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DA sets up biosecure swine facility in Ilocos

By BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT

A biosecure swine multiplier technology-demonstration farm has been launched in Natividad, Pangasinan, the first in the Ilocos Region as part of the Marcos Administration's program to fight African swine fever (ASF), raise swine production, and give livelihood to small farmers.

Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary Deogracias Victor B. Savellano said the Swine Multiplier and Technology Demonstration (SMTD) farm, inaugurated last Oct. 24 in Natividad, Pangasinan will help ensure the country's swine production.

"We will repopulate our hog sector through these swine technology centers. We have put in place biosecurity measures that use a standard shelter design for hogs to keep small farms away from ASF," said Savellano.

Through farmers' trainings on biosecurity measures, Philippines will be able to raise hog inventory and pork supply, Savellano said.

"The facility will provide support to local raisers by making available breeders and breeding materials and by producing adequate and quality stocks to supply DA and other agencies' needs for sustainability in production," he said.

A budget of ₱40 million has been allocated for four SMTDs in Ilocos Region. A budget of ₱10 million per SMTD includes provision for tunnel vent type

facility and 30 breeder sows and feeds.

The Natividad facility is the first in the region while three others will be launched within the year in Manaoag, Pangasinan and Candon and Vigan in Ilocos Sur.

Local government units (LGU) provide the land for the swine facility as its counterpart support. Farmers are trained on biosecure hog raising prior to receiving their swine.

Biosecurity measures in the swine program includes disinfection process under which farm workers are required to bathe for disinfection before and after entering the swine facilities. They also go through a 24-hour quarantine after entry to the facilities.

The swine facility itself is air-conditioned and has curtains that keep the facility off infection.

DA's National Livestock Program (NLP) has partnered with the International Training Center on Pig Husbandry (ITCPH) based in Lipa City, Batangas for the house design for the hogs, according to Agricultural Training Institute livestock focal person Krizel Joy Natividad.

The SMTD has been introduced under DA-NLP's Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (INSPIRE) Program. It is a hog repopulation program aimed at raising hog inventory following heavy ASF infestation, reported Aurelio Salvador of DA-Livestock.



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Biosecure swine center established in Pangasinan

ONE of the four biosecure swine multiplier techno-demo farms (SMTDs) that the government plans to establish in Ilocos Region this year has been completed.

The facility located at Natividad, Pangasinan, is part of the Marcos administration's program to fight African swine fever (ASF), raise swine production and afford small farmers with livelihood.

The sites of the three other SMTDs that will be launched within this year are Manaoag, Pangasinan, and Candon and Vigan in Ilocos Sur. The government has allotted P40 million for the construction of the four SMTDs.

"We will repopulate our hog sector through these swine technology centers," said Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary Deogracias Victor Savellano who graced the launching of the Natividad facility on October 24.

"We have put in place biosecurity measures that use a standard shelter design for hogs to keep small farms away from ASF,"

added Savellano.

In these centers good swine genetics will be reproduced and disseminated to far-flung provinces.

Through farmers' training on biosecurity measures, the Philippines will be able to raise hog inventory and pork supply, Savellano said.

"The facility will provide support to local raisers by making available breeders and breeding materials and by producing adequate and quality stocks to supply DA and other agencies' needs for sustainability in production," he said.

Each SMTD has a budget of P10 million, and this includes provision for tunnel vent-type facility and 30 breeder sows and feeds.

The local government units (LGUs) provide the land for the swine facility as its counterpart support. Farmers are trained on biosecure hog raising prior to receiving their swine.

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the International Training Center on Pig Husbandry (ITCPH) based in Lipa City, Batangas, for the house design for the hogs, according to Agricultural Training Institute livestock focal person Krizel Joy Natividad.

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It is a hog repopulation program aimed at raising hog inventory following heavy ASF infestation, reported Aurelio Salvador of DA-Livestock.

Biosecurity refers to measures aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of harmful organisms (viruses, bacteria, etc.) to animals and plants in order to minimize the risk of transmission of infectious disease.

Biosecurity measures in the swine program include disinfection process under which farm workers are required to bathe for disinfection before and after enter-

ing the swine facilities.

They also go through a 24-hour quarantine after entry to the facilities.

The swine facility itself is air-conditioned and has curtains that keep the facility free of infection.

Present during the launch of the Natividad facility were OIC-Provincial Veterinarian Dr. Arcely Robeniol (representing Pangasinan Gov. Ramon Guico 3rd); Natividad Mayor Rosita Rafael; Municipal Agriculturist engineer John Christian Sioco; and ATI-RTC 1 Center Director Dr. Rogelio Evangelista.

The event was also witnessed by the members of the Pagrang-ayan ti San Pedro Farmers Association, Municipal Agriculture and Fisheries Council (MAFC) Chairman Loujay Pagal, Sangguniang Kabataan Federation President Angelica Malaca, Municipal Local Government Operations officer Hope Ordonio, and staff of the Municipal Agriculture Office.

ARMANDO CARANDANG



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Seed, fertilizer procurement to be digitalized

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it will digitalize the procurement and distribution of agricultural inputs to beneficiaries.

Digitalization is expected to cut down on the estimated three months it takes for the current process to get inputs into the hands of farmers, it said.

"The procurement and distribution of seed and fertilizers used to take 90 days to complete, but with the digitalization of the system, clustered farmers would now have nearly real-time payouts through cashless transactions," it added.

The DA said it will carry out pilot programs via 15 of its regional field offices (RFOs).

Farmers are to be issued Intervention Monitoring Cards (IMC) to purchase farming inputs from merchants in their areas.

"The IMC cards function just like an ATM or e-wallet, where money can be issued for every transaction," DA Undersecretary Leocadio S. Sebastian said.



GREENFORCE STAFFING-UNSPLASH

Beneficiaries will also be able to choose their own fertilizer and seed, bypassing the traditional bulk procurement by DA field offices.

"This drastically departs from previous practice where farmers just had to accept whatever the DA RFOs supplied them, which some of them do not find useful for their farms," Mr. Sebastian said.

It added that the process of acquiring and distributing agricultural supplies in bulk will now involve more micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises that deal in these goods.

"Aside from being inclusive, this digital process empowers farmers to choose their own stocks of inputs and the merchants that offer them the best quality of goods at the best price," he added.

The DA said merchants can go to the Development Bank of the Philippines or the Universal Storefront Services Corp. to receive cash payments corresponding to farmer purchases.

It added that the digitalization exercise is a strategy being pursued under the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program.

The program is aimed at stabilizing the supply of rice at between 24.99 million metric tons (MT) and 26.86 million MT, in the process keeping the annual growth of rice prices at less than 1%, it said. — **Adrian H. Halili**



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DA sees potato prices stabilizing this month

POTATO prices are expected to stabilize this month with the expansion of supply, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Tuesday.

"Prices rose slightly, but we are expecting them to stabilize in November, December, and until the first quarter (of next year)," Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said on government television network PTV.

As of Oct. 30, the price of white potato was between P140 per kilogram (kg) and P240 per kg.

The average weekly price for white potatoes was P202.23 per kg between Oct. 23 and 27, against the P172.33 average on Oct. 2-6 and the P229.19 on Oct. 16-20.

Mr. De Mesa added that the potato harvest is coming in during the quarter.

He said that the uptick in prices was caused by typhoons during the third quarter.

"We expect the price to (stabilize) in November and December with the harvest," he added.

He added that onion and garlic prices are expected to remain stable until the end of the year.

"According to today's monitoring, the prices for onions and garlic are very stable," he said. "Prices for local red onions have (even) dropped by P10 to P130 (per kg)."

The DA reported that domestically grown red onion prices ranged from P120 to P190 per kg, while white onions were at P100 to P170 per kg. Domestic garlic was P500 per kg, while imported garlic was P120 to P160 per kg. — **Adrian H. Halili**



editorial

PHL bananas losing global market share

ONE of the things that make a country memorable to tourists and foreign businessmen is its produce, including local fruits. The homegrown fruits and other food items leave an indelible mark on those who visit the Philippines or those who have sampled our products in foreign trade fairs. The Japanese, for one, are fond of Philippine Cavendish bananas and pineapples and are importing these fruits on a regular basis.

Sembikiya Fruit Co. Ltd., one of the oldest fruit shops in Japan, said bananas and pineapples from the Philippines are preferred by its customers. (See, "Exec: Logistics woes crimp banana shipments to Japan," in the **BUSINESSMIRROR**, October 24, 2023). According to the president of Sembikiya, Philippine pineapples are well received in Japan due to their sweetness and rich aroma. Philippine bananas are also preferred by the Japanese over those produced in other countries due to their rich flavor.

However, these attributes are not enough to guarantee that local producers would get a bigger share of the fruit market in Japan and other countries. While Cavendish bananas and pineapples produced locally are considered top-notch and incomparable, the Philippines is losing market share to other competitors, such as Ecuador. More bananas from the Latin American country are entering Japan because logistics woes have made it difficult for Philippine exporters to deliver their commitments to foreign customers.

Problems related to logistics have been added to the list of hurdles confronting local banana growers who have been grappling with the spike in production cost and the spread of Fusarium wilt or Panama disease in their plantations. The lethal fungal disease, for one, has reduced banana output and made it more challenging for exporters to supply the volume required by foreign buyers. Compounding the problems for banana producers is the conflict in Eastern Europe, which caused inputs like fertilizer to become more expensive.

The country's banana exports plunged to a six-year low last year, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). PSA figures indicated that the Philippines exported 2.273 million metric (MMT) of bananas in 2022, or 6.5 percent lower than the previous year's 2.432 MMT. Because of the decline in shipments, the country's dollar earnings from bananas fell by 3.66 percent to \$1.096 billion in 2022 from \$1.138 billion in 2021. (See, "PHL bananas still sagging on high costs, pests," in the **BUSINESSMIRROR**, February 23, 2023).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations noted that banana production in the Philippines continued to fall as growers struggled to address and curb the devastating spread of Banana Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4 disease. The Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association estimated that the total hectareage affected by Fusarium wilt is between 15,000 hectares and 36,000 hectares. The area would represent about 17 percent to 40 percent of the 88,000 hectares planted with bananas nationwide.

Guatemala, a country that has a long history of political instability, overtook the Philippines and became the world's second largest exporter of bananas last year. Local banana growers have set their sights on reclaiming the title from their Guatemalan counterparts this year. However, our banana producers cannot do it alone; they need the government's help in removing the barriers that made it difficult for them to meet the volume required by buyers to improve

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London cocoa closes lower after hitting record high; raw sugar plunges over 2%

NEW YORK — London cocoa futures on ICE closed lower on Monday after earlier rising to a record high, while sugar and coffee prices also fell.

COCOA: March London cocoa settled £9 or 0.3% lower at £3,349 a metric ton after setting a record high of £3,385.

Dealers said a modest setback was not unexpected given the extent of recent gains but the overall mood remained bullish.

"We believe the market may be due a marginal (downward) correction in the near term," broker Sucden Financial wrote in a technical note on Monday, adding the outlook in the longer term remained bullish.

The Ivory Coast cocoa sector regulator will not allow bean

grinders to accumulate stocks beyond authorised limits during the main October-March harvest to ensure fair access amid fears of a supply shortage.

Main crop arrivals at ports in top grower Ivory Coast between Oct. 23 and Oct. 29 totaled 56,000 tons, down from 91,000 tons during the same week last season.

December New York cocoa fell \$26 or 0.7% to \$3,826 a ton after peaking at \$3,880 — the highest level for the front month since December 1978.

SUGAR: March raw sugar settled 0.59 cent or 2.2% lower at 26.75 cents per pound (lb).

Dealers said rising production from the key Center-South region of Brazil was helping to at least

partially mitigate crop concerns in major Asian producers.

Brazilian mills in the Center-South region will extend sugarcane crushing operations beyond the traditional period to cope with a record crop this year, according to mills.

December white sugar fell \$16.40 or 2.2% at \$725.40 per ton.

COFFEE: December arabica coffee fell 1.85 cents or 1.1% at \$1.591 per lb.

Coffee stocks in Japan, the world's fourth largest consumer, fell 13.2% in September to 2.52 million bags, according to data compiled by Coffee Trading Academy.

January robusta coffee fell \$69 or 2.9% at \$2,314 a metric ton. — **Reuters**