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Meat substitutes to boost food security

THE Marcos administration may want to consider cultivating the plant-based meat substitute industry as part of its broader food security strategy, according to an agricultural economist in the academe.

In an interview on Friday, Roberto Galang, dean at Ateneo de Manila's John Gokongwei's School of Management, also said meat production inherently generates a large carbon footprint.

He was reacting to a plan of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to increase domestic meat production by about 500 percent before the current administration's term ends.

Galang explained that aside from the waste directly produced by poultries and piggeries, there is also the waste

generated by the growing of feeds that sustain the animal population during their life cycle.

"Should we even try to produce more local chickens and pigs... or should we move toward more production of plant-based products? Piggeries and chicken farms cause pollution," he said.

Another matter that should be considered, Galang pointed out, is that many local government units do not want to host piggeries and poultries, especially those that produce on industrial scale because of the smell and waste they emit.

"The DA still has to figure out where we can build these livestock farms so that the farmers and entrepreneurs

know where to go [to build their farms]," the dean added.

This was confirmed by Gregorio San Diego, chairman of the United Broiler Raisers Association and president of the Philippine Egg Board, who told the Philippine News Agency (PNA) that poultries in San Mateo and Montalban (Rodriguez), Rizal, have been forced by municipal authorities to relocate elsewhere in the province.

"We moved further away, in towns like Baras, Pililla and Tanay, but now these areas are being groomed for tourism... we (poultry farms) may have to move even further away. That's additional transportation cost for us," San Diego said in Filipino.

Meanwhile, Galang said that most of the corn produced in the Philippines today is used as chicken feed.

He argued that if more plant-based meat alternatives are consumed locally, the lands used for growing animal feeds will be freed up for farming food that is directly consumed by people.

Galang said that many large corporations, such as San Miguel, Century Foods and Monde Nissin, have already established plant-based food subsidiaries.

"Should we not find more of that type of product and convince more consumers to eat more vegetables? It would actually improve food security if we promoted more veganism or vegetarianism," he added.

PNA



CLAMPDOWN

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. urged the Filipino people to join the fight against rice hoarding and smuggling as he ordered four rice firms prosecuted for smuggling.

In his speech during the rice distribution at the Augusto Legaspi Memorial Sports and Cultural Center in Kalibo, Aklan, President Marcos said the government needs the help of the Filipino people to safeguard the country's staple food against erring individuals.

"Nais ko na rin pong gamitin ang pagkakataon ng ito upang [hikayatin] kayo namakiusap sa pagbabantay laban sa smuggling at sa hoarding at mga sindikatong patuloy na namamayagpag sa pagsasamantala sa taumbayan," President Marcos said.

"Tulongan po ninyo ang ating mga ahensya sa

pagmamatayag upang mahuli at mapatawan ng angkop na parusa ang mga sumasabotahe sa sektor ng agrikultura at sa ating ekonomiya," the President added.

President Marcos ordered the filing of cases against San Pedro Warehouse and Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corporation, F.S. Ostia Rice Mill, and Gold Rice Mill for violating the provisions of Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, Rice Tariffication Law, and Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016, or Republic Act No. 10845.

The chief executive said all seized smuggled rice were distributed to Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) after importers failed to defend

the legality of their importation.

"Sa Bagong Pilipinas na ating binubuo, hindi po tayotitigil hanggang [hindi] nabubuwag ang lahat ng mga sindikatong ito—athanggang hindi

maibalik sa normal [at] mababang presyong ating mga bilingin," President Marcos said.

"Bilang pang-wakas, sa ating pagdadamayang ito, tiyak na magtatagumpay tayo sa pagkamtan ng Masagana, panatag, at matatag na buhay para sa lahat ng mga Pilipino. Walanang gutom, walang maghihikahos, at walang ring maliwanag na bukas," he added.

Kalibo, Aklan is already the 11th location where President Marcos led the rice distribution to 4Ps beneficiaries in the country.

President Marcos distributed rice to 4Ps beneficiaries in Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay, and Bgy. San Roque, Zamboanga City on September 19; Bgy. Santiago, General Trias, Cavite on Sept. 22; Iriga City, Camarines Sur on Sept. 23; and San Andres Sports Complex, San Andres Manila on Sept. 26.

The chief executive also distributed sacks of rice at the Dapa Municipal Gymnasium, Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte and Provincial Capitol, San Jose, Dinagat Islands on Sept. 29; and Taguig City University Gymnasium, Gen. Santos Avenue, Lower Bicutan, Taguig on Oct. 4.

President Marcos also led the rice distribution in Roxas City, Capiz, and in Antique.

PCO



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DA: Enough rice till early next year

AN official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Friday assured that the country has enough supply of rice until early next year.

Speaking at the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon briefing, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the rice harvest season in the country has already started.

"The good thing is our farmers continue to harvest and we expect this October to harvest the most during the wet season; and because of this, our national inventory stocks can hit up to 77 days this month of October," de Mesa said.

"And in the month of November at the end of the harvest for the wet season, we expect it to last 94 days; and imports are not included yet, so we can expect that our national inventory of rice is good and sufficient," he added.

De Mesa also noted that they are not expecting any spike in the prices of rice.

He added that the country's rice supply would be augmented with the arrival of imports in September.

"It hit over 271,000 metric tons and historically there are still a lot of imports coming in during the last quarter part of the

year," he added.

Meanwhile, de Mesa said President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has approved the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance program with a budget of PHP12.7 billion.

The beneficiaries are farmers who are tilling two hectares of land and below and will receive PHP5,000.

"In addition, free seeds have already been distributed - high-yielding varieties both inbred and hybrid, fertilizers, machinery to ensure that our farmers are ready for the dry season beginning October/November throughout the country," de Mesa said.

PNA



PBBM, DSWD chief lead rice, cash aid distribution

By Jester Manalastas

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian, personally handed out the rice assistance and livelihood grants to the program beneficiaries at the Capiz Gymnasium in Roxas City.

In his speech, Marcos emphasized the government's efforts to improve the lives of Filipino people during his visit to the Province of Capiz on Friday (October 6).

"Umpisapalamangpoitong mga hakbangin ng gobyerno namapaunlad ang buhay ng mga Pilipino mula sa pagpapalakas ng agrikultura ng bansa at pagpapalawig ng mga benepisyonong handog ng iba pang mga sektor," President Marcos said.

Some 1,000 beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), 679 of whom were also affected by the red tide incident in the province, each received a 25-kilo sack of premium rice.

The distributed rice is still part of the more than 42,000



PRESIDENT Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr., together with Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian, leads the distribution of premium quality rice to beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) at the Capiz Gymnasium in Roxas City on Friday. The rice is part of the more than 42,000 bags of Jasmine rice seized by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) in Zamboanga City last May, which were later donated to the DSWD. Photo by ALFRED FRIAS/PNA

sacks of rice seized by the Bureau of Customs (BOC), which was later donated to the DSWD for distribution to the 'poorest of the poor'.

Aside from the rice assistance, President Marcos and Secretary Gatchalian distributed more than Php1.7 million in

seed capital funds to six Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) Associations in the province of Capiz.

These SLPAs, composed of 122 members, are engaged in catfish production, balut production, retailing, community enterprise, and abaca trading.

The President also led the turnover of various government assistance from the Department of Agriculture (DA) and its line agencies, including the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC) and the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI).



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PCA, DILG sign MOU on coconut production

IN line with the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to develop a resilient and more robust coconut industry, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to foster collaboration in the communities to help increase coconut production in the country.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Benhur Abalos and PCA Administrator Bernie Cruz led the signing of the MOU which seeks to drum up support and cooperation for the PCA's Massive Coconut Planting and Replanting Project 2023-2028.

"With 69 out of 82 provinces in the country producing coconut, I am confident that the DILG, in the exercise of its mandate of general supervision over local government units, is in a very pivotal position to help the PCA in its endeavor," Abalos said.

The PCA seeks to plant 20 to 25 million trees annually from

2023 to 2028 or 100 million trees and develop strategies in post-harvest, processing, and marketing interventions under the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan.

Abalos highlighted the importance of the coconut industry in the agriculture sector, noting that coconut exports contribute an annual average of 35% to the Philippines' total agricultural exports.

He added that the agreement is in line with the call of President Marcos to employ a whole-of-nation approach in addressing the societal challenges that confront the country.

Under the MOU, the DILG is tasked to promote community involvement in assisting and endorsing PCA in the conduct of information dissemination among farmers; ensure participation of barangays in PCA's programs, projects, and activities; and assist in the conduct of training and capacity development activities at the barangay level.

Jun I. Legaspi



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Shellfish Bulletin No. 23
Series of 2023
06 October 2023

Shellfishes collected and tested from Sapijan Bay (Ivisan and Sapijan 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 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 Altavas, Batan, and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aklan; coastal waters of E.B. Magalona, Talisay City, Silay City, Bacolod City, Hinigaran, and Victorias City in Negros Occidental; Tambobo, and Siit Bays, Siaton; and Bais Bay, Bais City in Negros Oriental; coastal waters of Daram, and Zumarraga, Cambatutay, Maqueda, San Pedro and Villareal Bays in Samar; coastal waters of Guiuan in Eastern Samar; coastal waters of Leyte, Calubian, Ormoc, Sogod, Carigara Bay, and 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 Baliangao) in Misamis Occidental; Panguil Bay, Tangub City, and coastal waters of Ozamiz City in Misamis Occidental; coastal waters of Baroy in Lanao del Norte; Taguines Lagoon, Benoni, Mahinog in Camiguin; Balite, and Pujada Bays, Mati City in Davao Oriental; Malalag Bay in Davao Occidental and Davao del Sur; coastal waters of Nasipit in Agusan del Norte; Litalit Bay in Surigao del Norte; and coastal waters of Hinatuan, Cortes, Lianga, and Bislig Bays in Surigao del Sur.

ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO
Director

(PDI- Oct. 8, 2023)

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Shelfish Bulletin No. 23
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Do not harvest
Do not sell
Do not buy
Do not eat

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ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO
Director

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UPLB to boost Bio N fertilizer production

The University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) plans to scale up the production of Bio N fertilizer, a microbial-based fertilizer, to help address the persisting supply and cost issues of inorganic fertilizers.

UPLB-National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (BIOTECH) director Fides Marciana Tambalo is seeking government support to expand the production of Bio N fertilizer, a technology which it developed, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Increasing Bio N fertilizer's production could significantly aid the agricultural sector in addressing shortages and soaring prices of fertilizers.

The DA, under its national corn program, had previously funded the establishment of 17 Bio N mixing plants across the country.

Developed 40 years ago, Bio N is a microbial based fertilizer made of microorganisms (bacteria) isolated from the roots of talahib (*Saccharum spontaneum*) which can convert nitrogen from the air into ammonium nitrogen in the soil.

Available in 200 gram sachets, this fertilizer can boost crop yields for rice, corn, and vegetables while preserving soil health.

Additionally, it promotes plant health and makes plants green, even in drought conditions and in the presence of pests, reducing the incidence of rice tungro and corn earworm infestations.

The UPLB-BIOTECH earlier said microbial fertilizer enhances shoot growth and root development and can replace 30 to 50 percent of total chemical nitrogen requirement of crops.

It said five to six sachets of Bio-N – priced at P100 per sachet – can replace two 50-kilo bags of urea per hectare planted to rice.

Currently, urea fertilizer retails at an average of P1,780.90 per bag as of the third week of September, data from the Fer-

tilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) showed.

While this is lower compared to the P2,582.33 per bag average a year earlier, this remains higher than pre-pandemic levels and prior the war between Russia and Ukraine – two of the world's major sources of fertilizer.

FPA data showed urea fertilizer retailed at an average of P1,523.14 per bag in 2021, P1,041.35 per bag in 2020, P1,045.65 per bag in 2019, and P894.59 per bag in 2018.

The request for support was discussed in a recent courtesy meeting with DA senior undersecretary Domingo Panganiban.

The meeting aimed to further strengthen the partnership between DA and UPLB-BIOTECH, as well as explore possible collaboration with the goal of enhancing the research endeavors of the institute.

During the meeting, Tambalo also discussed current products and projects of the institution and also appealed for assistance from the department for the establishment of a specialized research facility focused on agriculture.

The National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (BIOTECH) is recognized as the first premier national institute on molecular biology and biotechnology within the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

It operates as the research and development unit of UP Los Baños, collaborating with various departments and disciplines in engineering, chemistry and applied microbiology to conduct research, training and extension in biotechnology.

Apart from Bio N fertilizer, the UPLB-BIOTECH also pioneered several notable technologies, including Fermented Plant Juice, K-SolB, Maizinc, BioPlasma, Oryzinc, NitroLink, BioSol, PhosphoLink, Micro Mix, NitroPlus, Bio-organic Fertilizers (BOF), BioGroe, Brown Magic, Mycogroe, MykoPlus, MYKOVAM, Nutrio, VAM Root Inoculant (VAMRI), and ACTiCon. – Danessa Rivera



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Phl urged to invest in agri-fishery R4DE

By DANESSA RIVERA

The country needs to invest more in research for development and extension (R4DE) to unlock the potential of the agriculture and fisheries sector, according to the **Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR)**.

BAR director Junel Soriano said the country needs to take "a bold and innovative approach" to R4DE in the agriculture and fisheries sector, which is the nation's lifeblood.

"It is high time we embrace adaptive strategies and innovative solutions to overcome the challenges faced by our farmers and fisherfolk," he said.

As the agriculture sector's productivity and sustainability slowed due to the use of outdated technologies, the BAR official stressed the importance of prioritizing the development of appropriate technologies tailored to specific, unique circumstances.

"By investing in research and development, we can create tools, equipment, and techniques that address the specific needs of our farmers and fisherfolk,"

Soriano said.

"We need to focus on sustainable aquaculture systems, precision farming methods, and resilient crop varieties that can withstand changing environmental conditions. This will not only enhance productivity but also minimize the impact on our fragile ecosystems," he said.

Apart from developing innovative technologies, these should properly reach farmers and fisherfolk to realize its benefits.

"We must ensure effective dissemination, promotion, and transfer of these technologies to reach every farmer and fisherfolk in the country. Our extension system needs to be revitalized and strengthened to facilitate knowledge sharing and technology adoption," Soriano said.

To bridge the gap between research and practice, there should also be active collaboration among research institutions, extension workers, farmers and fisherfolks through farmer-to-farmer exchanges, demonstration farms, and digital platforms, the BAR official said.

In addition, the country also needs a robust monitoring, evaluation, and documentation system to continuously improve the sector and lead to evidence-based and responsive policies.

"We must measure the impact of our programs, track adoption rates, and assess the socioeconomic outcomes of our initiatives. By collecting and analyzing data, we can identify what works and what doesn't, enabling us to refine our strategies and ensure the allocation of resources to areas that truly make a difference," Soriano said.

The Philippines also needs to actively seek international cooperation and partnership to access global expertise, funding opportunities, and best practices, Soriano said.

"Collaboration with international organizations, research institutes, and development agencies will open doors to innovative ideas and technologies that can be adapted to our local context. By learning from others and sharing our experiences, we can build resilient and sustainable agriculture and fisheries industries," he said.



The DA-ATI and Villar Foundation's farm business school facilitators' training

Part 2

FOR the entire duration of the training, the FBS facilitators' training participants stayed at the comfortable DA-ATI dormitory in Trese Martires. Twelve of us were females, and 10 were males. Eighteen came from different provinces in Calabarzon — three from Cavite, two from Laguna, five from Batangas, two from Rizal, and six from Quezon. Four hailed from other places (two from Bicol, one from Mindoro Oriental, and one from NCR). We also had varying ages: one-third were senior citizens, and the rest were born between 1971 and 1996. Although most of us had a college education, only four studied agriculture, and five had business-related degrees. The rest had other educational backgrounds, such as foreign service, dentistry, nursing, civil engineering and social science. Four participants had agriculture-related and other training lessons from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda). Most of us have farms of varying sizes, tenure and terrain. We also had similar experiences and challenges in sustaining our respective farms. We all aspired to contribute to our country's food security program, to become DA-ATI's learning sites for agriculture (LSA) and to turn our farms into flourishing businesses.

The DA-ATI FBS facilitators' training organizers utilized a participatory and experiential approach to



VIEW FROM THE SOUTH

**DR. LALAY
RAMOS-JIMENEZ**

impart knowledge and skills about the important components of a successful agricultural business. To foster camaraderie and teamwork among us, they created four groups, which were referred to as host teams. A host team was responsible for checking the participants' attendance, leading the morning prayer, presenting the highlights of the previous day's lessons, and introducing and awarding certificates of appreciation to the resource persons. I was amazed at how creative the young people were in summarizing the daily lessons learned and finding dynamic dance exercises to start the day and keep us awake midafternoon.

The organizers provided resource persons with remarkable, grounded experiences in agribusiness and farm tourism enterprises. The expert who discussed farm business profitability, particularly the practice of keeping farm business records, risks and risk management, and who patiently guided us in preparing our farm business plans, was Brian Amante Belen — a well-known agriculturist, farmer-entrepreneur, and founder of ABF Integrated Farms and Agribusiness Center Inc. He is also the manager of Ato Belen Farm, the flourishing integrated and diversified farm founded by his father, Renato Belen, Laguna's

agribusiness pioneer. He enriched his discussion with his narratives concerning their farm's activities in crop and animal production, agri-tourism, knowledge management, and training. I was particularly impressed by his gender-responsive project, which assisted some mothers in a resettlement area in their herbal tea business. He dubbed our group "batch walangya" because all of us were eager to participate in class discussions and other training activities. It was also exhilarating to listen to Josephine Costales, the multi-awarded co-founder and chairperson of the Costales Nature Farm in Laguna, the first Department of Tourism (DoT) accredited agrotourism destination in our country, which specializes in integrated organic farming. The Costales Nature Farm is often visited by many local and foreign tourists to learn about organic farming. Ms. Costales told us that she and her late husband were in the IT industry before they founded their organic farm in 2005. She was very upbeat in providing guidelines for crafting a farm tourism enterprise and sharing promotion and marketing tools and techniques, including the pricing of a farm tourism package. Marketing and negotiation are two essential components of a successful agribusiness. Our resource person for these topics was Mark Dexter Iglesias, the agribusiness entrepreneur and owner of the Iglesias Farm, an ATI-LSA and Tesda-accredited integrated and diversified farm, including food processing in Malvar, Batangas. Mr. Iglesias showed us the

difference between sales and marketing, the essential negotiation skills for farm business marketing, and value addition, including group marketing and buying, contract farming and appraisal. He also described the challenges he met in selling his family farm products and how the tools and strategies in marketing and negotiation had helped him find profitable markets.

The lecture by Dr. Gina Rosarda provided us with a comprehensive understanding of climate change and its ongoing and future deleterious effects on the environment, health, agriculture and fisheries, which will no doubt affect food security and safety throughout the world. The session on vision and goals facilitated by Abigail del Rosario, ATI Calabarzon's unit chief of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, provided us with time to reflect on our vision for our respective farms in the next five years. With our articulated vision, we also identified our goals for our family and farms. Roy Rogers Victoria 2nd, the resource person for communication, provided us with essential guidelines and effective techniques of how we could best present our messages to our different audiences, especially to farmers in our communities.

Several representatives from DA and other government agencies were also invited by the organizers to pitch their financial and other services for agriculture and fisheries and to present specific requirements to become farm tourism enterprises and farm school establishments. We

even had BIR representatives who talked about taxation in farming.

The market study of vendors, transport providers and consumers at the Trese Martires public market and the visit to two ATI-LSA farms for benchmarking were the highlights of the training because we saw how the FBS concepts and tools were applied in these places. We first went to the Anpilo Farm, a large dragon fruit-producing farm owned by Elmer and Ellen Relente in Calaca, Batangas. Mr. Relente presented his farm's history, vision, mission, production methods, marketing strategies, networks and community engagement, including the acceptance of student interns and other guests. This farm has been featured in several agribusiness TV and social media programs. From Calaca, we proceeded to Luntiang Republika Ecofarms, a 2.3-hectare integrated and diversified farm in Alfonso, Cavite, owned by Eduardo and Gilda Cleofre. The young staff and on-the-job trainees described the farm tourism services, value-adding processed products, farm production and training. They also took us around the farm and showed us the odorless pig and chicken sections, the herb gardens, and the farm tourism facilities.

The final lively session facilitated by Marites Piamonte Cosico, the former ATI Region 4A director, focused on the 10 personal entrepreneurial characteristics (PEC). She gave the individual results of the PEC form, which we filled out at the Sipag Villar farm business school. We learned about our

strengths and weaknesses as potential or current entrepreneurs, which could help guide our agricultural business plans. A posttest was administered by the organizers, and we all happily passed. We were all asked to write our FBS plans in the next six months, which will be followed by ATI Region 4A staff. Our group's evaluation of the entire training was generally positive, and we expressed our gratitude to the supportive ATI Region 4A organizers, resource persons, and other staff. Some of us thought the time was too short for the many important topics covered in 10 days. Irene Becerra, a balikbayan who revitalized cacao farming in her hometown in Batangas and introduced unique and beautiful handicrafts using cacao leaves, found the program beneficial because it provided her with useful strategies to market their cacao products effectively. Lanny Asis, a Department of Agrarian Reform retiree who owns an upland farm in Rizal, concurred with Irene's assessment and added that she has made new friends and learned about some doable projects like Irene's cacao leaves handcraft. Zielabeth Conde, the dynamic community leader and innovative agri-entrepreneur from Quezon, provided an important implication of the FBS: "All lessons from the training are significant. I will, however, highlight the lesson that ignited my advocacy: climate change. I can see that in the next 15 to 20 years, a possible famine will occur if we do not act and move to embrace innovation in farming to address food security and sustainability."



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Rice supply enough until next year – DA

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) sees no possible price hikes in rice, as the country's supply is enough to last until early 2024, Malacañang said Saturday.

Quoting Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, Presidential Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil said, "The Philippines has enough rice supply, which will last until next year due to the bumper harvest during the wet season."

Speaking during the Bagong Pilipinas briefing on Friday, de Mesa said that the stable supply of rice began in August this year and is expected to last until next month.

"We can expect that we have enough, abundant and stable supply of rice until early 2024," the DA official said.

De Mesa said they expect the national inventory stocks to reach 77 days this month.

"And in the month of November at the end of the harvest for the wet season, we expect it to last 94 days. And imports are not included yet, so we can expect that our national inventory of rice is good and sufficient," he said.

With the expected stabilization of rice supply, de Mesa said they do not see any movement of rice prices in the market.

The additional rice imports expected in the last quarter of the

year will further stabilize supply, he said.

"We have had an abundant harvest this wet season since the end of August. This September until October and November, we expect no increase in rice prices," he said.

"If our additional imports come in, this last month of September, it will hit over 271,000 metric tons, and historically, there are still a lot of imports coming in during the last quarter part of the year," de Mesa added.

The DA's latest price monitoring showed the cost of local regular milled rice at P44, while well-milled rice is P48.

The price adjustments took effect days after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. lifted the price ceiling on rice, which set prices at P41 to P45 per kilogram.

Meanwhile, de Mesa confirmed that Marcos approved the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance program with a budget of P12.7 billion.

The beneficiaries are farmers tilling 2 hectares of land and below who will receive P5,000.

"In addition, free seeds have already been distributed high-yielding varieties, both inbred and hybrid, fertilizers, machinery to ensure that our farmers are ready for the dry season beginning October/November throughout the country," de Mesa said.

CATHERINE S. VALENTE



EGG SUPPLY STABLE BUT SLIGHT PRICE HIKE SEEN -- DA

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it sees a slight hike in egg prices and its supply at 36 million per day remains stable.

"It will increase a little but since our supply is stable, we do not expect that there will really be a very steep increase in the price of eggs. Right now, the average egg price is around P6.70 to P9 per piece, depending on where you buy it. But that P6.70 is reasonable at this moment," DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said in a Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon briefing.

He said the demand for eggs often peaks during school months and the Christmas season.

"During school time, students eat an egg before leaving and they also have them as packed food in school; and when the



Christmas season is near, the demand for eggs is also high. Forty percent of our egg production is used by industrial users, those who make bread, cakes, in hotels and restaurants; sixty percent are our household users," De Mesa said.

He said the country's commercial production of 36 million eggs per day is enough to meet the de-

mand.

"So this is enough for the consumption of every Filipino of about 160 eggs per year or that is equivalent to eight kilos of eggs per Filipino in a year. So, our level of production is good," he added.

De Mesa, meanwhile, said they are coordinating with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)

and other agencies regarding the price range of Noche Buena products.

"The DA continues to communicate with the DTI and other agencies for various products, especially now, the Christmas season is approaching. And when we have it, the two departments will issue an official statement, a joint statement," he added. PNA



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257K ha. of agri lands vulnerable to El Niño

AROUND 257,600 hectares of agricultural lands have been identified as most vulnerable to the adverse impact of the El Niño phenomenon, the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) said yesterday.

Central Luzon was identified as the most vulnerable, with 85,000 hectares of land tagged as prone to the negative effects of the phenomenon, characterized by less than normal rainfall and prolonged dry spell.

"We are preparing for the El Niño as well. We have identified some [257,600] hectares of vulnerable areas nationwide. Under our proposed budget for 2024, meron na po kaming (we have) immediate measures for that," Josephine Salazar, NIA officer-in-charge Deputy Administrator for Engineering and Operations Sector, said in a weekly forum in Quezon City.

Following Central Luzon



are Soccsksargen (27,000 hectares), Ilocos Region (24,000 hectares), Mimaropa (17,000 hectares), Western Visayas (15,000 hectares), Central Visayas (14,000 hectares), and Zamboanga Peninsula (13,000 hectares), Salazar said.

These areas have been advised to plant high-value crops

to mitigate the impact of the El Niño.

"So, nakikipag-coordinate na po tayo sa (we are coordinating with the) Department of Agriculture [for] the preparation and prepositioning of seeds, as well para doon sa (for) high-value [crops]," she said.

In July, the NIA crafted an El Niño action plan which includes water delivery schedule, utilization of Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD) technology, diversification of crops, and the use of early maturing and drought-resistant crop varieties.

PNA



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NFA to buy palay from Novo Ecijano farmers

CABANATUAN CITY -- The Nueva Ecija provincial government is joining forces with the **National Food Authority (NFA)** in the procurement of newly-harvested palay from local farmers.

In his weekly tele-radio program "Usapang Malasakit sa Lipunan," Gov. Aurelio M. Umali announced that the NFA has already talked to him about the agency's plan to procure palay from Novo Ecijano farmers as per directives from President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr..

Earlier, the President, also the concurrent Agriculture Secretary and chair of the NFA Council,

By Steve Gosuico

raised the NFA's buying price for palay to P19-P23 for dry and P16-P19 per kilo for wet.

Umali said: "Pan-gunahin naman talagang layunin ng pagkakabuo ng Provincial Food Council ang matulungan ang mga magsasakang Novo Ecijano at sa apat na taon nang pag-iimplementang programa ay pumayag silang tulungan ang NFA, lalo na at kabilang naman ang ahensya sa PFC."

"Sa mahabang panahon kasi ay ang tuyo at malinis na palay ang binibiling NFA kaya bago

sa kanila ang pamimili ng sariwang palay," added the governor.

In collaboration with the NFA, Umali said they will develop a system or model that could be used as a blueprint by other local government units in implementing this palay-buying program.

In order to help boost the farmers' income and productivity, the governor also stressed that the government must prioritize the program's implementation in the country's top 13 palay-producing provinces, which include Nueva Ecija, Isabela and Iloilo, where about 80 percent of the total palay production comes from.

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Red tide back in Samar waters

TACLOBAN CITY – Red tide phenomenon has re-occurred in three bays in Samar and Eastern Samar provinces, raising warning not to consume shellfish products in these areas, the Bureau of Fisheries Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said yesterday.

These bays are the Irong-Irong Bay in Catbalogan City, Samar; the coastal waters of Calbayog City, Samar; and Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar province.

The bloom of this toxic organism returned in Matarinao after three weeks of red tide absence and in Irong-Irong Bay after nine months. The coastal water of Calbayog City was included in the red tide watch in early 2022.

Matarinao covers the coastal waters of General MacArthur, Hernani, Quinapondan and Salcedo in

Eastern Samar province.

BFAR attributed the change in weather patterns as the cause of the red tide blooms in the region.

"To safeguard human lives, we are issuing this warning as a precautionary advice to the public to refrain from gathering, selling, and eating all types of shellfish and *Acetes* sp. locally known as 'alamang' or 'hipon' from these bays," BFAR said in its local shellfish bulletin.

Water and shellfish meat samples will be sent to their main office for confirmatory testing.

Fish, squid, crab, and shrimp gathered from these areas are safe to eat provided that all entrails are removed and the marine products are washed thoroughly with running water before cooking.



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El Niño nakaamba sa Central Luzon, 6 pang rehiyon - NIA

Pitong rehiyon sa bansa ang posibleng makaranas ng matinding epekto ng El Niño phenomenon kung saan mahigit 257,000 ektarya ng mga lupang sakahan ng tagtuyot, ayon sa National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

Subalit tiniyak naman ng NIA na nakahanda sila at mayroon nang nakalatag na mga kaukulang hakbangin ukol sa pinangangambahang epekto ng El Niño sa bansa.

Tinukoy ng NIA ang Central Lu-

zon na siyang pinakamatinding tatamaan umano ng El Niño kung saan ay nasa 85,000 ektarya ng mga sakahan ang posibleng maapektuhan umano ng tagtuyot.

"We are preparing for the El Niño as well. We have identified some [257,600] hectares of vulnerable areas nationwide. Under our proposed budget for 2024, meron na po kaming immediate measures for that," pahayag ni NIA officer-in-charge Deputy Administrator for Engineering and Ope-

rations Sector Josephine Salazar sa isang news forum na ginanap sa Quezon City nitong Sabado, Oktubre 6.

Bukod sa Central Luzon, kabilang pa sa mga rehiyon na posibleng hagupitin umano ng El Niño ay ang Soccsksargen, Ilocos Region, Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, at Zamboanga Peninsula.

Kaya pinayuhan na umano ang mga nabanggit na rehiyon para magtanim ng mga high-value crop upang pagaanin ang magiging epekto ng El Niño.

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Extension of lower tariff rates on rice, swine meat, corn pushed

By XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS

The Inter-Agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook (IAC-IMO) has proposed the extension of lower tariff rates on essential commodities until Dec. 31, 2024, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said.

NEDA Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said that the committee's recommendation involves extending the effectiveness of Executive Order (EO) No. 10. This order reduces the tariff rates for swine meat, corn, and rice to 35 percent.

The current tariff rates will remain in place until Dec. 31, 2023, when the order is set to expire.

"The decision is to recommend the extension of tariff rates of those three products but there is a process you need to follow, it has to go

through the Tariff Commission," Balisacan said. "While world prices are still very much elevated, we don't want to see further increases in local prices by raising the tariff."

In September, the inflation rate rose to 6.1 percent from 5.3 percent the previous month, driven by record-high rice inflation at 17.9 percent, the highest in 14 years.

Nevertheless, Balisacan expressed confidence that the target inflation rate of two percent to four percent can still be achieved by the end of the quarter, despite recent fare hikes for jeepneys and potential wage hike petitions outside Metro Manila.

He also stated that the country's economic growth of six percent to seven percent is still attainable, although acknowledging that reaching the seven percent mark will pose challenges.

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Sugar prices hit 13-year high due to El Niño fallout – FAO

PARIS, France (AFP) – Global sugar prices soared to their highest level in almost 13 years in September as the El Niño weather phenomenon hit production in India and Thailand, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said Friday.

While world food prices steadied as a whole last month, the FAO's Sugar Price Index jumped by 9.8 percent compared to August, the highest point since November 2010, the UN agency said.

El Niño, a climate pattern that occurs on average every two to seven years, is typically associated with warming ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern

► 8

Sugar prices hit 13-year high due to El Niño fallout – FAO 1◀

tropical Pacific Ocean.

The phenomenon, which can last between nine to 12 months, started in July, according to the UN's World Meteorological Organization.

The FAO's Sugar Price Index has now risen for two consecutive months due to increasing concerns over a tighter global supply outlook in the 2023–2024 season.

"This mainly reflects early forecasts pointing to production declines in key sugar producers, Thailand and India, due to drier-than-normal weather conditions associated with the prevailing El Niño event," the FAO said.

"Higher international crude oil prices also contributed to the increase in world sugar prices," it added.



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Sarisuki, MoEngage partner to transform Philippine agriculture

PHILIPPINE company Sarisuki joins hands with MoEngage, a leading APAC customer engagement platform, to revolutionize the Philippines' agricultural supply chain.

Sarisuki's e-Grocery platform promotes access to sustainable food supply by ensuring fair compensation for farmers and affordability for consumers as well as by bridging stakeholders through its Agri Super Highway for sustainability, equity and transparency.

Sarisuki collaborates directly with Ka-Sangga farmers for farm-fresh produce, offering fair prices and support to improve farming. They aim to engage 1 million Ka-Sangga



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farmers and have 20,000 Ka-Sari Community Leaders distributing to 800,000+ community members.

Sarisuki's platform also advances sustainable farming through direct involvement with six farms plus two more farms implementing eco-friendly practices. Their trust-based model fosters transparency and collaboration, benefiting supply chains, reducing inflation and nurturing young entrepreneurs.

With customers encompassing metro areas and beyond, Sarisuki serves both urban and rural areas in the Philippines. Through its Agri Super Highway, the Filipino firm provides doorstep delivery of a diverse range of products not readily available in local markets. The platform offers competitive pricing by removing multiple supply chain middlemen, minimizing extra costs for both farmers and consumers.

MoEngage is an insights-led customer engagement platform trusted by over 1,200 global consumer brands. MoEngage's robust analytics provide Sarisuki with deep and actionable insights on consumer behavior, preferences,

likes and dislikes, thus enabling the community selling platform to personalize experiences and engage customers better.

MoEngage's advanced capabilities also help personalize interactions with customers, providing Sarisuki with relevant and timely updates about new products, promotions and special offers. This level of personalization strengthens the partner's relationship with customers and ensures that they stay informed about the platform's latest offerings and improvements.

Furthermore, MoEngage's multi-channel capabilities enable Sarisuki to engage with customers through various communication

channels, including email, push notifications, SMS and in-app communication.

Using its e-Grocery platform, Sarisuki already observed a surge in customers who access farm-fresh products from the comfort of their homes. Sarisuki's customer base has expanded, driven by significant growth in the adoption of online grocery delivery and improved digital infrastructure in the country.

Founded in 2020 as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Sarisuki is the largest online platform in the Philippines that leverages the power of local communities across the country. Its mission is to transform the agricultural supply chain

and positively impact the lives of Filipino farmers, consumers and the larger community.

Sarisuki firmly believes that farmers should receive fair compensation for their hard work and labor, while consumers should have access to affordable daily essentials.

Sarisuki seeks to bridge the gap between these stakeholders and create a sustainable, equitable and transparent Agri Super Highway.

A Customer Engagement Platform is software that captures data through apps or websites and allows personalized communications to customers via email, social media, or mobile apps. It's usually, a part of a brand's API.