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New rice varieties, tech will plug food shortage—Marcos

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

✉ @sam_medenilla

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Monday called for the development of more new rice varieties and technology to address the growing “existential threat” of food shortage.

During the 6th International Rice Congress (IRC) at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City, the chief executive stressed the crucial role of the innovations to help boost rice production even during calamitous events like El Niño.

“Whenever we find ourselves in a situation where the supply of rice is threatened, this is almost an existential prob-

lem that ordinary people feel,” Marcos said.

He urged other government agencies and the private sector to collaborate with the Laguna-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) to develop such new solutions and mechanisms for such a crisis.

Among the new technologies from IRRI is the ultra-low glycaemic index rice, which was presented to the President during the IRC, to help curb rising diabetes globally.

He said he hopes the IRC will help create more similar innovations, which can be rolled out to benefit not only consumers but also farmers.

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Rice...

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“The discoveries in this Congress will pave the way for greater strides in the rice industry in the Philippines and across the globe. I look forward to seeing the innovations to be discussed in this Congress come to life, including the ultra-low GI rice, in the near future,” Marcos said.

He noted the country’s hosting of the IRC comes at an opportune time as the “government compare and reevaluate policies, discuss ideas for enhancing global rice value chains, and introduce better practices and technologies.”

“We need all of these to sustain our growth,” Marcos said.

BUSINESSMIRROR reported last week data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which showed the country’s self-sufficiency ratio for rice in 2022 dropped to 77 percent—the lowest in 24 years or since 1998.



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Marcos: More than food, rice is life for Pinoys

By **ALEXIS ROMERO**

Rice is life for Filipinos, **President Marcos** said yesterday, as he likened issues affecting the supply of the food staple to an "existential problem."

"It goes without saying but I think it bears repeating that rice in our countries means more than food. Rice in Asia, rice in the countries where it is the staple, is in fact life," Marcos told delegates of the 6th International Rice Congress in Pasay.

"And whenever we find ourselves in a situation where the supply of rice is threatened, this is almost an existential problem that ordinary people feel," he added.

Marcos, also the agriculture secretary, gave assurance that the government is working to modernize and promote the growth of the farming sector and to run

after smugglers and hoarders.

"So as I end, let me assure and challenge you in this way: We will spare no effort to ensure the growth of the rice industry here in our country even as we safeguard the welfare of farmers and consumers alike," he said.

"We will do everything to pursue and punish those who are involved in smuggling and hoarding. We will make them pay for their wrongful actions and remedy the situation."

Marcos noted that the issues with the price and supply of rice stem from several factors that need urgent attention. He cited the effects of global rice prices, the "recurrent pounding of typhoons and other natural calamities" and criminal activities like illegal importation, smuggling, hoarding and other anti-competitive practices.

"So, seeing the complexities of the

situation, we strive to approach it in a comprehensive and a holistic way based on science," the Chief Executive said.

Marcos said the government invests in research and machinery and supports farmers through the National Rice Program and the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund.

The Philippines has also been working with international institutions like the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and foreign governments to ensure the steady supply of rice and to enhance the development and sharing of crucial technologies and strategies, he added.

Marcos called on state agencies and their private sector partners to continue working with the IRRI and its partners in identifying creative solutions and mechanisms for a more robust rice industry.



6TH INTERNATIONAL RICE CONGRESS — President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. poses with the participants to the 6th International Rice Congress (IRC) held at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City on Monday, Oct. 16, 2023. Seated with the President are IRC 2023 Head Overall Organizing Committee Chair Dr. Bas Bouman, Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food Chairman Senator Cynthia Villar, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Interim Director General and Deputy Director General for Research Ajay Kohli, and Pasay City Mayor Imelda 'Emi' Calixto-Rubiano. (Noel B. Pabalate)

Rice is life: PBBM urges gov't agencies to work with IRRI, solve rice woes

By BETHEENA UNITE
and XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS

Stressing that rice is not merely just a food but life, President Marcos encouraged government agencies and the private sector to continue collaborating with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in identifying solutions on the coun-

try's rice industry problems.

Speaking at the 6th International Rice Congress (IRC) 2023 on Monday, Oct. 16, Marcos shared with the international participants the issues currently hounding the rice industry in the country.

He cited recurrent pounding of typhoons and other natural calamities, and criminal



NATIONAL COOPERATIVE DAY — President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. leads the celebration of the National Cooperative Day at the Heroes Hall of Malacañang Palace on Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 with (from left) Cooperative Development Authority Chairman Undersecretary Joseph 'Joy' Encabo, Rep. Felimon M. Espares, Rep. Nicanor Briones, and Commissioner Romeo D. Lumagui Jr. In his message, the president underscored the vital link between the cooperative movement and agriculture, underscoring the importance of consolidating farmers within cooperatives. (Photo by Yummie Dingding / PPA POOL)

Rice is life: PBBM urges gov't agencies to work with IRRI, solve rice woes 1◀

activities such as illegal importation, smuggling and hoarding, and other anti-competitive practices continue to threaten the rice sector.

The President said the contribution from international institutions would help the Philippines address the situation.

"So, I enjoin all of our government agencies and of course our partners in the private sector to continue collaborating with the IRRI and its partners in identifying creative solutions and mechanisms for a more robust rice industry," Marco said in his speech.

"Your participation will surely inspire the rest of society and the entire global community to fortify our efforts for food security across the region and the world," he added.

Rice is life

Marcos also underscored that rice, for the Philippines, means more than food, as he stressed the need for collaboration among local and international stakeholders, who are also in the same rice situation.

"It goes without saying but I think it bears repeating that rice in our country means more than food. Rice in Asia, rice in the countries where it is the staple is in fact life," he said.

"And whenever we find ourselves in a situation where the supply of rice is threatened, this is almost an existential problem that ordinary people feel," he added.

He reiterated that the government will "spare no effort" to ensure the growth of the rice industry in the country and safeguard the welfare of farmers and consumers alike.

"We will do everything to pursue and punish those who are involved in smuggling and hoarding. We will make them pay for their wrongful actions and remedy the situation," he said.

"We will remain steadfast in our efforts to modernize the agriculture sector through open dialogue and consultations with our farmers and agriculture experts," he added.

The Chief Executive also expressed confidence that the three-day congress, which is participated by scientists, experts and decision-makers, will promote the development and use of more quality rice varieties and technologies such as the ultra-low glycemic index or GI rice.

"The discoveries in this congress will pave the way for greater strides in the rice industry in the Philippines and across the globe. I look forward to seeing the innovations to be discussed in this Congress come to life, including the ultra-low GI rice, in the near future," he said.

Every four years, the event brings together scientists, experts and decision-makers from the government, private and public sectors to formulate evidence-based solutions to some of the biggest challenges being faced by

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the global rice sector.

It is taking place for the first time in the Philippines, serving as the home country of the IRRI Headquarters located in Los Baños Laguna. The previous editions of the Congress were held in Singapore (2018), Bangkok (2014), Hanoi (2010), New Delhi (2006) and Beijing (2002).

Higher rice, corn output expected in Q3

The country's rice production in the third quarter may experience a slight increase compared to the same period last year.

In a report, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) settled the rice output from July to September at 3.8 million metric tons as of Sept. 1.

This reflected an increase of 0.3 percent compared to 3.79 percent million metric tons in the same period a year earlier. However, July's estimates were higher at 3.88 million metric tons.

Further, PSA noted in its forecast that there may be a smaller harvest area for the third quarter at 926,870 hectares, lower by 0.5 percent from the 931,750 in the same period last year.

This decrease in harvest may be offset by the increase in yield per hectare at 4.10 metric tons, slightly higher by 0.7 percent from last year's 4.7 metric tons.

Of the 926,870 hectares harvest area for rice, around 401,900 hectares

have been harvested as of Sept. 1. This translates to 1.62 million metric tons of palay output collected.

As for the 524,970 hectares that have yet to be harvested, 20.6 percent were at the reproductive stage while 79.4 were at the maturing stage.

The PSA also projected that corn production may see an increase in the third quarter to 2.46 million metric tons or 4.5 percent higher than the 2.35 million metric tons in the same period a year ago.

However, the agency indicated that this was a decrease of 3.9 percent compared to the corn output estimates of 2.56 million metric tons back on July 1.

It said that the cause for this upward revision to its forecast is the expected bigger harvest area at 820,650 hectares, up 1.8 percent from last year's 806,420 hectares.

The corn yield per hectare is also expected to swell at 2.99 metric tons or a 2.8 percent increase compared to last year's record of 2.91 metric tons in the third quarter.

Of the 820,650 hectares harvest area for corn, 436,670 hectares have been harvested as of Sept. 1. It produced over 1.18 million metric tons of corn output.

The 383,980 hectares of area for corn that have yet to be harvested comprised the reproductive stage at 13.9 percent and the maturing stage at 86.1 percent.



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Marcos vows support for consolidated farmers' cooperative associations

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

President Marcos said the government will support efforts to consolidate local farmers cooperative associations (FCAs), citing their critical role in the country's agricultural development.

Marcos said this as he led the National Cooperative Day celebration in Malacañan on Monday, Oct. 16.

In his speech, the President called on the country's cooperative

movement to start the consolidation process for local FCAs, vowing government support in carrying out the effort.

"That is how I see the role of the cooperative movement today. Cooperative movement is very closely related to agriculture because for the simple reason that we need to consolidate our farmers," he said.

The President, who has been spearheading the efforts to strengthen Philippine cooperatives, said he envisions a movement in which

the cooperative movement, the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), and the government are working together.

According to Marcos, strong cooperatives are vital to improving the country's agriculture and ensuring food security, noting that the Philippines has been lagging behind Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam in agricultural production.

"Sa bigas lang, ang cost of production natin napakataas at isa sa pinakamalaking factor doon ay yung labor

cost (In rice alone, our production cost is very high, and one of the biggest factors is the labor cost)," he said.

"Ang labor cost ng bawat ektarya ng bigas— ng palay— dito sa Pilipinas (The labor cost for every hectare of rice) is double the labor cost per hectare of Vietnam, of Thailand, even Indonesia," he added.

Through the cooperatives, President Marcos said that the country could attain economies of scale, especially with the use of huge farm machinery for producing and

processing that, in the end, reduce food prices.

As of 2022, there were 20,105 cooperatives in the country, around 1.8 percent lower than the 20,467 cooperatives registered as of 2021.

Based on government records, credit and financial services cooperatives accounted for more than half of the total cooperatives in 2022, followed by agriculture, consumers, and marketing cooperatives.

Last year, the industry generated almost 335,000 jobs.

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DA: 'Very difficult' to achieve rice target

ACHIEVING rice self-sufficiency will have to take a while as population growth continues to outpace productivity improvements, an Agriculture department official said on Monday.

"It is very difficult to attain 100 percent, as there is still a lot to be done," Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa told reporters.

De Mesa claimed that local productivity was rising but added that the department also had to

► **Rice B2**

■ RICE FROM B1

DA: 'Very difficult'

deal with population growth.

"[T]he latest statistics now show that [our population] is more than 110 million," he said.

Based on the last official census, the population of the Philippines was a little over 109 million as of May 1, 2020. Current estimates place the number at just under or at 118 million as of 2023.

The country is one of the biggest consumers of rice in the world, with domestic consumption estimated by the United

States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to hit 16.5 million metric tons for 2023-2024.

Local rice production falls short of that number, with the USDA projecting output of 12.6 million MT for the same period. Rice self-sufficiency, based on Philippine Statistics Authority data, was at 77 percent last year, dropping from 81.5 percent in 2021.

Demand for the grain has made the Philippines one of the world's biggest rice importers

— the USDA has said that the country has overtaken China to top the global list — and made it vulnerable to supply shortages and price spikes.

Supply issues this year alone have led to domestic price surges, fueling inflation and prompting the government to briefly order a cap on rice prices.

Government after government has adopted rice self-sufficiency as a target, but the goal has yet to be achieved. Most recently **President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.**, who also heads the Agriculture department, claimed that 100 percent could be exceeded via a host of initiatives.

In the short term, the Marcos government is targeting 97.4 percent rice self-sufficiency by the end of its term in 2028.

De Mesa echoed this, saying "we are not expecting that in a few years, we are at 100 percent, but the target of the government is to go near perhaps 95 to 97 percent for the coming years."

He attributed last year's low self-sufficiency level to higher costs for farm inputs such as fertilizer.

"But this year, we are expecting [self-sufficiency] to grow because first, our area for planting has increased, and cost of inputs also went down by a big number," de

Mesa added.

The Philippines, he continued, is already self-sufficient in crops such as tomato, calamansi, pomelo, cabbage, eggplant, ampalaya, cassava and sweet potato. The rate is over 100 percent, meanwhile, for banana, pineapple, mango and papaya.

Self-sufficiency, however, remains below 100 percent for corn (89.9 percent), onions (90.3 percent), garlic (5.5 percent), and potatoes (78.9 percent).

The Agriculture department, de Mesa said, is pushing for additional budgets to develop other high-value crops aside from rice.

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

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Action needed to lower rice inflation

RICE inflation could become a more serious issue and appropriate actions need to be implemented by policymakers, analysts said.

Higher rice prices blamed on typhoon damage and global supply issues were behind September inflation of 6.1 percent, up from 5.3 percent a month earlier.

The rise was largely driven by a significant increase in food prices, particularly for rice, which saw inflation surge to 17.9 percent from 8.7 percent.

"The situation may still be within manageable bounds if it's a one-off supply chain disruption or seasonal fluctuation," Security

Bank chief economist Robert Dan Roces told The Manila Times.

"However, if the rice price increase is sustained or exacerbated by additional factors like poor harvests or import restrictions, it could become a more serious concern," he added.

➤ **InflationB2**

■ INFLATION FROM B1

Action

The government had capped rice prices in September in a bid to contain inflation, which has now risen for two straight months after easing from February to August.

"Given that prices rose sharply in September, we will need to see prices come down dramatically to get the price for this all-important staple under control," ING Manila Bank senior economist Nicholas Antonio Mapa said.

"The only way we can do this is to ensure ample supply hits markets which in turn will temper price increases or even force prices lower," he added.

Mapa said that supply-side measures were urgently needed to prevent rising rice prices to affect the entire consumer price index basket.

He noted that inflation was already being exacerbated by higher global energy prices and increased labor expenses.

"On top of rice, we will now likely see inflation pressures emanate from energy-related items

given the surge in energy prices in the global market," Mapa said.

"We've already seen the sharp run-up in private transport and public transport costs due to the jump in crude oil prices while utility costs have also risen sharply in the past two months," he added.

Secondary effects are likely if supply-side issues persist, the economists said. This means that service and product providers could raise prices to cover higher production costs, caused by increased transportation and electricity expenses.

Monetary policy decisions and

fiscal stimuli will help alleviate pressures, Roces said as he called for a "multifaceted approach to monitoring and managing inflation."

Monetary authorities are expected to hike interest rates anew next month to temper inflation expectations but have also called for government action.

In deciding to pause for a fourth straight meeting last month, they "reiterated the need for nonmonetary interventions, including the temporary reduction of import tariffs with calibrated volumes and timely arrival of import commodities."

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

has rejected calls to temporarily eliminate or lower tariffs on rice but Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan has suggested keeping reduced most favored nation tariff rates on the grain in place until the end of the next year.

The President last December issued Executive Order 10 that extended lower tariff rates on rice, corn, coal, and pork beyond their original end date of 2022 to Dec. 31, 2023 (for rice, corn and pork), and longer for coal.

NIÑA MYKA PAULINE ARCEO



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Low farm output due to limited investments

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

LOW agricultural productivity in the Philippines is caused by limited investments from the private sector, the Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) said.

This is, "evident in the small percentage of establishments — only 1 percent engaged in the sector," FEF fellow and *The Manila Times* columnist Fermin Adriano said during a forum hosted by Stratbase ADR Institute on Monday.

Adriano said that constraints to private sector investment in the agri-food industry included perceived inadequate government support on mitigating risk; "outdated" incentives and lack of awareness of such; and high taxes, customs duties and tariff rates.

He also noted difficulties in obtaining licenses and procuring raw materials and poor infrastructure, among others.

To address these issues, Adriano recommended rationalizing and ensuring science-based and transparent regulatory measures, improving "ease of doing" business, particularly at the local government level, and improving access to capital specifically for procuring or installing new technologies for climate resiliency.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who is also the concurrent

Agriculture secretary, has also recognized the need to industrialize the agriculture sector amid the rising demand for agriculture products.

"We put a high premium on investments in agriculture, as it is the key to combating hunger and poverty and achieving our goal of food sufficiency and security across the country," Marcos has said.

For his part, Stratbase ADR Institute President Dindo Manhit emphasized the need to invest in the local agro-industrial sector to increase the country's farm and fishery productivity.

Manhit said that the service sector has driven the growth of the economy for many years "but has also exposed its weaknesses in the event of disruptions."

"This was very clearly dem-

onstrated three years ago at the height of Covid-19-driven lockdowns. This pandemic experience gives us a peek into possibilities. What could happen if the economy were less dependent on services and more on agriculture, forestry, and fishing, as well as industry?" Manhit said.

The Stratbase ADR Institute president added that this has been their basis for promoting investments in the manufacturing sector, specifically for the domestic market.

"This initiative will contribute to increasing the country's productivity and provide the growing domestic market with more affordable goods and essential commodities like food. This also strengthens our position in the global supply chain," Manhit added.



Marcos: Technology to help rice farmers face calamities, fight smuggling

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. on Monday said technology sharing could help the rice sector deal with natural calamities and in fighting smuggling.

In a speech at the sixth International Rice Congress in Pasay City, the President said disaster resilience in rice production is important.

He cited typhoons and other natural calamities that affect farmers and criminal and anti-competitive activities such as smuggling and hoarding.

"Seeing the complexities of the situation, we strive to approach it in a comprehensive and a holistic way based on science," he said.

Mr. Marcos said his government has been working with international institutions like the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and foreign governments "not only to ensure the steady supply of rice but also to enhance the development and sharing of crucial technologies and strategies."

"We have likewise been working on our disaster preparedness and resilience so that the rice industry can respond and adapt to the effects of El Niño and other calamitous events," he said, citing the need to boost research and help farmers acquire machinery.

"I enjoin all of our government agencies and of course our partners in the private sector to continue collaborating with the IRRI and its partners in identifying creative solutions and mechanisms for a more robust rice industry," he added.

The President on Sept. 5 imposed a price cap on rice that ran for almost a month, amid reports of hoarding and smuggling.

The cap, which was lifted on Oct. 4, limited the price to P41 a kilo for regular milled rice and P45 for well-milled rice.

Economists said rice prices remained elevated despite the price cap. Rice inflation rose to 17.9% in September from 8.7% in August, the fastest since March 2009.

Also on Monday, Mr. Marcos vowed to support efforts to consolidate farmers' cooperatives, which he said helps improve food security.

"In rice alone, our production cost is very high, and one of the biggest factors is the labor cost," he said in mixed English and Filipino.

"The labor cost for every hectare of rice here in the Philippines is double the labor cost per hectare in Vietnam, in Thailand, even Indonesia," he added.

The Philippine agriculture sector could achieve economies of scale through cooperatives, he said, noting that the use of huge farm machinery for production would help cut food prices.

There were 20,105 cooperatives in the country as of 2022, lower than the 20,467 cooperatives registered in 2021, the presidential palace said in a statement.

It said credit and financial service cooperatives accounted for more than half of the total, followed by agriculture, consumers and marketing cooperatives. The industry generated almost 335,000 jobs last year.

Meanwhile, Mr. Marcos encouraged the private sector to help the Philippines achieve its goal of becoming a part of the global chain of electric vehicles "by investing in manufacturing facilities in our country."

"Strive with us as we generate more employment opportunities, enrich our people's quality of life and foster more environmentally friendly communities," he said in a speech at the launch of Dongfeng Motors in the Philippines.

Dongfeng Motor Corp. Ltd. is a Chinese state-owned automobile maker.

"In return, we offer fiscal incentives such as the income tax holiday and duty exemption of capital equipment, raw materials and spare parts used in electric vehicles," he added.

Mr. Marcos said the government aims to increase the share of electric vehicles to 50% by 2040. As of late 2020, there were 8,800 electric vehicles in the country.

"To boost this number, we are working on the gradual shift to electric vehicles for public transportation," he said.

The President said the government should encourage the shift to electric vehicles "considering our continued dependence on imported fuels and the volatility of oil products in the world market."

"We not only get savings in fuel and gas, but also significantly lessen our greenhouse gas emissions and champion sustainability in our day-to-day activities," he added. — **K.A.T. Atienza**



Marcos vows to modernize rice industry

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. yesterday vowed to continue to promote and ensure the growth of the rice industry as he reaffirmed his commitment to bring to justice agricultural hoarders and smugglers in the country.

"We will spare no effort to ensure the growth of the rice industry here in our country even as we safeguard the welfare of farmers and consumers alike," the President said during the 6th International Rice Congress.

Marcos said the government will also remain steadfast in its efforts to modernize the agriculture sector through open dialogue and consultations with farmers and agriculture experts, as well as by pursuing new innovations and technology and using Science-based methods.

Aside from investing in research

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MARCOS

and acquiring machinery for distribution to farmers, the President said the government also provides them with support through the National Rice Program and the Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund, which includes the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance.

Government has also been working with institutions like the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and its partners, as well as foreign governments, to ensure the steady supply of rice and enhance the development and sharing of crucial technologies and strategies to improve the industry.

It has also been working on disaster preparedness and resilience so the rice industry can better respond and adapt to the effects of El Niño and other calamitous events.

During the event, the President welcomed the holding of the Rice

Congress and expressed hope that stakeholders would come up with creative solutions, innovations, and mechanisms to promote a robust rice industry.

He encouraged scientists and researchers to further develop varieties of rice, including newly discovered variants that reduce the glycemic index (GI) of the rice.

"The discoveries in this Congress will pave the way for greater strides in the rice industry in the Philippines and across the globe. I look forward to seeing the innovations to be discussed in this Congress come to life, including the ultra-low GI rice in the near future. With every grain that we harvest, process, and consume, we gain the strength and nourishment that we need to continuously drive our lives, families, and nations forward," he added.

The President said the holding of the congress is timely as he noted the global challenges with

regards to the supply, price, and quality of rice.

Marcos also said that with rice being a main staple in the diet of Filipinos and other countries in Asia, "whenever we find ourselves in a situation where the supply of rice is threatened, this is almost an existential problem that ordinary people feel."

The President reiterated that several factors affect the price, supply, and quality of rice such as global prices, recurrent typhoons and other natural calamities, as well as criminal activities like illegal importation, smuggling, hoarding, and other anti-competitive practices.

Marcos in September imposed a price cap on regular and well-milled rice following the high prices of the staple grain believe to have been caused by the illegal smuggling and hoarding of imported rice. The price ceiling was lifted earlier this month.



MGA MAGSASAKA NAKABAWI NA SA PAGKALUGI

NAKABAWI na ang maraming mga magsasaka sa kanilang pagkalugi dahil sa suportang ipinagkakaloob sa kanila ng Department of Agriculture na pinamumunuan mismo ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr.

Nagpahayag nga nang pasasalamat ang iba't ibang grupo ng mga magsasaka kay Pangulong BBM, kabilang dito ang malaking farmers association sa lalawigan ng Isabela, na ipinangalandakan pa ang mataas na nilang kita ngayon sa kanilang inaning palay dahil sa suportang ibinigay sa kanila ng Kagawarang Pang-agrikultura.

Sa kanyang pahayag, sinabi ni Noel Baquiran, ekspertong agriculturist sa Munisipalidad ng Tumauni sa Isabela, naging maayos na ang ganansiya ng mga magsasaka ngayong wet season ng kasalukuyang taon.

Bukod kasi sa malaking suportang tinanggap nila sa DA, pinagkalooban pa sila ng P2 milyon subsidiya ng Pamahalaang Lalawigan ng Isabela bilang dagdag sa mataas na pagbili sa kanila ng palay ng National Food Authority kaya walang dudang tumaaas talaga ang kanilang kita.

Sa panig naman ng Federation of Irrigators' Association sa Isabela, naibebenta na

nila ngayon ang sariwang palay sa halagang P20 kada kilo samantalang naibebenta nila ang mga tuyo ng palay sa halagang P26 kada kilo na malayo sa presyo noong binabarat sila ng pribadong rice traders.

Hindi naman naitago ni Samuel Lugo, pangulo ng Tumauni Irrigation Pilot Area, ang kanilang kasiyahan at pagbibigay papuri kay PBBM dahil bilang bahagi aniya ng asosasyon, nakababangon na ang mga lokal na magsasaka sa kanilang pagkakalugmok kaya't natutustusan na nang maayos ang pang-araw-araw na pangangailangan sa kanilang pamilya.

Sabi niya, lubos na nagpapasalamat ang mga magsasaka kay Pangulong Marcos, Jr. dahil bilang tumatayong pinuno ng DA, siya ang pangunahing nagtulak upang pagkalooban ang mga magsasaka ng binhi at abono. Pinakikinabangan na aniya ito na may 4,000 magsasaka na nagtatanim ng palay sa mahigit 3,000 ektaryang lupang sakahan sa munisipalidad pa lamang ng Tumauni,



Isabela.

Lumalabas ngayon sa datos ng regional Field Office ng DA sa Cagayan Valley na karaniwang nang umaabot sa limang metriko tonelada kada ektarya ang inaani ng mga magsasaka na may karaniwang may kabuuang kitang umaabot sa P112,000 sa bawat asosasyon.

Dahil sa mabilis na pagkilos ni PBMM sa pagkakaloob ng tulong sa mga magsasaka, umaabot na ngayon sa 326,301 na ektarya ang naitanim na palay sa lalawigan ng Isabela sa kabuuan ng wet season ng kasalukuyang taon na may inaasahang produksiyon na 606,829 na tonelada ng palay.

Ngayong buwan ng Oktubre, unti-unti na ring bumababa ang presyo ng bigas sa merkado dahil nitong Setyembre 30, umabot na sa 108,528 ektarya ang inani ng mga magsasaka na umaabot sa produksiyon na 453.400 metriko toneladang palay.



Tiniyak ni **Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.** na tumatayong Secretary of Agriculture na matatag ang suplay ng bigas sa bansa bunsod ng masaganang ani ng mga Pilipinong magsasaka.

Sinegundahan naman ito ni Department of Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa nang ianunsyo niya na aabot pa hanggang taong 2024 pa ang kasalukuyang suplay ng bigas.

Sa isang pulong balitaan, sinabi ni Asec. de Mesa na "komportable" ang national stock inventory ng bigas dahil mataas ang produksyon ng palay ngayong buwan ng Oktubre.

Kasama na rin sa national stock inventory ang ilang rice imports na kinuha ng Pilipinas noong ikatlong quarter ng kasalukuyang taon.

MARCOS, DA: SUPLAY NG BIGAS MATATAG

"Bagama't umaasa tayo ng additional imports ay very comfortable iyong ating national stock inventory - normally, tinitingnan natin between 60 to 90 days," pahayag ni de Mesa.

"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," dagdag ng opisyal.

Giit ni Asec. de Mesa, aabutin na sa 77 araw ang national rice stock inventory.

Kapag natapos aniya ang wet season harvest sa Nobyembre, asahan nang papalo sa 94

na araw ang ang national rice 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," sabi ni 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," dagdag ng opisyal.

Sinabi rin ni Asec. de Mesa na asahan na ring bababa ang

inflation sa mga susunod na buwan, oras na bumaba ang 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 bagay iyong food inflation na contribution - at doon sa food inflation, malaking contribution doon iyong bigas," sabi 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," sabi ni De Mesa.



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2 uri ng bigas na puwede sa diabetic

Iprinesenta ng mga eksperto ng International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) kay Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. ang dalawang uri ng bigas na may mababang glycemic index para sa mga diabetic.

Ang mga ito ay ang ultra-low gly-

sunod na dalawang taon ang bagong variety ng bigas para sa mga may diabetes.

Samantala, sinabi naman ni Pangulong Marcos na bahagi na ng buhay ng mga Pilipino ang bigas at hindi maaaring isantabi ito o alisin sa kanilang buhay.

Sa kanyang pagdalo sa 6th International Rice Congress na ginanap sa Philippine International Convention Center, binigyang-diin ng pangulo ang importansiya ng bigas kaya dapat tutukan aniya ang mga isyung nakapaloob dito partikular ang suplay at presyo nito.

Tiniyak pa ni Pangulong Marcos na hindi titigil ang gobyerno sa pagsusulong ng mga hakbang para mapahusay ang sektor ng agrikultura patikular sa produksiyon at masiguro ang kapakanan at proteksiyon ng mga magsasaka.

(Aileen Taliping)

cemic index rice na Philippine variety na IRRI 147 at IRRI 125 na nilikha umano para makatulong na bumaba ang mga kaso ng diabetes sa bansa at sa buong mundo.

Ayon kay Dr. Nese Sreenivasulu ng Grain Quality and Nutrition Research Unit ng IRRI, ang bagong tuklas nilang bigas ay mayroong mababang glycemic index na malaking tulong para sa mga diabetic.

Mabibili na aniya sa su-

PBBM calls for consolidation of farmers cooperatives, associations for PH agri dev't

RECOGNIZING the important role of cooperatives in agricultural development, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. called on the country's cooperative movement on Monday to start the consolidation process for local farmers cooperatives associations (FCAs), vowing government support in carrying out the effort.

"And that is what I — that is how I see the role of the cooperative movement today. Cooperative movement is very closely related to agriculture because for the simple reason that we need to consolidate our farmers. The farmers — maliliit lang sila, they're one," President Marcos said during National Cooperative Day celebration in Malacañang.

"Yan ang hihilingin ko sa cooperative movement na simulan na natin ang proseso ng pag-consolidate ng ating mga farmers association, ng ating mga cooperatives, lahat 'yan upang mapunta tayo sa kalagayan na malalaki na ang ating ginagamit na — ang ating pino-process, ang ating tinataniman na lupa. That is what we are trying to do," Marcos



said, adding that organizing cooperatives and farmer groups into bigger associations will give them more voice.

The President, who has been spearheading the efforts to strengthen Philippine cooperatives, said he envisions a movement in which the cooperative movement, the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) and the gov-

ernment are working together.

He gave an assurance that the government will always be ready to provide the needs of the CDA.

Strong cooperatives are key to improving the country's agriculture and ensuring food security, Marcos said, noting that the Philippines has been lagging behind Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam in terms of

agricultural production.

"Sa bigas lang, ang cost of production natin napakataas at isa sa pinakamalaking factor doon ay 'yung labor cost. Ang labor cost ng bawat hektarya ng bigas — ng palay — dito sa Pilipinas is double the labor cost per hectare of Vietnam, of Thailand, even Indonesia na hindi naman nage-export, certainly of India," he explained.

"Kaya't sabi namin, anong solusyon diyan? Ang solusyon diyan ay mechanization. So papaano gagawin ang mechanization? Eh 'di siyempre gagamit tayo ng mga — siyempre tulongan natin sa processing, sa milling, sa drying, hanggang sa packaging, hanggang sa marketing."

Through the cooperatives, President Marcos said that the country could attain economies of scale, especially with the use of huge farm machineries for production and processing that in the end reduce food prices.

As of 2022, there were 20,105 cooperatives in the country, around 1.8 percent lower than the 20,467 cooperatives registered as of 2021. PCO



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TC to hear lower tariff bid on rice, corn, pork

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

THE Tariff Commission (TC) will conduct a public hearing next week regarding the proposed extension of lower tariff rates on rice, corn and pork by the Marcos Jr. administration's economic development group.

The Samahan Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag), however, argued that any new tariff reduction proposals on agricultural commodities must be "rejected outright" since the country is not suffering from any shortfall of food supply, citing the **Department of Agriculture (DA)**.

"Without the political pressure coming from the economic managers, we commend the Department of Agriculture in finally admitting that the country has sufficient stocks of rice, pork and egg, until the first quarter of next year, even with limited importation," the group said

in a statement on Monday. "Any new proposal for tariff reduction on rice, pork and other agricultural products should therefore be rejected outright on the grounds that there is no shortage, coming no less from the DA," it added.

The TC issued recently its notice of public hearing on the possible extension of the reduced most favored nation (MFN) of the three agricultural commodities stipulated under Marcos's Executive Order (EO) 10. The public hearing is set on October 23 and will be conducted via videoconferencing from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

"Interested parties shall be afforded the opportunity to be present and present evidence in support of their position/s relative to the MFN tariff rates of subject articles," the TC said in its notice, adding that parties must submit their presentation slides to the agency on or before October 20. The conduct

of the public hearing is part of the prevailing laws and regulations on tariff modifications.

The President of the country may modify tariff rates when Congress is not in session, as stipulated under Section 1608 or the so-called Flexible Clause of the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act.

However, in order for the President to exercise the power to modify tariff rates, due process must be observed, which involves the TC conducting a public hearing as the first step.

Under the Flexible Clause, the TC must conduct a public hearing on any proposed tariff modifications and it is expected to submit its findings and recommendations to its mother agency, the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), within 30 days after its public hearing.

SEE "TC," A2

TC...CONTINUED FROM A1

In turn, the Neda shall make the necessary tariff-related recommendations to the President.

The President, in his capacity, may accept or reject any proposals made by the Neda.

Last month, Marcos formally rejected the proposal to further reduce rice tariffs, currently at 35 percent under EO 10. Marcos made the rejection a day before the TC submitted its formal recommendations to Neda.

The lower tariff rates on rice, corn and pork will expire by the end of the year and shall revert to their regular levels starting January 1, 2024.

Under EO 10, the tariffs on rice were lowered to 35 percent regardless of whether the volume is within or outside the country's quota from the regular 40 percent (in-quota) and 50 percent (out-quota) rates.

For pork, the tariffs are currently at 15 percent and 25 percent for in-quota and out-quota imports, respectively. The regular rates for imported pork are 30 percent for in-quota and 40 percent for out-quota.

Meanwhile, corn tariffs were slashed to 5 percent (from 35 percent) for in-quota imports and 15 percent (from 50 percent) for out-quota volume.

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LOWER COST OF FARM INPUTS

DA EYES RICE SELF-SUFFICIENCY RATE REBOUND THIS YEAR

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

After hitting a record low, the country's rice self-sufficiency rate (SSR) is expected to bounce back this year, to be driven largely by lower farm input costs and greater harvest area, officials of the **Department of Agriculture (DA)** said on Monday.

Agriculture Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian said

the agency is projecting the SSR for rice to reach 85 to 87 percent if local production vis-à-vis domestic demand is taken into account.

"If production is high and demand has not increased much, the self-sufficiency ratio will recover," said Sebastian on the sidelines of an event in Pasay City. "Hopefully, we can gain higher sufficiency."

He attributed the estimates

to the decline in input costs as well as various interventions provided by the agency.

"This year, we are expecting [SSR for rice] to rebound," Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said in another event in Quezon City.

"First, the area planted [with palay], has expanded. Second, the cost of inputs has significantly declined, especially for fertilizer," he said.

The price of urea (prilled), the most commonly used fertilizer, averaged P1,771.77 per 50-kilogram bag compared to P2,547.38 per 50-kg bag in the same period last year, based on figures from the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority.

Previously, the price of urea nearly breached the P3,000 level as it averaged P2,998.55 per 50-kg bag from May 23 to 27, 2022. INQ



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Regulatory, infra issues on agri sector need to be addressed

By **DANESSA RIVERA**

The government needs to address regulatory and infrastructure issues to attract investments in the agri-food industry, according to a panelist of a forum yesterday.

Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Deogracias Victor Savellano said during the Stratbase ADR Institute forum yesterday that this should give the country, particularly its agriculture sector, the much-needed boost in food production and ensure food security.

"The government wants to have coherent policies and definite answers to the stakeholders in agriculture. By having these, we hope to make them invest more. The regulatory matters have to be aligned to get the private sector to produce more food and ensure food security for the nation," Savellano said yesterday.

In the same forum, Stratbase ADR Institute president Dindo Manhit emphasized the need to invest in the manufacturing sector, particularly in the local agro-industrial sector, to increase the country's productivity and ensure food security.

The services sector has been the main driver for economic growth, but the

COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the sector's weaknesses in the event of disruptions, he said.

"What could happen if the economy were less dependent on services and more on agriculture, forestry, and fishing, as well as industry? This is our basis for promoting investments in the manufacturing sector, specifically for the domestic market, in the agro-industrial sphere," Manhit said.

"This initiative will contribute to increasing the country's productivity and provide the growing domestic market with more affordable goods and essential commodities like food. This also strengthens our position in the global supply chain," he said.

In his presentation, Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) fellow Fermin Adriano attributed the low agricultural productivity to the limited private sector investment in the agriculture sector.

"The limited private sector investment in Philippine agriculture, evident from the mere one percent engagement of establishments in the sector, contributes to consistently low farm productivity," he said.

Adriano, a former DA undersecretary, said constraints to private sector investment in the agri-food industry

include the perceived inadequate government support on mitigating risk, "outdated" and lack of awareness of incentives, high taxes, custom duties, and tariff rates, difficulty in obtaining licenses and procurement of raw materials, and poor infrastructure, among others.

To address these, he recommended the rationalizing and ensuring science-based and transparent regulatory measures, improving "ease of doing" business particularly at the local government level, and improving access to capital, particularly in procuring or installing new technologies for climate resiliency.

To increase productivity and market supply, DA assistant secretary for operations Arnel De Mesa said there is a need to solve the problem of logistics and distribution of agricultural products by building more farm-to-market roads and by ensuring that agriculture products are climate-proof.

Meanwhile, Stratbase ADR Institute COO and managing director Rupert Paul Manhit said there is a need to build more infrastructure projects through public-private partnerships (PPP) to modernize transportation and logistics systems for the efficient distribution of food.



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Multiple ASF, avian influenza vaccines undergoing testing

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday that it has received applications from various companies seeking to introduce African Swine Fever (ASF) and Avian Influenza (AI) vaccines onto the Philippine market.

Agriculture Undersecretary Deogracias Victor B. Savellano told reporters that the vaccines are still undergoing trials.

"(They are still under) testing; once approved and we are okay with all the protocols, then we will recommend the vaccines for purchase," Mr. Savellano added.

He said that the DA has received five bird flu vaccines for evaluation.

He added that the DA aims to seek approval for testing and use of AI vaccines from the President, who is also the Secretary of Agriculture.

"AI vaccines have been around for a long time now but there is no approved protocol for its testing, approval, and use," Mr. Savellano said.

He added that four suppliers have expressed interest in bringing ASF vaccines to the Philippines, with two currently being tested.

"They are in various stages of trials at our Veterinary Laboratory Division of the Bureau of Animal Industry," he said.

He added that until the approval of vaccines, the DA is prescribing heightened biosecurity measures to slow the spread of AI and ASF.

"For both the AI and ASF vaccines, we want to do it fast, but we want to do it safely also. This is a balancing act, but we are streamlining the process to expedite trials, approvals and eventual use," he added.

The DA has said that it is aiming to increase livestock production by five times by 2028.

Separately, Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines Chairman Nicanor M. Briones said in a statement that vaccine testing has only been conducted on starter hogs and not sows and breeders, which are "the ones that produce pigs."

Mr. Briones added that it would take billions more for the hog industry to recover from the effects of the ASF virus.

The House of Representatives said earlier that it would re-allocate about P1.5 billion towards ASF vaccines. —
Adrian H. Halili



P1.5B for ASF vaccines not enough

BY JED MACAPAGAL



As of September 30, 10 regions, 18 provinces, 44 municipalities and 97 barangays had active ASF cases. (PNA Photo)

AGRICULTURE groups welcomed the plan of the House of Representatives to channel P1.5 billion to vaccinate hogs but said the amount is not enough to completely eradicate cases of the African swine fever (ASF) in the country.

The Committee on Appropriations tasked to remove confidential funds will channel P1.5 billion for vaccine initiatives to combat the ASF.

"The P1.5 billion definitely isn't enough but it could be used for pump priming as we wait for the vaccine from Vietnam," said Danilo Fausto, Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. president, in a radio interview yesterday.

Fausto said the government should make the vaccines available to backyard raisers.

Nick Briones, representative of AGAP party list and chairman of the Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines, said administration of vaccines is the best solution against ASF but it is yet to be tested on local sows and breeders that produce pigs.

Briones said the available ASF vaccines from Vietnam have only been tested on starters but not on fatteners sold in markets.

Briones expressed hope the next generation of the vaccines will be tested on fatteners and on "challenged" hogs or vaccinated hogs exposed to the virus to test the efficacy of the vaccine.

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P1.5B

Deogracias Victor Savelano, undersecretary for livestock of the Department of Agriculture, said in a forum hosted by Stratbase ADR Institute yesterday the agency is ramping up bio-security measures while waiting for the issuance of regulations on ASF vaccines.

Before ASF hit in 2019, the pig population of the country was estimated at around 13 million heads but this has since gone down to around 10 million, with imported pork filling the gap.

Based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, pork self-

sufficiency ratio in 2022 reached 69.6 percent.

Earlier this month, the National Sectoral Committee on Poultry and Livestock passed a resolution recommending that the Food and Drug Administration and the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) issue

safety reports on the negative effects of the vaccines on hogs. The reports will facilitate the importation of 300,000 doses of ASF vaccine and its dissemination by BAI data showed as of September 30, 10 regions, 18 provinces, 44 municipalities and 97 barangays have active ASF cases.



BIGAS SA NCR TAAS-PRESYO PA

Nagbabala si Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Alfredo Pascual na tataas muli ang presyo ng bigas sa bansa kung kaya't kanila na umanong pinaghahandaan ang pagbibigay ng tulong sa mga maaapektuhan nito.

"We believe there will be some upward tick that's why we are also readying support for the affected people," sabi ni Pascual sa panayam sa programang 'The Source' ng CNN Philippines.

Aniya, ang presyo ng bigas ngayon ay malapit pa rin sa price cap na ipinatupad noong Setyembre. Maganda aniya ang tiyempo sa pagtatanggap ng price cap dahil panahon na ng anihan at maraming suplay ng bigas.

Subalit ang problema aniya ay ang presyo ng bigas sa National Capital Region (NCR). Bumaba na umano ang presyo ng bigas sa mga probinsya at mas mura na ito sa price cap na ipinatupad ng Malacañang subalit ang pinangangambahan ni

Pascual ay sa Metro Manila.

Ayon kay Pascual, naghahanda na ng ayuda para sa mga taong mangangailangan.

Sa mga pinakamahihirap, magkakaroon aniya ng Food Stamp Program kung saan makatatanggap ng tig-P3,000 ang isang milyong pamilya. May kaloob na tulong din galing sa Asian Development Bank para sa \$3 milyon na gagamitin sa pagpapamigay ng ayuda.

Aniya, magbibigay din ng tulong na P10,000 sa mga magsasaka ng palay na nasa Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program o 4Ps at 78,000 na magsasaka ang inaasahang makatanggap nito.

Gayunpaman, nilinaw ni Pascual na may sapat na bigas sa bansa at ang **Department of Agriculture** na ang nagsabi na ang suplay ngayon ay sapat para sa dalawang buwang pangangailangan ng bansa.

"The main issue is the price of rice in NCR," sabi ni Pascual. **(Eileen Mencias)**



NIA, DPWH kinalampag sa quarrying

NANAWAGAN ang mga Indigenous group sa Labangan, Zamboanga del Sur sa mga ahen-siya ng gobyerno tulad ng National Irrigation Administration, Department of Public Works and Highways at iba pa na ipatigil quarry operations sa Labangan River.

Nanawagan din ang mga katutubo, binubuo ng komunidad ng Subanen at Moro, kay Governor Victor Yu na ipatigil ang quarrying sa Labangan River.

Kung wala umanong mangyayari sa kanilang panawagan, ay maghahain na sila ng reklamo laban kina Governor Yu, Labangan Mayor Eduardo Relacion, at iba pang pribadong indibiduwal.

Sa Labangan River matatagpuan ang de-

kalidad na buhangin, graba at malinis na tubig mula sa bundok na siyang ikinabubuhay ng mga residente ng nasabing lugar. Pero dahil umano sa matagalan at malawak na quarrying dito, nasira ang kalikasan at nakaapekto ito sa pamumuhay ng mga residente ng limang barangay. Ang ilog at spillway na nagkokonekta sa mga barangay ng Cogonan, Noburan, Langapod at Bagalupa ay nakaranas na matinding pagkasira.

Nagsagawa na ng rally ang mga Subanen, Moro at ilang Kristi-yano para kalampagin si Governor Yu, Mayor Relacion, at mga indibiduwal na sangkot sa quarry operations sa rehiyon.

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DISASTERS COST FARM SECTOR \$23-B DAMAGE IN 30 YRS—FAO

TYPHOONS and other disasters cost Philippine agriculture at least \$23 billion in damages in the past three decades, according to the latest report published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

This was part of the findings of the FAO's report titled, "The Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security 2023," its first-ever global estimation of the impact of disasters on agriculture.

FAO said the estimate covered 565 disasters that hit the country since 1990. The report said 85 percent of the sources of the country's production are susceptible to disasters, and 50 percent of the country's territory is also considered economically at risk.

"Coastal communities, especially small-scale enterprising poor people, such as fishers and shellfish gatherers, are most vulnerable to coastal flooding, coastal erosion, and saltwater intrusion," FAO said in its report.

The estimate, FAO said, is only based on available data reflected in needs assessment reports which may not have reflected the impact on fisheries and aquaculture.

FAO noted that the assess-

ments in the last five years for Typhoon Kammuri (Tisoy) in 2019; Typhoon Goni, 2020; and Typhoon Rai (Odette), 2021 were among these assessments.

"While the assessments provide estimates for crop damages and losses, none or very few figures are reported for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors," FAO said.

Nonetheless, FAO said some information on fisheries was presented for Typhoon Rai (Odette). This indicated the need to push for greater focus on the impact of these disasters on the sector.

Based on this data, FAO said 2,126 fishers were affected by the loss of their produce estimated to be worth \$3.5 million from seaweeds, milkfish, tilapia, and shrimp production, such as cages and ponds in three regions.

FAO also noted that there was even more damage to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, with losses amounting to P3.97 billion or \$79.4 million.

"For aquaculture and fisheries, fishers were unable to continue fishing after the typhoon as they lost their equipment and gear," FAO said.

SEE "DISASTERS," A2



Disasters...CONTINUED FROM A1

Other disasters, such as animal diseases, also affect the production and income of farmers. FAO estimated that the outbreaks of the African Swine Fever (ASF) in 2020 cost the Philippines \$194 million to as much as \$507 million alone.

FAO noted that ASF in the Philippines initially affected 10 provinces in 2019. However, by the end of 2020, the disease had spread to a total of 32 provinces.

The cost per pig lost due to ASF in 2019 was \$281. FAO said this estimate can be used to assess the cost of ASF outbreaks in 2020.

"The approximate cost of the ASF outbreaks in 2020 in the Philippines was between \$194 million and 507 million, 3.3 to 8.7 times higher than the cost in 2019. The high cost is unsurprising considering the large geographical spread in 2020," FAO said.

"In Viet Nam and the Philippines, the estimated losses were mainly due to domestic pigs and to national costs versus in Germany, where the outbreak was in wild boars and due to the loss in the export market," it added.

The FAO said globally, over the last 30 years, an estimated \$3.8

trillion worth of crops and livestock production has been lost due to disaster events. This corresponded to an average loss of \$123 billion per year or 5 percent of annual global agricultural GDP.

The report reveals that over the last three decades, disasters—defined as serious disruptions to the functioning of a community or society—inflicted the highest relative losses on lower and lower middle-income countries, up to 15 percent of their total agricultural GDP.

Disasters also had a significant impact on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), causing them to lose nearly 7 percent of their agricultural GDP.

The report noted that the figure may be higher if systematic data on losses in the fisheries and aquaculture and forestry subsectors were available.

The report stressed the need for urgently improving data and information on the impact of disasters on all subsectors of agriculture to create data systems that can serve as the foundation upon which effective action can be built and informed. *Cai U. Ordinario*



DTI INKS MOU WITH CONSULTANCY FIRM



HALAL FOOD FEST Muslim vendors sell their best cuisine during the Kartilya ng Katipunan in Manila, which is part of the programs of the Manila City government to promote halal food. —**MARIANNE BERMUDEZ**

MSMES IN HALAL SECTOR GET FUNDING BOOST

By **Alden M. Monzon**
@AldenMonzonINQ

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with solutions and management consultancy firm DK P.O. Fulfillment Company Inc. (DKPOFCI) to offer low-cost funds to support the local halal industry.

The move is seen benefiting micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the local halal trade, an industry expected by the government to generate P230 billion in trade and investments, as well as 120,000 jobs in five years.

"Our micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, or MSMEs, are at the forefront of our Halal initiatives, poised to reap significant benefits. The Department of Trade and Industry is taking substantial steps to champion its growth in this domain," Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual said in his speech at the signing ceremony in Parañaque City.

Under the MOU, the DTI and the DKPOFCI will provide noninterest-based financing opportunities for MSMEs, thereby providing an avenue for their integration into the local halal industry.

MSMEs will also be provided services and programs for logistics management, quality control and inspection, custom brokerage, insurance,

as well as global sourcing and procurement under the MOU.

"DK greatly believes that the true growth of the halal industry will be dependent on a program that will address the development of an end-to-end entrepreneurial ecosystem," DKPOFCI executive chair Antonio Intal said.

Entrepreneurial education

"The sequence will focus on entrepreneurial education, then pre-seed funding incubation, then acceleration, then market penetration and development, and finally growth funding via transactional venture capital," he added.

To further promote the local halal industry, the DTI is also set to launch a national strategy to develop the sector.

It will also lead nine government agencies to form an inter-agency task force that will create a road map intended to position the Philippines as the most halal-friendly trade and investment hub in Asia-Pacific.

The DTI, with the Philippine Halal Board member agencies, will also host the Halal Economy Festival on Nov. 21, which will feature a trade and investment forum with renowned speakers from global halal authorities, business-to-business meetings, halal culinary and culture, and exhibits of halal-certified products and services. **INQ**



VP Sara hails Filipino farmers

By RAYMUND ANTONIO

Vice President Sara Duterte hailed Filipino farmers on Sunday, October 15, and called them “tunay na bayani” (real heroes) for ensuring that nutritious food is accessible to Filipino families.

“Ang bawat kuwento at karanasan ay nagpapaalala sa akin ng kahalagahan ng bawat hakbang na ginagawa ng ating mga magsasaka para sa kanilang mga pamilya at sa ating komunidad (Every story and experience remind me of the importance of every step in what our farmers are doing for their families and our communities),” Duterte said in a Facebook post after spending time with them during a recent mountain hike in Cebu.

She said they religiously go on with their daily tasks of ensuring their produce remain fresh and free from pests.

“Patuloy tayong magtutungan at suportahan ang ating mga lokal na magsasaka. Sila ang tunay na bayani sa likod ng bawat masustansyang pagkain na ating natatamasa (Let us continue helping each other and supporting our

local farmers. They are the true heroes behind every nutritious food we enjoy),” Duterte said.

Duterte hiked through the mountains of Dalaguete, Cebu to highlight the importance of local tourism.

“Sa aking kamakailang pag-akyat sa mga bundok, hindi lamang ang kagandahan ng kalikasan ang aking nasaksihan, kundi ang puso at sipag ng ating mga magsasaka (In my recent hike to the mountains, it’s not only the beauty of the environment that I witnessed, but the heart and hard work of our farmers),” she said.

The Vice President interacted with farmers and listened to them explain the process of farming.

“Nakakataba ng puso ang makasama at makilala ang mga masisipag na magsasaka na abala sa pag-aayos ng kanilang mga pananim na pechay at sayote sa gilid ng daan, handang i-empake at ihanda para sa mga susunod na hakbang ng kanilang araw-araw na pamumuhay (It’s heartening to spend time and know the hardworking farmers who were busy fixing their produce like pechay and chayote on the

streetside, ready to pack them for the next steps of their everyday living),” Duterte added.

According to the Vice President,

she learned about the different types of soil, the importance of using the right fertilizer, and the effective way to control pests.

She also saw how vegetables are brought from the farm to the roads and how they are careful in handling their produce to ensure quality.



CABBAGE FARM – Vice President Sara Duterte poses in a cabbage farm in Dalaguete, Cebu. (Inday Sara Duterte FB)



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Editorial

Time is ripe for PH halal industry

THE Philippines sits in the triangle of the Malay Archipelago, surrounded by its predominantly Muslim neighbors, Indonesia and Malaysia. There are 7 million Muslim Filipinos, and millions more Filipinos work in the Middle East and parts beyond.

Halal is a dietary law derived from Islamic teachings, meaning "lawful or permitted." Food not considered halal is deemed "haram," or "not permitted." The global halal market is valued at a whopping \$7 trillion annually.

The Philippines now aims to tap into the global halal market, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said recently.

The DTI said it will address the demand for halal products and services from both our domestic market and from 57 countries spanning Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the Americas, which are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

A third of the halal market comes from the halal food and beverage industry, but the market also covers recreation, travel, financial services, fashion and many other sectors.

The DTI announced the Philippine Halal Development Plan in April, in accordance with the Halal Export Development and Promotion Act passed in 2016. The strategy aims to make micro, small and medium enterprises a part of the global halal ecosystem by the end of this year. Over the next five years, it aims to chalk up P230 billion (\$4 billion) in halal trade and investments.

There are already halal producers in the Philippines, but now the DTI wants to go global and tap the big market overseas. The department is going to lead an interagency task force, which includes representatives from the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, the central bank, and the Departments of Agriculture, Tourism, Health, Science and Technology, and Foreign Affairs.

It will also involve the Mindanao Development Authority — the state agency promoting the welfare and development of the Mindanao region, which is one of the country's poorest areas and home to the majority of about 7 million Filipino Muslims.

The DTI said that with the new strategy, the Philippines hopes to make the halal sector a major player. It will also allow local enterprises "to participate in the industry and contribute to the economic development of the country, particularly in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region."

On June 1 this year, the Philippines was also awarded as the Emerging Muslim-friendly Destination of the Year at the prestigious Halal in Travel Global Summit 2023 in Singapore.

The Halal in Travel Global Summit 2023 recognizes destinations, organizations, companies and individuals that have made a significant impact on the Muslim lifestyle travel segment. The Emerging Muslim-friendly Destination of the Year (non-OIC) award is given to recipient destinations that cater to the unique needs and preferences of Muslim travelers.

The Muslim travel segment is also a big global market. Projections show that Muslim traveler arrivals will reach 140 million in 2023 and in succeeding years could reach 230 million. By 2028, the estimated expenditures are pegged at \$225 billion.

"This award is an affirmation of our collaborative efforts toward positioning the Philippines as a preferred destination for Muslim travelers and strategically developing our halal tourism portfolio across our region. This global recognition also opens up enormous opportunities for our country to introduce our rich and diverse culture and heritage evident in our Muslim communities and our immensely beautiful destinations, including Mindanao," said Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco.

According to Secretary Frasco, the Department of Tourism has focused on developing the country's halal tourism portfolio, ensuring, among others, its prioritization in the National Tourism Development Plan 2023-2028.

The DoT has also implemented a wide range of services and amenities designed to cater to Muslim travelers. These include an inventory of halal-certified dining options and increased halal accreditation for hotels and lodging places. A dissemination campaign with tourism enterprises and workers is also ongoing on the values, beliefs and practices of Muslim travelers.

Recognizing global trends and preferences of Muslim travelers, Frasco said that the DoT has also continued to pursue its sustainable tourism development initiatives. It recently signed a significant agreement with Agora, a global health and wellness tourism leader, to position the Philippines toward providing quality medical and wellness tourism offerings, especially to the Middle Eastern market.

It is heartening to see the Philippines waking up from its economic slumber and grabbing opportunities already at hand because of our geography, culture and history.



Interest-free financing eyed for halal

BY IRMA ISIP

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DK P.O. Fulfillment Company Inc. for the introduction of the latter's no-interest financing program specifically for small players in the halal industry.

Antonio Intal, DK P.O. executive chairman, in a press conference explained the company's Purchase Order (PO) Fulfillment Program, is a PO-based profit sharing between the business owner and the company.

The MOU between DTI and DK P.O. will provide non-interest-based financing opportunities for micro, small and medium enterprises, providing an avenue for their integration into the Halal industry. The concept of non-interest financing addresses financial and economic inclusions and supports one of the underlying principles in Islamic financing, such as the absence of "riba" or interest.

Intal said DK P.O. will finance a portion of the financing requirement of a business owner on products covered by a PO it

has with a retailer or a distributor. DK P.O. gets a 30-percent share in the profit made by the business owner.

Intal said the scheme is transactional profit sharing unlike that of a bank which earns money from the interest imposed on a loan.

But he noted the need to educate people on how the scheme works.

"People resist it because they do not understand it," Intal said.

He added: "The mode of Islamic or halal financing requires educational process and change of mindset.

Many think of traditional or getting loans where you pay interest. Education is critical to this new mode of funding," he said.

In the same event, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual said the DTI through SB Corp. will help introduce clients to DK P.O.

The PO Fulfillment Program is a proprietary system built for sustainable business performance. It is a comprehensive and integrated growth tool designed for expanding businesses with little or no access to capital reserves, insufficient funds to pay for the cost of goods, poor

cash flow, or chronic difficulties securing traditional bank funding.

Apart from the marketing and promotional activities, the MOU will provide MSMEs with services and programs for logistics management, quality control and inspection, custom brokerage, insurances, and global sourcing and procurement.

Pascual also noted the need to establish halal-certifying bodies in partnership with Malaysia and other countries where the Philippines can adopt their practices and standards.

Pascual said the Philippines

has entered into partnerships with halal powerhouses in the region, namely, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei Darussalam, to learn the best practices in generating P230 billion trade and investments in the halal industry in five years.

Another starting point is the revival of enterprises in Marawi City.

The DTI announced the Halal Economy Festival will be held next month featuring a trade and investment forum, business-to-business meetings, exhibit Halal-certified products and services.

Ngayong araw na ito ay ibabahagi ko sa inyo ang natatangi at magandang adbokasiya ni Atty. Glo De Castro na mas kilala sa tawag na Urban Gardening Mom ng kanyang libu-libong followers sa iba't ibang online platform.

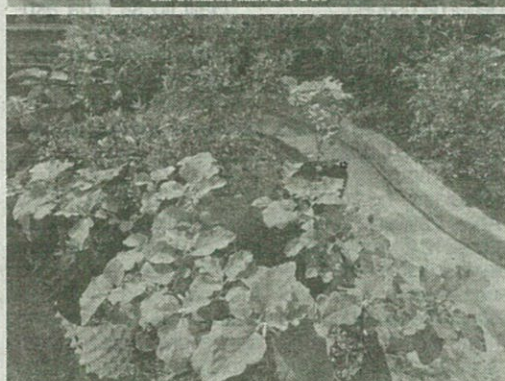
Mabait, matulungin, masipag at handang ibahagi sa iba ni Atty. Glo ang kanyang hiram na talento na ipinagkaloob sa kanya ng ating Panginoon.

Unang nakausap ng Magsasakang

halaman, maging ang end lot ng kanilang subdibisyon ay tinaniman din ni Atty. Glo.

Ayon kay Atty. Glo, nais niyang ma-inspire ang bawat isang Filipino na magtanim ng kanilang sariling pagkain sa pamamagitan ng ligtas at epektibong pamamaraan at eco-friendly.

"My mission is to inspire others so they too could successfully grow a garden at home in a safe, effective and eco-friendly way," ani Atty. Glo.



Atty. Glo De Castro

URBAN GARDENING MOM



Ang mga tanim na iba't ibang uri ng halaman ni Atty. Glo sa kanyang garden.

Reporter si Atty. Glo sa pamamagitan ng zoom interview noong kasagsagan ng pandemya.

Muling naulit ang aking personal at face to face na interview kay Atty. Glo noong nakalipas na buwan sa kanyang tahanan sa isang exclusive subdibisyon sa Pasig City.

Kasama ko ang aking crew sa Masaganang Buhay ay pinaghandang kami ni Atty. Glo ng masarap na tanghalian.

Sinabayan kami ni Atty. Glo sa aming pagkain sa loob ng kanilang magandang tahanan.

Matapos kaming mabusog lahat ay ibinahagi sa aming ni Atty. Glo, ang kanyang mission, vision at magandang adbokasiya tungkol sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman sa pamamagitan ng organikong pamamaraan.

Sa palibot ng bahay ay may tanim siya na iba't ibang uri ng

Nanawagan si Atty. Glo na samahan siya sa kanyang adbokasiya.

"Join me in my advocacy," aniya Bukod sa pag-

sa pamamagitan ng live at online.

Naniniwala si Atty. Glo na ang pagkakaroon ng seguridad sa pagkain dapat mag-simula sa ating mga tahanan.

Mayroon ding iba't ibang produkto tulad ng mga certified seed, garden tools, vermicast, chicken manure, neem oil at marami pang iba si Atty. Glo.

Sa mga nagnanais na tumangkilik ng mga produkto ni Atty. Glo, maaari kayong makipag-ugnayan sa kanya sa urbangardeningmom.com o kaya'y mag-text kayo sa 09176272632.



Ang Magsasakang Reporter at Urban Gardening Mom na si Atty. Glo De Castro

tatanim ay nagsasagawa rin ng seminar at training si Atty. Glo sa lahat ng nais matuto ng kanyang pamamaraan sa urban gardening.

Pahayag pa ni Atty. Glo, nagtuturo siya ng Urban Gardening 101

kaalaman kaugnay sa natural at organic farming, panoorin po ninyo ang mga video tutorial ko sa aking Youtube Channel na ANG MAGSASAKANG REPORTER tungkol sa step by step na pagtatanim, pag-aalaga at sikreto ng pagkakaroon ng magandang tanim na halaman.

Para sa iba pang tips at sikreto sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman, maari po kayong manood at makinig ng aking TV at Radio program na Masaganang Buhay tuwing Linggo, alas-7:00 hanggang alas-8:00 ng umaga sa OnePH Signal TV, Channel 1 ng TV-5. Mapapakinggan din po sa Radyo Singko 92.3 News FM.

Maaari rin kayong manood at mag-subscribe sa aking Youtube Channel na ANG MAGSASAKANG REPORTER para sa iba pang kaalaman at impormasyon sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman sa pamamagitan ng organikong pamamaraan.

Tuwing araw ng Martes ay regular ninyong mababasa ang aking kolum dito sa **Pilipino Star Ngayon (PSN)** ng Star Group of Publications.

Sa mga tanong at komento ay maaari ninyo akong i-text, huwag po tawag, sa 09178675197. STAY SAFE, HAPPY FARMING, GOD BLESS US ALL.



FAO: Disasters cause \$3.8 T in crop losses over 30 years

PARIS (AFP) – Natural and man-made disasters have caused \$3.8 trillion in crop and livestock losses over 30 years, the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) said on Friday.

Floods, droughts, insect infestations, storms, disease and war have caused about \$123 billion per year in lost food production between 1991 and 2021, the equivalent of five percent of total production or enough to feed up to half a billion people per year, the FAO said in a report.

This is the first time the UN body has tried to compile such an estimate, with the aim of putting into context the scale of the cost of disasters on both a global and personal scale.

"The international community is taking stock of the fact that disasters are... increasing tremendously... quadrupling since the 1970s" and are having an increasing impact on food

production, the deputy head of FAO's statistics department, Piero Conforti, told AFP.

The FAO report, entitled "The Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security", found that disasters are increasing in severity and frequency, from 100 per year in the 1970s to around 400 events per year in the past 20 years.

Climate change is increasingly responsible, as well as human and livestock diseases.

"Agriculture around the world is increasingly at risk of being disrupted due to multiple hazards and threats such as flooding, water scarcity, drought, declining agricultural yields and fisheries resources, loss of biological diversities and environmental degradation," said the FAO.

It identified the "systemic drivers of disaster risk" as climate change,

pandemics, epidemics and armed conflicts.

The damage adds up quickly.

Average annual grain losses hit 69 million tons, the equivalent of France's annual production.

Some 40 million tons of fruit and vegetable production was lost, and 16 million tons of meat, dairy and eggs.

Around 23 percent of losses due to disasters were sustained in the agricultural sector.

The FAO further found that poorer nations suffered the highest losses due to extreme events in terms of the percentage of their agricultural output, at up to 10 percent.

Asia is the worst-hit region, sustaining 45 percent of total agricultural losses due to disasters, and losing the equivalent of four percent of its agricultural output.

Horn of Africa nations that are regu-

larly impacted by drought lost an average of 15 percent of crop production.

Island developing nations have also been particularly hard hit, sustaining losses of seven percent of their agricultural output.

Women are also hit harder than men.

"That's because of resource constraints and structural constraints that women face in accessing things like information, financial instruments, the resources that they need to prepare to respond to or recover from disaster events," said the report's author, Zehra Zaidi.

In Pakistan, where women account for 70 percent of farm laborers, it was shown after floods that men found other work much easier than women.

Lack of sufficient data kept the FAO from calculating losses to fishing and forest production.

Despite the increasing frequency and

intensity of disasters, it is possible to reduce risks to agriculture.

"There is no one size fits all solution," said the FAO's Conforti, but "there are a range of practices that can enhance the resilience of agricultural systems."

That includes agronomic techniques such as using different plant varieties and different methods to prepare the soil, as well as creating and improving warning systems.

When locusts invaded the Horn of Africa region in 2020 and 2021, early warning provided the time necessary to treat 2.3 million hectares (5.6 million acres) in the region and nearby Yemen.

Some \$1.77 billion in losses in grain and dairy production was saved, the FAO estimates.

Moreover, it was extremely cost-effective, with each dollar invested in prevention measures resulted in \$15 of avoided crop losses.



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Wheat rises for 3rd session

SINGAPORE- Chicago wheat gained more ground on Monday with strong demand supporting the market, although ample supplies from the Black Sea region are likely to limit the upside potential in prices.

Soybeans rose, recouping some of the previous session's losses on harvest downgrades in the United States.

"China has bought some US wheat and there are expectations of more deals," said one Singapore-based trader. "Lower quality US wheat is competitive in the market."

The most-active wheat contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was up 0.7 percent at \$5.84-3/4 a bushel, as of 0251 GMT. Soybeans added 0.4 percent to \$12.85-3/4 a bushel and corn climbed 0.7 percent to \$4.96-1/2 a bushel.

Wheat prices are being under-

pinned by the strongest weekly export sales in more than a year in the United States and another rare sale of soft red winter wheat to China.

Exports of near-record crop from Russia, the world's No. 1 supplier, are likely to curb gains in prices.

For soybeans and corn, harvest downgrades in a monthly US Department of Agriculture (USDA) report last week lifted prices.

China imported 7.15 million metric tons of soybeans in September, customs data showed on Friday, falling 7.3 percent from a year ago after high stocks and a spike in global prices curbed recent purchases.

In news, a severe drought is disrupting barge traffic on the Tapajos river in the Amazon rainforest, shipping agencies told clients this week as Brazil enters the final months of 2023's corn export season. - Reuters