

CLIPPINGS FOR TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 07, 2022

A. SEC. FTL Jr. QUOTED

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

P20/Kilo rice not yet possible. Says DA chief

Capitalist

Food

New DA chief eyes revival of BAS

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Revival of stats bureau eyed to address farm data accuracy

To our new DA chief

MANILA BULLETIN

New secretary brings a ‘fresh’ approach to address agricultural challenges

PBBM’s P20/Kilo rice not yet possible – new DA chief

BUSINESS MIRROR

Tiu Laurel bares plan to reactivate DA’s BAS

Editorial: Twenty pesos...

P20/ Kilo rice: Not today, but cheap rice is goal

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

DA chief: P20/ kilo rice ‘not possible today’

Pro-production Laurel bats for accurate agri data

BUSINESS WORLD

Laurel to focus on raising agri output; not in favor of imports

Mindanaoans back new DA chief

ABANTE TONITE

PBBM pinawawalis kay Laurel korapsiyon sa Agri

P20 per kilo ng bigas kalimutan na

Bago, lumang mukha

ABANTE

P20 per kilong bigas bomalabs sa DA chief

Laurel iwas-pusoy sa Manila Bay Reclamation

P20 per kilong bigas

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON

P20/ kilo bigas imposible pa – DA

B. DA FAMILY

BUSINESS WORLD

DA launches 3 World Bank-funded projects

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON

Pananamantala, Korapsiyon sa devolution?

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

BUSINESS MIRROR

PHL seeks UN aid to boost fisherfolk, farmers' resilience vs climate change

BUSINESS WORLD

Meat prices to rise by up to 4%, DTI says

The saga of the farmers' unrequited toil in planting rice

D. FOREIGN STORY

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

Soybeans hit 7-Week high

BUSINESS WORLD

Soybeans rise for fifth session in a row



P20/kilo rice not yet possible, says DA chief

By **DANESSA RIVERA**

Achieving the "aspiration" for rice at P20 per kilo is not possible at this time, but the government will work on bringing down prices to affordable levels for consumers, newly installed **Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.** said yesterday.

At a briefing, Laurel said lowering the retail price of rice to the level promised by President Marcos during the election campaign is challenging, given the uncertainties in the world market.

"The P20 per kilo was an aspiration. The problem [is] we are now at a 15-year high [in] world market [prices]. What was previously at \$230 per ton in Vietnam, today it's \$700 per ton. Today, it is not possible," he said, citing challenges that include climate change, El Niño and geopolitical tensions overseas.

"The problem around the world is so complicated. There's climate change, El Niño is now here and it will continue until the middle of next year. Anything can happen. We don't know when there will be another war

in other places, and we don't know if a ship will get stuck in the Suez Canal," Laurel said.

However, the department chief did not discount the fact that lowering prices is still possible with the modernization of agriculture. "It is possible to lower the price. But we need to have our silos, we have to have buffer stock. And we have to change some laws, I believe," Laurel said.

At a congressional budget hearing last August, DA officials admitted that the P20-per-kilo rice promise is not achievable in the next two years. They cited inadequate irrigation projects, conversion of rice lands into subdivisions and not enough market roads and equipment as challenges to meet the aspirational target.

Laurel has also refuted criticisms that his appointment will benefit his businesses and was a "payback" for his significant contribution to President Marcos' campaign.

"Definitely there's no payback. As I said, this is a sacrifice. This is for the country," the newly appointed agriculture chief said at a press briefing

yesterday.

Moreover, Laurel said his appointment would not cause any conflict of interest as he has divested from Frabelle Fishing Corp.

"Basically, I've already divested. I have no more interests in all the companies I used to own... The DA is a full-time job. I have no time to do anything else," he said.

Protests greet Laurel

Protests greeted the first day in office of Laurel after members of fishers' group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) picketed outside the Department of Agriculture main office in Quezon City.

"This (protest) is our way to formally welcome the new DA secretary. We want to show our sentiments where we believe that we cannot expect from Secretary Francisco Laurel if our basis is his background as a big businessman involved in the fishery sector," Pamalakaya vice chair Ronnel Arambulo said.

"This has a conflict of interest because of his business. He will just

use his position at the Department of Agriculture to advance the interest of his business," Arambulo said.

According to Arambulo, fishers and farmers will not benefit from the appointment of Laurel.

However, Pamalakaya said it is willing to meet with Laurel in case he initiates a consultation with stakeholders.

The group also emphasized the need to remain "extra vigilant" with the appointment of Laurel due to his "extensive experience in the fishing industry and commercial ventures."

"There will always be a catch when a business tycoon is appointed in a government position," Arambulo said.

He added that small fisherfolk across the country are well-acquainted with Laurel's company, Frabelle, which was "previously associated with destructive trawling methods, depleting fish stocks and damaging coral reefs within municipal waters."

"We will definitely keep an eye on Agriculture Secretary Tiu-Laurel Jr., and will not allow (him) to use

his crucial post to advance business agenda, instead of the needed public service," Arambulo said.

For their part, an autonomous region in the south on Monday gave the newly appointed agriculture secretary a vote of confidence, certain he will complement efforts to empower the agriculture and fishery sectors in the Bangsamoro provinces.

Two members of the 80-seat Bangsamoro regional parliament, lawyer Hadji Nabil Tan and physician-ophthalmologist Kadil Sino-linding Jr., said they are certain that Laurel will be an efficient conduit of Malacañang to the fishery and agriculture sectors in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Basilan Gov. Jim Salliman and his counterpart in Lanao del Sur, Mamintal Adiong Jr., also welcomed the appointment of Laurel.

Cotabato Gov. Emmylou Mendoza said she is happy with the appointment of Laurel as a full-fledged agriculture secretary.

— **With Bella Cariaso, John Unson, Mark Ernest Villeza**



FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

Capitalist

During the entire time he concurrently held the agriculture portfolio, President Marcos has not made a dent on the policy architecture that brought us only failure. Finally, he has handed over control of the vital Department of Agriculture (DA) to someone else.



Little is known about Francis Tiu Laurel's thinking about the state of our agriculture and fisheries. He has yet to make a comprehensive statement of his plans.

Much of the media reporting about the new Secretary of Agriculture focused on his being a close friend of the President, a major campaign contributor and, by the way, a successful businessman. None of those attributes automatically translates into redemption for the nation's food supply.

Our agriculture and fisheries are in dire straits. We are not producing enough to feed our people. Our costs are way too high and the inaccessibility of food prices is a major source of poverty.

Climate change and overfishing threatens our aquaculture. There will not be enough bounty from the seas that surround us to supply what we need. Our small fishermen are catching less and less and our fishing fleets are operating further and further away from the archipelago.

There should be reason to be hopeful, however, that new thinking might finally infiltrate our agriculture policy architecture. Laurel, after all, is not cut from the same bureaucratic cloth as his predecessors.

For too long, the DA has functioned largely as arbiter of state subsidies to subsistence farmers and fishermen. The agency has not been the font of new ideas about how we can produce our food better and cheaper. It was never the force for change and reinvention that it urgently needs to be.

Laurel is a capitalist. That should be a good thing. He understands the value of investing and technological infusion to rapidly improving our food production.

Lately, the only innovations of note in our agriculture were introduced by tycoons who had to fight bureaucrats to bring improvements to the way we do things. Among these are: the large pig farms of the Lucio Tan group, the mega chicken farms recently embarked on by San Miguel Corporation and the vertical farms as well as dairy production ventured into by Metro Pacific. All of these required large investments as well as vertical integration to ensure they will be successful businesses.

None of these innovative investments in our food production were in any strategic plan produced by the DA. The agency was content giving out fertilizers and farm implements to inefficient small farms.

At the very least, the new agriculture secretary will not impede investments in our food production systems. These investments are what will save us.

Witness

If only because this family feud involves that largest bus company in the country, the continuing twists and turns of the court cases deserve watching.

The court drama began when four siblings attempted to wrest control of the Bacolod-based transport company founded in 1968 by the late Ricardo B. Yanson Sr. from the founder's widow and two other siblings. The matriarch, Olivia Villaflores Yanson, Leo Rey Yanson and Ginette Yanson Dumancas successfully fought off the takeover attempt.

As a result of cases filed by the matriarch, arrest warrants were issued against the four siblings (Yanson 4). The four have since stayed away from the country to evade the warrants.

Last August, the Bacolod RTC Branch 44 approved the petition of Olivia Yanson for probate of her last will and testament disinheriting the four. Leo Rey and Ginette have been named as heirs to the family fortune.

The Yanson 4 are contesting approval of the probate, suggesting that the matriarch is not competent enough to frame her last will and testament. The four are represented in court by one of the country's known trial lawyers, Sigfrid Fortun. While already the lead lawyer, however, he also tried to present himself as witness against Olivia's probate. This is rather odd.

Last month, the Bacolod City Regional Trial Court granted the motion of Ginette Yanson Dumancas to disqualify Fortun as a witness in the case. The motion seeking to disqualify the lawyer for the Yanson 4 cited the Code of Professional Responsibility that prohibits a counsel from testifying on behalf of his clients. The Supreme Court justifies the prohibition due to "the difficulty posed upon lawyers by the task of dissociating their relation to their clients as witnesses from that as advocates."

Rule 130 of the Amended Rules of Court provides that a witness can testify only to those facts in which he has personal knowledge. The Bacolod court finds that "the judicial affidavit of Atty. Fortun would show he has no personal knowledge of the facts he intends to testify." Also, he falls under none of the categories that might justify exemption from the rule.

The court's decision upholding Ginette's motion may be considered a blow to the case the Yanson 4 are trying to build invalidating their own mother's will and testament. With Fortun barred from testifying on behalf of the four fugitive siblings, there will be no one else to validate their claims about Olivia's competence.

One of the fugitive siblings – or all of them – will have to come home to stand as witness to their claims about their mother. But there are standing arrest warrants on them. This presents them a bit of a problem.

The hearing on the Yanson 4 appeal is scheduled next month.



Date: NOV 07, 2023 Page: 7



LIBRARY

DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

VIRTUAL REALITY

TONY LOPEZ

Food

Francis Tiu Laurel, 59, is the new secretary of Agriculture, vice, President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr., the Oxford-educated son and namesake of the president who achieved a rice surplus and launched the Green Revolution in the Philippines in the 1970s.



Having failed to bring down rice retail price to P20 per kilo and stop a runaway food-shortage-driven inflation, Marcos Jr. has come down to earth, given up, and given the job to the guy who knows best, Francis Tiu (Laurel is an adopted name).

Francis brings to his job 30 years of experience hunting for and harvesting food, from the deep ocean, that is, bring it up from the sea to the seafood restaurant, or from sea to the canning factory.

Few food tycoons have the wealth and depth of his experience – invest hard earned money, risk life and limb braving the waves and the winds, and bring bountiful catch from the deep up to the safety of land and consumer hands. Fishing is one of the most profitable enterprises; depending on how you market your catch, you can multiply your cash 10 to 20 times your capital. Provided you are as big as Francis' Frabelle Fishing Corp. whose motto is, "nobody does it better", fish from ocean to table.

Frabelle is a conglomerate – "deep-sea fishing, aquaculture, canning, food manufacturing and processing, food importation and trading, cold storage, shipyard operations, wharf development, real estate development, and power generation;" "over 100 vessels, and a growing workforce of 5,000; the go-to source for fresh, frozen, and processed seafood, with a market that extends to Asia, Europe, the Middle East, South Africa, and the United States." In 2019, the latest year for which data is available, Frabelle reported total revenues of P3.5 billion.

Unfortunately, 99.9 percent of fishermen are unlike Frabelle. Filipino fishermen are the poorest of the poor. In 2021, because of Chinese presence in Panatag Shoal, the income of a fisherman per trip went down 70 percent to P300 – probably not enough for Francis' coffee money. Fishing is the slowest growing sector of Philippine agriculture. In 2022, livestock grew 2.5 percent, poultry 1.8 percent, while crops declined 1.0 percent, and fisheries went down 6.7 percent.

Anyway, our main problem is rice, not fish which costs ten times more than a kilo of rice. In early October, *bangus* a kilo in Manila was P220; yellow-fin tuna P280 to P400; chicken, P170/kilo. Rice? Just P40 a kilo.

Food inflation raised Philippine inflation to 6.1 percent in September 2023, after hitting 4.7 percent in July 2023 and 5.3 percent in August 2023. From January to September 2023, inflation averaged 6.6 percent, thanks to high food prices.

Of the 6.1 percent average rise in overall September prices, more than half (58.3 percent) or 3.6 percentage points were because of higher prices of rice, up 17 percent, and other food items.

Of the 6.1 points of inflation, 1.74 percentage points came from rice, .83 from vegetables and fruits, and .35 (one third of one percent) from fish. So fish is not our problem. Most Filipinos don't buy it. Rice is. All Filipinos buy it. Each consumes 118 kilos of rice yearly.

Philippine agriculture is in deep shit, thanks to decades of government neglect and private sector indifference (except for the likes of food tycoons Ramon S. Ang of San Miguel and Manny V. Pangilinan of Metro Pacific Investments Corp.).

In 1960, the Philippines was an economic power. About 39.5 percent of its economic production or GDP came from agriculture. By 1999, rice was still 16 percent of value added in agriculture and 3.5 percent of GDP.

Today, agriculture's share of GDP or total economic production is down to 8.5 percent, a historic low.

Subtract 8.5 percent from 39.5 percent, you get 31. Multiply 31 percent of a P20-trillion GDP, you get P6.2 trillion. That is the value of loss in our agricultural production in 63 years. Now, P6.2 trillion (6,200 billion pesos) can buy you today, at P40 per kilo, 152.5 billion kilos of rice. That is enough rice to feed 1.2 billion humans for one whole year.

Note: 63 years ago, the International Rice Research Institute was established in Los Baños, Laguna. We also have the world's premier agricultural school, UP College of Agriculture in Los Baños, Laguna. And we have our own Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), 1985. In terms of rice technology, the Philippines has the best globally, equivalent to being able to send a man to the moon. We taught the Thais and the Vietnamese how to grow rice.

Yet, the Philippines suffers from a severe food shortage; 25 percent of demand has to be imported. The Philippines is the biggest rice importer in the world. Our agriculture is a mess. One of every five Filipinos is dirt poor, thanks to high food prices. Ten percent of 23 million Filipino families experienced hunger once in the past three months.

Today, Filipinos spend 32,414 hours a year on social media, mostly an unproductive enterprise. The Filipino farmer spends just 2,000 hours a year planting rice. If half of the 32,000 hours spent on social media were devoted to growing something, we could probably solve our malnutrition and hunger problems overnight.

Speaking of private sector indifference, the Philippine banking system has total loans outstanding of P12 trillion. Only P256.7 billion went to agriculture, just 2.13 percent of the banks' total lending. Why? The Bangko Sentral requires banks to devote 25 percent of total loans to agriculture. Shouldn't BSP be cracking the whip on these banks? Some of the banks make P200 million daily, operating just 7 hours a day.

Banks, the most profitable enterprises in the Philippines, do not provide money to produce food, which is up to half of total expenditures of Filipinos.

Shared prosperity? Nah.

* * *

Email: biznewsasia@gmail.com



Date: NOV. 07, 2023 Page: 86



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

New DA chief eyes revival of BAS

By DANESSA RIVERA

Newly installed Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. plans to revive the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) to establish key sectoral data and information necessary in forming timely and appropriate policies to develop the local agriculture sector.

In his first press briefing yesterday, Laurel proposed the re-establishment of

the BAS to prioritize and boost local production to meet the directive from President Marcos to ensure food security and be less dependent on imports.

"I have to look at the data, production versus demand. The problem I have right now is that available data is incomplete. The data we have right now is not so accurate, (but) I'm not blaming anyone on this. But one of the major things I want to start is bring back the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics so we will have accurate data," he said.

In a separate interview, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the reason for this is the function of the agency is devolved to local government units (LGUs).

"Our data are sourced from the LGU, regional field offices (RFOs), from the PSA, and institutional stakeholders. That's what the secretary wants to fix," he said.

The BAS, under Executive Order 116 signed by former president Corazon Aquino in 1987, was mandated to collect, compile, analyze and disseminate fishery statistics in addition to crops, livestock and poultry.

It replaced the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE-con) created under Republic Act 3627 created on June 22, 1963 as the lone agency under the DA to produce primary agricultural data.

However, the BAS was merged with the National Statistics Office (NSO), National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) and Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) into the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) by virtue of RA 10625 or the Philippine

Statistical Act of 2013.

Laurel noted that in his previous capacity as Frabelle Fishing Corp. (FFC) president, he had been pushing for local production over importation.

The FFC is a leading big-fishing corporation that has diversified in industries like power generation, real estate, meat and seafood processing, cold-chain network, aquaculture, and shipbuilding and repair.

"I am not pro-importation. I am pro-production. I am a producer in my past life. While I import, I produce a lot more," he said.

"I believe the Filipinos can produce more, but then we have to import when it is really needed. But if we need to have the right balance, we have to have the right data to manage it properly," the Agri chief said.

To get a better grasp of the actual situation on the ground, Laurel said he plans to go around the country in the coming weeks.

"I will directly talk to farmers and fishermen. I want to personally hear what they need, their concerns, their visions and to see their current conditions," he said.

Agriculture accounts for about 10 percent of the Philippine economy, but employs one in every four Filipinos. Data show that more than 10 million farmers and fisherfolk are poor, and many of them are approaching their senior years, posing a potential food crisis in the next decade.

"By modernizing the agriculture sector, we could make it a more profitable venture and attract a younger generation that would ensure the country's food security in the decades to come," Laurel said.

Date: NOV. 07, 2023 Page: A11 of A14



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DA CHIEF'S AIM

REVIVAL OF STATS BUREAU EYED TO ADDRESS FARM DATA ACCURACY

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

Newly appointed Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. intends to revive the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) to ensure the accuracy and completeness of data in the agriculture sector.

In a press briefing on Monday, Laurel said the current database was "somewhat incomplete," making it difficult to manage domestic production of and demand for agricultural products.

"Our data is not that accurate. I'm not blaming anyone for this, but one of the major things I want to start is [to] bring back [BAS] so we will have accurate data," Laurel noted.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the responsibility of gathering and analyzing relevant information has been delegated to other agencies and the local government units (LGUs).

"We have data coming from the LGUs... from (DA) regional field offices, from the

A4



Revival of stats bureau eyed to address farm data accuracy

FROM A1

PSA (Philippine Statistics Authority) and institutional stakeholders. This is what the new agriculture secretary wants to fix," De Mesa said.

The BAS was created through Executive Order (EO) No. 116 issued on Jan. 30, 1987, to replace the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, which was established in 1963.

EO 116 mandated the BAS to collect, compile and release official agricultural statistics; exercise technical supervision over data collection centers; and coordinate all agricultural statistics and economic research activities of all bureaus, corporations and offices under the Department of Agriculture (DA).

But even while under the DA, the former BAS was one of the four major agencies in the national statistical network engaged in data collection and compilation, the others being the National Statistics Office, the National Statistical Coordination Board, and the Bureau

of Labor and Employment Statistics.

These agencies were abolished and integrated into the PSA with the enactment of Republic Act No. 10625, or the Philippine Statistics Act of 2013.

'Sacrifice, not payback'

In the same briefing, Laurel also refuted claims that his appointment was a "payback" for his significant contribution to the campaign of longtime friend President Marcos in the elections last year.

"Definitely, there's no payback. As I said, [this is a] sacrifice. This is for the country," Laurel said.

The official said he had already divested his interests in Frabelle Group of Companies, whose diversified business interests include deep-sea fishing, aquaculture, canning, food manufacturing and processing, food importation and trading, cold storage, shipyard operations, wharf development, real estate development and power generation.

"I have no more interests in all the companies I used to own," he said.



Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

—PHOTO FROM DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FACEBOOK PAGE

"[The] DA is a full-time job. I have no time to do anything else. *Ang laki ng departamento*, complicated *ng kaunti* (The department is huge, it is somewhat complicated). This is a full-time job. *Wala akong oras* (I don't have much time) to think about other things," he pointed out.

"When I was asked by the President to join the DA, I actu-



GROUND INFO The Department of Agriculture wants better and complete information on the country's agricultural production to help guide the agency in crafting policies that will benefit farmers, traders and consumers. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

ally hesitated a couple of times. At the end of the day, [I was challenged] to do something for the country," he added.

Mr. Marcos announced his successor on Friday after he himself managed the agriculture portfolio for 16 months.

Pressing issues

In another development, farmers, fisherfolk, peasant

women, agricultural workers, and food security advocates held a protest on Monday outside the DA in response to the appointment of Laurel.

The protesters emphasized the need for Laurel to address issues such as food price reduction, agricultural smuggling, and protection of small farmers and fisherfolk.

The Kilusang Magbubukid

ng Pilipinas (KMP) expressed apprehension that Laurel's appointment could lead to further liberalization of domestic agriculture and food production, particularly in the fisheries sector.

KMP said the new DA secretary needed to reverse existing liberalization policies that had worsened domestic crises in agriculture and food security.

Fishers' group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) also said it would be "extra vigilant" with Laurel, given his background in the fishing industry.

"We demand significant and genuine reforms in agri-fisheries policies that will be in favor of our local food producers and rural sectors," said Pamalakaya vice chair Ronnel Arambulo.

But international nongovernment organization Oceana Philippines welcomed the long-overdue appointment of a permanent DA secretary and said it was hoping Laurel would ensure the full enforcement of fisheries laws and regulations.

—WITH A REPORT FROM RUSSEL P. LORETO INQ

Date: NOV. 07, 2009 Page: A4



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

To our new DA chief

Dear Mr. Secretary, you are now on top of the most problematic sector in our economy. I need not elaborate on this; we can all see it and feel it. I will just point out that being the economy's backbone, achieving new vigor in our farm and fishery sector under your leadership at the Department of Agriculture (DA) would give a major boost to our industry and services sector as well—and that means the rest of our economy. All eyes are thus on you to redeem us from the stagnation the sector has suffered, and I salute you for agreeing to take on this truly daunting challenge—a heavy yoke to carry indeed.

My three-minute pitch to you revolves around three major missteps made over the past decades that set back our agriculture and fisheries sector to the sorry state it's in now—and how you, with the help of Congress (which is a big if), can address them to finally redeem the sector.

First, we stifled agricultural investments by fragmenting our best farm areas and killing the rural land markets in the process. To correct this, *we must follow our neighbors' lead and consolidate our small farms into efficient large-scale operating units* to achieve economies of scale and lower costs. Two parallel policy tracks would achieve this. The ideal and more inclusive track would be vigorous cooperatives development. Prominent success stories like Soro-Soro Ibaba Development Cooperative in Batangas and Lamac Multipurpose Cooperative in Cebu tell us this is the way to go, even as our history with coops is checkered with failures. The Cooperative Development Authority is focused on regulation and admits to being ill-equipped to do developmental work. We must thus restore the Bureau of Agricultural Cooperatives Development in the DA (but change "Agricultural" to "Agri-Industry" and help farmers go beyond the farm gate and further up the value chain). Agri-



NO FREE LUNCH

CIELITO F. HABITO

culture guru Dr. Emil Q. Javier argues that we already have thousands of irrigators associations that can be transformed into coops with the right push and support. Meanwhile, the second track would be to lift land ownership ceilings for agribusiness investors, allowing quicker consolidation of raw material production, especially as coops development would take time and great effort. This way, we could attract back the conglomerates as well as new foreign investors to invest in agri-based manufacturing sooner.

Second, our policy of extended and excessive trade controls stifled competition, fostered hoarders and smugglers, and made government complacent in pursuing productivity improvement in step with our neighbors. Our new direction must be to *provide aggressive and appropriate support to our farmers to improve productivity and international competitiveness across the board*. Trade openness is critical, as lack of it stunted the sector and pushed up domestic costs and prices progressively higher than border prices over three decades. This deprived our poor of food security and proper nutrition, especially young children. We may provide *calibrat-*

ed tariff protection as needed, not government import controls that historically bred corruption, cartels, and complacency. *Transitional cash subsidies* could be provided so farmers can recover any losses while government eases them into lower costs via genuine productivity-raising support. This support is best provided in the form of public goods like irrigation, postharvest, and transport facilities whose benefits are long term, and less as farm inputs like fertilizer and seeds good for only one cropping season. Improved access to farm finance is crucial.

Third, despite mandated subsidiarity via devolution since 1991, the DA stuck with top-down management and one-size-fits-all solutions that only led to massive inefficiencies, resource misallocation and leakage, and neglect for promising strategic farm products. As intended under devolution, *DA must work through the provinces, which must take charge of managing farms and fisheries*, and in turn, take responsibility and accountability for coordinating assistance to farmers and fishers by the municipalities under them. DA must limit itself to steering, as the local governments do their rightful role of rowing. To this end, the DA under the previous administration had already rolled out the Province-led Agriculture and Fisheries Extension System or Pafes, which has picked up steam and shows a better way to truly help our farmers stand shoulder to shoulder with their Asean counterparts. That way, imports need not be feared, but seen as healthy competition to keep us on our toes, keep prices low, and give more food security to our poor.

In sum, Mr. Secretary, three S words define the top strategies you must spearhead to correct those age-old flaws: Scale, Support, and Subsidiarity. We are here to help you.

cielito.habito@gmail.com



New secretary brings a 'fresh' approach to address agricultural challenges

After more than a year, the President has finally appointed a secretary at the helm of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the person of **Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.** The appointment comes after the President has started initiating reforms in the agricultural sector, such as supporting farmers, expanding access to affordable food, and addressing smuggling issues.

In a statement released on the DA website, Laurel expressed his commitment to continuing the administration's agricultural programs, "As the representative of the President, my goal is to uphold his advocacies and programs in the agricultural sector."

"My primary aim is to ensure that there is an abundant harvest and to make sure that food is available on every table. It is also my goal to ensure that there is an enough supply of nutritious food that our people can purchase at the appropriate prices," Laurel said.

The new secretary, an industrialist and fishing magnate, brings his wealth of experience to modernize the agricultural sector, with the complementary mission to uplift the lives and livelihoods of farmers and fishers. He was also a member of the Private Sector Advisory Council, which is being consulted by the administration on various issues.

Laurel has pledged to ensure that farmers and fishers benefit from their hard work and dedication, emphasizing that they are "close to his heart" due to his firsthand experience of witnessing their struggles. He has also extended an open invitation to engage with the agricultural community, stating, "My office is open at any time for all of you. I'm ready to listen and work with you, and most importantly, I'm ready to work for you!"

This early, various lawmakers and groups have lauded the President's choice for the new secretary. Most of them have said that it is opportune time to

have a dedicated secretary as the President may have his plate full with a myriad of challenges, starting with geopolitical concerns and national security.

This was also seconded by several senators, who have said that they expect new perspectives from the newly-appointed secretary. Senator Alan Peter Cayetano said that he looks forward to hearing Laurel's plans, especially amidst this critical time in our country.

"Our nation expects the new secretary to use his experience and business acumen to develop a strategic roadmap that will drive innovation, enhance productivity, and create a more resilient and competitive agricultural landscape for the benefit of our farmers and our people," Cayetano said.

Senator Bong Go, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, congratulated Laurel and expressed interest in listening to his plans for achieving food security, increasing agricultural productivity, and modernizing the sector while ensuring sustainability, especially considering the growing number of aging farmers and fishers.

Senator Francis Escudero also welcomed the appointment, noting that the new secretary possesses extensive exposure and knowledge in fishing and agriculture.

While confidence in Laurel's ability bodes well for the department, it will take more than his business skills and extensive experience to address the complex issues that have mired this sector for generations. Laurel recognizes the magnitude of the challenge he faces and acknowledges that he "cannot do this alone." He has called for the support and cooperation of all stakeholders, especially the Filipino people.

With this, we eagerly await Laurel's plans so we could all rally behind him, because there can be no strong nation without a successful and sustainable agricultural sector.



PBBM's ₱20/kilo rice not yet possible – new DA chief

By JEL SANTOS

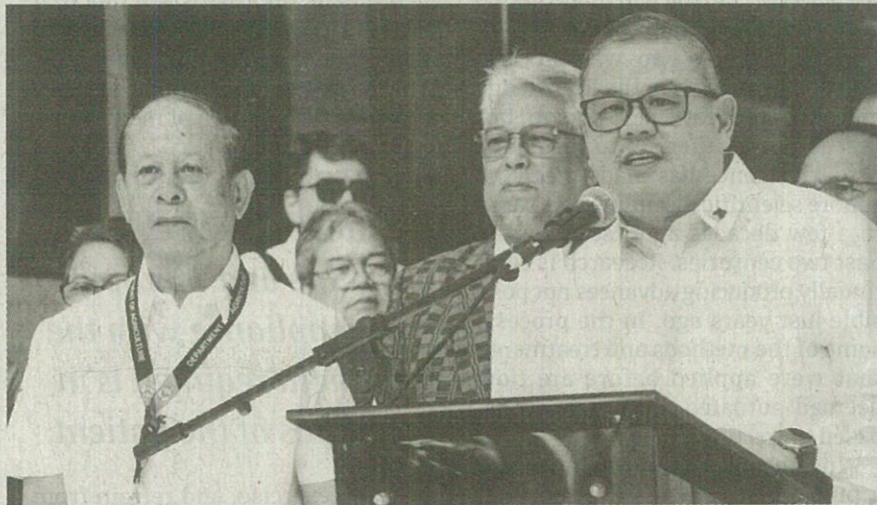
President Marcos' desire to bring down the price of rice to ₱20 per kilo is still "not possible" for now, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said on Monday, Nov. 6, his first day as chief of the agriculture department.

"The ₱20 per kilo was an aspiration. Ang (The) problem now [is] we are in the 15-year-high sa world market, 'di ba (right)? So today that is not possible," he told reporters in a press briefing at the central office of

the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Quezon City.

"But ang directive ni Presidente to modernize, irrigate, use the right seeds, mechanize and all of that, kumbaga maraming gagawin (But the directive of the President to modernize, irrigate, use the right seeds, mechanize and all of that, what I mean is that a lot must be accomplished)..."

Per the agriculture department's price watch, the cheapest rice sold in Metro Manila is local ▶ **8**



NEW DA CHIEF AT WORK – Newly appointed Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. attends his first-flag raising ceremony at the Department of Agriculture in Quezon City on Monday, Nov. 6, 2023. (DA FB)

PBBM's ₱20/kilo rice not yet possible – new DA chief

1◀

regular milled which sells at ₱41 a kilo as of Nov. 2. Meanwhile, ₱65 per kilo (local special) is the most expensive rice in the metropolis.

According to the new DA chief, they are currently working on making the price of rice affordable to the masses.

"We are hoping to do that in the coming—maybe toward the end of next year," Laurel said.

He said the order of the chief executive to modernize the Philippines' agriculture sector will not be easy, for such will be a very laborious task, saying that "it might take a little time."

"Modernizing is not easy, may (there is a) procurement process; it might take a little time. But we are doing it as much as possible," he said.

Addressing

'conflict of interest' issue

As some groups have expressed grave concern over the appointment

of the fishing tycoon as DA's chief, Laurel said he has already divested from all companies he used to hold.

The groups said that Laurel's appointment is a "conflict of interest," fearing that the new chief of the agriculture department may use his position to advance his business interests.

Laurel has been the president of the Frabelle Fishing Corporation—a deep-sea fishing company—since 1985.

"Basically, nag-divest na ako (I already divested), 'no. No more interest in all the companies that I used to hold... DA is a full-time job, I have no time to do anything else," the new DA chief said when asked about the issue. "Laki ng departamento (It is a big department). Complicated nang kaunti (A little bit complicated). There [are] 28 bureaus, departments, and GOCCs. So, it's a full-time job, wala akong oras (I don't have time) to think about other things."



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Tiu Laurel bares plan to reactivate DA's BAS

By ANDREA E. SAN JUAN

[@andreasanjuan](#)

NEWLY appointed Department of Agriculture Secretary (DA) Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he is planning to reactivate the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) to manage data on production and demand amid over-importation issues on agricultural products.

Asked how he would address the issue of over-importation of meats and poultry products, the Agriculture chief said he would have to look at the data of production versus demand.

"The problem right now is medyo incomplete 'yung data that is available. 'Yung data natin hindi ganun ka-accurate. I'm not blaming anybody on this," Tiu Laurel said at a media briefing in Quezon City on Monday.

Tiu Laurel had been appointed as the new secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. last Friday.

As the new head of the Agriculture

department, Tiu Laurel stressed that "one of the major things that I have to do from the start is to bring back, if possible 'yung Bureau of Agricultural Statistics so that we will have accurate data."

He also emphasized, "I'm not for importation. I am pro-production," adding that he was a producer in his "past life."

"While I import, I produce a lot more so I believe that the Filipinos can produce more. But then we have to really import when it is needed. But in order to make the right balance, we have to have the right demand to be managed properly," Tiu Laurel said.

Tiu Laurel divulged during the same briefing that his key thrusts as the new head of the agency would be to increase food production and modernize agriculture.

In a statement on Monday, DA said Tiu Laurel shared that the marching order of the President is to modernize agriculture so the country could be "food secure, less dependent on imports and lift millions of farmers and fisherfolk out of poverty by

the time his term ends."

For his part, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Guzman said the BAS is expected to cover different commodities and this will go hand in hand with the price and volume watch body, which serves as a platform for production guidance among industry stakeholders.

Last January 2023, the agriculture department reactivated its price and volume watch body to ensure proper coordination with the livestock and poultry stakeholders in securing the country's meat supplies.

According to an earlier story published by the BUSINESSMIRROR, Senior Agriculture Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban issued Special Order (SO) 19 that ordered the recomposition of the price and volume watch committee and advisory groups for livestock and poultry.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Kristine Y. Evangelista earlier said the revival of the price and volume watch group had long been proposed since it serves as a platform for production

guidance among industry stakeholders.

Evangelista noted that the body guides stakeholders whether there is enough supply or shortfall and therefore helps them in deciding whether to increase their production or not.

"It is also helpful to the department since we would have better projections regarding the sufficiency of our meat commodities," Evangelista told reporters in January 2023.

Meanwhile, according to a study published by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) in 2009, "one of the critical factors in import decision making is rice production," noting that importation has remained as one of the most "feasible" options for the government to meet the growing demand for rice.

With this, the 2009 study noted that it is imperative for the government to develop a strategy that would ensure "adequate" supply and minimum importation costs.

Further, the study said the Inter-Agency Committee on Rice and Corn, where the National Food Authority and Bureau of Agricultural Statistics are members, decides on importation when there is an impending production shortfall in the coming season.

BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

Date: NOV. 07, 2023 Page: A12



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

"Twenty pesos was an aspiration.
Ang problem nasa
15-year high sa world market.
Today, that is not possible.
But, with yung directive
ni Presidente, we are getting
ready to do our best to make
rice affordable."

Newly-appointed Agriculture
Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr



ALBANO
BUSINESSMIRROR
11 07 2023

Date: NOV 07, 2013 Page: A14



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

P20/kilo rice: Not today, but cheap rice is goal

BY ANDREA E. SAN JUAN

[@andreasanjuan](#)

THE P20 per kilo rice "aspiration" is not yet possible today but the Department of Agriculture will follow the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to "modernize, irrigate and mechanize" to make the price of the commodity affordable, newly designated Agriculture Secretary **Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr.** said.

"The P20 per kilo is an aspiration, right? The problem now... we are in a 15 year-high [for rice prices] in the world market. The previous \$230 per ton from Vietnam, today it's \$700 per ton. So today that [P20 per kilo rice] is not possible," Tiu Laurel said at a media briefing in Quezon City on Monday.

Nonetheless, the newly installed DA chief said that with the directive of the President to modernize, irrigate with the right seeds and mechanize, the agency is "getting ready to do our best to try to make price affordable."

Tiu Laurel said the DA hopes to do these steps towards the end of next year. "Of course, building and modernizing is not easy. May procurement process so it might take a little time, but we're going to do it as fast as possible," he added.

The DA chief said it's hard to say that the price of the staple would go down to P20 per kilo because of climate change.

"It's hard to say 'no. The problem today is that the world is so complicated. There's climate change. El Niño is now here and it will continue

until next year," Tiu Laurel said.

While it is possible to lower the price of rice amid the geopolitical conflicts, the DA chief said, "We have to have our silos, we have to have buffer stock. We have to change some laws."

In addressing the El Niño phenomenon, the Agriculture chief said he has specific plans in mind, but he still has to consult with his team and have a "common direction" to assess the situation.

Meanwhile, when asked whether rice production is the main priority of the agency under his leadership, Tiu Laurel said based on DA's statement on Monday, that while rice is the country's staple food, there are other "equally important sectors like livestock, poultry, fisheries and high value crops that require government attention and support."

The country's rice imports from January to September declined by almost 12 percent to 2.672 million metric tons (MMT) from 3.035 MMT recorded in the same nine-month period last year, Bureau of Plant Industry data showed.

The United States Department of Agriculture earlier projected that the Philippines could become the world's top rice importer this year with a total estimated volume of 3.9 MMT.

However, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa told reporters on the sidelines of the media briefing on Monday that the total rice imports of the country for 2023 will "definitely be lower" than the 3.8 MMT recorded last year, as this will be compensated by the country's local production.

BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

Date: NOV. 07, 2023 Page: A14



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



A FARMER walks through the lush green rice fields of Maragondon, Cavite, where expanses of land remain dedicated to rice farming. Recent reports reveal that the House of Representatives has redirected the most substantial budget increase, amounting to P64.5 billion, to the Department of Agriculture in its approved version of the proposed P5.768-trillion budget for 2024. The P20 per kilo rice "aspiration" is not yet possible today but the Department of Agriculture will follow the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to "modernize, irrigate and mechanize" to make the price of the commodity affordable, newly designated Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. said. NONIE REYES



DA chief: P20/kilo rice ‘not possible today’

BY JED MACAPAGAL

NEWLY-appointed Agriculture Secretary Francisco Laurel Jr. yesterday said that President Marcos Jr.'s campaign promise to bring down the price of rice to P20 per kilo is “not possible” yet due to spikes in global market pricing.

But Laurel was quick to add that the government's thrust to modernize the country's agricultural sector will help in

making the price of rice more affordable in the country.

“Today, it is not possible, but with the directive of the President to modernize, irrigate and use right seeds, mechanize... We are getting ready to do our best to try and make rice affordable,” Laurel said in his first press conference as secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Laurel's appointment was announced last Friday by Marcos, who concurrently

acted as DA secretary while he picked the department's chief. He used to own food conglomerate Frabelle Corp. and was also one of the top donors to Marcos' presidential campaign.

Laurel said: “The P20 per kilo was an aspiration. The problem now, we are now in a 15-year high in the world market. The previous \$230 per ton from Vietnam is at \$700 per ton today.”

He likewise conceded that it is “hard

to say” whether the P20 per kilo price of rice will be achieved within the Marcos administration, stressing that its movement is dictated by global events.

“It's hard to say. The problem now of the world is it's so complicated. There's climate change, El Niño is now here, and it will continue until the middle of next year. Anything can happen. We also don't

.....
See DA CHIEF > Page B3

Malaya Business Insight

Date: 07 NOV 2023 Page: B1 2 \$3



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DA CHIEF

know if a war will break out in another part of the world. We don't know if another ship will block the Suez Canal. It is possible to lower the price, but we need to have our silos, we have to have buffer stock and we have to change some laws, I believe," he said.

Laurel said the President's marching order to him was to increase production across all agriculture sectors, particularly on rice.

"Basically, ang directive ni President Marcos is to increase production in almost all sectors ng agrikultura, all commodities. But of course, may special emphasis sa bigas — modernize, irrigate, fertilize, and use the right type of

seeds as soon as possible (Basically, the directive of President Marcos is to increase production in almost all sectors of agriculture, all commodities. But of course, there's special emphasis on rice)," he said.

Based on DA's monitoring of public markets in the National Capital Region, the price as of last Friday of local well-milled rice is between P45 to P53 per kilo while regular milled rice is at P41 to P45 per kilo.

The price of imported well milled rice is at P45 to P48 per kilo, while the price of imported regular milled rice is not available.

Imported rice ranges from P55 to P60 for the special variety and P47 to P58 for premium.

For local rice, the special variety

costs P50 to P65 per kilo and premium, P50 to P60 per kilo.

According to data from the Bureau of Plant Industry's National Plant Quarantine Services Division, as much as 2.79 million metric tons (MT) of imported rice have arrived in the country as of October 26.

The bulk, or 2.5 million MT that is equivalent to 89.6 percent of the total shipments, was from Vietnam.

In September this year, Marcos said he remains optimistic that the P20 per kilo price of rice which he promised during his 2022 campaign for the presidency still has a "chance" of becoming a reality once the agriculture sector, particularly the cost of rice production

in the country, becomes stable.

"May chance lagi iyan (It always has a chance)," the President said then, adding: "Kung maayos natin ang production natin, hindi na tayo masyadong babaguhin at 'yung mga tulong na ibinibigay natin sa mga farmers ay magamit na nila (If we can fix the production [of rice] and it becomes stable, and we will not be hit by too many typhoons, and the farmers start using the aid that we have given them [then the P20 per kilo of rice is possible])."

The President has repeatedly said that the government is exhausting all measures to ensure that prices

of staple food in the market remain affordable, especially for poor households.

He also said the government is working on raising the rice buffer

stock amid the high demand for rice among Asian countries, which have increased their purchases or imports, in anticipation of the El Niño phenomenon.



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Pro-production Laurel bats for accurate agri data

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE newly appointed secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) vows to restore the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) to improve the accuracy of data in the sector.

"Our data is not so accurate – I'm not blaming anyone on this but one of the major things I want to start is (to) bring back Bureau of Agricultural Statistics so we will have accurate data. I am not pro-importation, I am pro-production," said Francisco Laurel Jr., in a briefing in Quezon City yesterday.

"I am a producer in my past life. While I import, I produce a lot more, I believe Filipinos can produce more but then, we have to import when it is really needed. But if we need to have the right balance, we have to have the right data to manage it properly," Laurel



LAUREL

added.

DA said the right data will greatly help the government's efforts to boost local production.

Arnel de Mesa, DA assistant secretary for operations, said in a

See PRO > Page A2

PRO

separate interview yesterday the function of BAS is devolved to local government units (LGUs).

De Mesa added the DA's data on agriculture is sourced from a multiple sources: LGUs, regional field offices, the Philippine Statistics Authority as well as from institutional stakeholders.

In 2013, BAS was merged with the National Statistics Office, together

with the National Statistical Coordination Board and the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics into the Philippine Statistics Authority through the Philippine Statistical Act.

BAS was first created under Executive Order 116 signed by former President Corazon Aquino in 1987 and mandated to collect, compile, analyze and disseminate fishery statistics in addition to crops, livestock

and poultry.

Apart from the restoration of the BAS, Laurel said he is also keen on tapping experts from the private sector at the beginning of his term.

"As for the current team, I plan to work with the current team and then assess. It will depend on their performance. If the current team performs, then good. If they don't perform, then sorry," Laurel said.



Laurel to focus on raising agri output; not in favor of imports

NEWLY appointed Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in his first briefing as head of his department that he will favor raising domestic production over importing food to fill supply gaps.

"I am not pro-importation, I am pro-production, I was a producer in my past life. I believe that the Filipinos can produce more," Mr. Laurel, who formerly headed a commercial fishing company, said on Monday.

He said the key to raising production is to modernize the industry as rapidly as possible, in accordance with the strategy set by the Palace.

"The President's directive is to increase production in almost all sectors of agriculture and all commodities, but of course there

is special emphasis on rice," Mr. Laurel said on Monday.

Mr. Laurel added that the Department of Agriculture is preparing measures to keep rice prices under control.

"It is possible to lower the price, but we have to have our silos, our buffer stock, and we have to change some laws," he added, without elaborating.

He said modernization would make agriculture more profitable and attractive to the younger generations.

"Modernizing is not easy, so it might take a little time, but we are going to do it as fast as possible," he said.

Due to high grain prices, President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. ordered price controls on rice on

Sept. 5, which capped regular-milled rice at P41 per kilogram and well-milled rice at P45. The controls were lifted on Oct. 5.

Mr. Laurel added that one of his major initiatives is to compile more accurate data on agricultural production.

"One of the major things I have to do from the start is to (revitalize), if possible, the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics so we will have accurate data," he said, noting that the bureau's current output is "incomplete."

He said more accurate and timely data will aid in making decisions on whether to rely on domestic output as against importing food.

"We really have to import when it is needed, but in order to

bring the right balance, we have to have the right data to manage it properly," he added.

Mr. Laurel added that he plans to promote the proliferation of aquaculture and mariculture.

"The (fisherfolk) and small coastal (communities) can make money, but we have to change some policies to promote that better," he said.

He added that the growth in seaweed production could further boost the fisheries industry.

During the second quarter, seaweed was the top item by volume of all fisheries products, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. Output was 365,775 metric tons for the period, accounting for 33.9% of fisheries production. — Adrian H. Halili



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Mindanaoans back new DA chief

COTABATO CITY — Mindanaoans on Monday gave newly appointed Agriculture Secretary **Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr.** their vote of confidence, expecting him to complement their efforts to empower the agriculture and fisheries sectors in the six Bangsamoro provinces in the south.

Two members of the 80-seat Bangsamoro regional parliament, Hadji Nabil A. Tan and Kadil M. Sinolinding, Jr., separately told reporters Monday that they look forward to Mr. Laurel's capability to help strengthen agro-fisheries in the region.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao's (BARMM) regional planners said at least 75 percent of the residents in the six BARMM provinces, Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, rely mainly on farming and fishing to generate income needed to sustain their families.

A bill for agricultural modernization was recently filed before the Bangsamoro parliament. — **John Felix M. Unson**



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PBBM pinawawalis kay Laurel korapsiyon sa Agri

Magtatayo ng sariling intelligence group si Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. para tutukan ang umano'y korapsiyon sa Department of Agriculture (DA).

Aniya, ang paglinis ng mga katiwalian sa DA ang isa sa mga pinakaunang inutos sa kanya ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

"One of the directives ni Presidente is kung may dumi diyan, clean it up," sabi ni Laurel. "Yan ang isa sa mga unang sinabi ni Presidente."

May ilang ulit nang nasangkot ang DA sa mga anomalya tulad ng fertilizer fund scam noong panahon ni dating Pangulo at ngayo'y Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo at sa ilang ahensiya ng DA din dinaan ni Janet Lim Napoles ang pork barrel ng ilang mambabatas.

Nilinaw ni Laurel na wala pa naman siyang ebidensiya ng katiwalian sa DA ngunit magtatayo siya ng intelligence group.

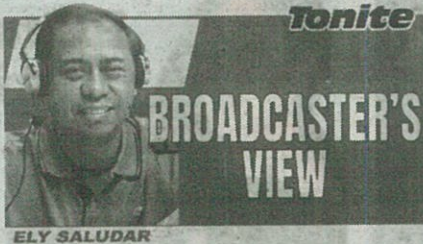
Maraming sakop na ahensiya ang DA tulad ng Bureau of Plant Industry at Bureau of Animal Industry kung saan kumukuha ng mga permit o sanitary phytosanitary import clearance para sa pag-angkat ng mga bigas, gulay, karne, at iba pang agricultural product.

Sabi ni Laurel, ipagpapatuloy niya ang kampanya laban sa smuggling ng mga produktong agrikultura at laban sa hoarding.

"We will go after them. There are a lot of good ideas to lessen smuggling from the origin pa lang... doon pa lang, maa-address na ito para hindi na makarating dito ang problema," ani Laurel.

Mas tututukan umano ni Laurel ang pagpapadami ng produksiyon kaysa sa importasyon ngunit kailangan aniya ng tamang datos kaya't nais niyang ibalik ang Bureau of Agricultural Statistics.

"Hindi ako pro importation. I am pro production. I am a producer in my past. While I import, I produce a lot more," sabi ni Laurel. (Eileen Mencias)



ELY SALUDAR

Panahon na upang isantabi ng Marcos Jr. administration ang pangako nitong maibaba sa 20 pesos ang kada kilo ng bigas sa ating bansa.

Muli na naman kasing nabanggit ang isyu sa pulong balitaan ni bagong talaga na si Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Bagama't inamin ng kalihim na malabo pa raw sa ngayon ang P20 kada kilo ng bigas at humingi ito ng kaun-

P20 per kilo ng bigas kalimutan na

ting panahon para raw matupad ang pangakong ito ng pangulo.

Marami raw kailangan na reporma sa sistema upang mapalakas ang produksiyon ng bigas sa bansa.

Pero dapat ay iwanan na ng administrasyon ang naging pangako noon sa kampanya sa eleksiyon ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.

Kahit pa matapos ang anim na taon na termino ng pangulo ay malabong matupad ang pangako nito na maibaba sa P20 ang kada kilo ng bigas.

Magpakatotoo na lang ang gobyerno at huwag ng paasahin ang publiko dahil mas lalong nagdaramdam lang ang masang Pilipino sa usaping ito.

Tanggap na rin naman ng lahat na nagoyo at nabudol lang ang mga

botante sa pangakong ito ng pangulo noong panahon ng kampanya sa eleksiyon.

Bagama't ang lagi nating binabanggit na bigyan ng pagkakataon ang lahat ng bagong upo na opisyal at abangan natin kung may pagbabago nga na magaganap sa sektor ng agrikultura sa pangkalahatan bagamat alam natin na fishing o sa pangisda ang negosyo ng bagong kalihim ng DA.

Sa ngayon ay may mga indikasyon na mabibigo lang ang publiko dahil muling ipinangangalandakan na lalaban daw ang smuggling na matagal na rin nababanggit ito ng pangulo noong siya pa mismo ang kalihim ng DA pero wala ring nangyari at hindi ito nasugpo.



Tonite



BOYET J. ADULCO

FOR THE
RECORD

Natulduran na ang higit isang taon na pamamahala ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. sa Department of Agriculture. Ito ay nang kanyang itilaga bilang Agriculture Secretary si Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Marami sa mga Pinoy ang hindi kilala si Laurel. Hindi siya isang politiko at lalong hindi siya isang fashion designer.

Siya ang may-ari ng Frabelle Foods Corporation, isa sa pinakamalaking deep sea fishing companies sa mundo. Produkto siya ng University of Santo Tomas na nagtapos sa kursong computer science.

Naging top donor sa presidential bid ni Marcos noong 2022 elections. Hindi na ito nakakapagtaka dahil matalik niyang kaibigan ang pangulo.

Siya ang bagong mukha sa gabinete ni Marcos at mukhang magaan na makakapasa sa Commission on Appointments (CA) dahil maraming senador at kongresista ang nagbigay ng thumbs up sa kanya.

Sa pag-upo niya sa Agriculture department, natuldukan na rin ang matalag nang usap-usapan na lumang mukha ang papalit kay Marcos sa DA. Tinutukoy natin si dating Interior and Local Government Secretary Mar Roxas. Mukhang pinili ni Roxas na alagaan ang dalawa niyang anak.

Isa rin sa kapansin-pansin ay ang pag-follow muli ni Pangulong Marcos sa dati niyang executive secretary na si Atty. Vic Rodriguez. Meron bang nagaganap na hindi na hindi alam ng marami?

Matagal din ang pinagsamahan ni Marcos at Rodriguez kaya naman ito ang pinagkatiwalaan na maging little president sa mga unang buwan ng panunungkulan ng pangulo.

Baka magulat na lang tayo isang araw na nanunumpa na sa bagong puwesto si Rodriguez. Sabi nga nina Elton

John, Stevie Wonder, Dionne Warwick at Gladys Knight, "That's what friends are for."

Sayang din ang isang Mike Defensor kung hindi ito mabibigyan ng puwesto sa gabinete ni Marcos. Nagpagod siya nang husto para makakuha ng malaking boto sa Quezon City si BBM.

Marapat lang na mabigyan siya ng puwesto kaysa naman sa ibang mga nakaluklok ngayon na hindi naman tumulong kay Marcos noong 2022 presidential elections.

Kung si Laurel ay nagbigay ng campaign fund sa kandidatura noon ni Marcos, dugo't pawis naman ang naging kontribusyon ni Defensor para manalo ang kanyang minamanok.

Sayang naman ang kanyang talent kung hindi mapapakinabangan ng administrasyong Marcos.

Kunsabagay, nakakaisang taon pa lamang sa kanyang panunungkulan si Marcos at mayroon pa siyang limang taon, malay natin mayroon pang mga bago at lumang mukha na manunungkulan sa administrasyon.



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

P20 per kilong bigas bomalabs sa DA chief

INAMIN ng bagong talagang Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr. na hindi pa kayang ibaba ngayon sa P20 ang bawat kilo ng bigas.

"Twenty peso was an aspiration. Ang problem nasa 15-year high sa world market. Today, that is not possible," wika ni Laurel sa kanyang unang first press conference.

Binanggit ng kalihim na maraming kinakaharap na problema ang agrikultura, kabilang dito ang cli-

mate change, El Niño at ang komplikadong sitwasyon sa buong mundo.

Aniya, isa sa naging tagubilin sa kanya ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. ay gawing modernize ang pagsasaka at irigasyon upang sa gayon ay mapataas ang produksyon ng bigas.

"We are getting ready to do our best to try to make rice affordable," wika ni Laurel. "It might take a little time." (Riz Dominguez)



LAUREL IWAS-PUSOY SA MANILA BAY RECLAMATION

INIWASAN ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na sagutin ang isyu ng reclamation project ng Frabelle Corporation sa Manila Bay.

Ikinatuwiran na lamang nito sa kanyang press conference sa tanggapan ng Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Lunes na nag-divest na siya sa kompanya.

"As I said, wala na akong oras doon eh. I really have no time for that. I just need to work and fix things and move forward," paliwanag ni Laurel nang direktang tanungin sa reclamation project.

Ang reclamation project ng Frabelle ay kabilang sa 22 ipinatigil ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. noong Agosto.

Sa isinagawang pagdinig ng Senate committee on environment and natural resources noong Oktubre 24, 2023, isiniwalat ni Senador Cynthia Villar na ang proyekto ng Frabelle ay nakaladkad sa overlapping ng reclamation project ng Century Peak ni

William King sa Cavite.

Dahil sa kontrobersiya, sinuspinde ng isang taon ng Ombudsman sina Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) Chairman Alberto Agra at Janilo Rubiato.

Nanindigan naman si Laurel na hindi na siya nakikialam sa operasyon ng Frabelle Corp.

"Basically, nag-divest na 'ko. I have no more interest in all the companies that I used to own," ani Laurel.

"DA is a full-time job. I have no time to do anything else. Ang laki ng departamento. Complicated ng unti, that marami — there's 28 bureaus, departments, and GOCCs. It's a full-time job. Wala akong oras to think about other things," dagdag pa niya.

Itinanggi rin nito na ang pagkaluklok sa kanya sa puwesto ay bilang kabayaran sa pagtulong niya kay Marcos noong 2022 presidential elections.

Abante

UNA SA BALITA

Date: 07 NOV 2023 Page: 4



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Sulat kay Editor

P20 per kilong bigas

Dear editor,

Matagal nang hinihintay ng maraming Pilipino na matupad ang pangako ng administrasyong Marcos na maibaba sa P20 ang bawat kilo ng bigas. Sa pag-upo ng bagong kalihim ng DA na si Francisco Tiu Laurel, sinabi nitong hindi pa ito makakamit sa ngayon.

Kahit paano, may natitira pa ring pag-asa na maibaba ang presyo ng bigas. Malay natin, si Laurel pala ang magpapasigla ng produksyon ng bigas sa bansa upang mabawasan ang importasyon nito. Sabi nga ng kalihim, may posibilidad pa rin na bumaba ang presyo ng bigas at iba pang bilihin basta huwag lang lumala ang giyera o kaya ay may bumalagbag na namang barko sa Suez Canal.

Concerned citizen

Date: 07 NOV 2023 Page: 2



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

P20/kilo bigas imposible pa - DA

Hindi pa posible sa ngayon na maibaba sa P20 ang presyo ng bigas sa bansa.

Sa unang media briefing, sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ito'y dahil nasa 15 year high pa ang world market sa ngayon at inihalimbawa dito ni Laurel na kung noon ay nasa \$230 ang kada tonelada ng isda sa Vietnam, sa ngayon ay nasa \$700 kada tonelada ito kaya malabo pang bumaba ang presyo ng bigas sa merkado.

Gayunman sinabi ni Laurel na gagawa ng mga paraan at mga pagbabago sa mga polisiya upang maging affordable ang bigas para sa lahat ng mamamayang Pilipino sa susunod na taon.

Niliwanag din nito na walang magaganap na conflict of interest sa paghawak ng posisyon sa DA dahil nag-divert na siya at walang panahon na gamitin ang posisyon sa kung anumang bagay dahil prayoridad ngayon ay gumawa ng ikabubuti ng mamamayan at makatulong sa bansa.

Hindi rin anyay payback sa kanya ang naitulong sa kampanya noon ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. sa pagkakatalaga sa kanya sa DA dahil matagal nang itataguyod sa kanya ang posisyon at ngayo'y malaking challenge ito sa kanya na paunlarin ang agri sector.

Binigyang diin pa ni Laurel na ang dagdag na pagkakaroon ng irigasyon ang mas paglalaanan ng pondo sa P64.5 bilyon na naibigay ng Kongreso sa ahensiya.

Hiningi rin ni Laurel ang kooperasyon ng mga tauhan para mapagtagumpayan ang mga ilalatag na mga pagbabago sa ahensiya.

Ang mga tauhan na walang magandang accomplishment sa puwesto ay kanyang aalisin at pananatilihin ang gumagawa ng mabuti sa pagtupad sa tungkulin.
(Angie dela Cruz)



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DA launches 3 World Bank-funded projects

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) launched three projects funded by the World Bank aimed at making farms and fisheries more climate-resilient.

"All these three projects will support the development of a more climate-resilient agriculture and fisheries sec-

tor in the Philippines," World Bank Country Director for the Philippines Ndiamé Diop said.

According to the DA, the World Bank invested a combined \$920 million in the projects. These are the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) Scale Up, Mindanao Inclu-

sive Agriculture Development Project (MIADP), and the Philippine Fisheries and Coastal Resiliency Project (FISHCORE).

The PRDP Scale Up will be allocated \$600 million, FISHCORE \$200 million, and MIADP \$120 million. — **Adrian H. Halili**

FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link
tinyurl.com/2xcftz8e

Date: 07 NOV 2023 Page: 4



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Pananamantala, korupsiyon sa devolution?

ANG Republic Act 7160 o ang Local Government Code ay ang *devolution* o paglilipat ng kontrol at responsibilidad ng ilang serbisyo sa kamay ng Local Government Units (LGU's). Kabilang dito ang mga serbisyo sa kalusugan, kalikasan, kalsada't daanan, social welfare, turismo at agrikultura.

Panahon na para balangkasin at rebisahin ang batas na ito lalong-lalo na ang pangangasiwa sa mga magsasaka sa bawat probinsiya. Dahil sa *devolution*, kasalukuyang nilo-localize ang pakikipag-usap sa mga magsasaka sa pamamagitan ng Municipal Agricultural Officer (MAO). Ang problema, mas yuko ang karamihan sa mga MAO sa Mayor ng kanilang munisipyo. Hindi na nakikipag-usap, hindi na nagre-report sa Department of Agriculture (DA) Regional Office pagdating sa kalagayan, karapatan at kapakanan ng mga magsasaka na dapat sana'y napuprotektahan.

Makailang beses nang nilapitan ang #ipaBITAGmo Pambansang Sumbungan ng mga magsasaka mula sa mga probinsiya ng Davao, Cebu, Bukidnon, Negros Oriental, Ilocos Sur, Nueva Vizcaya, Isabela, at iba pa. Iisa lang ang kanilang reklamo—pang-aabuso't panloloko. Sumbong laban sa mga traders na bibili kuno ng kanilang mga ani subalit tinatakbuhan lamang sila.

Maging mga pulitiko't pribadong investors na kumukumbinsing bilhin o gagamitin ang kanilang mga lupang sakahan



pero hindi naman magbabayad ng ayon sa napagkasunduan. Ang masaklap, walang nagagawa ang Barangay, MAO at mismong mga opisyal ng munisipyo—tila mga inutil kaya't nagpa-BITAG na ang mga pobrang magsasaka.

Ganito rin ang kasalukuyang sitwasyon ng mga magsasaka sa San Simon Pampanga. Bukod sa pangtatraydor, pananamantala ay binalewala ang hinaing ng kanilang mayor at MAO. Kung hindi pa nanghimasok ang BITAG ay hindi pa makakaabot sa kapitolyo maging sa DA-Region 3 ang kanilang kalagayan. Ako mismo ang kanilang nakausap, nakaraang Linggo ng tanghali.

Dismayado ang DA Region-3, tali ang kanilang kamay. Dahil sa *devolution of roles and responsibilities* na napapaloob sa RA 7160, puwede silang isnabin, balewalain ng mga lokal na opisyal ng munisipyo. Ang kapangyarihan sa pagdesisyon, nasa kamay ng LGU na hindi na kontrolado't nakikita ng national government. Dito na pumapasok kadalaan ang korupsiyon kung saan mga residente ang appektado kasama-na ang mga magsasaka.

Ngayong may bago nang sekretaryo ang DA, magiging mas aktibo ang BITAG sa pagbabantay at pakikipagtulungan sa ahensiya para sa kapakanan at karapatan ng mga magsasaka.

Date: NOV. 07, 2023 Page: A4



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PHIL seeks UN aid to boost fisherfolk, farmers' resilience vs climate change

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

[@sam_medenilla](#)

WITH agricultural losses and damages reaching a staggering P260.45 billion in the last decade from severe typhoons and prolonged droughts, the Philippine government is now seeking aid from the United Nations (UN) to boost the resilience of local farmers and fisherfolk against extreme weather induced by climate change.

In a statement, Climate Change Commission (CCC) Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje said he already held ini-

tial talks last Friday with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Among those who joined the

meeting were FAO Philippines Country Representative Lionel Dabbadie, Suzette Simondac-Manilay, Environmental Programme Coordination, and Nikki Antonette De Vera, Programme Coordination Specialist.

Their discussions covered possible partnerships on enhancing the capacities of local government units and the country's climate reports. The details of the cooperation is expected to be finalized in the succeeding CCC-FAO meetings.

Borje stressed the importance of technology development and transfer to allow agricultural workers to adapt to the effects of climate change and ensure the country's food security.

"This strategic approach is pivotal in building a climate-resilient agriculture sector and

safeguarding the livelihoods of millions of Filipinos," he said.

The strategy is part of the Philippines' National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP).

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), CCC said 4.5 million Filipino farmers and fisherfolk were affected by adverse weather events from 2012 to 2022.

They are expected to face more challenges in the future after the Work Bank recently released its Country Climate Development Report, where it pointed out that rising temperatures and sea levels, increasing variability in rainfall, and typhoons are expected to greatly reduce agriculture production.

It said this would result in lower agricultural wages and for more people to suffer hunger if left unaddressed.



PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS

Meat prices to rise by up to 4%, DTI says

PRICES of meat products that will feature in the traditional Christmas feast are expected to rise by up to 4%, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said, adding that producers are likely to absorb much of the higher operating costs.

Mary Jean T. Pacheco, officer-in-charge of the DTI Consumer Protection Group, said that the department is meeting with producers of items commonly used in the Christmas feast, known as Noche Buena.

"The meat processors said that their production costs increased by 15%-20%," Ms. Pacheco said in an appearance on government television network PTV on Monday.

She added that the producers will absorb much of the cost increases and seek a "minimal" price increase of up to 4% on some meat products.

She said not all meat products will see a price increase. She added that only some Christmas ham producers are charging more, citing price monitoring reports.

"Our advice is for our consumers to choose the products that fit their budget and their taste," Ms. Pacheco said.

She added that the DTI will issue a Noche Buena guide containing product and price information.

Separately, Ms. Pacheco said that the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of Executive Order 41, which prohibits the collection of pass-through fees on national roads, could be signed within the week.

"The IRR is now going around as there are six government agencies that need to sign it. Hopefully, it could be signed already because we are already done with consultations, we are now at the 'legal scrubbing' stage," she said.

The six government agencies that will have to approve the IRR are: the DTI, the Departments of Finance, the Interior and Local Government, Public Works and Highways, and Transportation, as well as the Anti-Red Tape Authority.

The DTI has said that the removal of pass-through fees was among the requests of the manufacturers seeking price increases.

"Although logistics is only a certain percentage of the total, we believe that because of the suspension of pass-through fees, the manufacturers will have a reduced burden," Ms. Pacheco said.

"That is why we always tell the manufacturers to not implement a price increase because the government is trying to do its best to reduce their operating costs," she added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**



The saga of the farmers' unrequited toil in planting rice

A popular ditty goes that "Planting rice is never fun. Bent from morn 'til the set of sun." Rice farmers nowadays would likely append to that folk ballad the lyrics, "planting rice ain't rewarding as well." After all, their average income is not quite enough to elevate them above the poverty threshold.

The plight of the farmers is rather ironic because rice is arguably our most precious commodity. It is consumed all day long, from breakfast to dinner, and anytime in between. Why then does cultivating this crop not bring about prosperity or comfort to the farmers?





LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PAGE: 2 OF 2

There is of course a simple explanation for this phenomenon.

In determining how much profit farmers could make from planting rice, selling price is one of the most important factors to consider. The higher the selling price, the better off they would be.

Unfortunately for the farmers, their well-being goes against the consuming public's welfare. And in the clash of competing interests, the consuming public will always have the edge because politicians translate this into more votes.

The farmers' lamentable condition is further aggravated by the fact that some commentators are pinning the blame on the farmers themselves. They claim local farmers are inefficient since they cannot produce enough rice during harvest, unlike their counterparts in the region. Moreover, they assert the farmers have been protected from competition for so long that they cannot match the lower price of rice from other countries. How accurate are the critics' assumptions?

Let us take first the issue of inefficiency that leads to low productivity. The accompanying table is a selected comparison of

MAP INSIGHTS EDGARDO C. AMISTAD

rice yield per hectare of rice producing countries in Asia.

The table clearly shows that our farmers are not doing that badly. We are second to Vietnam in terms of average ton yield per hectare. Thailand is a major exporter of rice only because their land area is double our own with a lower population base.

What about land fragmentation as the cause of our supposed inefficiency? I'm afraid this contention is not backed up by hard data. Our average rice farm is 1.3 hectares. Vietnam's is 0.5, Thailand's is 1.6, and Indonesia's is 0.3. The average in Asia is a meager one hectare.

Some might argue that even if our farmers were competitive in producing rice per hectare, our total harvest would still not be enough to cover the rice requirements of our population. Hence, the need to cover the deficiency with imports.

There is no rebuttal to the above argument. It is elementary that if you don't have enough supply of a certain good, then you have no choice but to acquire

it from somewhere else. But in doing so, we are again forgetting the bigger issue of reforming our agriculture sector, in general, and delivering the assistance needed by the farmers to be able to produce more rice, in particular.

I have heard foreign and local economists alike parroting the mantra that if we cannot produce a certain product, like rice, at the most competitive price, we would be better off buying it from other countries that can. They even cited Singapore as a perfect example. They said the Lion City's food security index is at the top 10 ranking and yet it does not produce most of its food requirements.

What those experts failed to mention is that Singapore's population is just a fraction of our own. Securing their rice requirements is not as daunting a task as ours.

In one conference I attended in the 1990s, former National Food Authority administrator Jesus T. Tanchanco, Sr. warned the proponents of rice import dependency that during the early years of Martial Law, we experienced a debilitating rice shortage. He recounted that he was given a "blank check" by

TABLE 1

National average total rice production, harvested area, and average yield for Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Philippines, and Cambodia between 2014 and 2018

Country	Total production (Mt)	Harvested area (Mha)	Average yield (t/ha)	Irrigated rice (as % of total rice area)
Vietnam	44.0	7.7	5.69	89
Thailand	30.1	10.0	3.01	21
Myanmar	25.9	6.8	3.83	17
Philippines	18.6	4.7	3.95	59
Cambodia	9.9	2.9	3.41	16

SOURCE: FAOSTAT, 2020 ([HTTP://WWW.FAO.ORG/FAOSTAT/EN/#DATA/QC](http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/QC)); YOU, ET/AL., 2014

then President Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. to procure from other countries all the rice supply we need at whatever price. Unfortunately, no country was willing to sell.

What saved the day for us was the willingness of the then ruling generals in Thailand to sell us some of our rice requirements. The balance was somehow covered by a bumper corn harvest, which was

mixed with the rice being retailed to increase the volume.

Let's now go to the critical issue of uncompetitive pricing. We need not belabor the point that our locally produced rice is indeed priced higher than that in other countries in the region. The more appropriate question to ask though is, "Why is this the case?" Why can't our farmers produce

rice at a lower cost? I can think of four major reasons behind this.

1. The high cost of inputs. Can the government do something to bring this down? If not, then we better think of price subsidies to have cheaper-priced rice.

2. The high number of calamities (typhoon, drought, etc.) that visit our country each year. The risk borne by our farmers is thus correspondingly higher, too.

3. The lack or absence of affordable credit to the farmers. There is a government bank mandated to cater to this need. Unfortunately, it has reneged on its obligation.

4. Inadequate post-harvest facilities, like field-drying machines, threshing, shed-drying, etc.

In all the above problems and concerns, the solutions are not within the farmers' grasp and control. All they can do is pray that those who are able to help will do their job.

In life, one of the best lessons we've learned is that in analyzing the sentiment or situation of a person, we must put ourselves in that person's shoes. I think it's time to put on the farmers' shoes. Let us feel for ourselves the burden, hardships, and frustrations they are enduring to put rice on our tables.

Finally, let us bear in mind that to succeed in providing the consuming public with enough rice at the lowest price possible, we must extend to the farmer the wherewithal to accomplish this goal for us. ■

EDGARDO C. AMISTAD is a member of the Management Association of the Philippines. He is an adviser to the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation.
map@map.org.ph
edgardo.amistad@yahoo.com





Soybeans hit 7-week high

SINGAPORE- Chicago soybean futures climbed to a seven-week high on Monday with erratic weather in the world's No. 1 exporter Brazil and demand for US cargoes underpinning the market.

There was additional support for soybeans from a weaker dollar which also lifted corn prices.

"There have been some issues with the Brazilian weather for soybean planting which is supporting prices," said one Singapore-based trader. "And China's demand for the next two months is likely to be strong."

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) climbed 0.5 percent to \$13.59 a bushel, after reaching its highest since Sept. 15 at \$13.59-1/4 a bushel earlier in the session.

Corn added 0.2 percent to \$4.78 a bushel while wheat lost 0.6 percent to \$5.69 a bushel.

The market is monitoring uneven crop weather in Brazil, where soybean planting is under way.

Dry conditions have been a concern in portions of leading soy-producing state Mato Grosso, while excessive rains have drenched southern areas. **-Reuters**



Soybeans rise for fifth session in a row

SINGAPORE — Chicago soybean futures climbed to a seven-week high on Monday with erratic weather in the world's No. 1 exporter Brazil and demand for US cargoes underpinning the market.

There was additional support for soybeans from a weaker dollar which also lifted corn prices.

"There have been some issues with the Brazilian weather for soybean planting which is supporting prices," said one Singapore-based trader. "And China's demand for the next two months is likely to be strong."

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade climbed 0.5% to \$13.59 a bushel, as of 0414 GMT, after reaching its highest since Sept. 15 at \$13.59-1/4 a bushel earlier in the session.

Corn added 0.2% to \$4.78 a bushel while wheat lost 0.6% to \$5.69 a bushel.

The market is monitoring uneven crop weather in Brazil, where soybean planting is under way.

Dry conditions have been a concern in portions of leading soy-producing state Mato Grosso, while excessive rains have drenched southern areas.

Still, brokerage StoneX raised its forecast of Brazil's 2023/2024 soy crop this week to 165 million metric tons, from the previous forecast of 164.1 million tons.

China's soybean imports are likely to stay high through the fourth quarter, taking 2023 purchases to an all-time record, but lackluster demand from loss-making hog farms is seen reducing purchases in early 2024, traders and analysts said.

Soybeans got a lift on Friday after the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) confirmed private sales of 131,150 tons of US soybeans to unknown destinations.

A weaker dollar, which is making US grains and soybeans more attractive on the world market is underpinning the greenback-priced commodities.

Major global currencies were steady early on Monday with investors preparing for the US dollar to extend declines from late last week after the US Federal Reserve dialled down its hawkish rhetoric.

Analysts are awaiting the USDA's Nov. 9 monthly supply/demand reports in which the government will release updated US and global crop estimates. —

Reuters