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Marcos defends price cap on rice

Photo: President Marcos

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ONE-MONTH SUPPLY

'NFA MUST MAINTAIN SUFFICIENT BUFFER STOCK'

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

With price controls on rice and palay in place, the National Food Authority (NFA) should now beef up and ensure that its buffer stock will last for at least a month by buying from local rice farmers.

A House official made the call after the NFA set a higher price range for its purchase of unhusked rice from farmers to allow them to earn more while securing palay stocks.

Quezon Rep. Mark Enverga, chair of the House agriculture and food panel, pointed out that Republic Act No. 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law, gave the NFA the power to "maintain sufficient rice buffer stock to be sourced solely from local rice farmers."

In a statement on Tuesday, the lawmaker said it would be best if the NFA "asserts its powers to maintain our country's buffer stock" with price controls on rice and palay now in place.

"I believe the buffer stock



PUT TO GOOD USE President Marcos leads the distribution of smuggled rice in Zamboanga City and Zamboanga Sibugay.

—MALACAÑANG PHOTO

should be enough for two to four weeks and also enough to meet sudden needs such as the aftermath of typhoons, and safety stocks for the effects of the coming El Niño months until the first half of next year," Enverga said.

He proposed that the NFA practice "strategic buying" at locations where the agency "can be an effective counterpoint to private rice traders and millers."

"With Christmas coming just weeks from now, it is im-

perative that rice prices moderate enough to bring inflation much closer to the economic managers' target range of 2 to 4 percent," he added.

New buying price

Enverga made the remarks after Malacañang announced the NFA's new buying price per kilogram of P19 to P23 for dry palay and P16 to P19 for wet palay.

With the palay production cost at P14 to P15, President Mar-

cos said farmers would earn more profits with the new price range for the NFA's palay purchases.

Mr. Marcos on Tuesday distributed sacks of smuggled rice to poor families in Zamboanga Peninsula.

The President gave 1,500 sacks of premium rice to some beneficiaries of the government's conditional cash transfer program or the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in Zamboanga City. He also distributed sacks of rice to indigent families in Tungawan town in Zamboanga Sibugay.

The distributed rice was part of the 42,180 smuggled sacks of rice worth P42 million seized by the Bureau of Customs-Port of Zamboanga during a raid on a warehouse in Barangay San Jose Gusu in Zamboanga City on Sept. 15.

The President explained that the warehouse owner was given 15 days to explain but did not give their response to authorities.

—WITH A REPORT FROM NESTOR CORRALES INQ



PBBM bares plan to increase rice buffer stock in NFA warehouses

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

[@sam_medenilla](#)

THE looming tight supply of rice in the global market next year due to the El Niño phenomenon prompted President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to announce on Tuesday the government's plan to increase the country's stockpile of the food staple.

In his speech during the distribution of confiscated smuggled rice in Zamboanga City, the Chief Executive mentioned he wants the National Food Authority (NFA) to raise the volume of its rice buffer stock, were rice is tapped in times of emergency.

"We will add more. We will have a

higher buffer [rice] stock so that we will have—we will not see a sudden spike in price [of rice]," Marcos said in Filipino.

NFA traditionally tries to maintain 300,000 metric tons (MT) of rice buffer stock, which will be sufficient for about 9 days based on the country's

demand for the food staple.

Last month, NFA reported its existing buffer stock dwindled to just 60,819.95 MT, which will only last for two days.

On Monday, Marcos announced NFA would start replenishing its buffer stock using a new buying price range for farmers.

Under the new price range, NFA will pay P19 per kilo to P23 per kilo for dry palay (unhusked rice) and P16 to P19 per kilo for wet palay.

Aside from a high buffer stock, Marcos, who is also the concurrent Agriculture Secretary, said the government would boost local rice production.

He noted the said interventions are necessary since the droughts from El Niño next year will greatly reduce farm production.

"We will closely monitor the needs of our citizens so no one can say they suffered hunger due to insufficient

rice supply," Marcos said.

Several countries, including China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore are bracing for the effects of El Niño by buying rice to fill up their reserves causing a spike in the price of the food staple in the global market, according to the President.

The government implemented a P41 per kilogram (kg) price cap for regular milled rice (RMR) and P45 per kg for well-milled rice (WMR) to stabilize the local price of the food commodity.

It also started the distribution of confiscated smuggled rice last Tuesday to beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

This includes the 1,500 sacks of premium quality rice, which were part of the 42,180 smuggled sacks of rice worth P42 million forfeited by the Bureau of Customs-Port of Zamboanga.



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Gov't to raise rice buffer stock

THE GOVERNMENT will be aiming to increase the buffer stock of rice in government warehouses to address the increase in the basic commodity's market prices, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. revealed during his speech in Zamboanga City on Tuesday.

"We will fill the warehouses with rice, we will add more buffer stock so that we will avoid price increase," Mr. Marcos said in Filipino as he led the distribution of about 1,500 sacks of smuggled rice to poor families in the southern city.

The rice distributed was part of 42,180 sacks of smuggled rice worth P42 million, which were confiscated by authorities during a warehouse raid in Zamboanga City last Sept. 15.

The President said the government followed due process in confiscating the smuggled items by giving the respondents a 15-day notice to hear their side. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

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Marcos defends price cap on rice

By HELEN FLORES

President Marcos defended yesterday the imposition of price caps on rice even as he ordered the increase in buffer stock of the staple in the National Food Authority (NFA)'s warehouses across the country to ensure its affordability.

In a speech during rice distribution in Zamboanga City, Marcos noted that countries in Asia such as China, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia were racing to increase their supply of rice before the dry spell, which he said triggered price increases.

"(These) countries in Asia are making sure they have a reserve, they have a buffer stock. And so they race (to get rice). So the price went up," he said.

"Everyone buys. They are buying at the same time, the

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Marcos

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price of rice also rises so we have to put a price cap," he stressed.

Marcos, who is also the agriculture secretary, said below normal rainfall is expected in the coming months due to El Niño that could result in lower yield.

The Chief Executive has issued Executive Order 39, mandating a price ceiling of P41 for regular milled rice and P45 for well-milled rice. The order took effect on Sept. 5.

He likewise ordered the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to intensify its anti-smuggling campaign and prevent the entry of smuggled rice in the country, as he emphasized the need to prevent smuggling of rice to help improve the selling of the local harvest.

"We need to tighten our guards against the illegal importation or smuggling of rice because what happens, this smuggled rice is not immediately being sold, they will hoard the supply to trigger rice prices to increase," Marcos said. "That is why I directed our partners in the customs to tighten well and not allow the entry of the smuggled rice."

Rice distribution

Marcos, meanwhile, led the distribution of around 1,500 sacks of confiscated smuggled rice to indigent families in Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay on Tuesday.

The rice distributed was part of the 42,180 sacks of premium quality rice worth P42 million seized by the BOC-Port of Zamboanga during its raid at a warehouse in Barangay San Jose Gusu, Zamboanga City on Sept. 15.

The confiscated sacks of rice were

turned over to the Department of Social Welfare and Development for distribution to the beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program.

Asked about the possibility of bringing down the price of rice to P20 per kilo, a promise Marcos made during the presidential campaign, the Chief Executive said: "There is always a chance for that."

Marcos also distributed other assistance from the Department of Agriculture and Department of Labor and Employment in Zamboanga.

Diokno: I serve at the pleasure of President

For his part, Finance Secretary and economic team head Benjamin Diokno maintained that he continues to serve at the pleasure of the President amid calls for him to be removed from the Cabinet for proposing tariff cuts on imported rice.

"I know where they are coming from. But I serve at the pleasure of the President," Diokno said in an interview with *Teleradyo* in response to demands from various agriculture groups to ax him as head of the economic team.

"If the President no longer wants me, he can remove me. It's that simple. I have served four presidents," Diokno said. Last week, several agriculture groups, led by the Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura and Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), demanded that Diokno and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan be removed.

Diokno proposed that the current 35 percent rice import tariff rate be slashed temporarily to zero percent or just up to 10 percent, at the maximum, to address rising price of the staple.

"Just because you have a proposal that is not acceptable by other groups doesn't mean you will resign," Diokno added. "You give your best recommendation. That is your duty."

Currently, the executive department is discussing at the highest level the proposal to reduce import tariffs on rice, which agriculture groups have called a "death sentence" on local farmers.

Leonardo Montemayor, former agriculture secretary and chairman of the FFF, said the proposal to reduce rice tariffs so close to harvest time will cripple farmers and only benefit rice importers.

He added that farmers are already reeling from the devastating effects of the typhoons this year that led to billions of pesos in agricultural damage.

Price cap lifted soon?

President Marcos seemed bent on lifting the price cap the government imposed on rice before the month ends, ACT-CIS party-list Rep. Erwin Tulfo revealed yesterday.

"What I've been hearing from Malacañang, the President may suspend it hopefully by the end of the month or around October," Tulfo told ANC.

Tulfo explained that there have already been recommendations from farmers' groups to Marcos, who also sits as agriculture secretary in a concurrent capacity and chairman of the NFA Council.

Meanwhile, Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez said the decision of President Marcos to raise the buying price of palay would be good for farmers in the long run. — **With Delon Porcalla, Roel Pareño, Louise Maureen Simeon, Romina Cabrera**

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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President Marcos and Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian lead the distribution of around 1,500 sacks of premium quality rice to various beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, or 4Ps, during a visit to the National Food Authority-Region 9 warehouse in Zamboanga City yesterday.



Marcos eyes more rice buffer stock

Intensified enforcement of anti-smuggling laws ordered

By BETHEENA UNITE

Like its neighboring countries, the Philippines will also increase its rice buffer stock in preparation for the looming El Niño phenomenon.

"We will increase our buffer stock so that we will no longer see sudden increase in prices," **President Marcos** said when he led the distribution of confiscated smuggled rice to Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries in Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay on Tuesday, Sept. 19.

► 5



FREE RICE — President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. (left) distributes sacks of premium quality rice to beneficiaries of the 'Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino' Program (4Ps) during his visit to the National Food Authority-Region 9 warehouse in Zamboanga City on Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2023. (PNA)



Marcos eyes more rice buffer stock 1◀

He also assured them that the government will prevent further increase in rice prices when the phenomenon strikes the country.

Marcos cited that the Philippines, like Indonesia, China, Thailand, Singapore, and other countries are buying rice to sustain their buffer stocks.

This situation, he said, also triggers high prices of rice so he decided to order a price cap on rice.

"What's happening now is Asian countries are anticipating El Niño in the coming months. The dry spell is now evident, so harvest is now low," Marcos said. "This is why other countries in Asia are ensuring that they have enough buffer stock. They are racing to buy stock. Prices are rising because all—Indonesia, China, Thailand, Singapore—are buying. They are buying at the same time, causing prices to increase."

Marcos has ordered a price ceiling of ₱41 per kilogram for regular milled rice and ₱45 per kilogram for well-milled rice.

On Monday, Sept. 18, the National Food Authority (NFA) Council set a new price range for buying palay in response to the changing production and market conditions.

The buying price for dry palay is



RICE PADDY ART — A rice paddy art featuring the Philippine logo consisting of the sun and three stars is unraveled by the Rizal Agricultural Research and Experiment Station (RARES) in Tanay, Rizal, on Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2023. RARES, a research station of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Region 4, grows and develops different seedlings, including rice, and distributes these to farmers in the Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon) region. (Mark Balmores)

now at ₱23 from ₱19, and ₱19 for the wet palay from the previous ₱16.

Marcos slams rice smugglers

In the same event, Marcos lambasted rice smugglers for earning huge sums while ordinary Filipinos are suffering.

"It is not right that they bring in rice, then hoard it to keep the

prices high. People are suffering while smugglers are earning much," Marcos said while distributing rice.

The President told the beneficiaries that the rice being distributed to them is part of the rice seized by the Bureau of Customs at a warehouse in Barangay San Jose Gusu in Zamboanga City.

A total of 42,180 bags of imported

rice worth ₱42 million were seized from the warehouse. A total of 1,500 sacks were donated to the families.

He said the government adhered to due process in confiscating the smuggled goods by giving the respondents a 15-day notice to hear their side of the story.

Marcos also assured the beneficiaries that the government is working

tirelessly to put an end to smuggling, which adversely affected the agricultural sector in the country.

"We should have ample food supply. It includes the strengthening of our agriculture system. But that is not the only problem here in the Philippines, we are also facing a very big problem on rice smuggling," he said. "We need to fix the agricultural sector and strengthen the enforcement of our laws to sustain the supply of rice in the entire Philippines."

Other assistance packages

The chief executive also led the turnover of ₱6.72 million worth of Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rural Development Project Investment for Rural Enterprises and Agricultural and Fisheries Productivity (DA-PRDP); ₱11.84 million worth of DA-PRDP I-REAP; and ₱1.5 million worth of DA Kadiwa financial grant (Hauling Vehicle).

He also distributed ₱1 million worth of DA Kadiwa financial grant (trading capital), ₱1.5 million worth of DA Kadiwa financial grant (vehicle and working capital), ₱59,043 worth of assistance certificate from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), ₱76,620 worth of mackerel drift gillnet, and ₱4,000 worth of eight rolls-PE Rope No. 10mm.

Other assistance from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) was also distributed such as ₱120 million worth of assistance under the "Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantages/Displaced Workers" and ₱530,000 worth of DOLE livelihood aid.



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South Cotabato gov backs rice price caps

SOUTH Cotabato Gov. Reynaldo Tamayo Jr. supports President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s Executive Order (EO) 39 imposing price ceilings on rice.

"Imposing price ceilings [on rice] is only proper. What is important is that the implementation of this executive order won't affect our rice farmers and retailers," Tamayo said on Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2023.

He advised rice industry middlemen to understand the purpose of the executive order and the imposition of the price cap.

Tamayo noted that the middlemen should

limit their profits, thereby allowing both retailers and rice growers to earn income.

On August 31, the President signed EO 39, imposing caps on prices at P41 per kg for regular milled rice and P45 per kg for well-milled rice.

Earlier, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) issued a joint memorandum to impose rice price ceilings to ensure that the staple is reasonably priced and conveniently accessible to Filipinos.

EO 39, which took effect on Septem-

ber 5, will remain in full force and effect unless lifted by the President upon the recommendation of the Price Coordinating Council or the DA and the DTI.

Tamayo clarified that the provincial government of South Cotabato has not monitored hoarding of rice stock.

"Regarding rice hoarding, so far we have not monitored any," he said, adding that rice supply in the region exceeds the demand requirement of the province.

"In fact, we deliver rice to other provinces," the governor said.

Meanwhile, Andy Ango, chief of the

Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division of DA-RFO 12, said rice retailers in the Soccsargen Region immediately complied with EO 39.

As of this week, all rice retailers in General Santos City and Kidapawan City are already compliant with the mandated price ceilings, while 90 percent of retailers in Koronadal City and 80 percent in Tacurong City have abided by the order.

The second leg of joint price monitoring started on September 15 in other markets in Region 12.

FRANZ R. SUMANGIL



GOLKAR INSTITUTE PRESIDENTIAL LECTURE SERIES 2023

Resilience in rice: More than just big harvests

Second of two parts

(Last Sept. 16, 2023, former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo spoke before the Golkar Institute of Indonesia, which is the Policy and Training Institute for Indonesia's young and

up-coming government leaders, established by the ruling Golkar Party. She spoke about "resilience on the issue of rice supply and prices." GMA expounded on the strategies she employed in 2008 when the World confronted an International Rice Crisis, which underlie this

resilience: "Ensuring Sufficient Rice Reserves and Boosting Domestic Production, Enhancing the Supply Chain and Addressing Its Limitations, Harnessing Science and Technology to Enhance the Supply Chain and Improve

►HarvestsA2

■ HARVESTS FROM A1

Resilience

Risk Management, International Cooperation, and Maintaining a Strong Fiscal Space and Economic Stability." Following are her delivered remarks.)

PHILIPPINES imposes rice price caps. Last August 31st, the Philippines imposed caps on rice prices through Executive Order 39, which mandated a maximum price ceiling of 72 US cents per kilo for regular milled rice and 79 US cents for well-milled rice.

History repeats itself. Now, back to 2007 and 2008, it seems that in July 2007, Vietnam restricted rice exports due to data that the volume of rice it contracted to export had equaled the total export plan for the whole year. India joined the ban in October 2007, and Vietnam banned exports in February 2008, leading to a global rice crisis.

Prices of fuel and grain skyrocketed then, with energy costs fueling edibles. Rice was exported at over \$1,000 a ton in April 2008. The market frenzy over corn being used for ethanol escalated the prices of rice, wheat and corn. US corn reached \$720 a bushel in June 2008, tracking wheat at over \$1,000 in February that year. West Texas crude peaked at \$140 a barrel in July 2008.

With the surge in global grain prices, Philippine prices also rose, even though our rice harvest was the highest in the decade. The harvest had been boosted by hybrid varieties developed

with my government's funding. But as usual, the global price surge led to speculative hoarding.

Strategy 1: Securing rice needs early and boosting domestic production. To bring down prices and stabilize supplies, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, a former Economics student of mine, imported rice, partly through government-to-government contracts by the National Food Authority or NFA. The Philippines bought close to 65 percent of its rice needs early, at a low early price. Later in the buying season, the only countries capable of supplying reasonable quantities of rice were Thailand and Vietnam.

The Philippines had a good relationship with both countries. Invoking old trading ties and the promise of future business, we secured the balance of our needs from Vietnam still at a good price. The Philippines eventually procured a record 2.3 million tons, and the NFA released affordable rice to the market. We kept the price of rice stable at 49 US cents a kilo and non-NFA rice was not much higher.

Secretary Yap had recounted that several traders asked him to delay releasing NFA rice until they could dispose of their stocks. He refused. Yap flooded stores, leaving hoarders with big losses.

So, what experience can we share from 2008 and other rice crises?

Maintain market clout. One obvious resilience experience is that the government in 2008 had ample market clout to defeat and deter

speculators. Speculators will always seek to treble profits by holding on to stocks, which escalates prices and future gains. But we maintained market clout, especially in areas likely to suffer shortages, such as typhoon-prone regions and urban areas far from farms. The government had kept ample stocks all the time, rather than rushing to import when prices shot up.

Watch out for price-driving factors. Also, there will be both recurring as well as unexpected developments that drive prices up, such as weather patterns and market swings. Weather patterns affect harvests; they can change, and extreme events cause temporary shortages. And expect occasional global and local market swings, for instance, the rise in world corn prices due to ethanol production.

A contributor to speculative trading. Challenges in market power lead to speculative trading, especially in basic commodities which consumers have to buy, whatever the price. For example, back in 2017, the NFA used almost \$40 million to pay down its debt rather than procuring rice. That and the limited harvests in the first half of the year led to speculative hoarding and profiteering. Some observers even wondered if traders had colluded with NFA insiders to deplete the agency's stocks.

More recently, last April, an Agriculture official reported that the NFA inventory was down to two days of national consumption, although nationwide stocks, including those in households, traders and warehouses, were still enough for 39 days. And domestic harvests in the first quarter were up 6 percent over a year ago. But local rice prices have already surged, and the Department of Agriculture



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said it was investigating hoarding and price manipulation after rice hit 99 US cents a kilo in the mountain city of Baguio, up from the usual 71 cents. The Agriculture official said, "If rice prices right now are 56 pesos a kilo (99 US cents), that's not right. We will import if needed."

Now, the Philippines is lining up imports from Vietnam and India through government-to-government contracts, which India allows.

Beyond importations, we must boost domestic production. To have sufficient rice reserves in the event of supply and market disruptions, it is important to boost domestic production. To depend too much on imports exposes countries and consumers to the vagaries of the highly volatile global rice trade.

The international rice market is thin and volatile. To quote a 2014 article by the New York Academy of Sciences, "The international rice market is regarded as 'thin' and 'volatile' and some of the reasons for this are: (1) global rice trade accounts for only 7 [percent] of total production; (2) rice is mostly eaten in the same country where it is produced; (3) many Asian countries have strict policies and restrictions on rice imports and exports; and (4) the rice trade is highly segmented by rice variety, degree of processing and the degree of milling."

With just 7 percent of global production, rice exports are prey to all manner of disruption in a host of

nations. So we must have our own production and agricultural modernization.

Financing modernization and irrigation. Early in my administration, I met several times with agriculture agencies, including the Land Bank of the Philippines, to implement the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997, which allocated some \$450 million a year to modernize the farming and fishing sectors.

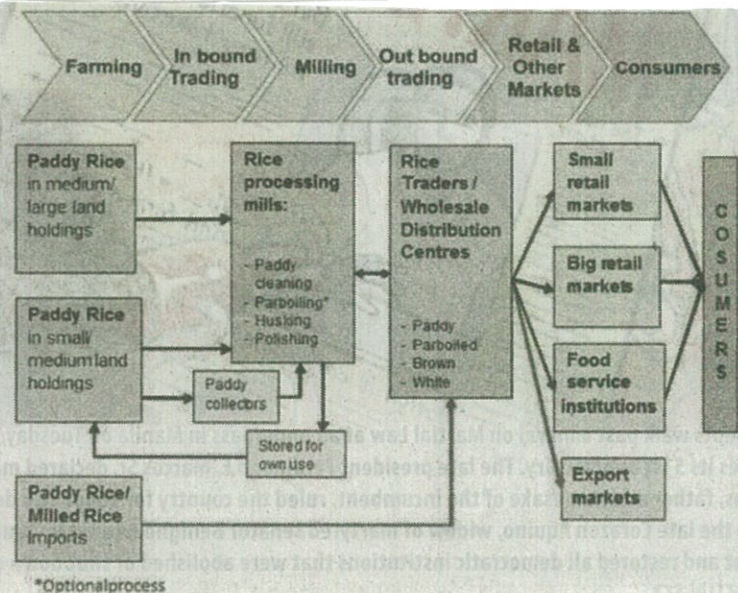
The biggest component of agricultural modernization in a country like the Philippines, which has no great river system, is irrigation.

I realigned budget outlays and also mobilized LandBank credit to channel more than the \$450 million stipulated for irrigation and other components of agricultural modernization. This not only boosted food production but also helped reduce poverty by 2 percentage points, or an estimated 2 million Filipinos, between years 2000 and 2003. It also helped that I released the local governments' share of national taxes, which had been held up in previous years.

Strategy 2: Enhancing the supply chain and addressing its limitations. Farmers in the rice supply chain pictured on the screen from the article of the New York Academy can boost or hamper output. Hence, our second resilience strategy in 2008 was enhancing the supply chain and addressing its limitations and failings, especially those that caused major market distortions. Among the many ways to do so, let me cite two we undertook in my administration. (see photo)

Investing in infrastructure and distribution. One way to enhance the supply chain was to facilitate needed farming inputs — seedlings and fertilizer, grain dryers, farm-to-market roads and other post-harvest facilities. These inputs and facilities cut costs and spurred production, especially among farmers who had not bothered producing rice because there was no road to bring it to market.

The Strong Republic Nautical Highway. Speaking of transport, a second key supply chain enhancement was what I called the Strong Republic Nautical Highway, an inter-island network of roll-on, roll-off (RoRo) ports connected by quality roads connecting major islands in our archipelago. This not only lowered the cost of passenger and cargo transport by 30 to 40 percent but also made possible much new inter-island trade.





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One rice producer and trader on Mindoro Island, south of our Calabarzon industrial region, had shipped her grain through Manila for clients on its neighboring island of Panay. But with the Nautical Highway, she trucked the rice directly to Panay. That enabled her not only to earn more but also to reduce what she charged her buyers. And this win-win result was replicated all over the country.

In the current administration of **President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.**, his recent policy, which we in Congress empowered by law, of writing off unpaid agrarian reform loans and giving land titles to land reform beneficiaries, is envisioned to further boost funding and output for many thousands of hectares of rice lands. Now, farmers can use their land to get farming credit, greatly enhancing their productivity.

Strategy 3: Harnessing science and technology. A third and widely acknowledged instrument for rice resiliency is science and technology, especially for two-key strategic thrusts: the just-mentioned supply chain enhancement, including the production of the rice itself, and risk management.

An oft-quoted fact is that while world population grew 90 percent between 1966, when the first Green Revolution began, and 2000, when paddy rice output surged 130 percent.

I have also mentioned our 2008 harvest increase helped by hybrid rice cultivation. Its proponent, SL Agritech, worked with Yuan Longping, China's "father of hybrid rice." And SL Agritech has also brought its seedlings

to Indonesia.

The Philippines has, of course, been at the forefront of farming technology with the International Rice Research Institute or IRRI south of Manila.

IRRI opened in 1962 when my father, the late Diosdado Macapagal, was president of the Philippines.

Water and good planting materials. As we seek out rice-related technologies, one area not to miss is sustainability. Water usage is especially crucial. We may need rice varieties that thrive in coastal and flood-prone areas. Flood-tolerant rice varieties are steadfast partners toward achieving food security amidst climate change. This is especially crucial to archipelagic nations like yours and mine, with many thousands of islands facing farmland loss due to rising oceans.

Risk management through AI, commodities exchange and rice stan-

dardization. On risk reduction, existing and upcoming risk monitoring assessment, and management systems are good to explore and implement, including those utilizing artificial intelligence to better analyze and act on increasing mountains of data.

A 2012 Asian Development Bank paper also suggests: "Asean can play a major catalytic role in developing the commodities exchange as a viable option for addressing price risk and price volatility in rice. It could work toward removing the uncertainties and adverse impact of unilateral trade policy restrictions. Furthermore, it can initiate steps toward rice standardization and the development of a regional rice index."

It is auspicious that the 2023 Asean summit has just taken place in Jakarta. There, President Marcos called for Asean and its partners in East Asia to strengthen regional food security mechanisms.

Whether an Asean commodity system is set up, the Asean Integrated Food Security Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the Asean Region, established after the 2007-2008 global grains crisis, provided a mechanism for working together to enhance rice resiliency in the region.

Strategy 4: International cooperation to manage risks. This would bring us further to a resilience strategy — international cooperation and risk management can help mitigate rice problems.

As the Asean logo shows, 10 rice stalks bound together are far stronger and unbreakable than separate nations.

Our 10 nations in Asean should certainly maximize our collective mechanisms for food security and resilience.

Strategy 5: Adequate financial reserves. I will end now with one overarching experience. This applies to whatever the crisis, be it a pandemic, a food crisis, or even a potentially military one.

For any government to be able to respond, it has to have the fiscal means to do so. Indispensable in responding to the vagaries of volatile food supplies and prices, the government must have ample fiscal space and resources to quickly mobilize supplies and address scarcity and surges. In my time as president and an economist, that is what I enabled the Philippines to do — to restore our fiscal stability, even at the political sacrifice of increasing taxes. That gave us the underpinnings for resilience during our 2008 rice crisis and during the 2008 global recession.

Earlier, I mentioned my father, the late President Macapagal. He was the first Filipino leader who dared to be close friends with Indonesia during the Cold War, when Indonesia was ostracized by the West for choosing to be non-aligned.

I end my talk today with something my father often said: "Logic can mislead us, but experience, never." Today I have spoken to you not so much from logic or wisdom but from experience. I hope my story helps you, the future of Indonesia.

Mabuhay. Terih Makasi.

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Rice assistance. President Marcos Jr. distributes confiscated smuggled rice to less fortunate families in Tun-gawan, Zamboanga Sibugay as he leads the turnover of assistance to residents and local government units in the province Tuesday.

PCO PHOTO

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'Palace serious in drive vs onion hoarders, smugglers'

EXECUTIVE Secretary Lucas Bersamin said the administration of President Marcos Jr. remains committed in running after alleged hoarders and smugglers behind the price manipulation of onions last year.

In a GMA News Online article, Bersamin was quoted as saying that Malacañang is "earnest about hoarders. Matagal na namin tinututukan iyan kasi hindi maganda sa taumbayan (We've

been monitoring this since it's not good for the public)."

The statement was made after Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla announced that the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has filed before the Department of Justice (DOJ) profiteering and hoarding charges against six

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PALACE

personalities, which supposedly includes government officials and private persons, for their alleged involvement in the 2022 onion price manipulation mess.

Remulla, however, refused to identify the respondents pending the DOJ's review of the NBI complaints.

Onion prices skyrocketed last year between P500 to P720 per kilo in local markets nationwide. The prices peaked during the Christmas and 2023 New Year's celebrations.

Bersamin referred questions on the

details of the cases to the DOJ. "It will be the investigating offices or prosecuting arm of government na ang magiging main authoritative diyan (who will be the main authority regarding that)," the Palace official told the online news agency in a phone interview.

President Marcos Jr. has vowed to go after smugglers and hoarders of agricultural products, especially onion and rice, during his second State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July.

He has warned that the full force of the law would be meted out against hoarders and smugglers, whom he

said could be charged with economic sabotage.

The President had also vowed to unmask and put an end to the illegal activities of cartels involved in the hoarding, smuggling and price manipulation of agricultural goods.

In his visit to Zamboanga City on Tuesday, Marcos reaffirmed his commitment to address smuggling and hoarding, especially of rice, which he stressed adversely affects not just the agricultural sector but also adds to the suffering of the people. — *Jocelyn Montemayor*



PBBM: P20/kilo rice still possible

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. remains optimistic that the P20 per kilo price of rice, which he made during his 2022 campaign for the presidency, still has a "chance" of becoming a reality once the agriculture sector, particularly the cost of rice production in the country, becomes stable.

"May chance lagi iyan (It always has a chance)," the President said in an interview after he led the distribution of an initial 1,500 sacks of smuggled premium quality rice to Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program

(4Ps) beneficiaries in the Zamboanga provinces.

Asked during the interview if his campaign promise of P20 per kilo of rice is still feasible, Marcos said: "Kung maayos natin ang production natin, hindi na tayo masyadong babagyuhan at 'yung mga tulong na ibinibigay natin sa mga farmers ay magamit na nila (If we can fix the production [of rice] and it becomes stable, and we will not be hit by too many typhoons, and the farmers start using the aid that we have given them [then the P20 per kilo of rice is possible])."

In a news release issued by the

Presidential Communications Office (PCO), Marcos said global developments have directly affected the prices of basic commodities in the country and forced the government and the local markets to adjust.

"Ngunit, kapag talaga nagawa natin ang cost of production (ay) binaba natin, ay bababa rin ang presyo ng bigas. Bababa rin lahat. Basta't mas mataas ang ani kahit na pwede nating ipagpantay ang presyo (If we are able to bring down the cost of production, the price of rice will also go down. Everything will also go down. As long as the harvest remains high,

we can match the price)," the President said.

The President reiterated the government is exhausting all measures to ensure that prices of staple food in the market remain affordable especially among the poor.

He cited the imposition of the rice cap of P41 per kilo of regular milled rice and P45 per kilo of well-milled rice to address the rising prices of the staple grain and the new buying price range for palay at P19 to P23 for dry and P16 to P19 for fresh following the changing production and market

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PBBM

conditions.

He also said the government is working on raising the rice buffer stock amid the high demand for rice among Asian countries, which have increased their purchases or imports, in anticipation of the looming El Niño phenomenon.

"Titingnan po natin kung papaano na ang mga magiging pangangailangan ng ating mga kababayan para hindi natin masasabi na ginutom ang Pilipino dahil hindi sapat ang bigas (We will assess the needs of our people so the Filipinos will not go hungry due to insufficient supply of rice)," the

President said.

SMUGGLED RICE

The President visited Zamboanga City on Tuesday to distribute an initial 1,500 sacks of smuggled premium quality rice to 4Ps beneficiaries.

Marcos inspected the 42,180 sacks of smuggled Jasmine rice, estimated to be worth around P42 million, that was forfeited by the Bureau of Customs-Port of Zamboanga (BOC-POZ) during its warehouse inspection in Barangay San Jose Gusu in Zamboanga City last May 19. The smuggled goods were donated to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) after the BOC-

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POZ issued an Order of Forfeiture last September 1.

The President assured the public that due process was observed during the confiscation of the rice, which included the observance of the 15 days given to consignees of the grains to explain how they acquired the rice and show proof that the corresponding tariffs and duties were paid correctly.

"Natapos na po ang 15 days, hindi po sila makasagot. Kaya't kinuha na namin, kinuha na ng gobyerno, kinuha na ng Customs at ginawang donation sa DSWD at gagawing donation ng DSWD at ng gobyerno sa inyo (The 15 days have ended, they have not been able to answer. Which is why the [Bureau of] Customs seized the rice, and it was donated to the DSWD and the DSWD and the national government will donate it to you)," he told the beneficiaries during the distribution.

During its investigation, the BOC discovered disparities between the actual seized goods and the descriptions provided in the documents pertaining to the stored rice.

It noted that the payment records referred to a shipment of broken white rice, which was contrary to the premium Jasmine Fragrant Rice that was discovered in the warehouse.

BOC also said that the warehouse also lacked the necessary Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC) from the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

On September 1, the BOC-POZ issued an Order of Forfeiture against the warehouse owner for violating the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA), Rice Tariffication Law, and Republic Act No. 10845, otherwise known as the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

The President reiterated the government would continue to closely monitor and prevent the smuggling of illegally acquired imported rice from entering the country and the market, stressing that these adversely affect not just the agricultural sector but also adds to the suffering of the people.

Marcos said owners of smuggled rice usually keep the grains in warehouses first and only sell them once the prices are already high.

"Iyon 'yung nakikita natin

kaya nagtaasan ang presyo ng bigas dahil 'yan ang kanilang ginagawa. Kaya't sabi ko sa ating mga kasama sa Customs, ika ko sa kanila kailangan higitan ninyo nang mabuti at huwag kayong papayag na may pumapasok na smuggled na bigas [That was our observation when the prices of rice went up, it's because of what they did. That's why I told the (Bureau of) Customs to monitor closely and do not let smuggled rice to come in]," said Marcos, who also commended the BOC for their successful seizure of the 42,180 bags of imported rice.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian, National Food Authority (NFA) Administrator Roderico Bioco, BOC Deputy Commissioner Vener Baquiran, Philippine Air Force Brigadier General Dennis Estrella, Army Major General Antonio Nafarrete accompanied and assisted the President during the inspection and distribution of rice.

DSWD Undersecretary for Operations Group Josefina Romualdez said 5,000 4Ps beneficiaries from Zamboanga would each receive a sack of rice.

She said apart from the distribution in Zamboanga City, there was also a simultaneous distribution of rice in the municipalities of Tungawan and Sibuco.

Bulacan Rep. Salvador Pleyto lauded the government's move to distribute rice seized from smugglers and hoarders to poor communities in Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay.

"By giving the rice away to the people, they are placed beyond the reach of those who have illegally brought them in," the lawmaker said.

Pleyto, a member of House Agriculture and Food Committee, said the new policy on confiscated contraband rice should discourage the smugglers and hoarders from artificially hijacking the market and adversely affecting local prices.

DSWD Undersecretary Ed Punay, during the "Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon" program in state network PTV 4, said more than 4,000 of the targeted 7,000 small and micro rice retailers under the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) have already received the P15,000 cash grant.

Punay said the distribution would continue until the end of the month.

While in Zamboanga, the President also led the turnover of P6.72 million worth of DA-Philippine Rural Development Project Investment for Rural Enterprises and Agricultural and Fisheries Productivity (DA-PRDP) funds, P11.84 million worth of DA-PRDP I-REAP, P1.5 million worth of DA Kadiwa Financial Grant (Hauling Vehicle), P1 million worth of DA Kadiwa Financial Grant (trading capital), and P1.5 million worth of DA Kadiwa Financial Grant (vehicle and working capital) to

select cooperative and individual beneficiaries.

Marcos also distributed P59,043 worth of Assistance Certificate from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR); P76,620 worth of Mackerel Drift Gillnet; and P4,000 worth of eight rolls-PE Rope No. 10mm; P120 million for the Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE) "Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantages/Displaced Workers;" and P530,000 worth of DOLE livelihood assistance.

PALAY

Lawmakers welcomed the decision of the National Food Authority (NFA) Council to increase the buying price of palay from the current farm gate prices.

Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez said rice farmers and their families stand to directly benefit from the increase of farm gate cost of dry palay from 19 to 23 per kilo and P16 to P19 per kilo for undried.

The Department of Agriculture has earmarked P15 billion for the procurement of un-milled rice which will mean better returns for rice farmers who have been protesting the low price per kilo in the face of mounting costs of farm inputs including fertilizers, seeds, and fuel for equipment.

"The President wants to make sure our local prices are stable, regardless of what happens in the world market. Our priority should be our own (farmers). Of course, we prefer our local supply compared to imported rice. We should import only those what we need. Self-sufficiency should be key," the House leader said.

The Speaker expressed hope that this and similar interventions would spur increased local rice production to bring down the country's reliance on rice importation.

He acknowledged that the government has to address issues related to production costs including funding, marketing, infrastructure, irrigation, and technology.

On the other hand, Minority Leader Marcelino "Nonoy" Libanan (4Ps party-list) called on President Marcos to maintain the cap on the price of rice to protect consumers and stamp out price manipulation, profiteering, and hoarding.

The lawmaker noted that Asian rice prices began creeping up after India, the world's biggest rice supplier, stopped exports of non-basmati white rice in July to prioritize its own consumption due to the adverse effect of harsh weather on harvest.

The ban has strained the capacity of Thailand and Vietnam, the world's second and third biggest exporters, to fill the void created by loss of shipments from India.

- With Peter Tabingo



Marcos eyes fishing ban

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. yesterday said government is looking at imposing fishing bans and other restrictions in some areas in the country, especially those used for breeding fingerlings, to address the problem of overfishing and boost fish population and aquaculture.

The President said improving the country's agriculture sector not only means securing rice and corn supply but also improving the fishery and the livestock sectors, according to the

Presidential Communications Office (PCO).

Marcos said the government is coming up with a plan to secure the country's fish stocks, along with other initiatives for the agriculture sector, to ensure food security.

"There are some places that should not be used for fishing because they are better used for breeding ... to increase the population of fishes. That is what we are planning," he said in Filipino.

He did not say where and when the fishing

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ban will be implemented. He said government is finalizing the plan.

The President said fish production in the country has gone down as some breeding grounds have been destroyed over the years.

Marcos said apart from increasing fish production, his administration implemented programs to prevent fish spoilage, like putting up more cold storage facilities especially in fish ports. He said up to 30 percent of the fish catch is degraded or damaged due to the lack of cold storage.

In May this year, Marcos said

he wants to build at least 11 cold storage warehouses on top of ongoing construction of cold storage facilities in the ports in General Santos City and Cagayan de Oro City. He said he wants all these storage facilities operational within the year.

Marcos, yesterday, said in areas where building a cold storage is not feasible, the government will put up an ice plant to ensure there is enough ice to prevent fish from becoming spoiled.

The President said the government also plans to put up a fisheries processing plant so that fish would be processed in a single area.



PBBM INUMANG FISHING BAN

Plano ng gobyerno na magpatupad ng fishing ban sa ilang bahagi ng bansa upang malutas ang problema sa overfishing o sobrang pangingisda.

Inihayag ito ni Pangulong **Ferdinand Marcos Jr.** sa isang panayam sa kanya sa Zamboanga City nitong Martes matapos matanong sa mga plano nito sa sektor ng pamalakaya.

Sinabi ng Presidente na ang planong fishing ban ay upang hindi maubusan ng isda at manatili ang sapat na supply sa

mga darating na araw.

"Kung minsan kailangan 'wag uubusin 'yung isda para sa next season mayroon pa. Kaya 'yun ang tinitingnan natin ngayon," anang Pangulo.

Bahagi aniya ng adhikain ng kanyang gobyerno ay masiguro ang food security kaya hindi lamang supply ng bigas at mais ang dapat na tutukan kundi pati na rin ang fishery at livestock sector.

Ayon sa Pangulo, may mga bahagi ng karagatan na hindi dapat pangisdaan dahil ito ay

nagsisilbing itlugan o breeding grounds ng mga isda.

Bumababa na aniya ang antas ng mga nahuhuling isda dahil sa nasisirang bahagi ng karagatan kaya mahalagang maprotektahan ito upang magpatuloy ang pagpaparami sa mga isda.

"May mga lugar na hindi dapat gawin palaisdan dahil ito nga ay parang breeding, para dumami ang population ng mga isda. Kaya 'yun ang pinaplano," paliwanag ng Pangulo. (**Aileen Taliping**)



BBM pinamudmod mga smuggled na bigas

IPINAMAHAGI ni Pangulong Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. sa mga mahihirap na pamilya ang mga nakumpiskang smuggled na bigas at iba pang tulong mula sa gobyerno nitong Martes nang umaga sa bayan ng Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay.

Ang ipinamudmod na bigas ay bahagi ng 42,180 sako ng bigas na nakumpiska ng Bureau of Customs sa sinalakay na warehouse sa lalawigan noong Mayo.

Sa kanyang talumpati, tiniyak ng Pangulo na ginagawa ng kanyang gobyerno ang lahat ng hakbang upang matuldukan ang smuggling ng bigas na isa sa mga nagpapahirap sa mga mangsasaka.

"Hindi lamang pagayos ng agricultural sector ang ating kailangang gawin. Kailangan din nating pagtibayin ang ating

pag-impose ng mga batas tungkol nga sa pagbigay ng suplay ng bigas sa atin, sa buong Pilipinas. Hindi tama na nagpapasok sila, iniipit nila ang suplay, pinapataas nila ang presyo, naghihirap ang tao para lang kumita sila ng malaki," anang Pangulo.

Ang mga nakumpiskang bigas ay itinum-over sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) upang ipamaha-

gi sa mga benepisyaryo ng Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) matapos hindi tumugon sa proseso ang mga mag-ari ng nakumpiskang bigas.

Inatasan na rin aniya nito ang Bureau of Customs (BOC) na tutukan ang kampa-nya laban sa smugglers upang maputol na ang illegal na operasyon ng mga sindikato. (Aileen Taliping)



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RICE AS AID

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian led the distribution of confiscated rice to some 5,000 poor beneficiaries in the Zamboanga Peninsula Region.

The rice distribution in Zamboanga served as a kick-off since the more than 42,000 bags of Jasmine rice seized by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) have been donated to the DSWD.

"We expect more than 42,000 poorest Filipinos to benefit from the seized rice by the BOC, which is in line with the President's directive to crack down on rice smugglers and hoarders," Gatchalian said.

The DSWD- Field Office 9 (ZamboPen Region) prepared the list of the 5,000 "poorest of the poor" who will be the first batch of recipients of 25 kilos of the high-grade Jasmine fragrant white rice, according to DSWD Undersecretary for Operations Group Josefina Romualdez.

There will be simultaneous distribution of 25 kilos of Jasmine rice to 5,000 poorest of the poor beneficiaries in the municipalities of Tungawan and Sibuco and the City of Zamboanga.

The 5,000 bags of Jasmine rice for distribution on Tuesday was part of the 42,180 bags of imported rice worth P42 million confiscated by the Bureau of Customs-Port of Zamboanga (BOC-POZ) following a raid on a warehouse in Barangay San Jose Gusu, Zamboanga City last May 19.

The BOC said they will conduct more inspections of warehouses following the directive of President Marcos to immediately address the issues of hoarding and rice smuggling.

Jester Manalastas

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Smuggled rice ipinamahagi ni PBBM sa 4Ps beneficiaries

Para makontrol ng pagtaas sa presyo ng bigas, nais ni **Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr.** na madagdagan ang buffer stock ng bigas sa mga bodega ng National Food Authority (NFA).

Ito ang sinabi ni Marcos sa kanyang pamamahagi ng tinatayang 1,500 sako ng premium quality rice sa mga benepisyaryo ng Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) sa kanyang pagbisita sa NFA-Region IX warehouse.

Sinabi ng Pangulo na ang mga ipinamahaging bigas ay bahagi ng 42,180 smuggled na sako ng bigas na nagkakahalaga ng P42 milyon na nakumpiska ng mga otoridad sa ginawang raid sa isang warehouse sa Barangay San Jose Gusu, Zamboanga City nitong Setyembre 15.

Ililipat din umano ang sako ng mga bigas sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) para sa distribusyon sa kanilang mga benepisyaryo sa rehiyon.

Si Marcos ang kasalukuyang pinuno ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ay nakipagpulong sa NFA council nitong Lunes habang itinatakda ang price range sa pagbili ng palay para mapataas ang kita ng local farmers.

Ayon pa sa Presidente, napagdesisyunan na ang bilihan ng dry palay ay P19 hanggang P23 habang ang wet palay ay P16-P19. (Gemma Garcia)

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May proteksiyon na para sa magsasaka

SALAMAT naman at tila natugunan na ng gobyerno ang apela natin para maproteksiyunan sa pagkalugi ang mga magsasaka sa ipinatupad na price cap sa pagbebenta ng bigas.

Hindi man sila nagbigyan ng ayuda katulad nang ibinigay sa mga traders ng bigas, nagpatupad na rin si **Presidente Bongbong Marcos** ng price ceiling sa halaga ng palay para huwag baratin ng mga traders ang mga magsasaka.

Kung sapilitang magbebenta ang mga traders sa halagang itinakda ng pamahalaan na anila'y mababa, maha-harap sila sa pagkalugi. Kaya naman nagbigay na ng ayudang pinansiyal ang pamahalaan upang pagtakpan ang pagkalugi. Wala na silang rason para mambarat sa mga magbubukid.



Hindi ko lang matiyak kung kuntento na ang mga magbubukid sa price cap na P19-P23 para sa basang palay at P16-P19 para sa pinatuyo. Iyan ang resulta ng bagong presyuhan na binuo ng National Food Authority (NFA).

Mas maganda sana kung ayudang pinansiyal din ang ibinigay sa mga magsasaka pero makuntento na muna tayo riyan. At least naresolba ang problemang idinadaing ng mga magsasaka kaugnay ng ipinairal na price cap sa bigas.

Ang inaangkat na bigas ay magsisilbing reserba lang ng NFA para makapagbenta ng murang bigas para sa mga naghihirap.

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P20/kilo ng bigas posible pa rin - PBBM

Umaasa pa rin si Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. na mapapababa pa rin ang presyo ng bigas sa P20 kada kilo sa bansa.

Sa isang ambush interview sa pangulo sa Zamboanga City, maaari itong mangyari sa sandaling maging stable ang sektor ang agrikultura at agricultural production sa Pilipinas.

Giit pa ni Marcos, lagging may chance lalo na kung maayos ang produk-

syon at 'wag masyadong bagyuhin at magagamit na ng mga magsasaka ang mga tulong na ibinibigay sa kanila ng pamahalaan.

Idinagdag pa ng Pangulo na mas madali para sa gobyerno na mag-sagawa ng kaukulang adjustment sa sandaling maging normal na ang lahat.

"Ngunit, kapag talaga nagawa natin ang cost of production binaba natin ay bababa rin ang presyo ng bigas. Bababa rin lahat,

Basta't mas mataas ang ani, kahit na pwede hating ipagpantay ang presyo," giit pa ni Marcos.

Matatandaan na naging campaign promise ng Pangulo na gawing P20 kada kilo ng bigas sa bansa.

Ginagawa rin umano ng gobyerno ang lahat ng paraan para masiguro na ang mga pagkain na bilingin sa merkado ay abot kaya para sa mga filipino lalo na sa mga mahihirap na kababayan. (Gemma Garcia)

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BUSINESS

Meat imports fall amid rising prices

The country's meat imports fell by 4 percent this year, according to the latest data by the Bureau of Animal Industry, as Filipinos consumed less pork and beef amid rising global market prices. "Market has been very tough," Meat Importers and Traders Association president emeritus Jesus Cham said, adding that "it would not be surprising for importers to be more conservative." —STORY BY JORDEENE B. LAGARE

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BUT CHICKEN PURCHASES RISE

PH MEAT IMPORTS FALL; PINOYS EAT LESS PORK, BEEF

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

The country's meat imports fell by 4 percent in the first eight months of the year as Filipinos consumed less pork and beef amid rising global market prices.

The volume of imported meat decreased to 817.35 million kilograms from January to August this year from 851.84 million kg in the same period a year ago, based on the latest data from the Bureau of Animal Industry.

"Importers are now feeling the effects of the low consumption coupled with high prices abroad," Meat Importers and Traders Association president emeritus Jesus Cham said in a message.

"Market has been very tough and [we] hear [that] many importers are lying low. It would not be surprising for importers to be more conservative," Cham said.

In August alone, the Philippines imported 115.11 million kg of meat, down 1.5 percent from the past year. But last month's volume of imported meat and meat products improved from the volume in July, ending a three-month downtrend.

For the eight-month period, pork imports made up nearly 50 percent of total volume, down 12.7 percent. Chicken came next with 35.4 percent, up 18.3 percent. The Philippines procured 91.68 million kg of beef, down 16.7 percent. **INQ**

editorial

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Importers can trust PHL tropical fruits

THE Chinese believe that all good things come in pairs so they consider the number two, despite being the smallest even number, as auspicious. Even before the Ghost Month ended on September 14, the Philippine farm sector witnessed two developments that bode well for fruit exporters. These developments involved Australia and South Korea—two members of the G-20, which consist of the world's largest economies.

In its statement on September 8, the Department of Agriculture announced that the Philippines has started exporting fresh mangoes again to Australia. The initial shipment consisted of 1,500 kilograms or 1.5 metric tons of Carabao mangoes. According to agriculture officials, the shipment marked the first fresh mango export from the Philippines to Australia in a decade.

Another G-20 country that will start purchasing fruits from the Philippines is South Korea. Manila had announced on September 13 that the Philippines's commercial shipment of Hass avocado to the Republic of Korea will start by the end of this month. This after Seoul finally approved the grant of market access to the Hass avocado exports from the Philippines.

The market access of Hass avocado to Korea was first requested by Manila in 2009 but was put on hold due to the one-at-a-time policy for Pest Risk Analysis. The PRA for Hass avocado resumed after the Philippines's success in securing market access for okra exports to Korea in 2021. Hass avocado for export to South Korea will initially be sourced from orchards accredited by the government and packing houses of Dole Philippines in Mindanao.

The twin developments are significant for the Philippines because the two G-20 countries have stringent sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards. For instance, banana exporters are still trying to regain their access to the Australian market. Seoul had planned to implement stringent residue limits on some pesticides used for bananas seven years ago. (See, "**S. Korea retains rules on PHL banana exports,**" in the **BUSINESSMIRROR**, December 4, 2016).

That the Philippines has been able to start the shipment of fruits to Australia and South Korea is a testament to the ability of Filipino exporters to meet the SPS requirements of importing countries. This also signals to the other buyers that they can trust tropical fruits from the Philippines.

The country is badly in need of new farm export winners as the latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that earnings from agricultural exports fell by nearly a quarter to \$1.61 billion, from the previous year's \$2.134 billion. The country has long relied on coconuts, pineapples, and bananas to drive agricultural exports; it is time to develop other commodities that have the potential to beef up the Philippines's export earnings.

We hope that Manila can take full advantage of the latest trade developments and assist local producers in accessing the export market. The current administration wants the Philippines to become an export powerhouse by 2028 and diversifying farm exports would give a boost to Manila's efforts to achieve its trade ambitions. (See, "**PHL exports boost seen as PBBM signs PEDP 2023-2028,**" in the **BUSINESSMIRROR**, June 7, 2023).



Meat imports decline 4.06% in eight months to August

MEAT imports fell 4.06% year on year in the eight months to August, with the declines broadly based as shipments of beef, pork, buffalo, and turkey all declined, the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) reported.

The BAI said that in volume terms, imports amounted to 817,278.24 million kilograms (kg) during the eight months. The total for August was 115.11 million kg, down from 111.48 kg in July and 116.95 million kg a year earlier.

Beef shipments decreased 16.78% to 91.65 million kg during the period. This accounted for 11.21% of total shipments during the eight months.

Brazil remained the top beef supplier at 69.71 million kg, followed by Australia with

45.26 million and Ireland 23.67 million.

Pork accounted for 49.67% of meat imports with 59.13 million kg in the eight months, down 12.7% from a year earlier.

The top supplier of pork for the period was Spain, with 222.08 million kg, followed by Canada with 127.31 million and Brazil 79.11 million.

Shipments of turkey fell 44.6% to 168.7 million, while buffalo imports dropped 6.29% to 29.31 million.

Chicken shipments rose 18.3% year on year to 289.52 million kg, accounting for 35.4% of all meat imports.

Brazil supplied about 235.26 million kg, followed by the US with 122.93 million and Canada 11.93 million. —

Adrian H. Halili



Rice import tariff cuts should not depress farmgate prices — NEDA

THE proposed tariff cut on rice imports should not impact farmgate prices for palay (unmilled rice), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said.

"As I said, any proposal to reduce tariffs must not reduce farmgate prices. Farmers must be protected," he told *BusinessWorld* at the sidelines of the national budget plenary debates at the House of Representatives on Tuesday.

"Any proposal to reduce tariffs, we have to calibrate that particular issue, balancing the interests. Most importantly, protecting farmers (from) reduction in their farmgate prices," he added.

The Department of Finance earlier proposed to temporarily slash the 35% ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and MFN (Most Favored Nation) rice tariff rates to zero percent up to 10%.

Asked if NEDA had proposed a specific percentage for the tariff

cut, Mr. Balisacan said it is "too early to disclose anything."

However, he noted that the tariff cut would not even be considered if oil prices were not elevated.

"If oil prices were not rising sharply, there should be no discussion of tariff reduction," he said in a mix of English and Filipino.

Oil firms hiked pump prices on Monday by P2 per liter of gasoline, P2.50 per liter of diesel, and P2 per liter of kerosene.

Fuel prices have gone up by a total of P11.85 per liter for gasoline, P17.30 per liter for diesel, and P15.94 per liter for kerosene since the second week of July.

"Again, the context is that oil prices are rising, and sharply rising over the last couple of months. We would want to prevent that (from) spilling into the local economy, because we have quite high inflation still, especially for rice," Mr. Balisacan added.

Farmgate prices, S1/10

Farmgate prices, from S1/1

Headline inflation unexpectedly quickened to 5.3% in August from 4.7% in July, bringing the year-to-date average to 6.6%. This was well above the central bank's 5.6% full-year forecast.

Rice inflation also surged to 8.7% in August from 4.2% in July due to tight supply.

"We want to make sure (fuel price spike) would not lead to sharp increases in rice prices, thereby making it even more difficult to cope with inflation, so we are studying this," he added.

Meanwhile, Mr. Balisacan welcomed the hike in the purchasing price for palay.

"The increase in farm price is long overdue, it's been lower

than the prevailing market price, so that was a welcome move," he said.

The National Food Authority Council on Monday approved a new buying price range for dry palay at P19-P23 per kilogram, and for wet palay at P16 to P19 per kilogram.

Data from the local statistics authority showed that the average farmgate price of palay increased by 9.4% year on year to P19.23 per kilogram in June.

To address rising prices, an executive order earlier this month set a price ceiling at P41 per kilo for regular milled rice and P45 per kilo for well-milled rice. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Joeson**

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DA lifts ban on poultry imports from France

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has lifted the over two-year temporary ban on poultry imports from France after being cleared from bird flu.

In a recent memorandum order, Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban has lifted the ban on the importation of domestic and wild birds and their products including poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs, and semen originating from France.

The DA is now allowing the importation of the products from the European country after banning it since January 2021.



Panganiban

ported cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza have ended with resolved status and no additional outbreaks.

As such, France is now free from the bird flu virus.

Based on the evaluation of the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), the risk of contamination

This comes after France reported to the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) that all

1,779 re-

ported cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza have ended with resolved status and no additional outbreaks.

ported cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza have ended with resolved status and no additional outbreaks.

ported cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza have ended with resolved status and no additional outbreaks.

ported cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza have ended with resolved status and no additional outbreaks.



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Phl meat imports decline 4% in Aug

By DANESSA RIVERA

The country's overall meat imports contracted as of end-August, dragged down by the decline in pork shipments.

The country saw a slowdown in its overall meat imports in the first half of the year, driven by the double-digit decline in pork shipments.

Latest data from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) showed the country imported 817.36 million kilos of meat and meat products as of end-August, down 4.05 percent from the 851.84 million kilos in the same period last year.

Pork accounted for nearly half of the total meat shipments at 49.66 percent of the total.

However, pork imports fell 12.68 percent to 405.92 million kilos from 464.84 million kilos a year earlier.

Pork offals – or internal organs – was the most imported pork products at 155.71 million kilos followed by pork cuts at 139.47 million kilos.

Spain continued to dominate

pork imports at 101.29 million kilos, followed by Canada at 77.82 million kilos, and Brazil at 63.34 million kilos.

Chicken is the second most imported meat product, cornering 35.42 percent. Its shipments rose 18.27 percent to 289.53



million kilos from 244.8 million kilos last year.

Mechanically deboned chicken meat was the top imported product with 160.3 million kilos, followed by chicken leg quarters with 75.28 million kilos.

The top two sources of chicken meat were Brazil with 166.15 million kilos and the US at 103.07

million kilos.

Meanwhile, figures from BAI also showed beef imports, which accounted for 11.21 percent of the total, slipped by 16.78 percent to 91.65 million kilos from 110.12 million kilos.

Of the beef products, beef cuts accounted for bulk with 56.8 million kilos followed by fats at 16.23 million kilos.

Brazil is the top source of beef shipments with 33.51 million kilos while the country imported 26.94 million kilos from Australia, making it the second top source.

Buffalo imports declined by 6.29 percent to 29.31 million kilos from 31.28 million kilos.

The country also shipped 229,302 kilos of whole and duck meat, a four-fold jump from 48,518 kilos in the same period last year.

Lamb meat shipments reached 563,298 kilos, a 26.57 percent jump from 445,053 kilos last year.

As for turkey, shipments dropped by 44.57 percent to 168,697 kilos from 304,355 kilos last year.



Old lessons from a recurring crisis

The present rice supply crisis is a recurring one, and by this time, our officials should have learned lessons but apparently haven't. Worse, while the President was enjoying the FI races in Singapore, former president GMA was in Indonesia sharing lessons of the past that made the President look bad for creating an avoidable rice crisis.

Putting on her professorial hat, former president Arroyo opened her speech before Golkar, the major Indonesian political party, by making it clear our rice crisis shouldn't have happened.

DEMAND AND SUPPLY



BOO CHANCO

Said FPGMA: "The policies and programs to address this issue do not need to be reinvented. The decisive factor will be 'implementation': meaning, 'executive management'. (BBM: *Aray ko po!*)

"WE HAVE MET THIS SITUATION BEFORE (caps hers). The current global anxiety over rice prices and supplies reminds me of the situation faced by rice-staple nations like Indonesia and the Philippines a decade and a half ago in 2007 and 2008, when rice prices tripled in a few months...

"HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF (caps hers). Now, back to 2007 and 2008: It seems that in July 2007 Vietnam restricted rice exports... India joined the ban in October 2007, and Vietnam banned exports in February 2008, leading to a global rice crisis... Rice exported at over \$1,000 a ton in April 2008...

"With the global grain price surge, Philippine prices also rose, even though our rice harvest was the highest in the decade. Our rice harvest had been boosted by hybrid varieties developed with my government's funding. But as usual, the global price surge led to speculative hoarding..."

FPGMA emphasized that the government must secure the country's rice requirements early, as well as boost domestic production.

"To bring down prices and stabilize supplies, (then) Agri-

culture secretary Arthur Yap, a former Economics student of mine, imported rice, partly through government-to-government contracts by the National Food Authority or NFA. The Philippines bought close to 65 percent of its rice needs early, at a low early price.

"Later in the buying season, the only countries capable of supplying reasonable quantities of rice were Thailand and Vietnam. The Philippines had a good relationship with both countries. Invoking old trading ties and the promise of future business, we secured the balance of our needs from Vietnam still at a good price. The Philippines eventually procured a record 2.3 million tons, and the NFA released affordable rice to the market. We kept the price of rice stable at 49 US cents a kilo and non-NFA rice not much higher.

"Secretary Yap recounted that several traders asked him to delay releasing NFA rice until they could dispose of their stocks. He refused. Yap flooded stores, leaving hoarders with big losses.

"So, what experience can we share from 2008 and other rice crises? MAINTAIN MARKET CLOUT. One obvious resilience experience is that the government in 2008 had ample market clout to defeat and deter speculators. Speculators will always seek to treble profits by holding on to stocks, which escalates prices and future gains. But we maintained market clout, especially in areas likely to suffer shortages, like typhoon-prone regions and urban areas far from farms. The government kept ample stocks all the time, rather than rushing to import when prices shot up."

This is exactly what we have been saying in past columns. The problem is supply and the perceived scarcity is driving up prices. The perception that NFA has practically no buffer stock, thanks to a talkative DA usec, emboldened rice traders to start hoarding and start raising retail prices.

The President probably didn't give NFA enough budget to buy from local farmers to boost its buffer stock. The PR gimmick of DA officials trying to suck up to the President by selling some of NFA's stock at P20/kilo at the Kadiwa centers further depleted NFA's buffer stock. In other words, the current administration created their own rice crisis. Absolutely pathetic!

FPGMA emphasized in her speech the importance of NFA having enough buffer stock because any inadequacy is a big contributor to speculative trading, specially for a basic commodity like rice which consumers must buy at any price.

"For example, back in 2017 (Duterte watch) the NFA used almost \$40 million to pay down its debt rather than procuring rice. That and the limited harvests in the first half of the year led to speculative hoarding and profiteering. Some observers even wondered if traders had colluded with NFA insiders to deplete the agency's stocks."

A summary of her speech had a line at the end that proudly proclaimed she didn't impose any price caps because she didn't have to. She used market forces to control prices:

Then, FPGMA said: "BEYOND IMPORTATIONS, WE MUST BOOST DOMESTIC PRODUCTION. To have sufficient rice reserves in the event of supply and market disruptions it is important to boost domestic production. Depending too much on imports exposes countries and consumers to the vagaries of the highly volatile global rice trade."

What she did not say is that after she temporarily solved the 2007 crisis, the country's rice deficit has increased and remains vulnerable to global supply fluctuations. That's because she failed to address long term systemic problems like land fragmentation. As one economist friend of mine commented, "without changing the structure of our agriculture from small, atomized, traditional farms into modern agribusiness commercial enterprises, we will never solve the food production issue."

In other words, what FPGMA accomplished was successful firefighting, but the causes of the fire remain and are waiting to be ignited the next year and the next. That's what every president has been doing rather than fixing the problem for good.

FPGMA talked about other things which are motherhood plans that every administration says they will do, but eventually fail to properly implement. Farm modernization, for instance.

The Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997 has yet to produce useful and significant results. Even in her time, a P728 million fertilizer scandal happened as an agriculture undersecretary close to her took advantage of the program to provide fertilizers.

But FPGMA is right. The President must learn lessons from the past to make our agricultural sector efficiently produce the food we need to feed our people. Stop talking and start implementing those motherhood intentions.

Boo Chanco's email address is bchanco@gmail.com. Follow him on X (Twitter) @boochanco

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NIA, SNAP ink deal for Alimit hydro project

By MYRNA VELASCO

Government-run **National Irrigation Administration (NIA)** and **SNAP** Aboitiz Power (SNAP group sealed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will explore "water management" component of the Alimit hydro project— primarily those that go beyond electricity generation, such as irrigation and flood control.

SNAP, which is a joint venture firm between Norwegian firm Scatec and Filipino company

Aboitiz Power, emphasized that the targeted feasibility study will focus on the "irrigation component that would address both food and energy security for the country."

The deal was signed on Sept. 14 this year between SNAP president and chief executive officer Joseph Yu and NIA acting administrator Eduardo Eddie Guillen.

Yu noted that NIA's collaboration with SNAP does not just delve with power and water management facets of the project; but more importantly, the tie-up touches on enhancement of "knowledge, ex-

pertise, resources, and innovation from our respective sectors."

Based on the prescription of the MOU, he stressed that "we look forward to studying and designing a project that addresses multiple challenges and has the potential to benefit not only the provinces of Ifugao and Isabela, but the region as well."

The targeted power capacity of the Alimit multipurpose hydropower venture would hover at 380 megawatts; and the other core usage of the facility will be aiding farmers on their irrigation needs.



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SRA TO PROBE LOW FARM GATE PRICES

BACOLOD CITY: The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is looking into the cause of low trading for the farm gate prices of sugar during the first release of quedan on Friday, Sept. 15, 2023.

In a statement, SRA administrator Pablo Azcona said, "I was informed that trading of sugar went below the P3,000 mark that we had forecast."

"Two mills had prices a little beyond P3,000 but some went as low as P2,550 to P2,700 which was a bit surprising, and SRA is now looking into what could have caused price depression during trading last week," Azcona added.

He said since February, they have

maintained prices at a comfortable level of P3,000, which is equivalent to P60/kilogram at farmgate raw price and P85/kilogram refined at retail price in Metro Manila.

Negros Occidental Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson said, "We always said we hope that we can maintain the price at P3,000 per bag."

"As we know, there was a lot of approved importation. But we hope SRA where most of the officials are from Negros Occidental are aware what the planters are expecting. I hope it rebounds and still maintains on the average of P3,000 per bag," Lacson pointed out.

"Farmers will be happy with P3,000

per bag. It is expected that sugar farmers would always send their canes to the sugar mills that give more income in return," he said.

Reports said some sugar mills in the province like VMC only bought at P2,600 per bag while other sugar mills pegged their buying at more than P3,000 per bag.

"If prices go up above P3,000, admittedly there would be extra money at the end of milling, but anything below you will be having farms that will only break even. That's why at P3,000 sugar farmers will be happy already so that they will have extra in their pockets," the governor said.

"We have been pushing for the P3,000 price as I feel it is the fair market price and this has been echoed by the administration as well as an incentive for farmers to plant more and be more sustainable," Azcona said.

Definitely none of the farmers want the low price, he also said, adding that the agency "will focus our investigation among the mills, traders and importers to see if there is some abnormality in their dealings, but rest assured that we will get to the bottom of this."

"Someone is definitely making a scenario and we will not take this sitting down," Azcona said.

EUGENE Y. ADIONG

The Manila Times®

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NOT SWEET NEWS A worker stacks sacks of sugar at a retail store in Marikina City in this May 16, 2023 photo. The Sugar Regulatory Authority said on Sept. 15, 2023 that there could be a possible drop in sugar output by to 10 to 15 percent this year due to El Niño.

PHOTO BY JOHN ORVEN VERDOTE



Meat imports fall 4%

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE country imported 817.35 million kilograms (kg) of meat in the first eight months of the year, 4 percent lower than the 851.84 million kg sourced in the same period in 2022, data from the **Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI)** showed.

Pork comprised bulk of the imports at 405.92 million kg or 49.6 percent of the total. This is 12.7 percent lower than the 464.84 million kg last year.

Chicken at 289.52 million kg accounted for 35.4 percent of total meat imports, and represented an increase of 18.3 percent from 2022's 244.8 million kg.

Beef imports were at 91.65 million kg or 11.2 percent of all meat imports. The volume is down 16.8 percent from 110.12 million kg a year ago.

The Philippines imported 29.31 million kg of buffalo; 168,697 kg of turkey, 563,298 kg of lamb and 229,302 kg of duck meat.



Pork comprises bulk of meat imports at 405.92 million kg. (PNA Photo)



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Crop climate calendars proposed

A NEOPHYTE solon proposed a measure that would institutionalize the use of crop climate calendars tailor-made to each specific locality, as a way to help farmers harness the power of science and technology in adapting to the disruptions triggered by climate change.

In filing House Bill 9129, Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan said crop climate calendars should be written in simple English, Filipino or in the vernacular, depending on the area where these will be distributed, to ensure that they can be easily understood.

The measure aims to tap the expertise of the Philippine Space Agency (PSA) in providing satellite data that could be used to enhance the efficacy of the crop climate calendars.

The proposed "Climate-Resilient Agriculture Act" may benefit about 9.7 million farmers, of which around 708,000 are employed in the Bicol Region.

"The traditional crop calendars distributed to farmers should be improved by coming up with crop climate calendars that would equip farmers with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions in helping secure the country's food production, amid the disruptions brought about by climate change on their planting and harvesting schedules," Yamsuan said.

Under the bill, crop climate calen-

dars refer to visual tools that present cultivation practices against the timeline of the cropping season and the risks faced by a crop per growing stage in relation to changes in climate and weather conditions.

Yamsuan said the crop climate calendars should be a collaborative effort of the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), the Philippine Space Agency (PhiiSA), and the local government units (LGUs), to ensure that these would be useful for farmers.

Yamsuan said extreme and unpredictable weather conditions pose a threat to the country's agriculture sector and food security.

"The use of crop climate calendars crafted with the use of the latest technologies is a significant first step in making our agriculture sector climate-resilient," Yamsuan said.

Under the measure, the DA, through its municipal, city and provincial agriculturists shall establish and promote the use of crop climate calendars tailor made for each specific locality or community.

The crop climate calendars, which should be presented using the 59 language or dialect spoken in the locality, should be distributed free of charge to all farmers and farmers' organizations.

Jester Manalastas



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ELY SALUDAR

Tonite

BROADCASTER'S VIEW

Produksyon ng isdang tamban nais palakasin ni Sen. Tol

kapag pinairal ang closed fishing season na ipi-
natutupad ng **BFAR**.

Sa ginanap na budget briefing ng DOST sa Se-
nado, sinabi ni Tolentino na dapat maidagdag ang
produksyon ng tamban sa food security programs
ng gobyerno.

"You have 438 ongoing projects for food secu-
rity. Perhaps, you would agree with me that tam-
ban upgrading of production is part of food secu-
rity," giit ni Tolentino sa mga opisyal ng DOST.

Dagdag pa niya: "Delata ang pagkain ng Pil-
ipino lalo na kapag bagyo, sa mga relief opera-
tions."

Sinabi rin ni Sen. Tol na maaring maging
halimbawa ng DOST ang pagkultura ng Dagup-
pan at Pangasinan sa bangus fingerlings na mula
sa Iloilo.

Iginiit ng senador, dapat ding palawigin ng
DOST ang Balik Scientist Program para sa mga
pananaliksik tungkol sa agrikultura at seguridad
sa pagkain. Diin niya, ang mga Pilipinong siyen-
tipiko ay makatutulong para sa pagbuo ng tam-
ban fish hatchery, paggawa ng bakuna laban sa
African Swine Fever (ASF), at pagpaparami ng
ani ng bigas at asukal.

Ayon naman sa DOST, sa pamamagitan ng Ba-
lik Scientist Program, mayroong 625 na mga Pilipi-
nong siyentipiko na bumalik para magsilbi sa Pilipi-
nas nang pansamantala at pangmatagalan. May 29
porsiyento sa kanila ang tumutulong para sa pag-
aaraal sa agrikultura at seguridad sa pagkain.

"Dapat mabigyan natin ng muscle ang food
security dahil problem natin ito for 30 years,"
pagtatapos ni Tolentino.

Hinimok ni Senador Francis 'Tol' N. Tolenti-
no ang Department of Science and Technology o
DOST na palakasin ang produksyon ng tamban,
isang uri ng isda na ginagamit sa de-latang sardi-
nas na siya namang karaniwang pagkaing Pinoy.

Kung tataas nga ang produksyon ng tamban
ay maaring bumaba ang presyo ng sardinas na si-
yang kadalasang pagkain ng mga biktima ng ka-
lamidad at ng masang Pilipino.

Limitado ang produksyon ng isdang tamban

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Keep lower tariffs on key agri products, coal, gov't urged

British chamber says EO 10 needs to be extended to fight rising prices

By Ronnel W. Domingo
[@RonWDomingoINQ](#)

Amid inflation woes and food security concerns, the British Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (BCCP) is pushing for a further extension of the implementation of Executive Order No. 10, which temporarily lowers tariffs on agricultural commodities including pork, corn and rice as well as coal for power generation.

In a statement, BCCP executive director Chris Nelson

said another extension of EO 10 “will attract foreign businesses and companies to invest in the country and help sustain the global food supply chain.”

Signed on Dec. 29, 2022, EO 10 extends by one year the temporary lower tariffs on agricultural products to the end of 2023. Meanwhile, the lower tariff on coal is extended beyond 2023, subject to a review every six months.

EO 10 itself extends the effectivity of the provisions of EO No. 171 that was signed on May 21, 2022.

In turn, EO 171 extended the effectiveness of EOs No. 134 and 135—both signed on May 15, 2021—which respectively lowered temporarily the tariffs on imported pork and rice.

Importation

These orders were issued as the government sought to arrest rising prices of these commodities by importation.

Based on EO 171, tariffs on pork were brought down to 15 percent to 25 percent instead of 30 percent to 40 percent.

Also, tariffs on corn were slashed to 5 percent from 35 percent. Tariffs on rice, meanwhile, were brought down to 35 percent from 40 percent to 50 percent.

While the temporarily lowered tariffs on rice are in effect until Dec. 31, there is a pending petition with the Tariff Commission for a further decrease—albeit also temporary—to zero or no more than 10 percent.

Further, BCCP's Nelson expressed strong support for the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling

Act that seeks to widen measures and provide stringent policies to protect the Philippine agricultural sector.

Agri challenges

The law calls for measures to address the challenges facing the agricultural sector—including smuggling, hoarding, price-setting by cartels, and profiteering.

“Just like the [United Kingdom], the Philippines have a strong agricultural sector that should be utilized well through

a comprehensive approach that is a key to establishing a resilient economy,” Nelson said.

According to BCCP, UK-Philippine trade has a positive outlook after ringing up a total of £2.6 billion (\$3.22 billion) in trade of goods and services last year.

The business group noted that last year, the Philippines imported 34 percent more pork and pork products, helping make the country the second-largest market for pork shipments from the UK. **INQ**



NBI files complaint vs six onion smugglers

By NILLICENT BAUTISTA

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) filed on Monday a complaint against six unnamed suspects allegedly hoarding onions and engaging in profiteering in December last year.

More charges will be filed pending case build-up, according to the Department of Justice (DOJ).

"This is just one of the cases being developed by the DOJ, but there will be other cases filed up to the point of economic sabotage after we finish the case build-up and data evaluation," Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla said in Filipino at a press conference.

"This is just the start. We will continue until it becomes clear to everyone that price manipulation

in our market is unlawful," he added.

Remulla confirmed that there are government officials involved in onion smuggling and price manipulation cases.

The NBI handed over to the National Prosecution Service preliminary documents related to the hoarding and profiteering of onions.

- With Alexis Romero



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ANI completes acquisition of Aussie firm

By **RICHMOND MERCURIO**

AgriNurture Inc. (ANI), the listed agro-commercial company of businessman Antonio Tiu, has completed its acquisition of Australian company Freshness First Pty Ltd.

The acquisition efforts for Freshness First began in late 2018, when ANI made a deposit amounting to P6.35 million to acquire the existing business operation in Australia.

In 2021, the group made ad-

ditional deposit amounting to P20.82 million.

As of end last year, ANI's deposit amounted to P27.82 million.

With the acquisition completed and legal documents finalized, Freshness First now becomes a fully-owned subsidiary of ANI.

Freshness First is engaged in the business of trading of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables in the state of Queensland.

It operates under its 100 percent owned and controlled subsidiaries BSK Pty Ltd., which does business

under the brand "Field Cuisine", and Michsul Pty Ltd., which does business under the brand "Bou Samra Fruits & Vegetables" servicing major institutional clients across the state.

ANI said despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and a major Brisbane flood during early 2022, Freshness First managed to steer toward recovery, posting A\$12.8 million in annual revenues as of July 2023, slightly higher than the same period last year.



REY MARFIL

Abante SPY ON THE JOB

Napapailing ang marami nating ayunatics na tropapips nang mabalita na bukod sa FIBA World Cup kung saan tinalo natin ang China, aba'y malapit na rin pala natin ilampaso sa pag-import ng bigas ang bansang pinagmulan ng COVID-19 at nang-aagaw sa West Philippines Sea.

Pero bago magwala ang mga wrinkles, pampangiti muna ang pag-usapan natin para mabata ang mukha. Isang maliit na imbensiyon ng Pinoy ang hindi dapat maliitin dahil napansin ng ibang bansa at binigyan ng pagkilala---ang microscope na kasinglaki o kasingliit lang ng keychain.

Ang microscope na puwedeng gawing keychain, naimbento ng 28-anyos na si Jeremy de Leon. Maliit man sa paningin ang kanyang imbensiyon, pero kapag itinatap ang maliit na bagay sa microscope gaya ng langgam o maging alikabok, aba'y lumalaki.

Para sa mga estudyante o maging sa mga paaralan, lalo na sa mga lalawigan na kailangan ang microscope na mahal, malaking tulong ang imbensiyon ni Jeremy. Kung tama ang

bulong sa atin ng mga kurimaw, hindi pa umaabot sa P60 ang presyo nito.

Maganda siguro kung may ahen-siya na maraming 'confidential' funds o mambabatas na may secret 'pork barrel' funds ang magpapagawa o bibili ng imbensiyon ni Jeremy para ipamigay nang libre sa mga mag-aaral at eskuwelahan.

Tamang-tama ngayon na pormahan na ng politikong tatakbo sa 2025 midterm elections dahil puwede nilang gawing giveaway ang naturang 'make-roscope'. Kaya lang, baka naman ipa-drawing ng politiko ang mukha niya sa kabilang side ng 'make-roscope' na kapag sumilip ang tao eh dambuhalang mukha niya ang makikita at may nakasulat pa na "#batamoko2025."

Samantala, may guilty feelings ang ilan nating tropapips na mahilig sa unli-rice nang maibalita na ilang kembot na lang eh matatalo na ng Pilipinas ang China sa dami ng ini-import na bigas.

Bata'y daw 'yan sa ulat ng 'Grain: World Markets and Trade' ng United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Ayon sa datos, aabot ang import volume ng Pilipinas sa bigas ng 3.8 million metric tons sa Trade Year 2023/2024. Ang pinakamataas sa kasaysayan ng bansa.

Ang China, tinatayang nasa 3.5 million metric tons naman.

Extra rice please?

Malamang may mga mahilig ku-main ng kamote ang magtatanong, 'Eh ano naman kung mas marami ang import natin ng bigas kaysa China? Aba'y oo nga naman, malaking ang maging katwiran ng mga mahilig mag-import, mas maraming import, mas malaki ang kita ng gobyerno sa taripa, at mas mabibigyan ng ayuda ang mga magsasaka.

Kaya lang, dapat isipin na mahigit isang bilyon ang populasyon ng China, samantalang mahigit 100 milyon pa lang ang Pilipinas. Aba'y napakahilig ba talaga ng mga Pinoy sa kanin at hindi na kayang tustusan ng mga lokal na magsasaka ang pangangailangan natin sa rice pa more?

Ang palusot, este paliwanag ng ilang opisyal, posible raw lumakas ang produksiyon o ani ng mga magsasaka sa China kaya raw siguro nabawasan ang pangangailangan nito sa imported rice. Kung totoo 'yon, aba'y sana ol pati sa mga magsasakang Pinoy.

Kaya lang may ilang tropapips tayo na hindi maiwasan na magtamang hinala na sadyang may milagrang nangyayari sa suplay at produksiyon ng palay ng mga lokal na magsasaka para everybody happy sa pag-import na tubong lugaw daw ang kita kapag may 'shortage' kuno. Ganoon nga kaya? Tandaan: "Bata mo ko at Ako ang Spy n'yo."

BusinessWorld™

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US corn hits 3-year low on harvest pressure, demand woes

NEW YORK — US corn futures on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBoT) hit their lowest levels in nearly three years on Monday as the Midwest harvest expanded, adding to fears of a supply glut at a time of weak export demand for US supplies, traders said.

The benchmark CBoT December corn settled down 4-3/4 cents about 1% at \$4.71-1/2 per bushel, after hitting \$4.69, the lowest price on a continuous chart of the most-active contract since December 2020.

After the CBoT close, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) said the US corn harvest was 9% complete, ahead of the five-year average of 7% but just behind an average of analyst estimates for 10%. The USDA rated 51% of

the crop as good to excellent, a percentage point lower than a week earlier.

Demand remains a concern. With huge shipments from Brazil reducing overseas demand for US corn, analysts believe stockpiles could reach

their highest levels in a decade. CBoT corn prices have fallen 30% this year.

CBoT November soybeans settled down 23-1/2 cents at \$13.16-3/4 a bushel after falling to \$13.15-1/2, the contract's lowest since Aug. 16. — **Reuters**

Farming can work so much better for the planet



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By Lara Williams

FEEDING 8 billion people is a big task, and we're not excelling at it. Our global food systems have become incredibly dysfunctional, failing on multiple fronts including human health, carbon emissions and pollution. A new research paper hints at something better but only if we pull every lever available to us.

Imagine a vast American cornfield. You might imagine it all ends up as cobs piled high at farmers markets or stacks of tin cans at the grocery store, but the truth is far less quaint. Just under 10% of the crop is eaten by humans — and half of that is as high-fructose corn syrup, which isn't exactly nutritious. A whopping 39% is used to feed livestock and 37% to produce ethanol for fuel. The remaining 14% is exported — some of that might get eaten, but a large chunk will be used for more animal feed or ethanol. Before we even get to pesticide use, water demand, and the monocultures also associated with modern agriculture, we can see how much healthy produce is diverted from people's plates.

This isn't working for us. More than 820 million people lack sufficient food. Yet at the same time, obesity rates are rising, and many have nutrition-deficient diets. As a 2020 report from the EAT-Lancet Commission points out: Unhealthy diets now pose a greater risk of morbidity and mortality than unsafe sex, alcohol, drug and tobacco use combined.

It's also not working for the planet. Food production contributes about a third of global greenhouse gas emissions. Excessive use of pesticides, fertilizer runoff, and land-use changes have helped facilitate catastrophic declines in biodiversity. Farming uses 70% of fresh water worldwide. As the global population continues to grow, output will have to expand just as extreme weather puts more pressure on agriculture. We've already seen how drought conditions have pushed the price of olive oil to record highs and exacerbated food shortages in the UK. Current projections suggest that, in a business-as-usual scenario, emissions from the global food system could rise between 50% to 80% by 2050 as it accommodates more hungry mouths.

Plenty of studies have explored how to reduce these emissions, but what if we were able to go a step further and create a food system that acts as a carbon sink rather than a source? A study, published in scientific journal *PLOS Climate*, suggests that it's possible. As one of the only sectors with the potential to reach net negative emissions, we ought not squander the chance.

The research explores how several elements might combine to reduce emissions and sequester carbon from the atmosphere:

- **The adoption of a healthy, flexitarian diet**, defined as the EAT-Lancet diet, consisting mostly of plant-based foods with small amounts of animal protein. It equates to a portion of dairy a day, two portions of fish a week



TIM MOSSHOLDER-UNSPASH

and either the equivalent of a hamburger's-worth of red meat once a week or a chunky steak once a month — if you want it.

- **The reduction of food waste** by half. We currently lose or throw away a third of all food produced.

- **Improving production efficiency** to limit the amount of land needed. There's a gap between the amount of produce agricultural areas can **deliver** and what's **produced**. The study based its calculations on closing this gap by 2050.

- **The implementation of novel technologies**. These include things such as methane inhibitors to cut down on the amount of gas belched up by cows and enhanced rock weathering, in which pulverized rocks are spread over farmland to absorb atmospheric CO₂, and agroforestry in which woodland is grown on land no longer needed for crops.

Diet shifts and waste reduction alone have been a big focus,

and for good reason: They're two of the most effective methods to lower your carbon footprint. If everyone were to adopt a predominantly plant-based diet and food loss were cut by 50%, food emissions would roughly halve. But these actions alone can't completely decarbonize the industry. "That's not really surprising," explains Michael Clark, director of the Smith School's sustainable food solutions program at the University of Oxford and co-author of the study. "If you're producing something, that's going to have emissions. The only way of having a fully net-zero food system is to not have a food system at all." Hence, the importance of novel technologies.

Researchers explored many scenarios, from what would happen with 100% tech adoption and no other changes to the consequences of purely non-tech interventions. The results are hopeful: If 50% of humanity adopted

a flexitarian diet, food loss was halved and the novel tech had a 50% adoption rate, then the food industry would remove 6.7 billion metric tons of CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e) a year. If everyone adopted a flexitarian diet, then that would nearly double to 12.4 billion metric tons of sequestered CO₂e. That's huge. In 2019, global aviation was approximately 920 million metric tons of CO₂.

It's important to note that this isn't a sure thing. There are still large knowledge gaps to close and big challenges to overcome. Some of the technologies have only been tested in small-scale trials, leaving questions over their performance at the huge scales required. The study also didn't factor in the economics and practicalities of adopting novel tech, which are likely to be high barriers. Any potential effects on water and biodiversity should also be researched.

We've already seen governments struggle to manage agricultural decarbonization. In the Netherlands, a new political party sprung up after farmers were outraged by government plans to pay them to close their farms in order to reduce nitrogen pollution. In Ireland, farmers have been pressured to cull cows. No doubt, herds will have to diminish — but fixing the problem must consider heritage and cultural concerns and offer farmers more than a payout.

Persuading people to shift their dining habits is also hitting a similar wall. The flexitarian diet is much healthier, and the authors of the EAT-Lancet report found that eating this way

has the potential to reduce food-related mortality by about 11 million deaths a year. But while that might convince some, there'll be entrenched habits and views to overcome as well. Clark explains: "You can wash your laundry with a different washing machine, or with solar energy as opposed to coal energy, but you're still washing your laundry. Food isn't viewed in the same way." A vegetarian meal might give you the same macronutrients and calories than a meaty one, but they will be received differently based on people's preferences.

Even cutting waste is a challenge. It's easy to throw food in the bin. Any eco-friendly alternative must be just as cheap and easy or offer value beyond that. Divert, Inc., a startup focused on converting squandered produce into energy, for example, has positioned itself as a full-on data product, designed to show stores the benefits of waste reduction methods such as price markdowns and help optimize supply chains to extend shelf life. It then aims to only convert food that can't be donated into energy.

The report highlights something that's emblematic of the wider climate fight: If we're going to limit warming to below 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures, preferably as close to 1.5°C as possible, then it will take more than simply utilizing new technology, improving existing processes and adapting our behaviors: We need to take every angle of attack. ■

BLOOMBERG OPINION



London cocoa prices slip; raw sugar consolidates

NEW YORK — London cocoa futures on ICE fell on Monday, slipping back after the market's recent strong advance, while raw sugar prices were hovering just below the prior session's 12-year peak.

COCOA: March London cocoa settled down £90 or 2.9% to £3,031 per metric ton.

Dealers said the market was technically overbought and could slip further in the short term after dipping below the 10-day moving average at £3,031.

Overall sentiment remained bullish, however, due to supply tightness with a global deficit widely forecast for both the current 2022/23 season and the upcoming 2023/24 season that begins on Oct. 1.

December New York cocoa fell \$136 or 3.6% to \$3,621 a ton.

Cocoa arrivals at ports in top grower Ivory Coast since the start of the season on Oct. 1 had reached 2.327 million tons by Sept. 17, down 4.8% from the same period last season.

SUGAR: October raw sugar settled up 0.2 cent or 0.7% at 27.11 cents per pound (lb) as the market

consolidated just below a 12-year high of 27.59 cents set on Friday.

The market remained underpinned by concerns that drier-than-normal weather linked to El Niño is likely to reduce output in India and Thailand.

December white sugar rose \$5.60 or 0.8% at \$735.90 a ton.

A total of 122,650 metric tons of white sugar has been tendered against the October contract on ICE Futures Europe, exchange data showed on Monday.

The European Union's (EU) crop monitoring service (MARS) has raised this year's EU sugar beet yield outlook to 74.5 ton/hectare (ha) from 73.7 ton/ha projected last month.

COFFEE: December arabica coffee settled up 0.45 cent or 0.3% at \$1.596 per lb.

Dealers noted the forecast for dry and warmer-than-average weather over Brazil's coffee areas this week. The country's coffee fields are entering the flowering period when rains and mild temperatures are desirable to improve next year's crop.

Nov. robusta coffee rose \$10 or 0.4% at \$2,566 a ton. — **Reuters**

Malaya Business Insight

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Wheat, corn fall

SINGAPORE- Chicago wheat slid more than 1 percent on Tuesday, dropping to a one-week low as cheap Russian grain flooded the market and the docking of ships in Ukraine eased concerns over supplies from the war-torn country.

Corn and soybean futures lost ground with freshly harvested supplies hitting the market in the United States.

The most-active wheat contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was down 1.4 percent at \$5.83 a bushel, after dropping to its lowest since Sept. 12 at \$5.82-1/4.

Corn slid 0.4 percent to \$4.69-3/4 a bushel and soybeans gave up 0.4 percent to \$13.11-1/4 a bushel.

The price of 12.5 percent-protein

Russian wheat for free-on-board (FOB) delivery in October fell to \$235 a metric ton last week, the IKAR agriculture consultancy said.

The SovEcon agriculture consultancy, meanwhile, estimated Russia's monthly shipments at 4.9 million tons in September versus 4.2 million last year.

Also pressuring prices was news that two cargo vessels arrived in Ukraine on Saturday using a temporary corridor to sail into Black Sea ports and load grain, despite the collapse of a safe-passage deal with Russia earlier this year.

"Funds view the lack of action by the Russians as a sell signal," analysts at StoneX said in a note.

- Reuters



Farm trade dispute creates rift between Ukraine and its allies

BRUSSELS/KYIV- A dispute over agricultural trade created a rift on Monday between Ukraine and some of its strongest allies in the European Union after three member states imposed unilateral measures to restrict imports from the war-torn country.

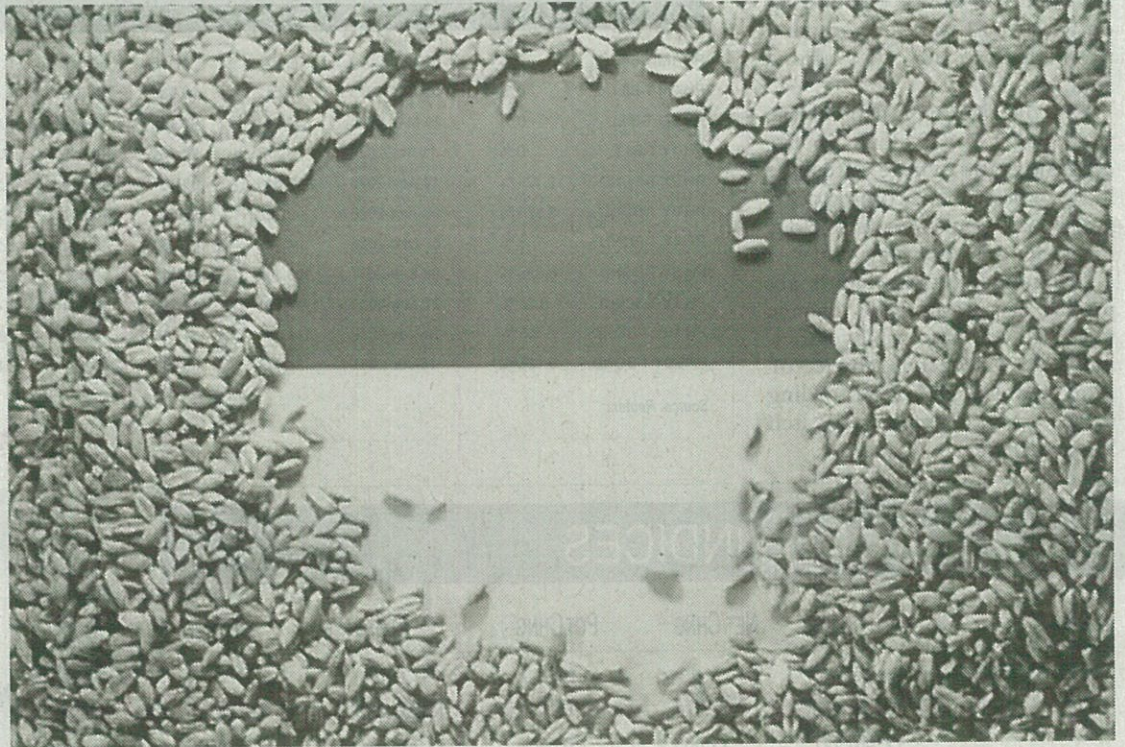
Poland, Slovakia and Hungary announced restrictions on imports on Friday after the European Commission decided not to extend a ban on sales into Ukraine's five EU neighbors, which also include Romania and Bulgaria.

Ukraine retaliated by filing complaints on Monday with the World Trade Organization (WTO) against Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, while other EU members condemned the unilateral moves.

Spain's agriculture minister on Monday said the bans seemed illegal while his French counterpart said they called European solidarity into question.

Poland, with a parliamentary election looming in October, distanced itself even further and withdrew from a coordination platform - a group including the five neighbors, Ukraine and the European Commission - that has been looking at solutions to boost Ukraine grain transit to global markets.

"We have to look forward, since Ukraine said it wants to sue Poland ... every comment we would have made on this platform could be used against us," Poland Agriculture Minister Robert Telus told reporters in Brussels.



Ukrainian flag is covered with grains. (Reuters Photo)

For much of the last year, some 60 percent of Ukrainian grain has transited through the five EU countries using so-called Solidarity Lanes as an alternative to the Black Sea due to Russian threats.

Like most countries in central and eastern Europe, Poland and Slovakia have been some of Kyiv's strongest allies in its fight against Russia's invasion that began in February 2022. Hungary's stance has been more ambivalent, as the only member of the EU and NATO alliance to maintain close relations with Moscow, still the

main source of its oil and natural gas.

But grain exports have been an area of friction throughout the region.

Ukraine's war with Russia has disrupted its ability to export agricultural products through its Black Sea ports, leading to a surge in shipments via road, rail and barge through its five EU neighbors.

Farmers in those countries protested these shipments were distorting local markets, leading the EU to approve trade restrictions - while still allowing transit

- until Sept. 15.

Spain's agriculture minister Luis Planas Puchades said it was up to the European Commission to judge whether the unilateral bans have broken any laws, but said the measures seemed illegal.

France's agriculture minister, Marc Fesneau, was also critical of the measures.

"For solidarity there needs to be unity... We must keep hold of the two elements, otherwise the European project is at risk. The single market is a fundamental element," he said. - Reuters