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747 micro rice retailers in Ecija get cash aid

By Steve Gosuico

CABANATUAN CITY -- About 747 micro rice retailers in Nueva Ecija each received their P15,000 cash payout worth a total of P11,205,000 from the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Region 3, according to the Department of Trade and Industry in Nueva Ecija.

DTI Nueva Ecija provincial director Dr. Richard V. Simangan said the cash aid was given to the micro rice retailers who were adversely affected by the putting of price caps on rice with the issuance of Executive Order 39 by President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. on September 5.

On October 4, the President ordered the lifting of price ceilings on rice, nearly a month after its implementation.

"Tuloy-tuloy pa rin naman ang monitoring ng DTI kahit lifted na siya," said Simangan during a "Kapihan with Media" held at their office here on Friday.

"Sa monitoring dito sa Nueva Ecija, lumalabas na pinakamataas ang compliance dito ng ating retailers," added the DTI chief, referring to the compliance of rice retailers to the government's price cap.

A total of 135 rice retailers for its first batch of beneficiaries were given P15,000 by the DSWD-Region 3, broken down as follows per locality: Bongabon, 11; Cabanatuan City, 13; Carranglan, 2; Gabaldon, 18; Gapan City, 12; General Natividad, 3; Guimba, 10; Laur, 4; Lupao, 9; Nampicuan, 3; Quezon, 13; San Jose City, 18; San Leonardo, 3; Munoz Science City, 5; and Zaragoza, 7.

The second batch of 612 rice retailers came from: Aliaga, 18; Bongabon, 9; Cabanatuan City, 59; Cabiao, 27; Carranglan, 17; Cuyapo, 21; Gabaldon, 59; Gapan City, 16; General Natividad, 14; General Tinio, 6; Guimba, 17; Jaen, 29; Laur, 6; Licab, 15; Llanera, 9; Lupao, 22; Nampicuan, 13; Palayan City, 12; Pantabangan, 12; Peñaranda, 4; Quezon, 39; Rizal, 44; San Antonio, 8; San Isidro, 17; San Jose City, 14; San Leonardo, 14; Santa Rosa, 19; Santo Domingo, 26; Science City of Muñoz, 13; Talavera, 25; Talugtug, 7; and Zaragoza, 3.

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DA assures public of stable pork prices until yearend

By **ROMINA CABRERA**

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has assured the public of stable pork prices until the end of the year, even with the coming holiday season.

There might be small price increases toward the holidays with increased demand but there is still enough supply up to the end of the fourth quarter, according to DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa.

De Mesa cited the price of egg, whose price increases during the school open-

ing season and the holiday season due to a natural slight increase in the demand, but since the supply is stable, the price increase is tamed.

He added that monitoring showed that prices of pork ranged from around P280 to P360, with some cuts showing a price drop over the last few days.

Data also showed that the country has more than 19 days of surplus inventory in pork, given the 38,000-metric ton (MT) imports at the end of the third quarter.



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Stable PH rice supply seen in Q1 of 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) on Saturday said that the supply of rice in the country will be stable in the first quarter of 2024, with abundant palay harvest this wet season coupled with rice imports arranged for the third quarter of this year.

In a news forum in Quezon City, Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the government's current rice inventory, including the additional imports, will be enough to cover the national stock until the first quarter of next year.

Explaining the palay production this October, which is the peak of the harvest

this wet season, de Mesa said they are expecting 77 days of national rice stock inventory this month.

He said that once the wet season harvest ends this November, they expect about 94 days of national stock inventory.

The figure still excludes the additional imports last September, de Mesa said, as the DA expects rice imports in the third quarter to reach 271,000 metric tons.

"In total, until the end of the third

►RiceA8



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quarter, is 2.4 million metric tons. This is 600,000 metric tons lower than the 3 million metric tons of the same period last year," he added.

The DA official also noted that slower inflation could be expected as a result of the drop in rice prices in the market after September's high inflation rate.

He said the imposition of Executive Order 39, setting the price ceiling on rice, has been adequately felt in the last week of September.

"We saw a low level of compliance among rice retailers in the initial week of its implementation, but it started to pick up in the third and last week of September, reaching 87 percent compliance," de Mesa said.

De Mesa also said a lot of retailers were selling rice even lower than P41 and P45 a kilo, as it coincided with the start of the wet season harvest that started in the last week of August.

"With the entry of September and the peak October-November harvest, there is even more supply, so we can expect stability in the prices of rice, and we can also expect a downtrend of rice prices in some areas nationwide," he said.

The price cap was implemented from September 5 until October 4, when President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. lifted the measure.

Affected retailers were given cash assistance worth P15,000 as a result of the price cap.

The measure stemmed from the surge in retail prices of rice in local markets, which Marcos blamed on smugglers and hoarders of agricultural products.

The President recently announced that smuggling charges were filed against the San Pedro Warehouse and Blue Sakura Agri Grain Corp., the F.S. Ostia Rice Mill and Gold Rice Mill.

Pork, egg supply

Meanwhile, de Mesa assured the public that there is enough supply of pork and egg to meet demand this Christmas season with improved local production and scheduled meat imports.

He said that pork imports are continuing, especially in the fourth quarter, based on the schedule arranged by the Bu-

reau of Animal Industry (BPI) last month.

"What I mentioned before, that's what we are doing now ... as for the import, it is continuing because it will come in this fourth quarter — that was processed by the Bureau of Animal Industry a few months ago," de Mesa said.

"ASF (African swine fever) is already here; it started in August 2019 in Rodriguez, Rizal, when I was still a regional director, and there are many areas that have been hit by ASF, we have graduated from the infected zone or red zone into pink zone, our buffer zone is now up to yellow zone," he added.

To counter the effect of the ASF, de Mesa said that the DA has been carrying out the "BABay ASF" program, in addition to pest control, prevention, biosecurity and repopulation initiatives by the department.

This is to ensure that those areas hit by ASF could restart production, the DA official said, stressing that another promising development is that of the ASF vaccine.

"It is continuing ... and now the vaccine for ASF and AI (avian influenza) is undergoing our testing, and your results are good and hopefully it will continue," he said.

With regard to egg supply in the country, especially with the Christmas holiday, de Mesa said they don't see any problem or disruption.

"Because our supply is stable, as well as our production of day-old pullets that will become layers when the time comes, the population is good, so we don't see any problems," de Mesa said.

"And that avian influenza that affected Central Luzon, although some were affected, they are slowly recovering," he added.

The DA official said that egg consumption usually increases during the opening of classes as more students prefer eggs for breakfast.

There is also high demand from hotels, restaurants and industrial users, de Mesa said.

About 40 percent of the supply goes to industrial users, while 60 percent is for household consumption, he added.

CATHERINES.S.VALENTE



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Boosted NIA budget to produce over 570,000 metric tons of palay

By XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS

The additional ₱40 billion budget for the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) can irrigate more rice fields that will produce over 570,000 metric tons more palay or unhusked rice each year.

NIA Administrator Eduardo Guillen said more investment in irrigation systems for next year can return over ₱10 billion per year in over four years or less

"And if computed conservatively at ₱19 per kilo, it can generate ₱10.83 billion per year, with a payback period of four years or less," the NIA chief said in a statement.

Some of the 2024 budget, Guillen noted, will also be used in addressing climate change and sustainability concerns, including solar-powered pump irrigation systems.

"This significant sum of ₱40 billion will also play a crucial role in addressing both climate change and sustainability concerns. Solar-

powered pump irrigation systems will revolutionize our nation's irrigation coverage, reaching previously inaccessible areas while mitigating the impending effects of climate patterns like El Niño," he said. "This is a wise investment on Philippine agriculture, the Filipino farmer and, ultimately, the average Filipino rice consumer."

Earlier, the House Committee on Appropriations, chaired by Rep. Elizaldy Co, amended the proposed ₱5.768 trillion national budget for 2024 to realign over ₱194 billion to

fight inflation and "invest in people and the country's future."

The small committee also amended the 2024 budgets for the Department of Agriculture to ₱20 billion for the rice subsidy program and ₱2 billion for the Philippine Coconut Authority for massive planting and replanting of seedlings.

The House of Representatives also realigned the 2024 budgets for vaccines against the African swine fever to ₱1.5 billion and the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority

to ₱1 billion for building fishery and post-harvest facilities in Palawan and Kalayaan Group of Islands.

The budget realignment for NIA will focus on agricultural productivity, which is among President Marcos' top priorities, Guillen said.

"Ensuring long-term food security is a paramount objective for NIA. To address the growing demand for food in our country, it is imperative to accelerate the development of new irrigation areas. Our strategic approach involves the establishment of multi-purpose dams, small reservoirs, small-scale irrigation systems, and the promotion of solar-driven pump irrigation systems, which offer cost-effective and sustainable alternatives to traditional diesel- or electric-driven pumps," he added.



Imported pork bubuhos sa Kapaskuhan

Walang dapat na ipangamba ang publiko sa suplay ng karneng baboy at itlog lalo na habang paparating ang kapaskuhan dahil maayos ang lokal na produksyon at may mga darating pa na imported pork, ayon sa Department of Agriculture (DA).

Sinabi ni DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa sa isang news forum sa Quezon City nitong Sabado, Okubre 14, na may parating na mga imported pork dahil inaprubahan na ito ng Bureau of Animal Industry noon pang Setyembre.

"Iyong nabanggit ko dati na, iyon nga na inayos ko ngayon... iyong import naman ay tuluy-tuloy iyan dahil parating ngayong fourth quarter - ito iyong naproseso noong mga nakaraang buwan pa ng Bureau of Animal Industry," sabi ni De Mesa.

Kaugnay naman sa suplay ng itlog, wala umanong nakikitang aberya sa naturag agri product pagsapit ng Kapaskuhan.

Ayon kay De Mesa, kadalasang tumataas ang konsumo ng itlog tuwing pasukan dahil kinakain ito sa agahan ng mga mag-aaral.

Pero malakas din umano ang demand ng itlog sa mga hotel, restaurant at industrial users na nasa 40 porsiyento mula sa kabuuang suplay nito habang 60 porsiyento naman ang konsumo ng mga sambahayan.



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PRESYO NG BIGAS PABABA NA

Asahan na ang matatag na suplay ng bigas sa abot-kayang halaga sa unang bahagi ng susunod na taon.

"We can expect stability in the prices of bigas and we can also expect na may ilang lugar na bababa rin talaga ang presyo sa mga merkado natin," sabi ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa sa isang news forum sa Quezon City nitong Sabado, Oktubre 14.

Tiniyak ng DA na may masaganang ani ng palay ngayong tag-ulan kasama ang pag-angkat ng bigas na nakaayos para sa ikatlong quarter ngayong taon.

"Bagama't umaasatayo ng mga karagdagang import ay napakakomportable sa ating pambansang stock inventory - normally, tinitingnan natin sa pagitan ng 60 hanggang 90 araw," ayon kay De Mesa. "But with our inventory plus imports, going into the first quarter of next year ay matatag na po ang suplay ng ating bigas sa buong bansa."

Sa pagpapaliwanag

sa produksyon ng palay ngayong Oktubre, na siyang pinakamataas na ani ngayong tag-ulan, sinabi ni De Mesa na inaasahan nila ang 77 araw ng pambansang imbentaryo ng bigas ngayong buwan.

Kapag natapos na umano ang wet season harvest nitong Nobyembre, sinabi niyang inaasahan nila ang 94 na araw ng national stock inventory.

"Kaya wala pa rito iyong mga karagdagang import noong buwan ng Setyembre at katapusan ng ikatlong quarter ay umabot sa 271,000 metric tons ang iyong na-import," paliwanag ni De Mesa.

"Ang kabuuan, hanggang end ng third quarter is 2.4 million metric tons. Ito ay 600,000 metriko toneladang mas mababa sa tatlong milyong metriko tonelada ng parehong panahon noong nakaraang taon," dagdag pa ng opisyal.

Samantala, sa pagtaas ng inflation rate noong Setyembre, tinanong si De Mesa sa forum kung inaasahan nila ang mas mabagal na inflation bunga ng

pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas sa merkado.

"Kami ay naniniwala na malaki ang epekto ng pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas. Kasi kung titingnan natin, sa inflation rate, malaking bahagi iyong food inflation na contribution - at doon sa food inflation, malaking kontribusyon doon iyong malaki," tugon ni De Mesa.

"At ang tantiya namin, noong nagkaroon ng pag-aaral doon sa inflation, iyong epekto kasi ng Executive Order No. 39, naramdaman ito towards last week ng September," ayon pa sa kanya.

Kaugnay ng EO 39 ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr., sinabi ni De Mesa na nakita nila ang mababang antas ng pagsunod sa mga retailer ng bigas sa unang linggo ng pagpapatupad nito ngunit nagsimula itong tumaas noong ikatlo at huling linggo ng Setyembre, na umabot sa 87 porsiyento na pagsunod.

Maraming retailer ang nagbebenta umano ng bigas na mas mababa pa sa P41 at P45 kada kilo dahil kasabay ito ng pagsisimula ng tag-ulan na anihan na nagsimula noong huling linggo ng Agosto.

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Masaganang ani inaasahan **Presyo ng bigas, pababa na - DA**

Asahan na ang matatag na suplay ng bigas sa abot kayang halaga sa unang bahagi ng susunod na taon.

"We can expect stability in the prices of bigas and we can also expect na may ilang lugar na bababa rin talaga ang presyo sa mga merkado

natin."

Ito ang tiniyak ng Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Sabado na may masaganang ani ng palay ngayong tag-ulan kasama ang pag-angat ng bigas na nakaayos para sa ikatlong quarter ngayong taon.

"Bagama't umaasa

tayo ng mga karagdagang import ay napakakomportable sa ating pambansang stock inventory - normally, tinitingnan natin sa pagitan ng 60 hanggang 90 araw," ani Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa sa isang news forum sa Quezon City.

NI ANGIE DELA CRUZ

"But with our inventory plus imports, going into the first quarter of next year ay matatag na po ang supply ng ating bigas sa buong bansa."

Sa pagpapaliwanag sa produksyon ng palay ngayong Oktubre, na si-

yang pinakamataas na ani ngayong tag-ulan, sinabi ni De Mesa na inaasahan nila ang 77 araw ng pambansang imbentaryo ng bigas ngayong buwan.

At kapag natapos na ang wet season harvest nitong Nobyembre, sinabi niyang inaasahan nila ang tungkol sa 94 na araw ng national stock inventory.

"Kaya wala pa rito ang iyong mga karagdagang import noong buwan ng Setyembre at katapusan ng ikatlong quarter ay umabot sa 271,000 metric tons ang iyong na-import," paliwanag ni De Mesa.

"Ang kabuuan, hanggang end ng third quarter is 2.4 million metric tons. Ito ay 600,000 metriko toneladang mas mababa

sa tatlong milyong metriko tonelada ng parehong panahon noong nakaraang taon.

Sa pagtaas ng inflation rate noong Setyembre, tinanong si De Mesa sa forum kung inaasahan nila ang mas mabagal na inflation bunga ng pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas sa merkado.

"Kami ay naniniwala na malaki ang epekto ng pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas. Kasi kung titingnan natin, sa inflation rate, malaking bahagi iyong food inflation na contribution - at doon sa food inflation, malaking kontribusyon doon iyong malaki," tugon ng agriculture official.

"At ang tantiya namin, noong nagkaroon ng pag-aaral doon sa inflation, iyong epekto kasi ng Executive Order (EO)

No. 39, naramdaman ito towards last week ng September," dagdag pa nito.

Kaugnay ng EO 39 ng Pangulo, sinabi ni De Mesa na nakita nila ang mababang antas ng pag-sunod sa mga retailer ng bigas sa unang linggo ng pagpapatupad nito ngunit nagsimula itong tumaas noong ikatlo at huling linggo ng Setyembre, na umabot sa 87-porsiyento na pagsunod.

Maraming retailer ang nagbebenta ng bigas na mas mababa pa sa P41 at P45 kada kilo, dahil kasabay ito ng pagsisimula ng tag-ulan na ani na nagsimula noong huling linggo ng Agosto, aniya, na binanggit na sa pagpasok ng Setyembre at ang peak Oktubre- November harvest, may supply pa.



Farmers' group sells rice to Negrenses at P25 per kilo

By Joel dela Torre

THE National Irrigation Administration (NIA)'s Federation of Irrigators Association of Central Negros-Bago River Irrigation System (FIACN-BRIS) has sold rice for P25 per kilo during the opening day of "Bigas ng Bayan" at the Food Terminal Market in North Capitol Road, Bacolod City.

According to NIA Region VI acting manager Jonel Borres, the P25 per kilo price was made possible through the convergence of all sectors of society, in partnership with

the provincial government of Negros Occidental, which opened up the "Bigas ng Bayan" Thursday.

He pointed out that the FIACN-BRIS led by Federation president Pedro Limpangog, allotted the 10 percent of their total production to the Negrenses at the said price that can be availed up to 5 kilos per consumer only.

At least 455 individuals had availed of the low-priced rice on its opening day, where senior citizens, indigents and per-

sons with disabilities (PWDs) were on top of the priorities.

Prior to this, Negros Occidental Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson tapped the FIACN-BRIS in its Dagyaw Project, an initiative that promotes farm-level productivity interventions.

They produced high-yield rice at a lower production cost with the aid of Job Order (JO) workers, who are also Irrigators Association (IA) members, in farming activities such as planting crops and running farm

equipment and machinery.

With President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s directives for "cooperation, collaboration, and convergence," NIA acting administrator Eddie Guillen has boosted the agency's partnerships with different national government agencies (NGAs), local government units (LGUs), and private sector to ensure food security and agricultural productivity despite agricultural challenges and threats such as El Niño.

The combined efforts

and initiatives of the FIACN-BRIS, provincial and local government units, and the NIA are a testament to the PBBM administration's vision of combating hunger and poverty and achieving food sufficiency and security across the country.

NIA continues its commitment in developing efficient and sustainable irrigation systems to uplift the lives of the Filipino farmers with the aim of propelling wealth creation opportunities in the agricultural sector.



DA assures public of sufficient rice supply in Q1 of 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) give an assurance on Saturday of sufficient rice supply in the country early next year with abundant palay harvest this wet season coupled with rice imports arranged for the third quarter this year.

"Bagama't umaasa tayo ng additional imports ay very comfortable iyong ating national stock inventory – normally, tinitingnan natin between 60 to 90 days," Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said in a news forum in Quezon City.

"But with our inventory plus imports, going into the first quarter of next year ay matatag po ang supply ng ating bigas sa buong bansa."

Explaining the palay production this October, which is the peak of the harvest this wet season, De Mesa said they are expecting 77 days of national rice stock inventory this month.

And once the wet season harvest ends this November, he said

they expect about 94 days of national stock inventory.

"So wala pa rito iyong additional imports noong buwan ng Setyembre at katapusan ng third quarter ay umabot sa 271,000 metric tons iyong na-import," De Mesa explained.

"Ang kabuuan, hanggang end ng third quarter is 2.4 million metric tons. This is 600,000 metric tons lower than three million metric tons of the same period last year."

With the higher inflation rate last September, De Mesa was asked during the forum if they expect slower inflation as a result of the drop in rice prices in the market.

"Kami ay naniniwala na malaki ang epekto ng pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas. Kasi kung titingnan natin, sa inflation rate, malaking bagay iyong food inflation na contribution – at doon sa food inflation, malaking contribution doon iyong bigas," the agriculture official said as a response. "At ang tantiya namin,

noong nagkaroon ng pag-aaral doon sa inflation, iyong epekto kasi ng Executive Order (EO) No. 39, naramdaman ito towards last week ng September."

With regard to the President's EO 39, De Mesa said that they saw low level of compliance among rice retailers in the initial week of its implementation but it started to pick up in the third and last week of September, reaching 87-percent compliance.

A lot of retailers were selling rice even lower than P41 and P45 a kilo, as it coincided with the start of wet season harvest that started in the last week of August, he said, noting that with the entry of September and the peak October-November harvest, there is even more supply.

"So, we can expect stability in the prices ng bigas and we can also expect na may mga ilang lugar na bababa rin talaga ang presyo sa mga merkado natin."



EDITORIAL

Driver of inflation

With the inflation rate still rising, so-called pass-through fees for the transport of commodities have been suspended nationwide. Transport, agriculture and business groups have welcomed the suspension of the fees collected by local government units, barangay offices and police. The government, however, will have to address related issues that are contributing to high consumer prices.

In Metro Manila, at least seven transport groups have announced plans to stage a strike over alleged extortion by local traffic and barangay enforcers in five cities. Meanwhile, an official of the country's largest business group has said that corruption contributes to the high inflation rate.

The Liga ng Transportasyon at mga Operator sa Pilipinas is seeking Metro Manila mayors' intervention to stop the reported collection by barangay and local traffic enforcers of up to P5,000 a week for the use of transport terminals, and P20 daily from every jeepney driver for permission to ply the streets. LTOP said drivers were losing from P200 to P300 a day from the collections. The group said a letter sent to Interior Secretary Benhur Abalos got no response; Abalos said he did not see the letter. He expressed readiness to meet with the group.

Meanwhile, the vice president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Perry Ferrer, estimated that

from one to one-and-a-half percent of the 6.1 percent inflation rate in September was due to corruption. Members of the PCCI are mostly operators of micro, small and medium enterprises, which account for over 90 percent of businesses nationwide. Ferrer reportedly gave the assessment during a pre-event briefing for the 49th Philippine Business Conference and Expo to be held at the end of this month. "If you take a look at all the goods [whose prices] are unusually high, these are all due to corruption," he was quoted as saying.

Last year, a survey among 119 of the country's top chief executive officers showed that corruption was seen as the top risk to post-COVID economic recovery, trumping surging oil prices and inflation. The survey, conducted online and through physical questionnaires from July to August by the Management Association of the Philippines together with PwC, showed that 67 percent saw corruption delaying economic recovery from the pandemic. The survey showed that the CEOs wanted the Marcos administration to give priority to promoting accountability and transparency, fighting corruption and attracting investments.

Surveys have consistently shown that the Marcos administration is seen to be weakest in managing inflation. Several sectors have cited one of the ways to address the problem: corruption must be curbed.



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Point of view

We must not take water for granted

By QU DONGYU

This year's World Food Day (Oct. 16) celebrates one of the planet's most precious resources: water. It's essential to life on Earth. It covers the majority of the planet's surface, makes up over 50 percent of our bodies, helps keep us fed, supports livelihoods and is central to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

So how should we approach the complex challenge of shielding our existing freshwater resources and aquatic food systems from pollution and the impacts of the climate crisis, while ensuring that people have equal access to water?

With about 70 percent of all freshwaters going to agriculture, changing the ways we produce our food, fiber, and other agricultural products is the most crucial task. It is also where failure to act will have the gravest consequences.

Freshwater is not infinite, and we need to stop taking it for granted.

Consider that over the last two decades, each of us on earth has lost approximately one-fifth of the freshwater available to us. For some people, the reality is much worse. In some regions, in fact, it runs closer to one-third.

Unless we act urgently, we are on course to increase our water use by more than a third by 2050 globally, given our planet's growing population. That means, collectively, we risk reaching a point of no return.

Rapid population growth, urbanization, industrialization, economic development and the climate crisis have all taken a toll on our water resources. Combined with water pollution, over-extraction and lack of coordinated management, this creates a complex mix of overlapping challenges.

Increased extreme weather events, drought and flooding are stressing our ecosystems, with daunting consequences for global food security. Smallholder farmers, particularly the poor, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, migrants and refugees, are the most vulnerable.

Approaching a complex challenge

At the heart of the balancing act to address these combined challenges must be securing sufficient water for agriculture, while reconciling the competing water needs of other economic activities, especially as urbanization accelerates.

Good governance is crucial for sustainable and equitable water allocation, through an integrated and inclusive approach with all partners. Water governance and tenure, water pricing, regulations and incentive measures are needed to drive change and ensure equitable access to clean and safe water resources.

We need to implement integrated water resources management through coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources to maximize human well-being, without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems. For this we need both national and regional designs.

Investment in innovative, efficient water management practices is vital, including in modern irrigation and storage technologies and science-based solutions to address water scarcity and harnessing flooding; so that we are building a water-saving and resilient society, including through managing more effectively the water-food-energy nexus.

Action on the ground

We can and are working to make these things happen. For example, in the Sahel FAO is providing mechanization opportunities to farmers to improve their water infrastructure and is supporting rural women and their households to access water.

Globally, irrigated land produces 40 percent of food from 20 percent of arable land – yet it remains an untapped potential.

To help deliver on this potential, FAO is developing a global irrigation needs and potential mapping methodology, and we look forward to working with countries to implement it.

Appropriate financing mechanisms and investments, at the right and big scale, are key to building and maintaining capital-intensive infrastructure.

Resilience-based solutions are key. Prioritizing green and blue infrastructure to promote agriculture and fisheries respectively can enhance water quality, maintain biodiversity and provide other benefits to agrifood systems and rural areas.

In Sri Lanka and Zambia, for example, FAO is piloting multifunctional paddy fields for fish and shrimp farming, in addition to rice production.

Such value-added infrastructure generates benefits by recharging groundwater, controlling floods and providing ecosystem services.

All actors must be on board

We can and must do more, together, with all the various actors making their distinct, yet inter-related contributions.

Governments need to design science- and evidence-based policies that capitalize on data and innovation, and coordinate across sectors to plan and manage water better. Water, energy and food are inextricably linked, and for policies to be successful, it's important they manage often-competing interests without compromising the health of our ecosystems.

Our farmers need to become agents of water management and be equipped with the right tools to perform that function sustainably. Farmers, forest-dependent people, livestock producers and those working in the blue economy of fisheries and aquaculture already manage water on a daily basis. Supporting and encouraging them to take leadership in finding and implementing water solutions is both the obvious and the smart thing to do.

Businesses need to become water stewards. That means making concrete commitments to improving water use efficiency and reducing pollution across the supply chain. This doesn't just benefit nature and society, but businesses too. Taking water governance seriously can boost their reputation and profits and help them avoid risks that water scarcity, floods and pollution could pose to operations in the future.

Let me underline again that all of us need to stop taking water for granted. Making informed decisions about the products we buy, wasting less water and preventing flooding disaster and pollution are easy ways for everybody to contribute to positive action for a future of prosperity for people and the planet. They are central to achieving what we at FAO refer to as the Four Betters: better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life – to ensure no one is left behind.

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