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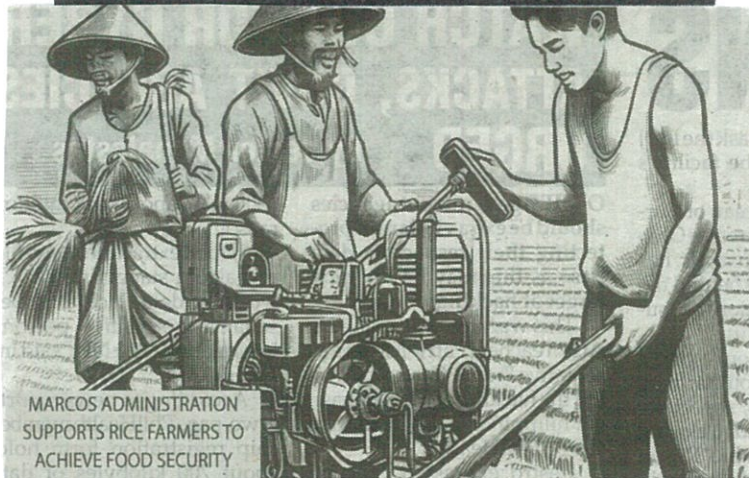
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MARCOS ADMINISTRATION
SUPPORTS RICE FARMERS TO
ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY

EDITORIAL

Rice farmers

WITHOUT doubt, the government has laid the groundwork to ensure the achievement of globally competitive agricultural sector and at the same time attain food security.

And to attain food security, which is a top priority of President Marcos' administration, concerned government authorities ought to help the country's rice farmers.

This, the government will do by providing the farmers not only in Luzon but elsewhere with much-needed equipment and facilities, such as tractors, harvesters and driers.

Aware of this, Marcos has ordered the Department of Agriculture (DA) to use the excess collection of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) to assist farmers.

He said the excess collection beyond P10 billion requirement should be used to provide facilities and equipment that will raise the competitiveness and output of farmers.

Republic Act (RA) No. 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Act, provides that revenues collected from rice tariffs should pay for the yearly requirement of P10 billion for the RCEF.

The amount will be used to fund government programs and projects that are aimed at helping the country's palay farmers, who now find it hard to send their children to college.

"Lakihan natin ang galing sa Rice Tariffication Law at ibigay natin sa ating mga farmers sa pamamagitan ng mga equipment," according to President Marcos.

Like all well-meaning Filipinos, we support the Marcos' administration's efforts to uplift the living conditions of the country's farmers, who comprise the bulk of the population.

"Madalas ay kulang pang pambayad ng utang ang kinikita ng isang magsasaka dahil sa taas ng presyo ng binhi, abono, pestisidio at iba pang gamit sa pagsasaka," a farmer lamented.



Program to eliminate use of harmful inputs for food production

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) is in talks with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and other relevant stakeholders for the implementation of a project that aims to eliminate the use of harmful inputs to food production systems.

FPA and UNIDO will lead the local implementation of the project to promote eco-friendly crop protection solutions for persistent organic pollutant (POP) and highly hazardous pesticide (HHP) reduction in Asia that has been funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The project aims to establish sustainable financing, investment

and incentive mechanisms in the formulation, production and application of eco-friendly crop protection solutions for the reduction of POPs and HHPs, enhancing livelihood, food safety and protection to human health and the environment.

The project will run until Oct. 31, 2028.

Other relevant stakeholders

like the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development under the Department of Science and Technology through the Philippine Agriculture and Resources Research Foundation Inc. will serve as project executing entities.

The project will also involve government regulatory capacity,

which aims to enable the environment for the introduction of crop protection solutions to reduce POPs and HHPs as well as enhance finance and investment in the development, production and application of biopesticides, safe chemical alternatives and other biocontrol agents.

.....
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PROGRAM

It is also expected to raise the capacity building and awareness in the formulation, production and application of biopesticides, safe chemical alternatives and other biocontrol agents. A monitoring system based on GEF and UNIDO requirements will also be implemented.

FPA added its Pesticide Regulatory Division will be the main government focal point and national coordinating entity of the project.

The coordinating agencies will include the member agencies of the Department of Agriculture and local government units of selected farmer groups.



RICE SUFFICIENCY LEVEL FALLS TO 24-YEAR LOW

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS

✉ @jearcalas

& CAI U. ORDINARIO

✉ @cauordinario

THE Philippines's self-sufficiency ratio (SSR) in rice fell to 77 percent in 2022, the lowest in more than two decades, as the country remained as one of the world's largest importers of the staple.

Latest data released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the country's rice SSR last year was lower than the 81.5 percent level recorded in 2021.

Historical PSA data showed that last year's rice SSR was the lowest in 24 years or since 1998, when it settled at 72.1 percent. This is the third time, since 1988, that the country's rice SSR was below 80 percent.

The PSA defines SSR as the extent to which the country's domestic production can meet its domestic requirement.

"A ratio of less than 100 percent indicates inadequacy of food production to cope with the demand of the population," the PSA said. "The higher the ratio, the greater the self-sufficiency."

Danilo V. Fausto, President of the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI), said the country's latest rice SSR figure is "very disheartening."

"We are struggling very hard to increase our production, our sufficiency and productivity. We are pushed back by recommendations that give incentives to importers than to producers," Fausto told the BUSINESSMIRROR in an interview.

"If these tariff reductions push through, we can expect that our self-sufficiency would not just be 77 percent but will be below the passing grade of 75 percent. *Hindi lang tayo bagsak, kung hindi repeater na,*" he added.

The country's milled rice output last year fell slightly to 12.921 million metric tons (MMT) from the record-level of 13.054 MMT registered in 2021, according to the PSA.

During the same year, the Philippines's rice imports surged to a record 3.863 MMT, about 30 percent higher than the 2.967 MMT it imported in 2021, PSA data showed.

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With such volume, the Philippines remained as the world's second-biggest buyer of rice behind China, which imported 6.155 MMT of rice last year.

'Check the formula'

HOWEVER, Agriculture Undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Leocadio S. Sebastian said it is important to check the formula used by the PSA in calculating the rice SSR.

Sebastian pointed out that the PSA's formula takes into account importation as part of the country's overall supply base and does not consider the local demand in a given year.

The PSA's formula for SSR in any commodity is as follows: local production divided by the total supply (production plus imports minus exports) multiplied by 100 percent.

"Hence, if you have more rice imports, the rice sufficiency will go down. The formula is not local production minus exports divided by local demand," Sebastian told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

Pundits, including former agriculture secretaries, and industry stakeholders have criticized the PSA's SSR formula in the past, arguing that it does not provide a "more realistic picture" of the country's rice supply situation. (Related story: <https://BUSINESSMIRROR.com.ph/2018/11/01/rice-self-sufficiency-ratio-slid-to-93-44-percent-in-2017-psa/>)

They said that as long as the Philippines imports rice, then its SSR will never hit 100 percent, since, mathematically speaking, imports form part of the denominator of the formula. (Related story: <https://BUSINESSMIRROR.com.ph/2021/11/17/phl-rice-self-sufficiency-rate-hits-85-in-2020-report/>)

PSA standards

HOWEVER, Sebastian noted that the PSA is following "certain standards" that is why it uses such a formula for calculating the SSR. The PSA adopted the Food and Agriculture Organization's formula and definition for SSR.

"As such we should be aware of their formula, considering that rice importation is liberalized which means, our imports are not just determined by our deficit but also by local and international market situation," Sebastian said.

He disclosed that the agriculture department is using an alternative formula that measures the level of rice supply in relation to the country's demand to "monitor" how the country is "progressing in terms of sufficiency level."

Using this alternative formula, Sebastian answered in the affirmative when asked if the country's rice SSR last year was higher than 77 percent.

Impact of climate change

ATENEO de Manila University (ADMU) economist Leonardo Lanzona told the BUSINESSMIRROR that if an SSR of 77 percent is the best the country can do, it is fair for the country to consider importing the rest of the Philippines's needs for the staple.

"We don't want to be placed in a situation where the costs are much greater [than the] benefits obtained from trying to reach self-sufficiency. If 77 percent is [the] best we can do, without incurring too much cost, then the rest can be imported," Lanzona said.

"We need to consider all of the sectors, making sure that the net benefits in various agricultural outputs are maximized given the constraints that we face," he added.

The decline in the SSR, Lanzona said, may have been caused by climate change and other "uncontrollable factors." This may also reflect the lack of efficiency in the current administration.

"The ratio should be the least of

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our concerns. The important thing is [to] assess the benefits from raising the ratio in relation to their costs," Lanzona said.

Buffer stock is key

PHILIPPINE Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) Senior Fellow Roehlano Briones said the decline of the SSR to 77 percent as of 2022 is not worrisome as long as the country has a buffer stock.

The decrease in the SSR last year, Briones said, may have been due to the damage to local rice supply following typhoons as well the higher rice prices globally. Given this, it is possible that the country's SSR will increase in 2023.

"[I am] not worried as long as we have sufficient buffer stocks. SSR not an important indicator," Briones told the BUSINESSMIRROR on Monday.

Meanwhile, University of the Philippines Los Baños economist Luisito C. Abueg said in a phone interview that with the 77 percent SSR and the recent imposition of the price cap, the SSR could further decline this year.

This may be possible if, given the price caps, farmers were discouraged from planting, thereby reducing the level of rice production. This is natural for farmers, he said, given that they also need to earn.

Another scenario that could lead to a lower SSR this year may be the decision of some traders to hold on to their stocks of good rice varieties to escape the price cap. This may also lead to a lower SSR, which is the level of supply versus the country's demand, this year.

Abueg also said El Niño, which is expected to be longer than usual, could also lead to a lower SSR this year. "[There are estimates] that the El Niño will affect one planting season and that would possibly contribute to the [lowering of the SSR]."

While any shortfall can be plugged by importation, Abueg said that based on recent experience, the importation of rice has not led to any decrease in prices. The theory is, if there are more imports, there is more supply, and this would reduce prices but this did not happen as rice prices remained expensive.

Road to 100 percent?

IN a recent Senate hearing, Sebastian revealed that the country would need to produce at least 24 MMT of palay to hit the 100-percent SSR.

The volume would translate to some 15.696 MMT of rice, based on a 65.4-percent milling recovery rate used by the PSA and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In April, the DA said it aims to achieve 100 percent self-sufficiency by 2027 through its Masagana Rice Program (MRP) 2023-2028, which seeks to group local farmers into rice clusters to achieve economies of scale.

Under the MRP, the agriculture department targets to improve local palay production to as much as 26.86 MMT.

"To achieve the stated goals, the DA shall implement four key strategies: climate change adaptation, farm clustering and consolidation to promote convergence of interventions; value chain approach; and digital transformation of the Philippine rice industry," the DA said.

However, in June, President Marcos Jr., concurrent agriculture chief, revised the department's rice SSR target to just 97 percent under his watch.

"You do not have to really go to 100 percent because the 3 percent are those niche products like organic or special grain like Japanese rice," Marcos said, speaking partly in Filipino.

"But with the 97 percent [rice sufficiency], we can say we can feed our citizens sufficient rice," he added.



More confidential funds for DoJ, Agri dept urged

BY BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

SEN. Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito has raised the need to increase the confidential funds (CFs) allotted to the Department of Justice (DoJ) amid the rising cybercrime threat in the country.

The Senate on Monday deliberated the DoJ's proposed P34.486 billion 2024 budget and its attached agencies, such as the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Bureau of Immigration (BI).

"The DoJ's confidential and intel funds are justifiable because it is being used for the witness protection program and other assets," Ejercito said.

He said that DoJ's proposed total CFs is P471.296 million, with only P475,000 allocated to the cybercrime division and P211.75 million designated for the Witness Protection Program, both under the Office of the Secretary.

Some P20 million is allocated to the BI, P175.4 million to the NBI and P19.2 million to the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), Ejercito said.

Sen. Rafael "Raffy" Tulfo, meanwhile, wants to realign part of the Department of Agriculture's (DA) P50 million confidential fund to the NBI, BI or the

Philippine National Police (PNP).

"Considering that other agencies, especially those in civilian nature, are asking for confidential and intel funds, I guess these are the agencies that we really have to put confidential and intel funds," Ejercito said.

"I think this cybercrime scam is a daily problem that we all Filipinos are encountering. This is the new crime and new enemy that we are facing right now," he said.

Tulfo noted that during the hearing of the DA budget, the department said it has P50 million in confidential funds. "I asked them what the P50 million will be used for," he said.

"An official told me that it will be used to go after smugglers. I told them that there is the NBI, the PNP and the [Bureau of] Customs. So, I am proposing to cut the budget of the DA's confidential fund and transfer some to the NBI, PNP and Immigration. In

my opinion, the DA does not need confidential funds," Tulfo said.

Ejercito said the cybercrime units of the PNP and the Department of Information and Communications Technology should also be strengthened to combat cybercrime more effectively.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel 3rd praised Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra for allowing the realignment of his office's CF to best-suited government agencies.

Guevarra said the OSG had initially requested P19 million from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for 2024 but decided to allow Congress to reallocate it to agencies that need confidential funds more.

"One good thing we heard from the SolGen himself, he is giving up the CF given in the National Expenditure Program by the DBM for the OSG," Pimentel said.



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Rice inventory down 11.3% in July; corn up

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE country's rice inventory dropped by 11.3 percent in July, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said on Monday.

Local rice supply was estimated at 1.81 million metric tons (MT), lower than the 2.03 million MT posted a year earlier.

However, the country's total rice stocks inventory recorded a monthly decrease of 0.8 percent from the June's level of 1.82 million MT.

Rice stocks inventory held by

the **National Food Authority (NFA)** and households registered declines compared to their respective levels from the same period in 2022.

NFA's rice stock dropped by 62.1 percent annually to 60,840 MT from 160,500 MT. Month-on-month, the NFA registered a 28.5-decrease in rice stocks from

June's 85,100 MT.

Households logged 771,930 MT of rice stocks, 28.7-percent lower from last year's 1.06 million MT. The figure was also lower by 12.78 percent from the previous month's 885,000 MT rice inventory.

On the other hand, rice stocks in the commercial sector rose by 21.6 percent to 984,760 MT from 809,830 MT recorded a year earlier. In relation to June's stock level of 848,110 MT, a 16.11-percent increase was recorded.

For local corn inventory, the PSA said this increased by 10.3 percent in the same month and was esti-

mated at 823,760 MT.

Month-on-month, it fell by 7.1 percent compared to June's inventory level of 886,460 MT.

Corn stocks in households recorded an annual decline of 23.6 percent to 58,600 MT.

For stocks in the commercial sector, this accounted for 92.9 percent of the total corn inventory, rising by 14.2 percent to 765,170 MT.

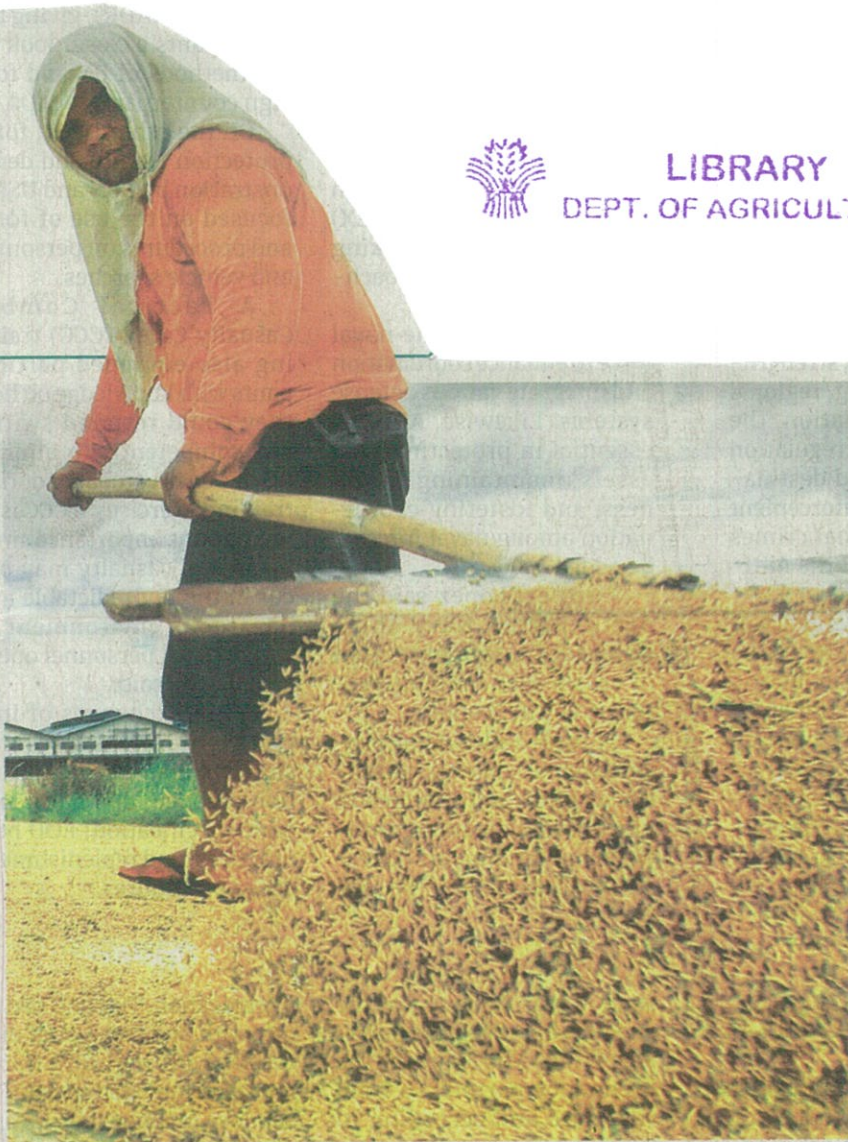
In comparison to the inventory level in June 2023, the volume of corn stocks in households and the commercial sector registered monthly decreases of 38.0 percent and 3.4 percent, respectively.

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PALAY PURCHASE PRICE HIKE – Farmers dry palay on a road in Baliuag, Bulacan on Monday, Oct. 9, 2023. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. announced that the National Food Authority (NFA) Council has increased the purchase price for dry palay from ₱19 to ₱23 and wet palay from ₱16 to ₱19. (Noel B. Pabalate)

Rice prices may go down further in next 2 weeks – farmers' group

By JEL SANTOS

Rice retail prices in the country are projected to fall further in the coming two weeks, as the harvest season has already begun, the Federation of Free Farmers Cooperative (FFFC) said.

"Well, nag-umpisa na ang ani-han kaya dumadami ang supply ng palay pero it takes a little time kasi iyong palay na iyan ay gigilingin pa bago makarating sa retail outlets sa mga merkado (Well, the harvest season has started so the supply of rice will increase but it takes a little time because that rice will be milled before reaching the retail outlets in the markets)," FFFC chairperson Leonardo ► 8

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Rice prices may go down further in next 2 weeks – farmers' group 1◀

Montemayor said in a radio interview on Sunday, Oct. 8. "Maybe, two weeks bago makarating ang bigas na 'yan. Siguro within the next two weeks, we can expect the price of rice na medyo bababa (Maybe, it takes two weeks before it reaches the market. Maybe, within the next two weeks, we can expect the price of rice to drop a bit)," he added.

On Sept. 28, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said it observed a ₱5 per kilo decrease in the price of rice.

Montemayor did not specify how much of a decline in rice retail prices is expected, saying "we should wait and see."

"Pero (But) there should be at least stability po sa presyo (in the price). Hindi na dapat magtataas 'yan (It should not go up)," he said.

Although the harvest season has already started, the farmers' group said the government should not relax as there is still the threat of the El Niño phenomenon, which may greatly affect the supply of the country's primary staple.

"Iyong inaasahan na komportableng supply natin ng bigas sa bansa hanggang sa katapusan ng taon, posible pa itong madiskaril kapag sumipa ang El Niño (The ample supply of rice that we expect until the end of the year may be derailed by El Niño)," said Montemayor.

He said that a strong typhoon may also affect the country's rice supply and its quality.

Earlier, the DA, concurrently headed by President Marcos, assured that the country has enough supply of rice that will last next year due to "bumper harvest" during the wet season.

According to the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), it has prepositioned seedlings to more than 200,000 hectares of farmland for protection against the possible effects of the El Niño.

Josephine Salazar, officer-in-charge of NIA's Engineering and Operations, said NIA has identified 257,600 hectares as El Niño vulnerable areas in the country.

Per NIA, the identified vulnerable areas are 27,000 hectares in Region XII (Soccsksargen); 13,000 hectares in Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula); 14,000 hectares in Region VII (Central Visayas); 15,000 hectares in Region VI (Western Visayas); 17,000 hectares in Region IV-B (Mimaropa); 85,000 hectares in Region III (Central Luzon); and 24,000 hectares in Region I (Ilocos Region).

The chief executive has ordered concerned agencies to employ a whole-of-government approach against the looming impact of the dry spell.



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Rice inventory declines in early July; corn higher

THE national rice inventory declined 11.3% year on year, while corn stocks rose 10.3% in early July, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

In a report, the PSA said the rice inventory was 1.80 million metric tons (MT), with the sharp fall in rice volume held by the **National Food Authority (NFA)** driving the decline.

"Of this month's total rice stocks, 54.6% were from the commercial sector, 42% were from the households, and 3.4% were from NFA depositories," the PSA said.

Rice held by the NFA fell 62.1% year on year to 60.84 thousand MT, while household rice stocks fell 28.7% to 771 thousand MT.

Commercial warehouses held 984.76 thousand MT for the

period, rising 21.6% from a year earlier.

On a month-on-month basis, the rice inventory fell 0.04% compared to June.

"Month-on-month decreases in rice stocks were noted in both NFA depositories and household sector at 28.5% and 14.3%, respectively. Meanwhile, rice held by commercial entities increased 16.1%," it said.

Meanwhile, the PSA said that the inventory for corn rose to 833.76 thousand MT in early July from 746.92 thousand MT a year earlier.

"About 92.9% of this month's total corn stocks were held by the commercial sector, while the remaining 7.1% were held by households," it added. — **Adrian H. Halili**



PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

Pork inventory seen sufficient until first quarter of 2024

THE supply of pork is expected to be ample until the first quarter of 2024, despite the expected increase in yearend demand, an industry group said on Monday.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura Executive Director Jayson H. Cainglet said there are no supply issues with pork, though farmgate prices remain out of step with retail prices.

"(For) stocks and supply we aren't seeing a problem but farmgate prices for pork is declining, and yet retail prices are getting higher," Mr. Cainglet told *BusinessWorld* by phone. "We really have a lot of stock until the first quarter of next year."

Mr. Cainglet said farmgate prices of pork were now hitting P150 to P160 per kilogram.

"This means that the procurement of hogs is slow because there are many pigs in the market, either live or frozen," he added.

The farmgate price of backyard hogs, as of Oct. 9, was P140-160 per kilo, while the farmgate price for commercial hogs was P130-180 per kilo, according to Department of Agriculture's (DA) price monitors.

He said shipments of pork will increase towards the end of the year, further boosting supply.

Mr. Cainglet said the industry has adjusted after the outbreak of African Swine

Fever (ASF), particularly commercial hog raisers.

"We would rather have the backyard (hog raisers) make a comeback. But because of ASF, it is more difficult for (them) to return compared to commercial growers," he added.

The DA said it has distributed 85,601 sentinel pigs as of Sept. 15, to over 32,437 ASF-affected farmers through its National Livestock Program (NLP). Sentinel pigs are so called because their presence in farms that had been decontaminated will serve as early warning if the disease lingers.

"At the start of the second quarter of 2022, the growth of our swine industry has been positive. And of course, our department took the lead so that our pig farmers can recover from ASF," NLP Director Ruth S. Miclat-Sonaco said in a statement.

The DA added that 56 farmers' cooperatives and associations had been given grants to procure 9,240 breeders.

Philippine pork production is expected to hit 925,000 metric tons representing a 5% downgrade of a previous forecast due to the continued presence of ASF in top producing regions, the US Department of Agriculture said. — **Adrian H. Halili**



Matinding parusa laban sa agri smuggling



KUYA NG BAYAN

PULONG DUTERTE

Isa sa mga nagpapahirap sa ating mga magsasaka at mga mangingisda ay ang pagbaha sa merkado ng mga smuggled na agricultural products tulad ng bigas, asukal, isda, karne at iba pang pagkain.

Bago mag-adjourn ang session ng Kongreso nitong nakaraang buwan, naipasa na ng Kamara de Representante sa huling pagbasa o third and final reading ang panukalang batas na nagpapataw ng matinding parusa laban sa smuggling ng mga ganitong agri-fishery product, kasama ang tabako.

Isa ang inyong Kuya Pulong sa mga pangunahing may-akda ng panukalang batas na ito na nakapaloob sa House Bill (HB) 9284.

Ang layunin nito ay mapuksa na ang malakihang smuggling, hoarding, profiteering at pagka-cartel ng bigas, asukal at iba pang agricultural products sa pamamagitan ng pagtukoy sa mga krimeng ito bilang "economic sabotage".

mic sabotage".

Kapag krimeng economic sabotage, ang parusa sa ilalim ng HB 9284 ay pagkakakulong ng habang-buhay at pagbabayad ng multa na katumbas ay six times ng halaga ng produktong pinuslit o itinago.

Dapat ding magbayad ang nahuling smuggler o hoarder ng kaukulang buwis na may pataw na interes para sa mga produktong kanilang pinuslit.

Nakasaad din sa bill na maging ang mga sangkot sa pag-smuggle o pag-hoard ng produkto, tulad ng mga tumulong magbenta, mameke ng import clearance, nag-transport, nagtago sa warehouse o cold storage facility ay kasama rin sa papatawan ng matinding parusa.

Bubuo rin ng Anti Agri-Fishery Commodities and Tobacco Economic Sabotage Council sa ilalim ng bill. Pangungunahan ito ng pangulo o ng kanyang itatalagang kinatawan. Kasama bilang miyembro ng council ang mga kalihim ng Department of Finance, Department of Agriculture, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Justice, ang chairperson ng Philippine Competition Commission at mga kinatawan

mula sa pribadong sektor.

Bukod sa smuggling, isa pang kalaban ng mga manggagawa sa sektor ng agrikultura ay ang masamang lagay ng panahon na bunga ng climate change.

Batid ito ng inyong Kuya Pulong kaya sa abot ng ating makakaya, naghatid tayo ng tulong sa mga mangingisda sa Davao City na nawalan ng kita ngayong panahon ng tag-ulan kung kailan madalas ay hindi sila makapangisda.

Nagbigay tayo ng bigas at cash assistance sa may mahigit 4,000 na mangingisda para matulungan sila sa oras ng kanilang kagipitan. Ang aking anak na si Rodrigo "Rigo" Duterte II ang tumulong na mamahagi ng ayuda sa mga Dabawenyong mangingisda kamakailan.

Isa sa mga hobbies ng inyong Kuya Pulong ang fishing kaya naman naiintindihan ko ang kalagayan ng ating mga mangingisda na walang nahuhuli kapag masama ang panahon.

Para sa inyong Kuya Pulong, dapat na hindi pinababayaan ang kalagayan ng ating mga magsasaka at mangingisda dahil sila ang susi para makamit natin ang ating sama-samang hangaring magkaroon ng seguridad sa pagkain.



Mga guro siningil NFA sa rice allowance

Kinuwestiyon ka-hapon ng isang grupo ng mga guro ang National Food Authority (NFA) kung bakit hindi pa ipinamahagi ang 25 kilong bigas para sa kanila na ipinag-utos ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. noong Disyembre 2022.

Sinabi ng Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC) na sumulat na sila kay NFA Administrator Rod-erico Bioco upang ipaba-tid dito na marami pang mga guro ang hindi pa natatanggap ang kanilang rice allowance mula nang lagdaan ng Pangulo ang

kautusan noong nakara-ang taon.

Pero nakaramdam umano sila nang pag-kadismaya dahil natapos na ang Enero at Pebrero ay hindi pa rin nila na-tatanggap ang pangakong bigas.

Aniya, bagama't may naipamahagi nang bi-gas sa ilang guro noong Hunyo, ngunit may mga reklamo tungkol sa hindi magandang kalidad nito.

Sinabi ng TDC na maraming guro, karami-han dito ay sa Metro Ma-nila, ang naghihintay pa rin ng kanilang bigas.

Tugon naman ni Jon-athan Yazon, manager ng Operations Coordina-tion Department ng NFA,

maaaring naantala ang pamamahagi ng bigas dahil sa kakulangan ng mga papeles.

Inihayag naman ng NFA na nakumpleto na nila ang pamamahagi ng naturang rice allowance sa malaking bahagi ng bansa. Dagdag ng NFA, ang Region 8 at NCR na lamang sa ahensiya ng Department of Educa-tion (DepEd) ang hindi pa 100% natatapos ang distribusyon ng bigas.

Pinirmahan ng Pa-ngulo ang Administrative Order No. 2 noong Dis-yembre 16, 2022 para sa one-time rice allowance ng mga empleyado at manggagawa ng gobyer-no. (Dolly Cabreza)

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Muling pag-angkat ng NFA: panukalang banô, korap (2)

NILANTAD ko kahapon ang pagkabanô ng burokrata sa bigas sa DA. Pumoporma na ang mga kakambal nilang korap. Binobola nila si President Bongbong Marcos at Kongreso na umangkat ng bigas.

Tumataginting na P280 bilyon ang kabuoang lugi ng National Food Authority mula 1987. Subsidiya kasi ang NFA. Tatlong dekada ito bumili nang mahal na konting ani sa magpapalay, at nagbenta ng bultong angkat na bigas sa mamimili nang mura.

Sunud-sunod na mga tiwali ang namuno sa NFA. Kumikil ng suhol sa mga kumpanyang nagpapalisensya para umangkat ng bigas. Nilisensyahan pati pekeng farm cooperatives para umangkat.

Umbot sa 4.5 milyong tonelada ang inangkat ng NFA kada taon mula Vietnam at Thailand. Sa "tong-pats" na \$10 kada tonelada, \$45 milyon o P2.25 bilyon ang kickback. Pati sako ng bigas ay pinagkitaan: 10¢ kada piraso x 90 milyong sako = \$9 milyon o P450 milyon. Pati Malacañang ay nakiparte sa korapsyon.

Sapol

NI JARIUS BONDOC



Binuwag ang raket na 'yan nu'ng 2019 ng Rice Tariffication Law. Pinatigil ang NFA sa pag-angkat, paglisensya ng umaangkat, at pag-inspeksyon ng pribadong bodega.

Pinayagan kahit sino umangkat ng bigas basta magbayad ng 35% import duty. Nilimita ang NFA sa pagbili ng ani ng magpapalay para emergency buffer kung may sakuna. Ang kita ng gobyerno sa 35% duties ay dapat pampondo ng NFA sa pagbili ng lokal na palay.

Ngayon tinatakot ng mga korap sa DA ang madla. Kesyo raw pang isa't-kalahating araw na lang ang NFA buffer stock. Dapat daw alisin ang Rice Tariffication Law para maka-angkat muli ang NFA.

Ibabalik nila ang mga bilyon-pisong raket. Mababaon muli sa utang at lugi ang NFA. Kawawang bayan ang magtutustos nito.

Makinig sa Sapol, Sabado, 8-10 ng umaga, DWIZ (882-AM).



Small farmers exempt from issuing receipts

THE Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has exempted from issuing receipts agricultural producers whose annual gross sales/receipts do not exceed P1 million.

"Small farmers do not need to issue receipts. The BIR will do its part in making the lives of our farmers easier. The BIR will only require receipts if their annual gross sales/receipts exceed P1 million," BIR Commissioner Romeo Lumagui Jr. said in a statement yesterday.

For ease of doing business, the BIR issued revenue regulation 12-2023 which removes the requirement of principal and supplementary gross sales/receipts for the sale of agricultural food products by these small farmers.

Agricultural food products refer to products in their original state which are generally used for yielding or producing food for human consumption, such as farm produce, livestock, poultry, marine product, ordinary salt and agricultural inputs.

Products that have undergone

See SMALL ► Page A2



Exemption. Revenue Regulation 12-2023 removes the requirement of principal and supplementary gross sales/receipts for the sale of agricultural food products by small farmers. (DA Photo)

SMALL

the simple process of preparation or preservation for market are also covered.

Agricultural producers, however, should still record each sale transaction in a simplified sales book.

"If the annual gross sales/receipts exceed P1 million at any time during the taxable year, the agricultural producer shall be required to issue official receipts/sales invoices for each subsequent transaction valued at

P100 or more," the regulation states.

Agricultural producers covered by the regulation include suppliers/producers/sellers, contract growers and millers of agricultural food products.



Phil food sector to grow 20% this year

By **DANESSA RIVERA**

The Philippine local food service sector is projected to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels by 2024, underpinned by strong consumer confidence and recovery of the tourism and hotel industry, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In a report, the USDA-Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) said sales of the local consumer food service are expected to expand by 20 percent to approximately \$13 billion this year, following a robust growth in 2022, as the tourism and hotel industry continues to improve.

Fueled by local demand, it cited that hotel occupancy rates reached 80 percent in January.

With the recovery of international tourism, the USDA-FAS said the hotel industry would present further growth.

"By early 2024, the food service industry is estimated to recover to pre-pandemic levels," it said.

Based on the chart provided in the report, sales of the local

food service sector amounted to move more than \$13 billion in 2019.

The USDA-FAS said the sector's growth would mainly be driven by dine-in restaurants, catering and events.

In 2022, the sector saw increased popularity of dine-in and the continued increase in deliveries.

This year, popular restaurants are already experiencing full dine-in capacity along with customer queues during weekends.

"With the recovery in the service industry, restaurants and hotels are expected to become more profitable in 2023. After school classes resumed, increased consumer mobility and improved employment rates bolstered restaurant and hotel spending," the USDA-FAS said.

"Some restaurants experience queues of customers dining in, and event bookings are starting to fill up hotel venues," it said.

As the Philippines topped global rankings for social media and internet usage, the USDA-FAS said Instagrammable food establishments are expected to attract more

dine-in customers for social media posts.

Last year, the Philippines was the top country with the highest population of vlog watchers and influencer followers, which include food influencers promoting restaurants.

The USDA-FAS also said food deliveries and non-contact food ordering systems would still provide some support to the sector's growth as these remain a convenient options for consumers.

"Though not as frequent as during the pandemic, use of online delivery platforms, drive-throughs, and curbside pickups will continue to appeal to customers," it said.

The US agency also cited the continued opening of new local and international stores and franchises of restaurant chains.

"While most food establishments are launching new restaurant concepts, some restaurant chains fast-tracked store openings to meet local and international franchise agreements," it said.

The rollout of company and franchise owned stores would outpace independent restaurant, the report said.

"Chains have more financial leverage to expand, efficiency in operations, and capacity to order bulk purchases compared to independent stores. Most food chains such as Jollibee and Potato Corner focused on faster store openings locally and abroad," the USDA-FAS said.

Per segment, the US agency also foresees full-service restau-

rants' sales growth expanding by 25 percent, overtaking the sales of limited-service restaurants, which is projected to have a slower growth at 20 percent.

Café and bar sales growth is seen growing by 20 percent this year, but still far from the pre-pandemic levels.

The USDA-FAS also estimates street stalls and kiosks' sales will grow by 25 percent

this year after outperforming all categories last year.

"Street stalls and kiosks provide convenience and budget food to commuters in transportation hubs and malls. With the face-to-face resumption of classes and work, street stalls and kiosks selling potato fries, hot dogs, milk teas, and fruit shakes will contribute to sales growth," it said.



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Disinflation expected to resume this month

By LOUELLA DESIDERIO

The country's inflation is expected to decelerate this month with data likely to reflect a reversal of the increase in rice prices, according to think tank Oxford Economics.

"We still expect disinflation to resume in October, mainly because local rice prices are firmly on a downward trend," Oxford Economics economist Makoto Tsuchiya told **The STAR**.

He said the headline inflation rate is expected to be at around four to five percent for October.

The headline inflation rate rose for the second straight month to 6.1 percent in September due largely to faster food price increases, particularly rice.

In August, the headline inflation rate was at 5.3 percent.

While the government imposed a price cap of P41 per kilo of regular milled rice and P45 for a kilo of well-milled rice last month,

rice registered a higher inflation rate of 17.9 percent in September from 8.7 percent in August.

National Statistician Dennis Mapa said earlier that it was the highest inflation rate for the staple since it reached 22.9 percent in March 2009.

Tsuchiya said the higher rice inflation rate in September was due to the timing of data collection.

"When data for October will be collected, rice price level will be much lower," he said.

He said the lower rice price level would drag down the headline or overall inflation rate.

Inflation in the January to September period averaged 6.6 percent, still higher than the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' two to four percent target range.

With inflation expected to ease, Tsuchiya said he expects inflation to still settle within the target range this year.



BIR incentivizes farming via tax exemption

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS [@jearcalas](#)

THE Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) announced it has exempted small-scale farmers from issuing receipts if their annual gross sales do not exceed P1 million.

BIR Revenue Regulation (RR) 12-2023 exempts agricultural food-product suppliers, producers, sellers, contract growers and millers from issuing receipts if their annual gross

sales or receipts are below P1 million.

"Small farmers do not need to issue receipts. The BIR will do its part in making the lives of our farmers easier," BIR Commissioner Romeo D.

Lumagui Jr. was quoted in a statement the BIR released last Monday.

Lumagui added that the BIR will only require receipts if the annual gross sales and/or receipts of a farmer exceed P1 million. The BIR chief explained the revenue collector decided to remove the requirement of principal and supplementary gross sales and/or receipts for the sale of agricultural food products by small farmers as part of its "ease of doing business" and "taxpayer's service" program delivery.

According to Lumagui, RR 12-2023 is in line with the provisions of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997 (Republic Act 8424,

as amended).

In its latest regulation, the BIR defines agricultural food products as those sold in their "original state." These are goods "generally used for yielding or producing food for human consumption such as farm produce, livestock, poultry, marine product, ordinary salt and agricultural inputs." The BIR RR 12-2023 also exempts agricultural products that underwent a "simple" process of preparation or preservation. "The said agricultural food products shall still be covered by these Revenue Regulation even if they have undergone the simple processes of preparation or preservation for market, such as freezing, drying,

salting, broiling, roasting, smoking, or stripping, including those using advanced technological means of packaging such as shrink wrapping in plastics, vacuum packing, tera-pack, and other similar packaging method," RR 12-2023 read.

Despite being exempted from the issuance of receipts, the BIR instructed agricultural producers to still record every sale transaction they made in a "simplified" sales book. The information in their sales book must contain the following: date of transaction; description of goods sold or services rendered; registered name; registered address; taxpayer identification number of purchaser

(if engaged in business); amount of sales; amount of tax withheld, if any; and, the net amount received.

"If the annual gross sales/receipts exceed [P1 million] at any time during the taxable year, the agricultural producer shall be required to issue official receipts or sales invoices for every subsequent transaction valued at P100 or more," the BIR said.

The BIR added that agricultural producers would still be exempted from the issuance for receipt or invoice even if they earn from the sale of goods or services other than agricultural food products as long as the annual aggregate gross sales or receipts do not exceed P1 million.



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Small farmers exempted from receipt requirement

SMALL farmers do not have to issue receipts as long as their annual sales do not exceed P1 million, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) said.

"The BIR will do its part in making the lives of our farmers easier," BIR Commissioner Romeo Lumagui Jr. said.

The move is in line with the agency's commitment to improving the ease of doing business and taxpayer services, the BIR said.

Individuals involved in the sale and production of agricultural food products will no longer be required to issue receipts, provided that their annual sales don't exceed

P1 million.

Under Revenue Regulation 12-2023, individuals engaged in supplying, producing, selling, contract growing, and milling of these agricultural food products can avail of the exemption.

Agricultural food products include items in their natural state that are typically used for producing food for people, like farm crops, livestock, poultry, seafood, regular salt, and agricultural materials.

This exemption also applies to products that have undergone basic preparation or preservation for sale, the BIR said.

NIÑA MYKA PAULINE ARCEO



Agri chamber exec: Counter lack of interest among youth

THE lack of interest in agriculture among the youth can lead to a decline in the sector's productivity, a top official of the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (Pcafi) said.

"Without the participation of the youth, the agricultural sector is likely to have an aging population of farmers like what we have now, which can lead to a decline in productivity and innovation," Pcafi President Danilo Fausto said on Saturday.

He added that older farmers do not adapt quickly to new technologies and modern farming practices.

Fausto said the crucial role of agriculture in attaining food security must be promoted to encourage youth to venture into agribusiness.

"Encouraging youth to engage in agribusiness involves addressing several aspects, including changing perceptions, providing education and training, offering support, and creating favorable conditions," he said, noting that the involvement of the younger generation is essential for the sector's sustainability and growth.

He also urged maximizing the use of social media and digital platforms to promote opportunities in the agriculture sector.

"Engage with the youth on platforms they frequent ... create engaging content that highlights the achievements and opportunities within the sector," Fausto said.

He added that the "overreliance" on traditional, less efficient farming methods may limit the diversification of the economy.

The lack of support for younger people who want to enter the agriculture sector was also cited as one of the challenges. Also, by providing financial incentives and grants, Fausto said the financial barriers to the entry of the younger generation to the agriculture sector will be reduced.

"We ask [the] government to help advocate policies that support youth involvement in agribusiness. This could include incentives, streamlined regulations, and initiatives that make it easier for young people to start and sustain agribusinesses," he said.

The idea of a one-stop shop in all provinces and regions across the country to provide assistance for the youth wanting to enter the agriculture sector was also identified by Fausto as one of the possible initiatives from government.

"If the government sees young would-be entrepreneurs interested in agribusiness or agriculture, [they] should provide all encouragement and support to make sure this individual succeeds," said Fausto.

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



A root crop called *camote*

FENG shui (literally, wind water flow) lore has it root crops embody a hidden store of treasures. Say, a local food conglomerate needs yearly 35,000 metric tons of cassava for livestock feed— the available local supply falls short of 13,000 tons. Cassava granules sell for around P9 a kilo.

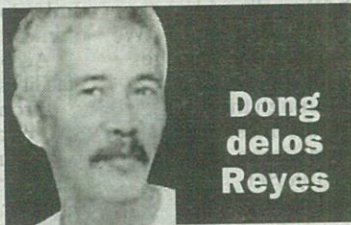
Demand for the same root crop to be used in-liquor manufacturing is hitting above the roof. Why, raising cassava is a no-brainer task— this is one tough crop that can grow in the most hostile patches of earth, providing sustenance for ages to dwellers in sub-Saharan parts of Africa.

While the hardy cassava is nearly pure starch, the lowly sweet potato or kamote is considered by nutritionists as a super food, the most nutritious of all vegetables—kamote levels of Vitamin A are "off the charts, rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties." A fist-sized kamote can supply a day's dose of glucose to fuel the brain, muscles, and organs, so they claim.

Count the country lucky for having been blessed with a plethora of edible root crops that represent buried treasures, as feng shui would have it—tugui, paket, ubag, ubi, gabi, uraro, horse-radish tree or the more familiar malunggay, carrot, radish, potato, jicamas, peanut, asparagus, ginger, galangal, shallot, garlic, onion...

God helps those who help themselves, or, as the Filipino adage goes,

MANGKOKOLUM



Dong delos Reyes

"Nasa Diyos ang awa; nasa tao ang gawa."

Wracked for ages by howlers and inclement clime, the people of Batanes helped themselves raising meek kamote as adjuncts of green to their earth-hugging abodes. Typhoons can come and go but the kamote patches stay green, their hoard of nutrients for sustenance grow in bulk, untouched, a reservoir of food that can be unearthed to hush hunger.

The vernacular architecture that Batanes natives reared was another gesture of helping themselves to endure, adapt to the hostile geography they chose to dwell upon. Spanish missionaries who settled the northern islands brought with them stonecutters, masons, and artisans from Cagayan province to build churches of enduring stone.

The Ivatans of Batanes watched, helped out. Building technology was thus transferred: the natives learned and went on to raise their own houses akin to the cal y canto or mortar and

stone churches.

Man-made structure was adapted to the vagaries of nature. Where storm winds were hurled from, the defense wall was laid like a turtle's carapace at its thickest—about a meter of stone and mortar without a vent. Air ventilation came from windows that opened up to the northeastern breeze.

The natives have not stumbled into cutting slate or granite slabs into shingles to be arrayed as tile roof—they have kept the *cuatro agua* or four layers of bundled cogon sheaves piled as tiles usually capped with a spread of net that prevents the roof from being blown away during storms. The grass roofing also served as effective thermal insulation in summer.

Such homes that withstood surge of storms and whiplash of winds were built in bayanihan fashion. Ivatans, like ants in a colony have practiced for ages a quaint work ethic of helping each other, 18-20 people per team that took the collective burden of home building... yes, they built homes for each other, built a community together.

They adapted the *cal y canto* building techniques from the Spanish friars in the 18th century, rebuilt their communities with such knowledge. Indolence, dearth of imagination, apathy and indifference can be anathema even on the most fertile patch of earth.

Even the most hostile geography can be blessed with *cal y canto* con kamote.

Malaya Business Insight

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Wheat, corn rise

CANBERRA - Chicago wheat prices rose on Monday as traders worried about dry weather shrinking harvests in Argentina and Australia and Russian attacks damaging Ukraine's ability to export grain.

Corn and soybean prices also rose.

"Argentina's 2023 crop is likely being downgraded, as is Australia's. And the starting point for 2024 Black Sea crops is poor," independent analyst Tobin Gorey wrote in a post on LinkedIn.

"None of them on their own are likely to lift global prices much. Woven together, though, they may

be enough," Gorey added.

The most-active Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) wheat futures were up 1.3 percent at \$5.75-3/4 a bushel, having recovered from last month's three-year low of \$5.40.

CBOT corn rose 0.6 percent to \$4.95 a bushel and soybeans were 0.7 percent higher at \$12.74-3/4 a bushel.

Poor production in southern hemisphere countries that harvest later in the year would tighten a market currently awash with exports of cheap wheat from Russia, which has had two bumper harvests in a row. - Reuters