentation to the Commission.

The public hearing was scheduled after the FEF issued a position on Sept. 2 this year calling on the government to lift or reduce import tariffs for rice from 35 percent to 10 percent to arrest the surging price of rice rather than impose a price ceiling on rice.

FEF explained that the price cap will harm consumers because it will drive supply away from the market, fuel a black market for rice, cause traders to cheat consumers by mixing inferior broken rice with regular and well-milled rice, and incentivize traders to hoard as the price ceiling is below their procurement and selling prices.

"Lower-income consumers in particular will suffer when regular milled rice becomes less available in markets at a controlled price and is passed on as well-milled rice by traders," FEF said.

EO 39 will similarly harm farmers because traders will use the price cap to justify lowering their buying prices for palay or simply refuse to buy palay from the farmers as they will lose money due to the high farmgate price of palay.

In addition, FEF said that the price ceiling will not be effective in solving the demand-supply gap and arrest increasing food price inflation. "It will only aggravate the current tight rice supply situation into a full-blown rice crisis. An Executive Order cannot repeal the law of supply and demand," it added.

Instead, FEF suggested that import tariffs, currently set at 35 percent for rice imports from ASEAN countries, be lifted or reduced to 10 percent for immediate effect on lowering rice prices.

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: A1 & A2

Plant-based food may reduce greenhouse gas emissions – study

PARIS: Replacing half of the pork, chicken, beef and milk products we consume with plant-based alternatives could reduce global greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and related land use by nearly a third, and virtually halt forest loss, according to research published on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila).

Population growth and higher incomes are on track to increase global demand for these key animal products, which can bring damaging environmental consequences.

Forests are cleared to make way for cattle and the grain needed to feed them, while cows belch methane, a potent greenhouse gas whose warming effect is much more powerful than carbon dioxide.

The study, published in the journal Nature Communications, used modeling to analyze the impact of a worldwide dietary shift towards plant-based alternatives to pork, beef, chicken and milk with the same nutritional value.

It suggested that greenhouse gas emissions connected to agriculture and land use could be cut by 31 percent in 2050 compared to 2020 levels if consumption were reduced by half.

In that scenario, the amount of land dedicated to agricultural uses falls by 12 percent instead of continuing to expand.

The extent of forests and other natural land areas would remain nearly the same as in 2020, as land earmarked for livestock and production of feed is spared

➤GreenhouseA2

GREENHOUSE FROM A1

Plant-based food may reduce greenhouse gas

rather than burned or cleared.

The increased use of nitrogen for crops is almost half of what it would otherwise be on expected trends, while water use drops 10 percent.

'Critical opportunity'

A massive shift to plant-based foods would also improve global food security, with the number of undernourished people falling by 31 million by 2050, the researchers said.

In addition, it would boost biodiversity. Restored land area could contribute between 13 and 25 percent of the estimated land restoration needed by 2030 under a target set in a global treaty hammered out at the end of last year.

The decline of life-sustaining ecosystems on current trajectories would be more than halved by 2050, the study suggested.

"Plant-based meats are not just a novel food product but a critical opportunity for achieving food security and climate goals while also achieving health and biodiversity objectives worldwide," study co-author Eva Wollenberg said.

Sub-Saharan Africa, China and Southeast Asia would see the biggest reductions in biodiversity losses, while carbon sequestration levels would improve the most in sub-Saharan Africa and South America, notably Brazil.

Freeing up cropland would especially affect China, the world's top consumer of pork and chicken meat.

Replacing beef alone would provide around half of the emissions reductions achieved through reducing consumption of all four animal products.

The researchers cautioned that such changes should take into account the importance of livestock in some cultures and to small-scale farmers, but noted that climate change also represented a major risk to them.

The pricing of plant-based products will greatly determine the evolution of the market, while the speed and fairness of the change will depend much on public policies, they said. **AFP**

The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: A7

Pork supply shortage looms in Negros

BY EUGENE Y. ADIONG

BACOLOD CITY: A possible shortage in the supply of pork in Negros Occidental looms as demand is expected to rise in the last quarter of 2023.

Rayfrando Diaz, provincial administrator, said the shortage is attributed to the impact of African swine fever (ASF) and hog cholera diseases that hit the hog industry of the province.

Diaz said they are also anticipating the price of pork meat to increase in the coming weeks.

Data from the Provincial Veterinary Office showed that hog fatalities have reached 17,801 this year, representing 9.96 percent of the 164,334 total hog population in Negros Occidental.

Diaz also reported that Negros Occidental's hog industry incurred losses amounting to almost P200 million in 2023.

Hog cholera and ASF struck 3,536 hog raisers, affecting 153 barangay (villages) in 20 towns and cities in Negros Occidental, he added.

Earlier, Dr. Placeda Lemana, provincial veterinarian, said that hog shipments from Negros Occidental to other areas of the country dropped by almost 70 percent in August.

The dip in swine production, however, is not concentrated in Negros Occidental, as the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) also reported a decline in production in the entire Western Visayas region.

For the second quarter of 2023, PSA showed that hog production in the region registered at 42,025 metric tons (MT), which marked a 14.34-percent decrease compared to the 49,059 MT recorded during the same period last year.

The number of hogs slaughtered in the region also saw a decline, dropping by 2.10 percent, or a total of 226,992 heads.

The PSA said the losses are due to deaths caused by hog cholera, ASF and other diseases.

Based on the June 26 data of the Department of Agriculture-Western Visayas, hog growers in the region have lost at least P762.5 million due to the outbreak of ASF. This loss corresponds to a total of 79,376 hogs that died due to swine diseases and depopulation procedures to prevent the spread of ASF.

Of the six provinces, Capiz recorded the highest number of hog mortalities and depopulated swine heads with 47,645 deaths, equivalent to P428.89 million in losses.

PSA figures showed that the swine inventory in the region was estimated at 814,000 heads, with Negros Occidental contributing about 50.48 percent, or an equivalent of 410,980 heads.

The region also saw a decrease in both duck production and duck egg production. Duck production experienced a slight drop of 0.04 percent compared to the previous year, while duck egg production declined by 3.83 percent.

WITH REPORTS FROM RJAY ZURIAGA CASTOR

The Manila Times®

Date: Sept. 14, 2023 Page: A7

Fishermen oppose construction of seawall

NOT GOOD? Sheet piles, which mark the extent of the Lingayen-Binmaley seawall, configure the shoreline of Lingayen Gulf as construction of the seawall continues despite the protests from local fishermen groups. PHOTO BY GABRIEL CARDINOZA

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan: Fishermen groups from this town and neighboring Binmaley called on authorities to stop the construction of a seawall along the coastline of the Lingayen Gulf that stretches from Lingayen to Binmaley.

In a letter to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (provincial board) last week, the fishermen said that the seawall will reduce the area where they can dock their fishing boats.

The fisherfolk also fear that their wooden boats will be smashed into the concrete seawall by huge waves and strong winds during thunderstorms.

And if this happens, the fishermen added, they will lose their only source of livelihood. Five leaders of fishermen's groups from Lingayen and Binmaley signed the letter.

The seawall project is reportedly aimed at protecting the coastal villages of this town and the capitol complex from flooding and storm surges.

The website of the Department of Public Works and Highways did not list a seawall project from this town to Binmaley, but it listed the "construction/maintenance of flood mitigation structures and drainage systems, construction of flood mitigation facilities at Lingayen-Binmaley, Pangasinan."

The project cost is P130.14 million, and construction began on June 14, 2023, the website said.

The fishermen also said that with the seawall, the area where they can pull their fishing nets will become smaller.

Some residents here begin their day by fishing using a traditional seine technique locally called kalukor. This is a standard 200-meter-long net deployed by a boat and pulled from the shore strategically by two groups of people holding the ropes until the seine reaches the shore with the catch.

The fishermen clarified that they are not against government projects, especially those that will benefit poor people like them, but they claim that the seawall would bring them more harm than good.

The provincial board has scheduled a public hearing on the seawall project at 9 a.m. on Thursday, September 14, at the Pangasinan Training Center here.

GABRIEL CARDINOZA

The Manila Times®

Date: Sept. 14, 2023 Page: B4

Cebu kicks off urban farming

CEBU CITY: The local government here has institutionalized the People's Farm Task Force, showcasing an unused lot at the South Road Properties (SRP) as a demonstration area for city employees and residents who want to go into farming.

Councilor Pastor Alcover Jr., Cebu City Council Committee on Agriculture chairman, said the people's farm would help ensure food sufficiency, especially for poor communities in the area, by producing vegetables and fruits planted in the backyard.

The demo farm inside SRP allocates 120 to 200 square-meter-wide lots to each of the 70 departments of the Cebu City Hall participating in the task force.

He said employees from the Cebu City Environment and Natural Resources Office, City Agriculture Department, Department for Veterinary Medicine and Fisheries, Cebu Resources Management and Development, Parks and Playground Commission, Department of Engineering and Public Works, and SRP Management Office have adopted a piece of the people's farm to plant food-producing plants.

Alcover also invited residents and members of organizations based in the city to become "weekend farmers" by cultivating a portion of the SRP lot during their free time on weekends.

"Those who want to join will be screened. The advantage of this project is that even if you do not know about agricultural farming, we have people who can assist you," Alcover told the Philippine News Agency.

He said a food summit will be held to judge the well-developed farm lots at the SRP. **PNA**

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A1 & A2

Tariff cuts backed

THE Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc (FFCCCII) yesterday expressed support to proposals to eliminate tariff on rice or at least reduce it to 10 percent from the current 35 percent to address augment supply and further stabilize prices.

In a statement, FFCCCII president Cecilio Pedro said the proposal to temporarily remove or reduce tariffs would not only translate to a decrease in rice prices and temper the increasing inflation in food prices, but also address the demand-supply gap in this sector.

"This move will undeniably mitigate the pinch our countrymen are feeling due to the sharp increase in the price of rice, our staple food," Pedro said.

But he said this temporary measure should be coupled with other calibrated measures to achieve long-term stabilization of the prices of rice and improve the inflation situation.

"We recognize the concerns of our farmers on the possible effects of the tariff reduction, such as the entry of cheaper imported rice and lowering of the prices of domestic palay. However, at this time of soaring prices and lack of supply of this staple, we need to consider foremost the needs of our consuming public ... and support this temporary measure," Pedro said.

In a separate statement, the British Chamber of Commerce Philippines also expressed support to proposals extending Executive Order No. 10 by conducting a review on the lower tariffs of commodities such as pork, rice, corn, and coal.

BCCP said the extension will address inflation and food security.

"The British Chamber remains committed to advocating for the lowering of tariffs which greatly helps in dealing with inflation and food insecurity. Also, it is necessary to help with the increasing global market demand and supply," said Chris Nelson, BCCP executive director.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) yesterday said eliminating or cutting tariffs on rice is ill-timed since farmers are about to harvest the main season crop and rice prices will naturally go down.

"Encouraging additional imports through tariff reduction will further depress palay prices and discourage farmers from expanding their future production, thereby making the country even more dependent

See TARIFF ➤ Page A2

on imports," Raul Montemayor, FFF national manager, said in a statement.

Montemayor said a tariff cut will not benefit poor consumers especially that 85 percent of imports are for premium grades of rice.

"The authority to adjust tariffs is constitutionally vested in Congress. This power can be delegated to the President only during extraordinary situations. The economic managers are abusing this privilege by waiting for Congress to recess on September 30, so that they can ask the President to cut rice tariffs through an executive order," Montemayor said.

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) grains world trade report released yesterday said the Philippines may be delaying rice imports as traders are waiting for lower prices.

FFF concurred with USDA's outlook, saying importers are on a wait-and-see because of uncertainties in government policy as well as movement in international prices.

The Tariff Commission is set to hear tomorrow, September 15 the petition of the Foundation for Economic Freedom to slash rice tariffs on rice.

BusinessWorld

Date: 1 4 SEP 2023 Page: 2/S1

Filipino-Chinese chamber supports rice tariff reduction

THE Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (FFCCCII) has declared its support for a reduction in rice tariffs as a temporary measure to address shortages in the commodity.

In a statement, the chamber said it backs the proposed temporary reduction in tariffs on imported rice to between 0% and 10% to stabilize prices and supply.

Last week, Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno proposed to temporarily reduce the 35% rice import tariff to as low as 0%.

"The FFCCCII believes that Secretary Diokno's proposal to temporarily reduce the said rates ... would not only translate to a decrease in rice prices and temper the increasing inflation in food prices, but also address the demand-supply gap," it said.

It added that the move will "undeniably" mitigate the sharp increase in the price of the staple.

However, FFCCCII said the lowering of the tariff should be coupled with other measures to ensure long-term stabilization of prices. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A10

Manila begins review of anti-dumping duty on flour

THE government's review of the anti-dumping duties it imposed on Turkish wheat flour got underway on Wednesday.

The Tariff Commission (TC) held the first of five public hearings on Wednesday regarding the expiry review of the anti-dumping duty the Philippines imposed on Turkish wheat flour.

The TC is undertaking the expiry review following the petition made by the local flour milling sector to extend the anti-dumping duty imposed on Turkish wheat flour for a second time.

The anti-dumping duty on Turkish wheat flour is set to expire on October 27, nearly eight years since the Philippine government had determined the necessity of implementing the trade remedy to protect the local flour milling industry.

Petitioner Philippine Association of Flour Millers (Pafmil) was represented by its counsel Rodolf Britanico. The petitioner presented three witnesses: Joseph Bippert of the United States Wheat Associates, Ricardo Pinca and Mario Banag of Pafmil.

The witnesses of the petitioner argued that Turkey is continuing its anti-dumping practices and that the Philippine wheat flour milling industry could suffer injury once the anti-dumping duty expires.

Meanwhile, the oppositor, the Southeast Anatolian Exporters' Association, was represented by Gülden Bozdeniz and Bülent Hacıoğlu of Trade Resources together with Mert Erkoyuncu of the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye.

The association argued that the Philippine flour milling industry will not face any threat from Turkish flour anymore since Turkey's exports to the Philippines have drasticallly declined in recent years due to the anti-dumping duty.

The oppositor noted that the Philippines is no longer a significant market for Turkey since there are "more attractive markets," such as Iraq, Yemen, and Somalia.

It also maintained that the first extension of the anti-dumping measure was inconsistent with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and jurisprudence, claiming that it was "unlawful."

The TC has scheduled the following dates for the public hearings—September 13, 14, 15, 18 and 19.

However, the TC suspended the hearing for September 14 to give the petitioner ample time to scrutinize the information and data presented by the oppositor on Wednesday, which the petitioner claimed were not part of the affidavit first submitted by the oppositor.

The petitioner sought for continuance instead of making a motion to strike out the information presented by the oppositor.

The Philippines first imposed the anti-dumping duty on Turkish wheat flour in 2015 which lasted until 2020. It was extended for another three years or until later this year.

Anti-dumping, a trade remedy allowed under WTO agreements, permits a state to impose additional duties on products that are being exported at a price that is lower than the prevailing market price in the country of origin.

Under the extended measure, the Philippines imposed anti-dumping duties on Turkish wheat flour of up to 29.57 percent depending on the exporter.

Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
Everybody's Newspaper

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: 5

Rice millers, traders commit 30K sacks for 'Rice on Wheels' program

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said rice millers and traders committed 30,000 sacks of 50-kilogram rice for the Rice on Wheels for Retailers program in support of Executive Order (EO) No. 39.

"The Rice on Wheels for Retailers program aims to ensure the availability of regular and well-milled rice that are within the price ceiling set by E.O. No. 39. This program specifically targets retailers in public markets to enable them to source out cheaper rice," DTI said in a statement Tuesday.

The program, being implemented in partnership with Bulacan rice millers and traders, started on Sept. 8 and was rolled out in Manila, Quezon City, Parañaque, Makati, Pasig, Caloocan, Muntinlupa and Marikina.

The DTI said the caravan, which will be implemented in other areas if there is a demand, has sold 1,371 sacks of well-milled rice since the caravan started last week.

"For now, the Rice on Wheels program serves as a mitigating measure for those affected by the implementation of EO 39. We will adjust the timeline of the program depending on the result of our monitoring in the coming weeks, whether the situation is improving and there is already enough source of cheaper rice in the market," it said.

On Monday, DTI Secretary Alfredo Pascual said EO 39, which imposes a price cap on rice prices effective last Sept. 5, may be extended for two more weeks to evaluate the impact of the program and decide on whether the policy should be continued or lifted.

Pascual said there is high compliance among retailers on the price ceiling of PHP41 per kilogram for regular-milled rice and PHP45 per kg for well-milled rice.

EO 39 also provides aid to affected retailers in the form of financial assistance, loan programs, logistics support, and market linkages and support. *PNA*

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: Sept. 14, 2023 Page: 7

Meat, milk alternatives could slash food system emissions a third – study

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS, France — Replacing half of the pork, chicken, beef and milk products we consume with plant-based alternatives could reduce global greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and related land use by nearly a third, and virtually halt forest loss, according to research published on Tuesday.

Population growth and higher incomes are on track to increase global demand for these key animal products, which can bring damaging environmental consequences.

Forests are cleared to make way for cattle and the grain needed to feed them, while cows belch methane, a potent greenhouse gas whose warming effect is much more powerful than carbon dioxide.

The study, published in the journal Nature Communications, used modelling to analyse the impact of a worldwide dietary shift towards plant-based alternatives to pork, beef, chicken and milk with the same nutritional value.

It suggested that greenhouse gas emissions connected to agriculture and land use could be cut by 31 percent in 2050 compared to 2020 levels if consumption were reduced by half.

In that scenario, the amount of land dedicated to agricultural uses falls by 12 percent instead of continuing to expand.

The extent of forests and other natural land area would remain nearly the same as in 2020, as land earmarked for livestock and production of feed is spared rather than burned or cleared.

The increased use of nitrogen for crops is almost half of what it would otherwise be on expected trends, while water use drops 10 percent.

A massive shift to plant-based foods would also improve global food security, with the number of undernourished people falling by 31 million by 2050, the researchers said.

In addition, it would boost bio-

VEGETABLES (UNSPLASH)

diversity. Restored land area could contribute between 13 and 25 percent of the estimated land restoration needed by 2030 under a target set in a global treaty hammered out at the end of last year.

The decline of life-sustaining ecosystems on current trajectories would be more than halved by 2050, the study suggested.

"Plant-based meats are not just a novel food product but a critical opportunity for achieving food security and climate goals while also achieving health and biodiversity objectives worldwide," study co-author Eva Wollenberg said.

Sub-Saharan Africa, China and Southeast Asia would see the biggest reductions in biodiversity losses, while carbon sequestration levels would improve the most in sub-Saharan Africa and South America, notably Brazil.

Freeing up cropland would especially affect China, the world's top consumer of pork and chicken meat.

Replacing beef alone would provide around half of the emissions reductions achieved through reducing consumption of all four animal products.

The researchers cautioned that such changes should take into account the importance of livestock in some cultures and to small-scale farmers, but noted that climate change also represented a major risk to them.

The pricing of plant-based products will greatly determine the evolution of the market, while the speed and fairness of the change will depend much on public policies, they said.

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A6

Sugar output in India's Maharashtra set to fall to lowest in 4 years

A file photo shows laborer's load sugarcane into a load carrier at a wholesale sugarcane market in Kolkata. *(Reuters Photo)*

MUMBAI- Sugar output in Maharashtra, India's top producing state, is likely to fall 14 percent in the 2023/24 crop year to its lowest in four years due to lower cane yields following the driest August in more than a century, industry and government officials told Reuters on Wednesday.

The reduced output could add to food inflation and discourage New Delhi from allowing sugar exports, supporting global prices which are already near their highest in more than a decade.

Higher domestic prices will, however, improve margins for producers such as Balrampur Chini Dwarikesh Sugar Shree Renuka Sugars and Dalmia Bharat Sugar helping them make payments on time to farmers.

The western state of Maharashtra, which accounts for more than a third of India's sugar output, could produce 9 million metric tons in the 2023/24 season (which begins on Oct. 1), down from 10.5 million tons in 2022/23, said B.B. Thombare, president of the West Indian Sugar Mills Association.

"The sugar cane crop didn't receive ample rainfall during the crucial growth phase this year. In almost all districts, the crop's growth is stunted," he said.

Maharashtra, which often surprises the global sugar market with wide swings in production, received 59 percent lower rainfall than normal during August.

Maharashtra's sugar commissioner Chandrakant Pulkundwar said he had been informed by representatives from sugar mills during a review meeting that cane yields would be lower this year due to a prolonged dry spell and higher temperatures.

The crop badly needs good rainfall in September to limit damage caused by the dry spell, Pulkundwar said.

India is likely to receive an average amount of rainfall in September, the state-run weather department has forecast, after the driest August in more than a century.

Maharashtra's output is crucial to India's ability to export, making the outlook for overseas shipments dismal for the coming season, a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading house said, declining to be named due to his company's policy. - ***Reuters***

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A6

Ukraine increases farm exports by rail and truck as Black Sea ports blocked

A worker operates a combine during a rapeseed harvesting in a field near the village Kyshchentsi, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Cherkasy region. *(Reuters Photo)*

KYIV- Ukraine, which has had to find different ways to export its grain since Russia quit the UN -brokered Black Sea grain export deal in mid-July, is stepping up road and rail shipments, brokers said on Wednesday.

Spike Brokers said 188,000 metric tons of agricultural goods were exported by lorries in the Sept. 1-11 period, compared 169,000 tons in the corresponding period in August. It had shipped 146,000 tons in the corresponding period in July.

"The most active crossing points in September were those between Ukraine and Poland," it said in a report.

Brokers said the grain exports by rail via the Ukrainian-Polish border had also increased by 14 percent over the past week.

"Romanian border crossings are used for 114.8 wagons of grain per day, up +28.8 wagons per day, or +33.49 percent , over the last week," it said.

Spike Brokers said traffic through Hungarian and Slovak borders had also increased.

"As of September 10, the average daily transfer of grain cargo is 498 wagons per day. Over the past week, the overall figure increased by +34 wagons per day, or by 7.33 percent ," the brokers stated.

Before Russia's invasion in February 2022, eastern European countries were not among the main importers of Ukrainian grain, but the export of Ukrainian grains and oilseeds to Poland and Romania rose sharply last year, Ukrainian customs data showed.

Ukrainian authorities warned on Tuesday the country could seek international arbitration over restrictions on its grain exports after Poland said it would continue to block domestic imports of Ukrainian grain even if Brussels lifts a ban. - ***Reuters***

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A6

Soybeans, corn slips

SINGAPORE- Chicago soybeans lost more ground on Wednesday, trading close to a three-week low hit in the last session, while corn eased with both markets under pressure after a US government report showed crops suffered less-than-expected damage.

Wheat futures eased after closing higher on Tuesday on tightening global supplies.

"There are no major new supply concerns for corn and soybeans globally at the moment but markets will be very closely eyeing US crop yields as they come in," said Rabobank analyst Dennis Voznesenski.

"CBOT corn price descent may be coming to an end soon, particularly when considering production costs."

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) lost 0.2 percent to $13.43-1/2 a bushel, not far from a three-week low of $13.40-3/4 hit on Tuesday.

Corn gave up 0.1 percent to $4.76 a bushel after hitting $4.74 on Tuesday, equaling last month's 32-month low, while wheat fell 0.3 percent to $5.86 a bushel. - ***Reuters***

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
Date: 14 SEP 2023 Page: A10

FAO: More public, private investments needed to transform agrifood systems

THE Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is urging more public and private investment in the massive task of transforming global agrifood systems to feed a growing population, while guarding against adverse environmental impacts.

"We need to accelerate the pace of agricultural growth, while paying attention to issues of environmental sustainability, natural resource degradation and the impacts of the climate crisis in the region, and beyond," FAO Director-General QU Dongyu said in opening remarks at the 1st Uzbekistan Agrifood Investment Forum held recently.

The forum is part of the International Conference on Food Security, organized by the government of Uzbekistan with the technical support of FAO.

"We need to create an enabling environment for unlocking both public and private investments," in order to finance the necessary changes in how our food, fiber and feed are produced and delivered by the deadline of 2030, set for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, Qu said.

FAO has estimated that this would cost $4 trillion in low- and middle-income countries.

It is also necessary to invest in national agrifood control systems that will help make food safer and which is vital to food security and nutrition. Qu further underlined the need for well-designed public on-farm investments, such as for rural roads, irrigation, electrification and warehousing, among others, to increase overall investments in agriculture.

FAO has long argued that public investment in agriculture often does not reflect its importance in the economy, with farmers frequently forced to finance investments—usually small—out of their own savings or from informal sources of credit.

One way to help small-scale farmers optimize costs and be competitive is through reliable and timely knowledge and data provided by digital tools, such as digital advisory services to rural communities, tailored to local contexts and needs, with easy access to key data, information and statistics.

Qu encouraged Uzbekistan to use the tools and approaches of FAO's Hand in Hand Initiative, for identifying and optimizing agrifood investments, and to participate in the Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum from October 17 to 20 in Rome as part of the World Food Forum 2023.

The Initiative, launched in 2019, currently supports 63 countries worldwide. Projects carried out under it include: developing value chains for priority commodities, building agro-industries and efficient water management systems, digital services and precision agriculture, reducing food loss and waste, and addressing climate challenges and weather risks. It uses advanced geospatial modeling and analytics, as well as a partnership-building approach.

The Agrifood Investment Forum was co-organized by Uzbekistan's Ministry of Agriculture and its Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

It was aimed at increasing understanding of how to promote on-farm investment through innovative financing schemes; achieving a better understanding of the size and structure of investments in Uzbekistan's agriculture; identifying win-win options for farmers and governments to enhance investments for agricultural growth and making policy recommendations centred on the needs of farmers and agribusinesses.

Among the attendees were ministers from Europe, Asia and Central Asia as well as representatives of UN agencies and international financial institutions.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: A10

Poland to extend Ukraine grain-import ban, pressuring EU

POLAND will extend its ban on imports of grain from Ukraine unless the European Union allows its own restrictions to stay in place beyond Friday—a move that raises tensions with both Kyiv and Brussels.

The government in Warsaw approved the plan Tuesday, effectively issuing an ultimatum to the EU three days before the scheduled expiration of the bloc's measures. Meanwhile, Hungary and Romania reiterated that EU import restrictions should be extended until at least the end of the year.

"We're convinced that the EU is wavering and will allow for the extension" of the current restrictions, Polish Agriculture Minister Robert Telus said in a radio interview on Tuesday. "If it doesn't, then we're going to act tough because it's in the interest of Polish farmers."

Ukraine has sought alternative export routes for its grain after Russia blocked most shipments via the Black Sea shortly after its invasion last year. Some eastern European countries have since restricted grain imports from Ukraine, on grounds that the flows are undercutting their own farming sectors. The collapse in July of a deal to facilitate exports from the Black Sea has heightened tensions.

Earlier this week, Ukrainian Deputy Economy Minister Taras Kachka warned that Kyiv will file a complaint at the World Trade Organization if Poland introduces a unilateral ban on Ukrainian grain. The government in Warsaw will still allow for the transit of Ukraine grain through its territory to the ports on the Baltic Sea or to be sold elsewhere in the EU.

The decision comes little more than a month before a parliamentary election in Poland on Oct. 15. Farmers are an important constituency for the ruling Law & Justice party, which is fighting to stay in power for a third term. The glut of grain imports on the domestic market sparked protests earlier this year.

Poland, Hungary and Slovakia have each pushed for an extension of the ban. Romania and Bulgaria have expressed more flexibility on the arrangements at EU-wide talks and avoided mentioning a potential unilateral ban. Hungarian Agriculture Minister Istvan Nagy is holding talks on the matter with his counterparts from Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, he said in a video on his Facebook page.

The European Commission—the EU's executive arm—should extend restrictions on grain imports from Ukraine at least until the end of 2023, Nagy and his Romanian counterpart, Florin Barbu, said in a joint statement following their meeting Tuesday.

Romanian farmers have threatened to block ports and border checkpoints used to aid the transit of Ukrainian grains if the ban isn't extended.

Spain's olive oil

A SURGE in the price of olive oil in top grower Spain has increased the cost of making a traditional paella to its highest in five months.

Bloomberg's monthly index, which calculates how much Spanish households need to spend on ingredients to make the Mediterranean rice dish, jumped 18.3 percent in August from a year ago, accelerating from a 15-percent rise the previous month.

This compares with an uptick in the rate of headline inflation to 2.4 percent and a slight slowdown in the pace of overall food price increases to 10.5 percent.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business
Date: SEPT. 14, 2023 Page: A10

A WHEAT harvest in the Lisowice district of Torun, Poland. BARTEK SADOWSKI/BLOOMBERG

Olive oil led the spike, shooting up 53 percent in August from a year ago as Spain reels from devastating droughts. Prices have risen so much that thieves are targeting olive oil mills in the south of the country, and supermarkets have started to place security tags on bottles.

While inflation in Spain has slowed sharply from double-digit levels last year, the cost of making paella is a reminder of lingering price pressures on everyday items that continue to hit consumers in the euro zone's fourth-biggest economy.

The European Commission forecasts year-end inflation of 3.6 percent in Spain, one of the lowest rates among major economies in the region and below the euro area's average. ***Bloomberg News***