

**CLIPPINGS FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2023**

**A. SEC. PBBM QUOTED**

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

**'More funds needed for NFA's stockpile'**

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT**

**Editorial: Survey reveals real feelings**

**BUSINESS MIRROR**

**Panel okays bill amending agri smuggling law**

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON**

**Editoriyal: Ipamudmod ang smuggled na bigas**

**PEOPLE'S JOURNAL**

**Crackdown on onion cartels welcomed**

**Fishing ban eyed to curb overfishing**

**Affordable rice**

**Marcos cites BOC's anti-rice smuggling drive**

**B. DA FAMILY**

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

**Shellfish Bulletin No. 22 (Series of 2023): September 19, 2023**

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT**

**Drop in global sugar output boon to local producers**

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

**Shellfish Bulletin No. 22 (Series of 2023): September 19, 2023**

**2,258 small rice retailers get P33M in cash 'Ayuda'**

**Sugar regulator eyes 'scenario' building in drop of farm-gate sugar price**

**THE MANILA TIMES**

**DTI monitors rice price cap implementation**

**Hyper-Localization vs importation**

**SRA optimistic on sugar industry's growth**

**Modified planting pushed in Cagayan**

**MANILA BULLETIN**

**Ex-DA chiefs bat for solar-powered irrigation system**

**127 rice retailers get cash aid in Region 12**

**BUSINESS WORLD**

**SRA suspects price manipulation behind in raw sugar prices**

**Red tide up in Vis-Min areas**

**ABANTE**

**Red tide alert nakataas sa ilang coastal area**

**C. AGRI-RELATED STORY**

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

**Negros Occidental ASF cases contained**

**BUSINESS MIRROR**

**PCAFI, RISA: Sue China for corals damage**

**'Supply woes prevent PHL from hiking fruit exports to China'**

**THE MANILA TIMES**

**Pangasinan to open salt farms for tourist**

**Cooperatives as drivers of rural growth**

**CSU taps Indonesian University**

**ASU hosts international agri-ecotourism congress**

**BUSINESS WORLD**

**Lawmaker calls for relaxations of biofuel requirement to ease oil prices**

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON**

**'Walang taas-presyo ng isda sa bansa'**

**PEOPLE'S JOURNAL**

**Supply constrains limit PH fruit exports to China**

**D. FOREIGN STORY**

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT**

**Wheat rebounds, corn slips**

**BUSINESS MIRROR**

**Big emissions bills are coming for ships sailing in Europe**

**'Multiple shocks keep pushing world further away from SDGs'**





## 'More funds needed for NFA's stockpile'

By RAMON EFREN LAZARO

**MALOLOS** – Now that the **National Food Authority (NFA)**'s palay-buying price has been raised, the agency should be provided a bigger procurement fund for its stockpiling program, according to farmer groups.

An official of the Federation of Central Luzon Cooperatives said that with the increase in the NFA's palay procurement price, the agency's budgetary requirement should also be raised so that it can sustain if not increase its palay stockpile target.

Simeon Sioson, chairman of the 4SM Multipurpose Cooperative in San Miguel, Bulacan, pointed out that if the NFA's palay procurement budget is not raised, then the volume of palay that is targeted for its stockpiling will result in lesser volume compared to its original target.

On the other hand, Raul Montemayor, national chairman of the Federation of Free Farmers, explained in a text message that the NFA's current P9-billion budget could procure around 390,000 metric tons or 7.8 million bags of palay.

Montemayor added this is only equivalent to two percent of the country's total production of palay in a year, which is "a bit small and needs more

funding by the NFA."

The NFA Council on Monday raised the buying price of clean and dry palay to P23 and P16-P19 per kilo of fresh palay.

At present, the NFA's scarce number of palay driers will limit its capabilities in procuring fresh palay from farmers, according to Montemayor.

He also explained that if the buying price of palay traders is much higher compared to the government's palay support price, there is a big possibility that farmers would sell their produce to private palay traders rather than to the NFA.

He added that perhaps the NFA should add incentives in its palay procurement program, like free fertilizers for every 50 cavans of palay delivered by the farmer to the NFA.

On the bright side, palay prices are expected to go down as the peak palay harvest season begins and farmers are assured that their produce will not be bought at less than P23 per kilo because of the P23-per-kilo government-support price for palay by the NFA.

### File charges

Raids may have scared unscrupulous traders, but authorities should go the extra mile by making sure a maximum deterrent effect will be achieved – through indictments.

"I congratulate the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and other concerned agencies for a job well done. But they should not stop at confiscating rice and other products smuggled into the country. These offices should file charges against the smugglers immediately," Speaker Martin Romualdez said.

"Unless the culprits are jailed or otherwise punished, they would continue doing their illegal activities, even if some of their smuggled products end up being seized," Romualdez added.

The leader of the House of Representatives nonetheless expressed support for President Marcos' decision to distribute confiscated smuggled rice to thousands of poor residents of the Zamboanga peninsula.

"We firmly stand with **President Marcos Jr.** in his initiative to distribute premium quality rice to the 4Ps beneficiaries," Romualdez said.

"This significant gesture demonstrates more than just an act of generosity; it underscores the administration's commitment to addressing the needs of our people, especially during challenging times," he added.

Another administration lawmaker, Bulacan 6th District Rep. Salvador Pleyto Sr., a member of the House committee on agriculture and

food, said Marcos' decision to give away smuggled and hoarded rice to poor families was hailed as the "best deterrent" against smuggling.

"The President's action sent the strong signal that there should be no revolving door for smuggled rice in the government. By giving them to the people, it has been placed beyond the reach of those who have illegally brought them in," Pleyto added.

The first-term legislator said the President's decision would mean "confiscated smuggled rice can no longer be rescued by bribes."

Marcos has already instructed the BOC to run after smugglers and bust their illegal operations.

Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan lauded the Chief Executive for having "outsmarted smugglers" and "taught them an expensive lesson" by distributing smuggled rice the government has confiscated to poor families in Zamboanga.

"The President has given smugglers and hoarders a bitter, expensive lesson where it would hurt them the most – their pockets. By his single strong-minded act, the President has helped farmers and poor families and punished those that have made life dif-

ficult for them," Yamsuan said.

### Amendments

Meanwhile, the House committee on agriculture and food approved yesterday proposed amendments to Republic Act 10845, or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016, which aims to expand the scope of products that will be covered by the law.

"Our goal is to make sure there will be conviction and final judgment on smuggling cases. As highlighted by our resource persons, the sad reality is that no one has been convicted of smuggling," panel chairman Quezon 1st District Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga said.

Enverga emphasized that there are many salient features of the substitute bill, saying the "major thrusts are the expansion of the coverage of the current law to include other products that are often being smuggled and hoarded."

"This is because the reality on the ground is that rice and onions are not the only produce being smuggled and hoarded. There are also provisions on business records, harmonizing with other related laws and raising the penalties," he said.

"I am in agreement in principle on the suggested refinements to make law enforcement and prosecution easier so that

there will be smuggling cases that lead to conviction and final judgment," he added.

The measure is one of the priorities set by the Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council endorsed by the Marcos administration.

A related but separate bill on agricultural smuggling, House Bill 3917 authored by the President's lawmaker-son Ilocos Norte 1st District Rep. Sandro Marcos and Pwersang Bayaning Atleta party-list Rep. Migs Nograles, hurdled third reading in December last year and is now at the Senate.

It has been referred to the technical working group of two Senate committees: agriculture, food and agrarian reform, and justice and human rights.

The measure's distinction from the others is that it holds tobacco smugglers criminally liable for the non-bailable offense of economic sabotage.

The bill aims to amend RA 10845, which former president Rodrigo Duterte signed and which penalizes unlawful importation of tobacco, both in raw and finished products.

The difference of the Duterte-signed law from HB 3917 is that the offense can now be categorized as "economic sabotage," which carries no bail for those who will be indicted.

– With Delon Porcalla





## EDITORIAL

A member of the

**PPI** Philippine  
Press  
InstituteThe National Association  
of Philippine Newspapers

## Survey reveals real feelings

FOR those in government, specifically officials at the very top of the political totem pole, the latest survey conducted by OCTA Research should serve as an eye opener.

Results of the OCTA survey taken on July 22 to 26 validate a prevailing sentiment -- that more and more Filipinos are turning from optimism to pessimism with regard to the economy, particularly those in the Visayas where poverty is rampant.

The poll found out that 46 percent of the respondents believed that the economy would be better in six months. Some 43 percent said it would remain the same, while 6 percent said it would worsen. Another 6 percent said they do not know.

Compared to a similar survey conducted in March, optimism in the economy dropped by four points from 50 percent. Pessimism stayed at 6 percent. In October 2022, those who believed that the economy would improve was also at 46 percent, while those who said it would worsen was at 10 percent.

**'... if the true sentiments of the people are collated and validated by reliable survey firms and the results furnished the President and his Cabinet, future policies will be more people oriented and socially conscious.'**

Based on the latest survey, optimism with the economy was highest among those who live in balance Luzon at 54 percent (from 47 percent), followed by those in Metro Manila at 44 percent (from 46 percent), Mindanao at 42 percent (from 43 percent) and the Visayas at 31 percent (from 69 percent).

Pessimism on the economy was highest among those in the Visayas at 11 percent (from 3 percent), followed by those in Metro Manila at 9 percent (from 7 percent), Mindanao at 8 percent (from 11 percent) and rest of Luzon at 2 percent (from 5 percent).

Numbers are a good indication of mass sentiment, and better if results are compared with those taken some months back. Good and truthful survey research may be used to assess thoughts, opinions, and feelings of respondents. An extensive one will have the added advantage of sampling a larger population and thus will wield a greater statistical power.

Surveys, too, are efficient validation tools in knowing the real score in mass acceptance or rejection of national government policies, particularly those which relate to food, peace and order, income and jobs.

For instance, we should be able to ascertain soon how the Filipino people feel about the imposition of a price ceiling on rice -- P41 per kilo for regular and P45 per kilo for well-milled rice. Controversial policies like this that will surely have a deep and extensive impact on all Filipinos should be assessed as to their acceptability with the masses.

Akin to this issue of rice price cap is **President Marcos'** campaign promise to bring down the price of rice to P20 per kilo, which was improbable when he first broached the idea and now, almost impossible, considering the high prices of rice in the international market. This item should also be asked by social researchers of prestigious survey firms.

We are confident that if the true sentiments of the people are collated and validated by reliable survey firms and the results furnished the President and his Cabinet, future policies will be more people oriented and socially conscious.



# Panel okays bill amending agri

BY JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

[@joveemarie](#)

# smuggling law

**T**HE House Committee on Agriculture and Food on Wednesday approved an unnumbered substitute bill declaring large-scale agri-fishery commodities and tobacco smuggling, profiteering, cartelizing, and other acts of market abuse as economic sabotage.

House Committee on Agriculture and Food chairman Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga said the unnumbered substitute bill, which will be known as the Anti-Agri-fishery Commodities and Tobacco Economic Sabotage Act of 2023, would amend Republic Act (RA) 10845, or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016, to include the smuggling of agri-fishery commodities and tobacco products as economic sabotage.

According to Enverga, the measure would expand the prohibited acts to include hoarding, profiteering, and cartelizing and provide for stiffer penalties.

He said the proposal would cre-

ate a task force under the Department of Justice and a council for the effective implementation of this measure.

Nueva Ecija Rep. Mikaela Angela Suansing, chairperson of the technical working group, said the measure is a priority of the administration, which President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. mentioned in his 2023 State of the Nation Address.

The bill refers to economic sabotage as any act or activities that undermine, weaken, or render into disrepute the economic system or viability of the country or tend to bring about such effects, particularly for this proposal.



THE Bureau of Customs (BOC), Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) conducted joint anti-smuggling operations in Manila and Malabon over the weekend. Authorities inspected several warehouses and storage facilities and found imported agricultural products, including onions, garlic and mung beans. BUSINESSMIRROR FILE PHOTO

The measure added that the crime of large-scale agri-fishery commodities or tobacco smuggling as economic sabotage involves agri-fishery commodities in their raw state or which have undergone the simple processes of preparation or preservation for the market, such as freezing, drying, salting, broiling, roasting, smoking, or stripping, with a minimum aggregate fair market

value of P1 million, or involving tobacco with a minimum of excise tax and VAT payable in the amount of P1 million.

It said agri-fishery commodities refer, but are not limited, to rice, sugar, corn, pork, poultry, beef, lamb, garlic, onion, carrots, cruciferous vegetables, coconut, coconut oil, palm oil, palm olein, wheat, fish, and shellfish.

The bill provides a penalty of



Date: SEPT. 21, 2023 Page: A12



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

life imprisonment and a fine of six times the fair market value of agri-fishery commodities or tobacco subject to large-scale smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, cartelizing, and other acts of market abuse, and the aggregate amount of the taxes, duties, and other charges avoided plus interest at the prevailing legal rate shall be imposed on entities who commit any of the acts numerated under this proposal.

Also, the measure added that the penalty of imprisonment of not less than 30 years but not more than 40 years and a fine six times the fair market value of agri-fishery commodities or tobacco subject to large-scale smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, cartelizing, and other acts of market abuse and the aggregate amount the taxes, duties, and other charges avoided plus the interest at the prevailing legal rate shall be imposed on entities who knowingly sell, lend, lease, assign, consent, or allow the unauthorized use of their import permits for purposes of large-scale smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, cartelizing, or the other acts of market abuse.

Meanwhile, Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez assured this bill would be approved

by the lower chamber before its break on September 27.

In the Senate, Agriculture panel chair Senator Cynthia A. Villar was kept busy on Wednesday replying to colleagues' interpellations on her bill categorizing farm smuggling and hoarding as an act of economic sabotage, after she noted that not a single violator has been jailed since the passage of an earlier law.

Sen. Cynthia Villar, chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture, Food, and Agrarian Reform, fielded questions from Senate Deputy Minority Leader Risa Hontiveros during the interpellation period on Senate Bill (SB) 2432, also known as the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act last Wednesday. Among the questions asked by Hontiveros was the inclusion of tobacco in the list of agricultural products covered by SB 2432, considering that it is not related to food security and not even an agricultural commodity.

Villar noted that tobacco is defined by the World Health Organization and classified under the customs code as an agricultural product. She added that aside from undermining the country's campaign against smoking, tobacco smuggling reduces government revenue.



Date: 21 SEP 2023 Page: 4



**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



### Editorial

## **Ipamudmod ang smuggled na bigas**

**S**ABI ni **President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.** posible pa rin daw mangyari ang pinangako niyang magiging P20 ang bawat kilo ng bigas. Basta raw maging stable ang sector ng agrikultura at ang agri production, posibleng bumaba sa P20 ang bigas. Ang pangakong ito ay binitawan niya nang nangangampanya noong 2022 elections. Pero sa takbo ng mga nangyayari, mahirap mapaniwalaan ang P20 per kilo ng bigas. Umaray nga ang rice retailers dahil sa inisyu niyang EO 39 na nagbababa sa price cap ng bigas na P40 at P45 per kilo. Nangyari pa ang krisis sa bigas habang siya ang Agriculture secretary.

Habang patuloy ang pagmahal ng bigas na hindi laman kung bakit, patuloy naman ang agri smuggling. Dagsa ang smuggled na bigas na malayang nakakalusot sa Bureau of Customs (BOC). Ang nakakatawa pa, pagkaraang makalusot sa BOC ang libu-libong sako ng bigas ay saka naman sila magsasagawa ng raid sa mga bodega. Bakit hinayaan pa nilang makalusot sa bakuran saka nila iri-raid ang mga bodega. Para lang masabi na nagtatrabaho sila?

Sa rami ng mga smuggled na bigas na nakumpiska, ang mga ito ang pinamahagi ng Presidente at ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) sa mga benepisyaryo ng Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) sa Zamboanga City noong Martes. Nasa 1,500 sako ng bigas ang ipinamahagi. Ang smuggled rice na nagkakahalaga ng P42 milyon ay nakumpiska ng BOC sa Port of Zamboanga noong Setyembre 15.

Tama lang na ipamahagi ang nakumpiskang smuggled rice. Kahit na hindi matupad ang pangakong P20 per kilo ng bigas, sapat na ang ipamudmod ang mga nakumpiskang bigas. Siguruhin lamang na lahat ay mapagkakalooban ng bigas at hindi magkakaroon ng palakasan. Dapat DSWD ang mamamahagi at huwag ipaubaya sa barangay. May mga pangyayari sa nakaraan na ang mga kamag-anak ng barangay officials ang nabibiyayaan ng ayuda gaya ng bigas at sardinas.

Dapat namang linawin ng BOC kung ano na ang nangyari sa sinalakay nilang mga bodega ng bigas sa Bulacan noong Agosto 30. Sinalakay ng BOC sa pangunguna ni Comm. Beinvenido Rubio ang tatlong malalaking bodega ng bigas sa Balagtas, Bulacan kung saan 202,000 sako ng bigas ang natagpuan. Ang mga sinalakay ay ang Great Harvest Rice Mill Warehouse, San Pedro Warehouse at FS Rice Mill Warehouse. Bukod kay Rubio, kasama rin sa mga sumalakay ang mga opisyal ng Department of Agriculture at maging si House Speaker Martin Romualdez at ilang mambabatas.

Nasaan na ang mga bigas? Kung smuggled ang mga ito, ipamudmod na sa mga mahihirap gaya ng ginawa ng Presidente sa Zamboanga. Maraming nagrerebeldeng bituka ang matutulungan nang napakaraming bigas na nasa mga bodega.





## CRACKDOWN ON ONION CARTELS WELCOMED

**By Jester Manalastas**

A HOUSE leader has welcomed the government's filing of criminal charges for profiteering against six individuals allegedly involved in the reported hoarding and price manipulation of onions.

According to Cavite Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr. this action of the National Bureau of Investigation's (NBI) only shows President Marcos Jr.'s strong resolve in putting an end to agricultural cartels in the country.

"It only shows that the President (Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr.) is really bent on going after these agricultural smugglers and hoarders. It proves that the Chief Executive means business," Barzaga, chairman of the House committee on environment and natural resources, said.

Speaker Ferdinand Mar-

tin Romualdez had called for a congressional probe in December last year when prices of onion surged to over P700 per kilo and as a result, the panel chaired by Quezon Rep. Mark Enverga was able to unmask key cartel personalities and allied firms.

The House of Representatives has been cooperating with the Department of Justice and the NBI in going after the onion cartel, which is behind the hoarding and price manipulation of agricultural products, especially onions.

Barzaga said the House and the DOJ, headed by Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla who, himself, is a former Cavite congressman, have been helping each other by exchanging information on the culprits behind the sudden increase in the prices of onion.

"As a matter of fact, the majority of the information was unearthed during the

House hearings. This is a long-standing national problem and perhaps, time has finally come for a real campaign against agricultural smuggling and hoarding, a modus which hurts the public tremendously. The senior lawmakers said that "the government can get serious when it wants to and when it needs to address agricultural smuggling. This is just the tip of the iceberg and expect more agrismuggling cases to be filed in the near future," he said.

"Results matter for consumers; for people who suffer the greed and caprice of criminals masquerading as businessmen, this is a recurrent and systemic issue that requires a total approach. We really have a big problem when our regulators, especially those in the Department of Agriculture and Bureau of Customs, do not do their jobs honestly and contribute to our nation's problems," he added.





## FISHING BAN EYED TO CURB OVERFISHING

**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.** on Tuesday bared government plans to address overfishing and boost the country's fish population and aquaculture, one of them is the imposition of fishing ban and other restrictions in certain areas, particularly those intended for fish breeding and propagation.

"Kung minsan kailangan 'wag ubusin yung isda para sa next season mayroon pa. Kaya yun yung tintingnan natin ngayon," the President said in explaining the fishing ban.

"At may mga lugar na hindi dapat gawin palaisdaan dahil ito nga ay para sa breeding," Marcos added saying "(p)ara dumami ang population ng mga isda. Kaya yun ang ating pinaplano," he said.

The President said these measures are part of the government's plan of securing the country's fish stocks along with other initiatives for the agriculture sector to ensure food security.

During a media interview at the National Food Authority (NFA)-Region IX warehouse in Zamboanga City after he distributed confiscated smuggled rice to poor families in the prov-



ince, President Marcos said developing the Philippine agriculture not only means securing the supply of rice and corn but also involves improving the fishery and the livestock sectors.

"Kaya't kasama sa ating development plan ang mga fisheries dahil nang bumaba ang dalawang bagay: bumababa ang ating nahuhuli, ng ating mga mangingisda dahil nasira na 'yung mga kung saan pinalalaki ang mga isda," Marcos told reporters.

The administration is also implementing programs to put up more cold storage facilities to prevent spoilage, the President said, noting up to 30

percent of the fish catch is degraded or damaged.

"Walang cold storage. Kaya nagtatayo tayo ng cold storage. Doon naman sa mga maliliit na bagsakan ay magbibigay tayo ng gawaan ng yelo, para 'yung yelo na 'yan, 'yun 'yung ilalagay nila sa bangka para pag may nahuli sila, ilalagay lang doon sa yelo at hindi masira 'yung isda," Marcos said.

"Tapos ang isusunod natin after that ay 'yung processing na para doon lang sa isang lugar ang magiging processing. Yun ang ating mga pinaplano para sa fisheries." **PCO**





# AFFORDABLE RICE

THERE is still a chance that the P20 per kilo of rice could be realized, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said on Tuesday, pointing out that once the agriculture sector and the cost of production in the country would become stable and normalize, the goal would be reached.

"May chance lagi 'yan," President Marcos said when asked by media if the P20.00 per kilogram of rice is still feasible. "(K)ung maayos natin ang production natin at maging maayos, hindi na tayo masyadong bagyuhin at 'yung mga tulong na ibinigay natin sa mga farmer ay magamit na nila."

The President explained there are factors happening outside the Philippines that are directly affecting the prices of basic commodities in the country, prompting the government and the market to adjust.

President Marcos emphasized that it would be easy for the government to make the necessary adjustments once everything normalizes.

"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 nating ipagpantay ang presyo," the President

said.

The chief executive stressed the government is exhausting all remedies to ensure that prices of staple food in the market are still affordable to the Filipino people, especially to those who find it difficult to make ends meet.

President Marcos added there are enough measures to ensure a reasonable buying price for farmers, adding that the National Food Authority (NFA) Council has set on Monday a new price range for palay buying.

The NFA Council, chaired by President Marcos, approved last Monday the buying price

range for "wet palay" from PhP16.00 to PhP19.000 while the price range for "dry palay" was pegged at PhP19.00 from the PhP23.00.

"So, pagka naging mas normal na ang sitwasyon, malaking pag-asa talaga natin na ibababa natin ang presyo ng bigas," Marcos assured.

The chief executive led on Tuesday the distribution of seized smuggled rice in Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay and Zamboanga City as he also turned over other agricultural assistance to the residents and the local government units in the 2 provinces. **PCO**





**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## MARCOS CITES BOC'S ANTI-RICE SMUGGLING DRIVE

**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.** praised the Bureau of Customs' (BOC) strong stand against smuggling during the successful turnover of P42 million worth of rice to selected government agencies and beneficiaries on Tuesday.

The President led the distribution of 42,180 sacks of rice to select beneficiaries in Zamboanga City and Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay.

The remaining stocks will be allocated to different regions across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao once the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has identified areas where rice supply is most needed.

In his speech, President Marcos cited BOC for its consistent investigation and inspection of warehouses suspected of storing smuggled rice.

He praised the government's commitment to address smuggling, highlighting BOC's pivotal role in the campaign against illicit trade.

The President's recognition underscores the importance of BOC's efforts and reaffirms the government's determination to safeguard national interests and border integrity.

Customs Commissioner Bi-venenido Y. Rubio expressed

full support for the President's campaign, stating: "The BOC treats this matter with the utmost urgency, as it is crucial not only for our farmers but also for all Filipinos who work diligently to put food on the table. That's why the BOC will relentlessly curb these illegal activities."

Earlier, the BOC seized the 42,180 sacks of rice at the Port of Zamboanga after the owner failed to submit the necessary documentation to prove the legality of its importation and payment of correct duties and taxes due thereon.

Following Executive Order No. 39-2023, the President ordered BOC to intensify intelligence gathering efforts to identify and padlock warehouses suspected of storing smuggled rice.

The Bureau was also instructed to work closely with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for appropriate steps to address unwarranted price increases and supply shortage manipulation.

The President's marching orders aim to safeguard the interests of consumers and ensure that rice remains an affordable and accessible staple for all Filipinos.





Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Agriculture  
**BUREAU OF FISHERIES AND AQUATIC RESOURCES**  
Fisheries Building Complex, BPI Compound, Brgy. Vasa  
Visayas Ave., Quezon City  
| do@bfar.da.gov.ph | records@bfar.da.gov.ph |  
+63(2) 8539-5685

**Shellfish Bulletin No. 22**  
**Series of 2023**  
**19 September 2023**

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

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

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

The following areas continue to be **FREE** from toxic red tide: coastal waters of Cavite, Las Pifias, Parañaque, Navotas, Bulacan, and Bataan (Mariveles, Limay, Orion, Pilar, Balanga, Hermosa, Orani, Abucay, and Samal) in Manila Bay; mariculture areas in Infanta, coastal waters of Bolinao, Anda, Alaminos, Sual, and Wawa, Beni in Pangasinan; mariculture areas in Rosario, and Sto. Tomas in La Union; coastal waters of Pampanga; Masinloc Bay in Zambales; Pagbilao Bay, Pagbilao, and coastal waters of Walay, Padre Burgos in Quezon; Honda, and Puerto Princesa Bays, Puerto Princesa City, and coastal waters of Inner Malampaya Sound, Taytay in Palawan; coastal waters of Milagros, and Mandaon in Masbate; Sorsogon Bay, and Juag Lagoon, Matnog in Sorsogon; coastal waters of Borongan, San Dionisio in Iloilo; coastal waters of E.B. Magalona, Talisay City, Silay City, Bacolod City, Hinigaran, and Victorias City in Negros Occidental; Tambobo, and Silt Bays, Slaton, and Bais Bay, Bais City in Negros Oriental; coastal waters of Daram, and Zumarraga, Cambatuzay, Irong-Irong, Maqueda, San Pedro and Villareal Bays in Samar; coastal waters of Gulan, and Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar; coastal waters of Leyte, Calubian, Ormoc, Sogod, Carigara Bay, and Cancabato Bay, Tacloban City in Leyte; coastal waters of Biliran Island; Tantanang Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay; Murcielagos Bay in Zamboanga del Norte and (Sapang Dalaga, and Ballangao) in Misamis Occidental; Pangul Bay, Tugub City, and coastal waters of Ozamiz City in Misamis Occidental; coastal waters of Baroy in Lanao del Norte; Taguines Lagoon, Benoni, Mahinog in Camiguin; Balite, and Pujada Bays, Heli City in Davao Oriental; Malalag Bay in Davao Occidental and Davao del Sur; coastal waters of Nasipit in Agusan del Norte; Litalit Bay in Surigao del Norte; and coastal waters of Hinatuan, Cortes, Lianga, and Bislig Bays in Surigao del Sur. Moreover, coastal waters of Altavas, Batan, and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aklan are now free of the toxic red tide.

ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO  
Director

www.bfar.da.gov.ph /BFAR.Central

P.S. September 2023





## Drop in global sugar output boon to local producers

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is optimistic about the prospects of the sugar industry in the face of possible decline in the output of major global producers.

Pablo Azcona, SRA administrator, said Thai Sugar Millers Corp. director Rangsit Hiangrat had indicated Thailand expects production to decline by 30 percent to its lowest in the last 10 years.

Azcona said India has declared it will not export sugar and would import close to a million tons this year.

With these developments, SRA expects sugar to yield better prices.

However, it said, reports indicated local trading in Negros Occidental last week dropped to a low of P2,550 to P2,700, with only two mills reporting trading at P3,000 at least.

The SRA said it is investigating possible trade manipulation.

“Since February, we have maintained prices at a comfortable level of P3,000 which is equivalent to P60 per kilogram at farm gate raw price and P85 per kilogram refined

in retail price in Metro Manila. We have been pushing for P3,000 as the fair market price and this has been echoed by the administration. (This is) an incentive for farmers to plant more and be more sustainable,” Azcona said.

The SRA will focus the investigation on the mills, traders and importers for possible anomalous deals.

The current global situation is a “clear indicator” the local industry must be supported, and that the country should not depend on imports as the world

production continues to decline, the SRA added.

The SRA had expected sugar production to increase by at least 50,000 metric tons (MT) in crop year 2023-2024 with more hectares of land planted with sugarcane.

Raw sugar production in 2022-2023 was down 1.6 percent to 1.79 million MT, from 1.82 million MT the previous crop year.



However, Azcona cautioned sugar production could fall by 10 to 15 percent if the effects of the El Niño will be extreme.



Date: SEPT. 21, 2023 Page: A4



**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

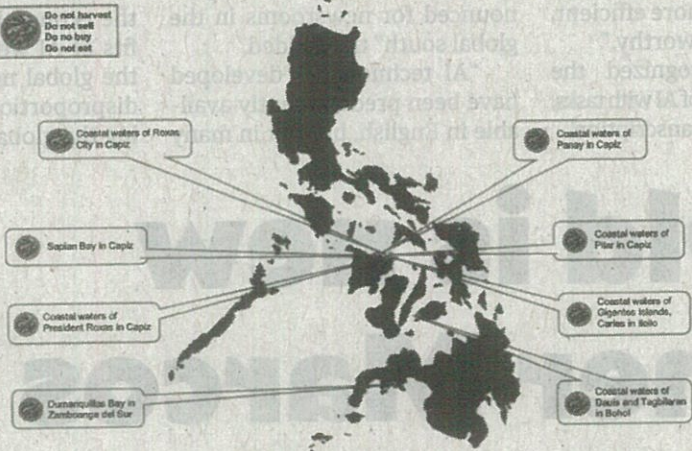


**BAGONG PILIPINAS**  
Tanggapagayud ng Malinh at  
Masaganang Karagatan

Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Agriculture  
**BUREAU OF FISHERIES AND AQUATIC RESOURCES**  
Fisheries Building Complex, BPI Compound,  
Brgy. Vasra, Visayas Ave., Quezon City  
| do@bfar.da.gov.ph | records@bfar.da.gov.ph |  
+63(2) 8539-5685

**Shellfish Bulletin No.22**  
**Series of 2023**  
19 September 2023



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



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

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

**ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO**  
Director

 [www.bfar.da.gov.ph](http://www.bfar.da.gov.ph)  /BFAR.Central

(PDI – Sept. 21, 2023)



Date: SEPT. 21, 2023 Page: A5



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DUE TO PRICE CAP

## 2,258 SMALL RICE RETAILERS GET P33M IN CASH 'AYUDA'

By **Ronnel W. Domingo**  
@RonWDomingoINQ

More "micro rice retailers" adversely affected by price caps have been identified and verified, and have received their cash aid as Executive Order No. 39 remains in force for the third week, according to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Based on reports from DTI regional offices in Ilocos, Central Luzon, Davao and Soccskargen made public on Sept. 20, a total of 2,258 retailers received their P15,000 subsidy for a total of P33.87 million.

The most number of beneficiaries were in the Davao region with a total of 1,624—including 470 in Davao City, 385 in Davao Oriental, 349 in Davao Occidental, 172 in Davao de Oro, 165 in Davao del Norte and 83 in Davao del Sur.

In Central Luzon, there were a total of 336 micro retailers who received the subsidy through the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Sustainable Livelihood Program.

Nueva Ecija had the highest number of payees with 107 beneficiaries, followed by Zambales with 78, and Aurora with 44. Meanwhile, Bataan had 38 payees, Bulacan with 29, Pampanga with 25 and Tarlac with 15 beneficiaries.

Leading the distribution were DTI-3 OIC Regional Director Brigida Pili and Department

of Agriculture Regional Director Crispulo Bautista Jr., who emphasized the importance of empowering micro rice retailers and stabilizing their businesses in public markets.

"We aim for this payout to aid businesses, to prevent losses, and to sustain retailing businesses in public markets so that we can assist our consumers in purchasing affordable rice," Pili said in a statement. "This comes at a time when we are anticipating the rice harvest in our municipalities and barangays."

There were 127 rice retailers in Soccskargen that received the cash aid. In the Ilocos region, 171 micro rice retailers received their cash aid.

According to the DTI guidelines, a single cash payout of P15,000 will be issued to rice retailers who sell regular milled and well-milled rice within the prescribed price ceiling—respectively, P41 per kilogram and P45 per kg.

To be eligible, retailers must hold a license from their local Business Permit and Licensing Office or possess a certification issued by the barangay or any government office.

They should also be registered with the DTI as sole proprietors, with the Cooperative Development Authority as cooperators, or with the Securities and Exchange Commission as partnerships or corporations. INQ



# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

Date: SEPT. 21, 2023 Page: AS



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PROBE UNDERWAY

## SUGAR REGULATOR EYES 'SCENARIO' BUILDING IN DROP OF FARM-GATE SUGAR PRICE

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

The **Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA)** is looking into the decline in farm-gate prices of sugar amid the projected growth in domestic production.

Without disclosing any names or entities, SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said the agency suspected irregularities in transactions. "Someone is making a scenario and definitely we will not take this sitting down," he said.

Azcona said the SRA would focus its investigation on "the mills, traders and importers to see if there is some abnormality in their dealings."

The SRA is not ruling out the possibility of trade manipulation. Azcona said they were surprised that farm-gate prices dropped last week, particularly in Negros Occidental where prices declined to a low P2,550 to P2,700 with only two mills reporting trading at P3,000 at least.

"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.

### Global developments

"Since February, we have maintained prices at a comfortable level of P3,000 which is equivalent to P60 per kilogram at farm-gate raw price and P85 per kg refined in retail price in Metro Manila," he added.

Azcona said the recent developments in the global mar-

ket are expected to improve farm-gate prices of sugar.

For instance, sugar output in Thailand is projected to decline by 30 percent, which the SRA chief said "will be their lowest in the last 10 years."

This scenario, said Azcona, will prompt good prices for local sugar "especially with India also declaring that they will not be exporting sugar this year but may need to import close to a million tons for their needs."

Azcona also said Brazil, one of the world's largest sugar-pro-

ducing countries, declared that while they hope to maintain or increase their production this year as compared to last, "Brazil may put any excess sugar they have for fuel use or for energy."

"The global situation is a clear indicator that we cannot kill the local industry and be import dependent, as the world production continues to decline. Let us put more effort into supply security through self-sufficiency and not import dependence," he added.

The SRA is projecting raw

sugar output to reach 1.85 million metric tons (MT) for crop year 2023 to 2024, which began on Sept. 1 and will end on Aug. 31, 2024—lower than the raw sugar withdrawal estimated at more or less 2.20 million MT.

Depending on the severity of the El Niño phenomenon, Azcona said earlier the domestic production may slightly increase or decrease by 10 to 15 percent.

For the current crop year, the SRA is allocating the entire sugar output to "B" or the domestic market to stabilize supply. INQ





**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## DTI monitors rice price cap implementation

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said Wednesday it is strictly monitoring rice retailers nationwide as well as leading the distribution of cash assistance to beneficiaries as mandated by Executive Order (EO) 39 or the imposition of rice price caps.

DTI Region 11 said 1,624 rice retailers have been monitored in the Davao Region. Davao City got the most inspections at 470, followed by Davao Oriental at 385, Davao Occidental at 349, Davao de Oro at 172, Davao del Norte at 165, and Davao del Sur at 83.

It was found that the selling price of well-milled rice ranges from P42 to P64 per kilogram, while regular-milled rice was priced between P38 and P59 per kilo.

Issued on August 31, EO 39 that mandated the rice price ceilings became effective on September 5, stating that the DTI, together with the Department of Agriculture (DA), must ensure strict implementation of the rice price caps, including monitoring and investigation.

Accordingly, the Special Interagency Task Force on Price and Supply Monitoring and Enforcement (SITF-PSME) was mobilized in the Davao Region, complementing the Local Price Coordinating Councils (LPCCs) in cities and municipalities.

Led by DA Region 11, the SITF-PSME monitored three rice warehouses in Davao City on September 5 and found that the buying price of well-milled rice at the time was pegged at P2,450 per 50-kilogram sack or P49 per kilogram. Meanwhile, the retail price was at P50 per kilogram.

### Cash aid payout

The DTI had released P2,730,000 to 182 beneficiaries, who received P15,000 each.

"We have been coordinating with the

DA closely since rice is under its jurisdiction. Nonetheless, we at DTI have been doing our best to carry our role based on EO 39," DTI Region 11 Regional Director Maria Belenda Ambi said.

Meanwhile, DTI Region 3 (Central Luzon) reported that the region has 336 rice retailers who will receive cash assistance. Nueva Ecija had the highest number of payees with 107 beneficiaries, followed by Zambales with 78 and Aurora with 44.

Meanwhile, Bataan had 38 payees, Bulacan with 29, Pampanga with 25, and Tarlac 15.

"We aim for this payout to aid your businesses, to prevent losses, and to sustain your retailing businesses in public markets so that we can assist our consumers in purchasing affordable rice. This comes at a time when we are anticipating the rice harvest in our municipalities and barangays," DTI Region 3 Officer In Charge Director Brigida Pili.

For Region 12 (Soccsksargen), the DTI said 127 rice retailers have received cash assistance.

DTI Region 1 (Ilocos), meanwhile, said that 171 rice retailers received cash assistance and were validated to comply with the mandated rice price cap.

The DTI assured the public that the agency is visiting as many rice retailers as it possibly can to make sure the mandated price ceiling is implemented.

Under EO 39, the mandated price ceiling for regular milled rice is P41 per kilogram, while the mandated price cap for well-milled rice is P45 per kilogram.

The price ceiling 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.

**JENICA FAYE GARCIA**





## Hyper-localization vs importation

FOR the most part of 2020, the world economy almost stood still after the coronavirus struck. Scientists worked hard to create a vaccine, but Covid-19 had already caused damage to the health and economy of many countries. By 2021, supply chain disruptions have threatened food sufficiency. In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, a major source of the world's food supply. The ongoing conflict and disruptions continue to mess up the world's food security.

### Recurring economic issues

In 2023, the health situation in most parts of the world has normalized. But technological developments, climate change, demographic shifts and ongoing supply chain disruptions continue to perpetuate a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world environment. Food security remains a major global nightmare.

At that time, some economists predict that outsourcing production to low-cost countries may come to an end as governments think of ways to improve domestic supply security.

Futures Platform Content Director Dr. Tuomo Kuosa said, "Global recession and 'slowbalization' seem like certain things now, with the way the pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of national and global supply chains."

At that time, some economists predict that outsourcing production to low-cost countries may come to an end as governments think of ways to improve domestic supply security.

Dr. Aleksi Neuvonen, co-founder of Demos Helsinki, clarifies that this does not mean that the world will go back to the way it used to be before globalization started. For one thing, manufacturing is now more automated. This means more widespread use of artificial intelligence and robotics, and therefore fewer jobs for humans. The pandemic has drastically changed consumer behavior, and this has led to fewer customer service jobs, even as contact centers are now increasingly populated by intelligent machines. The purchasing power to buy food, especially among vulnerable sectors, will continue to be compromised, even if there is an ample food supply, which is not the case.

### Food self-sufficiency

The Covid-19 has taught nations a couple of lessons: 1) back-to-basics and 2) self-reliance. A hundred thousand years ago, when the Neanderthals wanted meat, vegetables, or fish, they did not go to a mom-and-pop wet market. Today, people must relearn to "hunt, plant or fish."

Self-sufficiency is now driven by nationalist and protectionist ideologies (which slowly died when globalization started) and by a recent trend called hyper-localization.

Dr. Kuosa says, "Hyper-localization stands for a very local and communal way of living. It is closely connected to the circular economy, especially the



concepts of localized food production and energy self-sufficiency."

Unless we implement a purposive strategy of hyper-localization for self-sufficiency, the family's need for food supply could remain unsatisfied. The rich and the poor will compete for limited supplies, and guess who wins. The recent competition for access to the Covid-19 vaccine between the rich and the poor is a good preview.

In the aftermath of Covid-19, trade and the supply chain are becoming more "de-globalized," as bioregions emerge. Post-Covid, there should be massive vertical farming in self-sufficient communities, or families growing their own food in what used to be flowerpots. There should be government support for farmers, fishermen and livestock producers whose sole, consuming ambition is to feed themselves and their communities.

### Malthusian theory

In 1798, Thomas Robert Malthus, a British economist known for his ideas on population growth, published his book, "An Essay on the Principle of Population." Malthus noted that the world population hit the 1 billion mark in 1804. In 219 years, it has increased to more than 8.6 billion. He theorized that "populations would continue expanding until growth was stopped or reversed by disease, famine, war or calamity."

Malthus believed that while population tends to grow exponentially, "food production will not be able to keep up with the growth in the human population." He also theorized the "Malthusian limit," a condition where people would return to "subsistence-level conditions as a result of agricultural or economic production being eventually outstripped by population growth." These subsistence-level scenarios were played up in several movies, including "Oliver" (1968) and "Soylent Green" (1973).

Paraphrasing Malthus, I see two grim possibilities. Either we control population growth or the lethal combination of poverty, fatal illnesses, pandemics, wars, famines or plagues will increase the death rate.

### Poverty and food supply

In the Philippines, poverty incidence was at 49.2 percent in 1985. In 2021, the official government statistics reported that poverty incidence was down to 18.1 percent or 19.99 million Filipinos. Between 2018 and 2021, an estimated 2.3 million Filipinos fell into poverty amid the economic recession caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. (Source: Wikipedia, Sept. 10, 2023)

The Philippine Statistics Authority posted on its website, "Inflation

of food accelerated to 6.5 percent in July 2023 from 6.0 percent in June 2023. The index of vegetables, tubers, plantains, cooking bananas and pulses is the main contributor to higher food inflation as its annual increment accelerated to 28.5 percent in July 2023 from 14.7 percent in June 2023." (Source: PSA, Aug. 8, 2023)

Recent news reports said, "As per Executive Order No. 39 signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, the prices of Regular-Milled Rice and Well-Milled Rice are now capped at P41 per kilogram and P45 per kilogram, respectively."

Many small retailers were caught holding bags of rice purchased from middlemen at a price higher than the price cap. Some Filipinos might also be wondering what happened to the P20 per kilo of rice.

A government press release on Sept. 7, 2023, reported that "President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. welcomed the suggestion of Vietnam for a five-year rice importation arrangement."

The 2019 Rice Tariffication Act barred government-to-government import arrangements under the **National Food Authority (NFA)**. Despite these, however, the report said, "... the Philippines' bilateral rice trade with Vietnam has remained healthy and unimpeded, with Vietnam supplying around 90 percent of the Philippines' rice imports..."

On Sept. 8, 2023, Jayson Cainglet, executive director of the Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag), opposed the five-year importation plan. Paeng Mariano, chairman emeritus of the Samahang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (SMP), said that instead of using the money for rice imports, the government should instead use it to strengthen palay and rice production in the country. (Currie Cator, CNN, Sept. 8, 2023)

### Prologue and epilogue

During the dynamic and turbulent post-WW2 years, poverty and hunger were imminent. The Ford and Rockefeller foundations, with support from the Philippine government, founded in 1960 the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños, Laguna. (Source: Wikipedia)

IRRI has taught several agriculturists from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and other countries modern rice technology. The graduates eventually improved their country's rice production, and the Philippines was left behind.

The tables have turned. It sounds eerie that the former students now supply the teacher's needs — based on lessons learned from the teacher.

Ernie Cecilia is the chairman of the Human Capital Committee and the Publication Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (AmCham); chairman of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP's) TWG on Labor Policy and Social Issues; and past president of the People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP). He can be reached at [erniececilia@gmail.com](mailto:erniececilia@gmail.com).



# The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 21, 2023 Page: B2 & B3



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## SRA OPTIMISTIC ON SUGAR INDUSTRY'S GROWTH

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) remains optimistic on the growth of the country's sugar

industry.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona also said in a statement that the drop of sugar production in Thailand will prompt good

prices for local sugar.

Azcona said he has been told by Rangsit Hiangrat, director of Thai Sugar Millers Corp., that Thailand will have a 30-percent

drop in production or the lowest in 10 years.

He added the scenario, along with the declaration of India to stop sugar exportation this year

and its plan to import close to a million tons of the commodity, will affect prices for local sugar.

"These two big sugar exporters alone have driven world market

prices up which is why it was surprising that our local farm-gate price dropped last week," Azcona said.

►Growth B3





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

■ GROWTH FROM B1

## SRA

In relation to the reports showing that local trading in Negros Occidental dropped to a low of P2,550 to P2,700 per 50 kilograms (kg) last week, Azcona said that they are looking into the possibility of trade manipulation.

According to the official, sugar prices have maintained a comfortable level of P3,000 per 50 kg since February. This is equivalent to P60 per kg at farmgate raw price and P85 per kg of refined at retail price in Metro Manila.

"We have been pushing for the P3,000 [per kg] 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.

The SRA also noted the announcement of Brazil to maintain or increase their production this year as compared to last and said that it "may put any excess sugar they have for fuel use or for energy."

"The global situation is a clear indicator that we cannot kill the local industry and be import dependent, as the world production continues to decline," said Azcona.

The agency is also calling to put more effort into supply security through self-sufficiency and not be dependent on importation.

Moreover, Azcona emphasized the sugar industry's need for sustainable local production, as well as production improvements through modernization, mechanization, research and consolidation.

"We continue to be positive of growth in the sugar industry, and at the moment, we are moving to ensure stable farmgate prices as this has shown a net increase in sugar planted areas because of last year's good prices," he said.

"Barring any severe El Niño, we may have the same or slightly better produce this year," Azcona added.





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Modified planting pushed in Cagayan

AS part of the strategy to enhance the productivity of farmers, the Department of Agriculture (DA)-Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) office is pushing for the scaling up of a modified planting calendar with mechanization technologies in Enrile, Cagayan.

Through the Southern Cagayan Research Center (SCRC), the DA-Region 2 office during Farmers' Field Day in Barangay Roma spearheaded the establishment of said project on September 13 while serving as a climate change adaptation and mitigation measure.

Kay Olivas, DA-Region 2 officer in charge, regional technical director for research and regulatory, said technologies showcased were the adjustment of the planting calendar or 15 days before the regular planting for the wet season.

Olivas said the planting calendar is with the use of mechanized crop establishment technologies such as mechanized precision seeder, walk-behind rice transplanter and riding-type rice transplanter with high-yielding inbred rice variety of NSIC Rc402 or Tubigan 36.

According to SCRC, the adjusted planting calendar has further proved its effectiveness during the onslaught of Typhoon "Egay" where harvesting was done approximately a week before the rains arrived.

"Because of technology, we were able to harvest before the rains came. And when we harvested, we were able to sell our palay (unmilled rice) at P22 per kilo," said Eduardo Datul, one of the cooperators.

The DA noted that although some cooperators were doubtful of the mechanizations, they eventually adopted the technology.

Another cooperator, Federico Diego, said he is grateful because he was among those included in "this good project" that was "truly effective."

The SCRC said there was an additional profit per hectare with an average amount of P23,583.27 and P14,625.17 using mechanical transplanter and mechanical rice seeder, respectively.

In the barangay (villages) of Roma Sur and Roma Norte in Enrile, there is a hindering factor, which is the absence of viable active farmers cooperatives and associations (FCAs).

"The absence of FCAs prevents farmers from receiving not only these technologies but also from benefits and other support services and projects from the government," DA-Region 2 said. **LEANDER C. DOMINGO**





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Ex-DA chiefs bat for solar-powered irrigation system

By BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT

Former secretaries Emmanuel F. Pinol and Leonardo Q. Montemayor of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said using a solar-powered irrigation systems in the country's farmlands could help ensure rice self-sufficiency at competitive price levels.

In a joint statement, the former agriculture secretaries urged the Marcos administration to undertake a nationwide solar-powered irrigation program to improve rice production in the country.

Pinol and Montemayor said that some 200,000 hectares inadequately serviced by the **National Irrigation Administration (NIA)** will benefit from their recommendation. These areas, which are located at the tail-end of NIA's dam-sourced

irrigation distribution system, get minimal or no water especially during the dry season.

An additional 1.5 million hectares of rain-fed uplands can be planted to rice and/or high value crops like soybean and vegetables during the dry season, Pinol and Montemayor said.

"The beauty of solar-based irrigation is that it is free (coming from the sun), renewable, environmentally sound. It reduces farmers' irrigation expenses since it does not require increasingly costly diesel fuel," they pointed out.

The 137 solar-powered irrigation system (SPIS) program was introduced by Pinol and launched by President Duterte in 2017 in M'lang, Cotabato. In 2018-19, DA completed an SPIS in Lumban, Laguna built by the LK Group of Israel and the country's largest SPIS in Llanera, Nueva Ecija in cooperation with the Filipino-owned Ramon Uy Foundry and Machine Shop Corporation based in Bacolod City.

According to Pinol, he had proposed - as Duterte's first DA Secretary - an

Israeli-funded nationwide program. However, a P40-billion soft loan offer by the Israeli government for over 6,000 units of SPIS to cover 500,000 hectares had not been acted upon by the economic team of the previous administration.

Meanwhile, Montemayor said that a similar proposal was submitted to the Office of the President early this year by Oscar I. Violago, developer of the successful Casecan multi-purpose power generation and irrigation dam project in Nueva Ecija in the late 1990s. The project is currently servicing some 137,000 hectares in Central Luzon, the country's rice granary.

"Malacanang's response is still being awaited," he disclosed.

Montemayor said that there are currently over 300 various solar irrigation projects already established by the DA, the Department of Agrarian Reform, the Bangsa Moro Autonomous Region, and local government units.

"These and future development plans need to be coordinated and scaled up to achieve rice and food security goals at the soonest time possible," he added.



Date: SEPT. 21, 2023 Page: B-1



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## ■ 127 rice retailers get cash aid in Region 12

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) reported a total of 127 micro-rice retailers in Region 12 that received cash assistance of ₱15,000 each under the Sustainable Livelihood Program – Emergency Relief Subsidy (SLP-ERS). The distribution was held from Sept. 13-14 at Tacurong City in Sultan Kudarat, Koronadal City and Kidapawan City in South Cotabato, Cotabato Province, Alabel in Sarangani, and General Santos City. DTI Region 12 joined the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Region 12, the Department of Agriculture (DA) Region 12, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Region 12, and the Local Government Units (LGUs) in the distribution of cash assistance to micro-rice retailers. The distribution was in response to the presidential directive stipulated in Executive Order No. 39, which took effect on Sept. 5, 2023, mandating the imposition of a price ceiling for Regular Milled Rice (RWR) at ₱41 per kilo and Well-Milled Rice (WMR) at ₱45 per kilo. DTI-12 Regional Director Flora Politud-Gabunales underscored that EO 39 is a temporary government measure to address the sudden spike in rice prices in the market and to ensure the availability and affordability of rice for Filipinos. She also added that the financial assistance given to the rice retailers will benefit the consumers since this is a means to make rice affordable and accessible to all. (Ma. Joselie C. Garcia)





**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## SRA suspects price manipulation behind decline in raw sugar prices

RAW sugar prices have dropped in Negros Occidental due to suspected market manipulation, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona said in a statement that "local trading in Negros Occidental last week dropped to a low of P2,550 to P2,700 (per ton) with only two mills reporting trading at P3,000 at least."

He said that since February, prices have consistently come in at "a comfortable level" of P3,000, equivalent to P60 per kilogram at millgate for raw sugar and P85 per kilo for the Metro Manila refined retail price.

"We have been pushing for P3,000 as I feel it is the fair market price and this has been echoed by the administration. (Such a price serves as) an incentive for farmers to plant more and be more sustainable," Mr. Azcona added.

He said that the regulator is planning to investigate the drop in prices in the province, the country's most important sugar growing area.

"Definitely we will not take this sitting down... none of the farmers want the low price," he added.

The SRA will focus its probe on sugar 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."

Mr. Azcona has said that the SRA expects the farmgate price of raw sugar to remain stable after the initial decline in February.

The SRA estimated raw sugar production at 1.85 million metric tons (MT) during the 2023 to 2024 crop year.

The area planted to sugar is expected to have risen by 3,000 hectares, which is expected to raise output by 50 thousand MT. — **Adrian H. Halili**





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Red tide up in Vis-Min areas

SHELLFISH are not supposed to be harvested and consumed at this time in parts of Visayas and Mindanao where the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) raised a red tide warning.

Areas found affected by paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) or toxic red tide are the coastal waters of Sapián Bay which covers Ivisan and Sapián in Capiz; Mambuquiao and Camanci in Batán, Aklan; and Panay Island, particularly in the coastal towns of Pilar and President Roxas, and Roxas City, all in Capiz.

Also testing positive of the toxin were shellfish from the coastal waters of Gigantes Islands in Carles Iloilo; Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; and Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur.

"All types of shellfish and *Acetes* sp. or *alamang* gathered from the areas are not safe for human consumption," announced the BFAR, noting that ingestion of affected shellfish may cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tingling sensation in the lips and extremities, numbness, and in severe cases, death. — **Adrian H. Halili**





## Red tide alert nakataas sa ilang coastal area

NAGBABALA ang Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) na nakataas pa rin ang red tide alert sa ilang coastal water sa Pilipinas.

Ang mga apektadong tubig sa baybayin ay sa Roxas City, Sapián Bay, President Roxas, Panay, Pilar pawang nasa Capiz; baybayin ng Gigantes Islands, Carles sa Iloilo; baybayin ng Davao; Tagbilaran sa Bohol at Dumaguete Bay sa Zamboanga del Sur.

Sa abiso ng BFAR noong Martes, ang lahat ng uri ng shellfish at acetes o alamang na nakolekta mula sa mga nasabing lugar ay hindi ligtas sa pagkonsumo ng tao.

Ayon sa BFAR, lahat ng uri ng shellfish at acetes sa mga lugar ay positibo para sa Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP), isang nakakalason na red tide na lampas sa kanilang limitasyon sa regulasyon. (Dolly Cabreza)





## Negros Occidental ASF cases contained

BACOLOD CITY – Citing zero hog deaths in the past several weeks, the provincial veterinary office (PVO) said African swine fever (ASF) in Negros Occidental has been contained.

Hog fatalities due to ASF and other swine diseases this year have reached

17,801, representing 9.96 percent of the total hog population in the province.

The hog industry in Negros Occidental incurred losses worth P200 million. At least 3,536 hog raisers in 153 barangays in 20 towns and cities were affected.

Provincial veterinarian Placeda Lemana said hog shipments from the province dropped to more than 3,000 in August due to swine diseases.

Lemana said pork products

from ASF-affected areas in Mindanao, which passed through Negros Occidental via Iloilo, were confiscated as the PVO intensified border control measures.

She allayed fears on the shortage of pork in Negros Occidental, with the demand expected to rise during the holiday season.

The average price of pork in Negros Occidental is currently at P280 per kilo.

– Gilbert Bayoran





## PCAFI, RISA: SUE CHINA FOR CORALS DAMAGE

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS  
@jearcalas

THE Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) urged the Marcos Jr. administration to pursue the filing of an environmental case against China over the destruction of coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea.

PCAFI President Danilo V. Fausto said they are "strongly encouraging" the government to file an environmental case against the people behind the destruction of the country's coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea.

In doing so, Fausto pointed out, the world would be aware of what is happening to the future food sources of the Filipinos.

"Nakakaiyak. Iyong sinira ang coral reefs, below the belt na iyon [That's so heart-breaking. Destroying the coral reefs, that's below the belt]," PCAFI President Danilo V. Fausto said during his group's forum on Wednesday.

"Iyong political, territorial, okayyon pag-awayan politically, diplomatically. Pero iyong corals eh bahay ng mga isda, hindi na

makatao iyan," he added.

(It is okay to dispute territories politically and diplomatically. But to destroy the corals, which house the fish, that's inhumane.)

Earlier this week, defense officials confirmed that coral reefs in Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal in the West Philippine Sea were destroyed by Chinese Maritime Militia. (Related story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/09/18/pcg-confirms-severe-reef-damage-in-2-wps-features/>)

Diovanie De Jesus of Oceana said it might take decades for coral reefs in the area to recover since they were totally destroyed.

De Jesus also noted that payment for damages may not be enough to cover the rehabilitation of the area but would still be better than zero.

"At least we can ask for something. We can use these payments for other projects like establishing marine protected areas in the West Philippine Sea and protect existing reefs other than these destroyed reefs," he said in a television interview on Wednesday.

CONTINUED ON A5

De Jesus pointed out that this is not the "only case" where the country's coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea were destroyed.

Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla earlier said the Department of Justice (DOJ) will recommend to Malacañang the filing of cases against China for the destruction of coral reefs and harvesting of corals in the West Philippine Sea. (Related story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/09/19/doj-to-recommend-filing-of-case-vs-china-over-destruction-of-maritime-environment-in-wps/>)

In 2019, the BUSINESSMIRROR reported that China's increasing demand for food will deplete marine resources in the West Philippine Sea and wreak havoc on the country's fish supply in the near future. (Related story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2019/07/04/china-fast-outstripping-phl-fish-catch-in-eez-maritime-experts-warn/>)

The loss is not just on account of China's rapid devouring of Philippine fish. Its massive reclamation and artificial island building has destroyed vital coral reefs that provide habitat to marine resources. According to estimates by marine experts, the

Philippines is losing at least \$647.5 million (P33.67 billion) annually from the marine resources—within the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ)—that were destroyed by China.

### Senate push

MEANWHILE, senators are stepping up a clamor for China to pay for environmental damages it caused in the West Philippine Sea.

Deputy Minority Leader Risa Hontiveros led the push after the Philippine Coast Guard recently confirmed that the destruction of coral reefs in Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal was most likely caused by Chinese maritime militia vessels.

The senator then filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 804, condemning the massive coral harvesting and urging the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry into the matter.

"We should seek payment for damages caused by China in the WPS. Aabot ng bilyon-bilyon ang makukuha natin kung mao-obligang magbayad ang Tsina. Ninanakawan na nga nila ng hanapbuhay ang ating mga mangingisda, winawasak pa

nila ang ating likas-yaman. Kung mabayaran ng Tsina ang lahat ng utang niya sa Pilipinas, siguradong makakatulong ito sa kinakaharap nating krisis sa ekonomiya. [We can get billions of compensation if China is obliged to pay up. They have not just deprived our people of livelihood; they have stolen our natural riches. If China is made to pay up all it owes the Philippines, that can help us deal with the economic crisis]," Hontiveros said.

In 2020, at the height of the pandemic, the senator filed PSR No. 369, calling on the Executive to exert legal and diplomatic efforts so that China would foot the bill for our Covid-19 response. This call came after Dr. Deo Onda, a scientist from the University of the Philippines' Marine Science Institute, estimated that the Philippines was losing around P33.1 billion annually from the damaged reef ecosystems in Panatag Shoal and Spratlys Islands due to China's reclamation activities in the area.

Onda then explained that the amount was determined using a baseline value of \$353,429 or P18 million per hectare per year for coral reefs based on a study conducted by Elsevier, a Dutch company

specializing in scientific, technical, and medical information and analytics.

"This will not be the first time for us to seek reparations. Japan paid our country for her destruction of Manila during World War II, and in more recent history, the United States of America also paid the Philippines P87 million, after the USS Guardian damaged Tubbataha Reef in the Sulu Sea. May karapatan tayong maningil [We have the right to demand payment]," Hontiveros explained.

The resolution also states that the government cannot tolerate the continuing harms to the environment, economy, and security brought about by China's incursions, and must explore available resources to hold China accountable, including a claim for damages to be filed with the Permanent of Court Arbitration.

"Our 2016 Arbitral Award clearly invalidated China's sweeping and expansive claims in the WPS. This is a case we won because of our dogged commitment to abide by international law and uphold the truth. It is only right that we pursue all options to make China pay," Hontiveros concluded.

With a report by Butch Fernandez



Date: 21 SEP 2023 Page: A12



LIBRARY

DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## 'Supply woes prevent PHL from hiking fruit exports to China'

By ANDREA E. SAN JUAN

[@andreasanjuan](#)

**M**ANILA and local producers should address "supply side issues" and "capacity constraints" to enable exporters of durian and calamansi juice to increase their market share in China, according to Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) officials.

Trade Undersecretary for the Industry Development Group (IDG) Ceferino S. Rodolfo also said 15 Philippine exhibitors who joined the recent China-Asean Expo (CAEXPO) in Nanning initially generated \$8.68 million in sales or some P495 million.

The Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, the export promotions arm of DTI, said fresh and processed (soft candies) durian products, banana chips, and calamansi juice, were the top sellers at the consumer fair.

Rodolfo said, however, that while almost all of the products offered by Philippine participants

during the fair were sold out, the participants face a number of constraints that prevent them from meeting the requirements of their buyers.

"The challenges really are on the supply side. There is a market and what is very interesting here is that the price points for this expo are much higher than the [levels seen] in the Philippines," he told reporters during a virtual media briefing last Tuesday night.

Rodolfo noted that the Philippine durian debuted at the expo and was warmly received by the Chinese who have tasted the fruit. The Chinese, he said, described the taste of the Philippine durian as "really sweet and creamy."

The Philippines started exporting durian to China in April, three months after President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signed an agreement for protocol with Beijing during his state visit in China last January.

Froilan Pamintuan, Trade and Industry Commercial Officer in Guangzhou, said that

when durian entered the China market, it gained a lot of potential buyers.

"Unfortunately, medyo limited parin 'yung capacity natin to serve some of the requirements. In fact, here in the southern part of China, we encountered some potential buyers who were seeking for possible services of durian pero hindi na sila ma-serve ng Philippine suppliers because of capacity constraints."

"That's why it's really a supply issue. But there is a tremendous potential for durian," Rodolfo added.

The DTI noted that the favorite Philippine fruits of the Chinese are bananas and durian.

Officials said imported bananas from the Philippines accounts for 90 percent of the market share in China.

With the Philippines's neighbors in Asia currently dominating the durian market in China, Rodolfo underscored the need for the Philippines to work on its supply-side issues so it can corner a bigger market share for its.

Calamansi juice is another product that was a hit among Chinese buyers. Rodolfo said a Filipino exhibitor who sold the said product at the expo told him that a buyer placed an order for 32 container vans of calamansi juice. The seller, however, could not commit to delivering the orders due to supply side issues.

"For example, we need to ensure that the calamansi is available all year round and that farmers should have their own processing facilities which will allow them to process calamansi," he said.

Pamintuan, for his part, said the Philippines is targeting to ship more frozen durian products to China.

"Right now the protocol that has been signed which provides market access for durian from the Philippines to China only involves fresh durian. The frozen products are not yet included. Maybe that's one intervention that we can probably get [implement] with the help of our colleagues from the Department of Agriculture."





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Pangasinan to open salt farms for tourists

**DASOL, Pangasinan:** This town's tourism office is now preparing a tour package, including a visit to a salt farm.

Guendolin Bustamante, head of this town's tourism and cultural office, said her office is now drafting a memorandum of agreement between the municipal government and the salt farm owners for their inclusion in the tour package.

"The salt farms here are privately owned," Bustamante said, adding that visitors cannot just barge into a salt farm without the owners' permission.

At present, salt farms located along the Pangasinan-Zambales highway are the most visited by curious motorists, who have been dropping by the farms to watch workers harvest salt and take pictures. Some even ask the salt farmers to allow them to hold the wooden rake to experience harvesting salt.

However, the salt farm tour may only take place during the salt production season in the dry months of November to May. Most salt farms are converted into fishponds during the rainy months.

"Every tourist who comes to Dasol



**DON'T GET SALTY** A tourist uses a rake to gather the newly produced salt toward the edge of a salt bed in Barangay Hermosa in Dasol, Pangasinan. The salt is collected in a bamboo basket and hauled into a store room. PHOTO BY GABRIEL CARDINOZA

should visit our salt farms. But at the same time, they should be able to take home the salt from our town," said Bustamante.

This town is Pangasinan's top salt producer.

In 2021, Dasol produced 24,000 metric tons (MT) of salt from its more than 10,000 banigan (salt beds) located in 13 of its 18 villages, according to the Office

of the Provincial Agriculturist data.

Its production in 2021 constituted 37.4 percent of the Pangasinan's total salt production of 64,156.36 MT.

Bustamante said that her town had been attracting celebrities because of the popular accommodation establishments in the town, like Sirom, which is Bali-inspired, and the high-end resort Dasol Beach Villas, which opened last year.

Both facilities are located at Tambobong Beach, about 20 kilometers from the highway.

"We are very happy that celebrities have been visiting our town, especially because they have been promoting our town by posting their photos on social media and inviting their friends to visit our town," said Bustamante.

The town, which faces the West Philippine Sea, also boasts of the Colibra and Crocodile islands, where tourists can collect seashells, enjoy the shallow water surrounding them, or watch the sunset.

"We are now also planning to open our caves to tourists," said Bustamante.

From Metro Manila, the town may be reached by bus from Pasay or Cubao traveling to Alaminos City. From Alaminos, one may take another bus going to Santa Cruz, Zambales, to take a jeepney bound for Dasol.

By car, the town may be reached by exiting at the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway Luisita exit and then driving to Dasol via Camiling and Alaminos City.

**GABRIEL CARDINOZA**





## Cooperatives as drivers of rural growth

### MOVING FORWARD

**WILLIAM D. DAR**



THE global agricultural landscape is currently undergoing many changes, from adoption of more sustainable or eco-friendly systems, to digitalization. And the country's agriculture sector must not be left behind.

One of the countries that has taken bold steps to level up its agriculture sector is India, with a member of the Indian government's public policy think tank agency NITI Aayog saying that the government will increase the number of cooperatives nationwide.

Specifically, NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand said that the Indian government will establish cooperatives in every village of the country where there is still no cooperative. The cooperatives will then be leveled up to engage in other activities besides producing farm and food products, and even export their products.

Chand said the move aims to help develop the rural economy and answer the Indian govern-

ment's call for "prosperity through cooperation," adding that his government's priority is to strengthen farmer organizations.

Another big development from India for its agriculture sector is the onboarding of 1,600 farmer producer organizations in the Open Network Digital Commerce (ONDC), which can accelerate the creation of more cooperatives in the countryside of India.

The ONDC is a big step to linking farmers directly to the market for their products through digital channels. And I am not surprised that India is forging ahead with this as that country is the leader globally in the information technology-business process management industry.

Chand called this development

a "game changer" as it will help improve the income of farmers and get them onto the path of digitalization.

NITI Aayog is also bent on changing the mindset of food producers that agriculture should be treated as a business. So, the think tank agency is also exploring ways to make farmers and cooperatives think like entrepreneurs which, in turn, will help attract more private sector investment into India's agriculture industry.

To attain that, NITI Aayog is creating a national database of cooperatives that will help the agency to identify gaps in their geographical distribution and get inputs for policymaking.

What the Indian government wants to happen is agricultural and rural cooperatives become financially viable business entities. Furthermore, NITI Aayog said a 15-percent corporate tax rate will apply to new cooperatives starting at the end of March next year that will engage in manufacturing activities.

### The Philippine setting

The Philippines can definitely learn lessons from India's latest initiatives to level up its cooperative sector, especially now that the Philippines is facing a possible rice supply shortage crisis, and our agriculture sector as a whole is feeling the shocks from climate change and globalization.

And among the best ways to deal with those challenges is creating a robust agribusiness ecosystem like what I have discussed in one of my past columns ("Creating a robust agribusiness ecosystem" published on August 24). One of the objectives of establishing a robust agribusiness ecosystem is to consolidate or cluster fragmented land holdings into larger, more cohesive units to attain economies of scale and enable better management of resources, including soil and water resources.

Clustering can also be carried out at varying scales, from 15 hectares that can be run by small and medium business enterprises,

including cooperatives, and to 1,000 or more hectares for corporate farming initiatives. The latter can be done with a corporation owning and operating its own large plantation or a firm partnering with clustered farmers. I prefer the latter as it is a more inclusive model.

Larger consolidated farms can also stimulate other economic activities like provision of transportation services. And those who used to be smallholder farmers will have better incomes and will spend more for themselves and their families, stimulating local economic growth.

Taking it one step further, consolidated and clustered farmlands will facilitate the creation of cooperatives that can aspire to go into value-adding, creating more jobs in the countryside. The private sector partner of the clustered farmers can also assist or spearhead the creation of cooperatives of their farmer-partners, which will make it easier for private companies to transfer technology and know-how

to farmers.

And once a cooperative's business activities expands and go beyond the production of crops, they will need to tap the services of other cooperatives engaged in extending credit, providing logistical and storage services, among many others.

So, the dream that there will arise more "billionaire cooperatives" in the countryside should not be a dream at all, because this is very possible. I even have come across or heard of such billionaire cooperatives thriving and becoming one of the anchors of growth in the Philippine countryside. You could easily mistake these cooperatives as corporations as they are managed efficiently like a typical corporation, or even better.

But if the government takes similar steps to what the India government is doing to boost the cooperative sector, especially onboarding cooperatives on digital trading platforms, I am certain the number of billionaire cooperatives will increase in the next few years.





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## CSU taps Indonesian university

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

**T**HE Cagayan State University (CSU) has forged a partnership with the Mahasaraswati University of Denpasar (Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar Indonesia) for exchange programs and agribusiness initiatives.

Through CSU President Urdu-jah Alvarado, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was sealed on September 18, with

the Mahasaraswati University of Denpasar led by Rector I Made Sukamerta.

During the virtual MoU cer-

emony, Alvarado said she looks forward to international exchange opportunities with Mahasaraswati University of Denpasar.

"With Indonesia being one of the Philippines' closest neighbors, I am sure that there will be a lot of interesting topics and cultural experiences to learn from one another that can improve cross-cultural understanding," she said.

Alvarado said the new partnership will dwell on faculty and student exchange across the areas

of teacher training, education, and agriculture and agribusiness activities including crop and livestock, food processing and innovation focusing on CSU's efforts on high-value crops like coffee, citronella and lemon grass.

She said the partnership will also include activities in the field of research and access to publications, joint seminar workshops, trainings and other academic activities.

The virtual event was wit-

nessed by CSU Vice President for Academic Affairs Mariden Cauilan; Vice President for Administration and Finance Gigged Battung; Vice President for Partnership and Resource Mobilization Teresa Dimalanta; Vice President for Research, Development and Extension Junel Guzman; and different CSU campus executive officers and domestic and international partnership coordinators.

Founded in 1982, the Ma-

hasaraswati University of Denpasar is a private higher education institution located in the large city of Denpasar, Bali, and a medium-sized coeducational Indonesian higher education institution.

This 41-year-old Indonesian higher educational institution offers courses and programs leading to officially recognized higher education degrees in several areas of study. It has a selective admission policy based on entrance examinations.





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## ASU hosts international agri-ecotourism congress

ANCHORED on the theme "Revitalizing agro-industrial connectivity toward sustainable ecology and resilient GloCal Village," the 2nd International Agri-ecotourism Congress from September 11 to 12 was hosted by the Aklan State University (ASU) in Boracay, Malay, Aklan.

Held at the Paradise Garden in Boracay, the event aimed to serve as a platform for the dissemination of research results and for sharing knowledge, experiences and culture in establishing agri-ecotourism technologies and innovations to sustain and mainstream the agri-ecotourism industry to a diverse set of audience.

The event was attended by students, faculty researchers, scientists, research specialists, agricultural service providers, private sectors engaged in the agri-ecotourism industry, local government units and other stakeholders in agri-ecotourism from France, Indonesia and the Philippines.



■ Photo shows participants of the 2nd International Agri-ecotourism Congress hosted by the Aklan State University in Boracay, Malay, Aklan. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



# The Manila Times®

Date: SEPT. 21, 2023 Page: 134



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Joining the event was the Philippine government-hosted Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) headed by Director Glenn Gregorio.

Gregorio said the agency, through Nova Ramos, Searca's Training for Development Unit head under the Education and Collective Learning Department, presented agri-ecotourism as a pillar of rural development.

Gregorio said Ramos shared the center's capacity-building initiatives on agri-ecotourism, including its support for agri-innovators, that catered to legislators, educators, practitioners and other stakeholders across the Southeast Asian region and beyond.

Ramos also highlighted the socio-cultural, economic and environmental benefits of agri-ecotourism and its potential as a pathway for inclusive and sustainable rural development.

Aklan Gov. Jose Enrique Miraflores in his message delivered by a representative underscored the importance of tourism in their province, its annual growth and the challenges that it brings.

In his message, Miraflores stressed the need to gear tourism toward benefiting everyone, whether from a social, economic or environmental point of view saying, "This is the significance of agri-ecotourism, as it

aims to guide tourism development with respect for local communities, all in harmony with the environment."

## The education factor

Lily Freida Macabangun-Milla, Commission on Higher Education (CHED) International Affairs Staff director, said CHED supports education and lifelong learning in tourism.

"This project was intended to make the university the destination itself as it leverages on the trifold function of the university that is instruction, research and extension as it globalizes the higher education institutions (HEIs) by taking advantage of global developments," Macabangun-Milla said.

Tourism education comes into play in terms of the progress in the sector in areas that are not the usual tourist destinations but could offer more in terms of agri-ecotourism, she added.

In building the international competitiveness of higher education institutions, Macabangun-Milla said, "CHED endeavors to uphold international commitments and support HEIs like ASU in promoting to build knowledge-based society and ensure that we have responsible global citizens for the world and of the world."

As keynote speaker, Sen. Lorna Regina "Loren" Legarda also said that "future agro-industrial connectivity is not just a concept, but a part of the

future where our actions align with the principles of sustainability and resilience in agriculture and industry."

In her video message, Legarda urged both industrial and agricultural stakeholders to forge links to move forward together toward sustainable tourism saying that education is vital in developing responsible tourism that benefits all stakeholders.

She also noted that education and awareness-raising help highlight the beauty, diversity and cultural importance of agricultural activities while offering educational and recreational experiences.

"One person can stimulate rural development, support farmers and local communities, and create sustainable and authentic tourism experiences, thereby promoting environmental conservation, raising awareness of sustainable agriculture, as well as offering a promising avenue for economic development, environmental preservation and cultural exchange," Legarda added.

## Views outside of PH

Also during the event, Etriya Etriya, a lecturer from the Department of Agribusiness, Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) in Indonesia, presented a more concrete definition of agri-ecotourism.

She said agri-ecotourism is a hybrid

form of agritourism where activities are based directly on agriculture and ecotourism, and this requires responsible travel to natural areas to preserve the environment.

"Agri-ecotourism allows tourists to contribute to small communities through their purchasing decisions; in turn, they have a chance to learn more about the history and environmental activities of the region," Etriya added.

The Asean Center for Biodiversity presentation through Arvin Diesmos, Biodiversity Information Management Unit director, emphasized the importance of nature-based solutions to conserve and protect natural resources for the benefit of the agri-ecotourism industry.

The international event also featured breakout sessions, with the participants divided into two groups to cover all the research carried out on agri-ecotourism, namely the Natural/Biological Science and Development category and the Social Science category.

Also included in the presentations were research on biosolids from the wastewater treatment plant, mangrove tea, kabuteng saging production and cultivation, exploration of local historical and cultural sites, business risks and resilience practices of Guimarães' coastal resorts, the contribution of the weaving industry on local weavers and engaging youth in agri-ecotourism, among others.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Lawmaker calls for relaxation of biofuel requirement to ease oil prices

THE GOVERNMENT should provide P5.19 billion in fuel subsidies to the transport, farm and fisheries sectors in the next three months to avert runaway inflation that could hit 6.2% this year amid spiraling global crude prices, the chairman of the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee said.

In a memo to House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Albay Rep. Jose Ma. Clemente S. Salceda also proposed the reduction of the biofuel requirement for gasoline to 5% to reduce prices by as much as P1.03 a liter.

To address the spike in pump prices, he said the government should implement fuel discounts for the transport, farm and fisheries sectors to prevent second-round effects.

"An increase in fuel prices, however, would have second-round effects on inflation. Historically, a P10 increase in fuel prices results in a one-percentage-point increase in overall consumer price index (CPI)," he added.

Inflation quickened for the first time in seven months to 5.3% in August, due to rising fuel and food costs.

If fuel and rice prices continue to increase, Mr. Salceda noted inflation could average 6.2% this year. This would be higher than the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' 5.6% full-year projection.

Mr. Salceda estimated that P907 million would be needed to provide fuel discounts for 180,000 jeepneys or P5,040 per driver until the end of the year. He also proposed giving a subsidy of P2,800 per hectare for farmers, which would require a P3.36-billion budget; and a subsidy of P420 for a fisherman, which would need a P924-million budget.

*Biofuel, S1/9*

### Biofuel, from S1/1

Mr. Salceda, who is also chair of the Ways and Means Committee, said the funds for the fuel subsidies could come from value-added tax (VAT) collection from diesel and gasoline, which are projected to be at least P9.3 billion higher than its target.

The Commission on Elections also said it would exempt the distribution of fuel subsidy from the spending ban currently in place for the village and youth council election, Chairman George Erwin M. Garcia told reporters.

At the same time, Mr. Salceda suggested that the National Biofuels Board lower domestic bioethanol additive requirement to 5% from the current 10% under the Biofuels Law.

"The additive makes pump price more expensive because current domestic bioethanol is P84.11 per liter, above the gasoline pump price. Relaxing the requirement could also increase mileage, as bioethanol contains 30% less energy than pure gasoline. The reduction will result in an outright reduction of per liter price by P1.03, and total savings (due to mileage) of P3.05 per liter," he said.

The lawmaker also proposed a flexible excise tax regime for fuel products.

"Automatic reduction of excise tax by P3 when the 3-month average Means of Platts Singapore (MOPS) index of prices exceeds \$80 and increases the excise tax by P2 when the same is lower than \$45," Mr. Salceda said.

House leaders have proposed the temporary suspension of fuel taxes to address rising pump prices.

However, Mr. Salceda said that suspending fuel excise taxes can only be done if Congress amends the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion law.

Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno on Tuesday warned that the government may lose up to P37 billion in revenues in the fourth quarter if it suspended collection of VAT and excise tax on petroleum products.

"Removing — or even simply suspending — taxes invariably raises disposable income. Cutting taxes puts more money in everyone's pocket, enabling them to buy more goods and services, ultimately stimulating the economy," Terry L. Ridon, convenor of think tank InfraWatch PH, said in a statement. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**





## **‘Walang taas-presyo ng isda sa bansa’**

Maraming isda sa Pilipinas kaya’t walang anumang magaganap na pagtataas sa presyo ng mga isda sa bansa.

Ito ang binigyang diin sa isang media forum sa Quezon City ni Danilo Fausto, pangulo ng Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc.

Ayon kay Fausto, hindi nababago ang presyo ng

iba’t ibang uri ng isda sa bansa dahil walang kakulangan sa demand dito ng mamamayan.

Kaugnay nito, sinabi ni Fausto na pabor din ang private sector sa close season dahil sa mga strategic areas lamang ito naisasagawa. Aniya, sa isang kilometrong karagatan ay may 250 toneladang isda ang napo-produce sa

isang taon.

Samantala, hinikayat nito ang pamahalaan na magsampa ng environmental case laban sa China dahil sa pagwasak sa coral reef sa West Philippine Sea. Aniya, pag-aari ito ng Pilipinas kaya’t walang karapatan ang China na wasakin ang bahay ng mga isda.

-Angie dela Cruz-





## Supply constraints limit PH fruit exports to China

THE potential for Philippine fruit exporters in China remains high amid the huge demand from the world's largest market but supply constraints limit the country to maximize the opportunities.

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) officials told reporters in a virtual briefing on Tuesday evening that the 20th China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning, China held from Sept. 16 to 20 reaffirmed the big opportunities for Philippine products, especially durian.

Philippine Trade and Investment Center in Guangzhou Commercial Consul Froilan Emil Pamintuan said since the first shipment of fresh Philippine durian to China last April, potential Chinese buyers have started to look into sourcing the fruit from the Philippines.

"In fact, here in the southern part of China, we encountered potential buyers who were seeking possible sources of durian but the Philippine suppliers can no longer serve them because of the capacity concern," Pamintuan said.

Trade Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo said stakeholders have to work on addressing the low productivity of local fruit farmers for them to tap the demand from overseas markets.

"It's really a supply issue, but there is really a tremendous potential for durian," he said. "We really have to work to get a good market share of the China durian market."

Biggest fruit imports of China are bananas and durian, with the former leading in terms of volume and the latter in terms of value.

The Philippines is the top source of bananas for China while Thailand and Vietnam lead China's durian market. "Our target is to be able to have the same dominance in the durian market, which we are currently enjoying in the banana market," Rodolfo said.

From January to June 2023, Philippine durian exports to China were valued at USD1.88 million compared to Thailand's exports of USD3 billion and Vietnam's USD828 million.

During the meeting between President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and Chinese President Xi Jinping last January, Manila and Beijing signed a protocol of phytosanitary requirements for the exports of fresh durian from the Philippines to China.

This agreement has allowed fresh durian from the Philippines to have the same market access as durians from Thailand and Vietnam.

Fifteen exhibitors from the Philippines participated in this year's CAEX-

PO, generating sales of at least USD8 million.

The participating exhibitors brought fresh durian and durian candies, banana chips, calamansi juice, liniment, and jewelry, among others to the Philippine booth of the trade exhibition.

Rodolfo said that in 2019, there were 51 exhibitors from the Philippines generating sales of around USD12.8 million.

He added that despite the lower number of Philippine exhibitors this year, generated sales remained high because of the value of fresh durian in China.

The trade official also mentioned that a calamansi juice exhibitor at the Philippine pavilion was not able to supply the whole demand of a Chinese buyer, requiring 32 20-foot container vans. The Filipino seller was only able to commit 25 container vans because of its limited supply capacity.

"On the economic, trade, and investment side, the fundamentals of each other's position in terms of global value chains, in terms of complementation of our comparative advantages is very strong, which leads to the strong interest in terms of investments and trade. We intend to maximize fully all of these opportunities," Rodolfo said. PNA





## Wheat rebounds, corn slips

SINGAPORE- Chicago wheat rose on Wednesday, recouping some of this week's losses as uncertainty over supplies from Ukraine and expectations of lower output in key exporting countries supported prices.

Corn lost ground, while soybeans inched higher with both markets likely to remain under pressure from advancing harvest in the US

"There is likely to be further wheat production downgrade in Australia and Canada," a Sydney-

based analyst said. "Supplies could tighten towards the end of the year."

Most-active Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) wheat contract added 0.8 percent at \$5.88-1/2 a bushel, after falling 3.4 percent over the previous two sessions.

CBOT corn slipped 0.3 percent to \$4.74-3/4 a bushel after rising 1 percent on Tuesday and soybeans rose 0.1 percent to \$13.16-1/2 a bushel. - **Reuters**



Date: 21 SEP 2023 Page: A12



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Big emissions bills are coming for ships sailing in Europe

**S**HIPS carrying everything from consumer goods to food and fuel in and out of the European Union will soon face hefty emissions bills.

The maritime industry will join the bloc's Emissions Trading System in January, meaning big ships will start paying for carbon emissions. Some major freight firms—such as MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company SA and A.P. Moller-Maersk A/S—could see costs run into hundreds of millions of dollars, according to BloombergNEF.

Vessels carry more than 80 percent of world trade and are a big source of emissions, pumping about 1 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere in 2018. The incoming system is the world's first large-scale carbon charge for international shipping, and part of the bloc's green push to tackle climate change. Yet though sizable, the fees are unlikely to be high enough to force an immediate shift to cleaner marine fuels.

"The EU ETS will increase the freight rates," said Tore Longva, decarbonization director at ship classification society DNV. But vessel supply and demand is likely to have a bigger impact on shipping rates, he said.

For a single container ship sailing between Europe and Asia, the emissions cost could total about €810,000 (\$864,500) next year, assuming a carbon market price of €90 a ton, according to DNV. Firms will have to cover a greater share of emissions in the following two years, meaning costs should go even higher.

### An example of how it will work:

■ A vessel carrying 5,000 standard-sized containers between the EU and Asia over a year generates about 40,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. But because the journeys stretch outside Europe, only half the emissions need to be covered.

■ That means incurring a cost for 20,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, plus an extra 2,500 tons while the ship is in European ports.

■ In the first year, 40 percent of the qualifying emissions are chargeable, so that ship would face costs for 9,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.

■ Assuming a carbon price of €90 a ton, that's €810,000.

■ That would rise to €1.4 million in 2025 when 70 percent of emissions must be covered and €2 million in 2026 when all emissions are chargeable (assuming a €90 carbon price).

■ The regulation covers ships of 5,000 gross tonnage and above and applies to vessels going into—and out of—EU and European Economic Area ports.

It could take a while for the program to really cut emissions, though. At a carbon price of about €90, it would still be cheaper to use polluting oil-based fuels and pay for the emissions rather than use more expensive marine bio-fuels, Longva said.

And while the additional costs are notable, shippers have seen big swings in fuel prices in recent years that far outstripped the looming carbon charges.

For example a carbon price of €90 would equal a charge of less than €300 for every ton burned of oil-based fuel. Yet the cost of very low-sulfur fuel oil in Rotterdam—a common propellant—jumped by about \$850 a ton in less than two years through early 2022.

### Stricter rules

STILL, the emissions system will encourage shippers to be more fuel efficient. And as the number of allowances available to buy to cover emissions falls, that should push up carbon prices and make the system more effective. Emissions of methane and nitrous oxide from shipping will also be included in years to come.

The EU also has a separate regulation coming into force in 2025 called the FuelEU Maritime, which should also drive shippers toward cleaner fuels. It sets maximum limits on the annual greenhouse gas intensity of the energy used by vessels, with the targets getting tougher as time passes.

Bloomberg News





Date: 21 SEP 2023

Page: 112

## 'Multiple shocks keep pushing world further away from SDGs'

**H**ALFWAY into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a lot of the progress made towards its food and agriculture-related targets has stagnated or reversed, according to a new report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The report, titled *Tracking progress on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators 2023*, was published last Friday, days before world leaders gathered in New York to attend the UN's SDG Summit to review the state of the Agenda's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"At the SDG summit, there will be enormous expectations for concrete commitments to be made for reversing the SDGs' current predicament with tangible actions and results. To do so, leaders around the world need data that can guide their decisions and help them make priorities," José Rosero Moncayo, Director of FAO's Statistics Division, said at the report's launch.

The main conclusions of the report are that while the world was already off track from meeting the SDGs even prior to 2020, the past few years have seen multiple shocks that have further stalled or even reversed progress across several targets. These include the lingering effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of armed conflicts around the world, high inflation, along with the escalating effects of the climate crisis.

The food and agriculture-related SDG indicators, of which FAO is among the UN agencies' main custodian, are in a particularly critical state. The proportion of the world population facing chronic hunger in 2022 was about 9.2 percent, compared to 7.9 percent in 2015. The latest FAO estimates put the global hunger figure for 2022 between 691 million and 783 million people.

"Investment in agriculture has stalled, there is no progress in conserving animal genetic resources, and forest area across the globe continues to shrink."

FAO said the few positive trends are in the area of conservation of plant genetic resources, water use efficiency, and the adoption of instruments to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The report focuses on selected indicators across eight of the SDG Goals that were adopted at a UN Summit in New York in 2015 (1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14 and 15).

### Among the highlights of the report are:

- The prevalence of undernourishment in the world is still far above pre-Covid-19 pandemic levels. Similarly, food insecurity

has increased significantly, from 25.3 percent of the global population in 2019 to 29.6 percent in 2022.

- SDG indicators focused on malnutrition present a mixed picture. Although stunting has declined, from 26.3 percent in 2012 to 22.3 percent in 2022, the rate of reduction is not nearly close enough to meet the global target. In 2022, 6.8 percent of children under 5 years of age were affected by wasting, while the prevalence of overweight children, measured at 5.6 percent, has stagnated in the past decade.

- In 2021, the share of countries facing moderately to abnormally high food prices was 21.5 percent, down from the record high of 48 percent in 2020. However, this figure is still above the 2015–2019 average (15.2 percent), reflecting continued increases in food prices, mainly supported by elevated production and transport costs on account of costlier fertilizers and energy.

- Agricultural losses directly attributed to natural disasters, which are increasing both in frequency and intensity, amounted to \$19.3 billion in 2021, based on data from 22 countries. The percentage of food lost after harvesting on farms and at transport, storage, wholesale and processing levels is estimated at 13.2 percent globally in 2021, compared to 13 percent in 2016.

- In one-third of the assessed countries, fewer than 50 percent of women and men involved in agricultural production have ownership and/or secure tenure rights over the agricultural land. Among landowners, the share of men having ownership is at least twice that of women in almost half of the countries.

"The vision of a world with zero hunger and malnutrition and sustainable agriculture is still within reach, and the distance to be covered is not insurmountable," FAO said.

"However, to achieve the food and agriculture-related SDG targets, urgent coordinated actions and policy solutions are imperative to address entrenched inequalities, transform agri-food systems, invest in sustainable agricultural practices, and bolster resilience against shocks."

The UN agency said improving data capabilities plays a key role in ensuring progress. Despite extensive efforts towards building stronger data and statistical systems for SDG monitoring, significant data gaps still exist.

"There is the need to speed up investments in data generation, in particular in less developed countries, to be able to guide transformative change."