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New DA chief urged to prioritize food security, address fisheries sector issues

ENVIRONMENTAL groups urged Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., newly designated Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA), to buckle down to work and address food security issues and help the fisheries sector, which belongs to the poorest of the poor sector in the Philippines.

"Every person that takes over the post of Department of Agriculture is faced with the task of, first and foremost, being the champion of our farmers and fisherfolk to whom we owe our food security. We are an agricultural country yet the government has historically neglected the sector's development and the people who serve as the backbone of this industry. They remain considered to be among the poorest sectors in the country and, ironically, they are also the ones providing food to our tables for our daily sustenance," Father Edwin Gariguez, convenor of Protect VIP, said in a statement.

Gerry Arances, co-convenor of Protect VIP, expressed hopes that the new Agriculture chief will recognize the vital role marine resources play in ensuring food security in our country.

"With the impacts of climate change getting more frequent and intense year after year, the new secretary should prioritize investing in research to make the agricultural sector climate-resilient to secure the produce and livelihood of the farmers and fisherfolk and to promote sustainability. This should go hand-in-hand with ensuring that the health of our fisheries sector is maintained by protecting it from destructive activities, such as the case of the Verde Island Passage [VIP] and the fossil gas boom around its vicinity," said Arances.

The country's total fisheries production in 2020 was 4.4 million metric tons (MMT), which is down from the 2021 production of 4.25 MMT, according to the Philippine Fisheries Profile 2021 of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

For his part, Aldrin Villanueva, fisherfolk leader from Pola, Oriental Mindoro, and leader of the Oriental Mindoro Fisherfolk Federation of Oriental Mindoro said with a new Cabinet secretary taking the helm of the agriculture department, they are hoping that the fisheries sector will finally get much-needed help and support from the government.

"Protecting and preserving our vital ecosystems, such as the biodiverse VIP, is not only an environmental imperative but also an essential strategy to safeguard the nation's

food security as well as the economic well-being of our fisherfolk, who are considered as one of the impoverished sectors in the country. We urge Secretary Laurel to place strong emphasis on creating comprehensive policies and initiatives that include protecting vital marine ecosystems and empowering fisherfolk and coastal communities to ensure a resilient and equitable food system for all Filipinos," added Gariguez.

Long-overdue appointment

MEANWHILE, the international non-government organization, Oceana, welcomes what it calls the long-overdue appointment of a permanent Secretary of Agriculture and extends its hands in partnership with Tiu Laurel for the full enforcement of fisheries laws and regulations, and the mainstreaming science-based, participatory, transparent, and accountable fisheries governance.

"It is our fervent call to the new secretary to strengthen the reforms for evidenced-based, transparent, and sustainable management in addressing the challenges faced by the fisheries sector, including overfishing, declining fish production, and worsening poverty in the fisherfolk sector and coastal communities," Atty. Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Oceana vice president, said.

"The tall order should not stop in reducing the prices of food commodities. We are in an archipelagic country, blessed with the longest coastline and declared as the world's center of marine biodiversity. We should be able to feed Filipinos with fish and seafood that are accessible to all, especially the nutritionally and food-insecure coastal communities. We have progressive laws that are set to protect our marine environment and restore our fisheries abundance and we look forward to having these fully implemented," she added.

For his part, Pablo Rosales, President of PANGISDA Pilipinas said they are committed to protecting the ocean and their fishing ground and called on the new DA chief to do the same to bring back the richness of the country's coastal and marine resources.

To recall, Oceana and municipal artisanal fisherfolk groups expressed their opposition to the plan to amend the Philippine Fisheries Code (RA 10654).

Instead, they called for the comprehensive and full implementation of key reforms that were introduced by the law.

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Palay farmgate price hits P31 per kilo

By BELLA CARIASO

The farmgate price of palay reached P31 per kilo as cost of well-milled rice reached P54 per kilo, according to farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG).

In an interview yesterday with **The STAR**, SINAG chairman Rosendo So said that a 50-kilo sack of rice delivered to Metro Manila now ranges between P2,400 and P2,500.

He added that the retail price of well-milled rice ranged from P54 to P55 per kilo.

"We don't know what the cost of rice is in December but it is possible it could reach P60 per kilo," So added.

He noted that traders buy P31 per kilo of palay in Isabela and Bulacan and P29 to P30 per kilo in Pangasinan.

He added that the imposition of a price ceiling is no longer possible as the stocks are in the hands of traders. So had earlier proposed the reimposition of the price ceiling amid the expected increase in the retail price of the grains.

"Traders are still competing with the stocks (of palay) as the harvest is 70 percent complete. The high farmgate price is expected to persist," he added.

President Marcos lifted Executive Order 39 on the imposition of a price ceiling of P41 and P45 per kilo for regular and well-milled rice on Oct. 4, almost a month after it was implemented on Sept. 5.

Based on the monitoring of the Department of Agriculture, the retail price of local regular milled rice ranged between P33 and P50 per kilo; local well-milled rice, between P45 and P54 per kilo; local premium rice, between P50 and P62 per kilo and local special rice, between P50 and P65 per kilo.

Imported well-milled rice ranged between P45 and P80 per kilo; imported premium rice, between P50 and P60 per kilo and imported special rice, between P55 and P63 per kilo.



Retail prices of onions rise to P240 a kilo

The retail price of onions further increased to P240 per kilo after cost reached as high as P220 a few days ago, even as farmers' group Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) said there is no reason for prices to go up as imported onions continue to flood the market.

In an interview with **The STAR**, SINAG chairman Rosendo So said the prevailing price of onions in cold storage facilities is only P110 per kilo.

"If the onions are sold at P110 in the cold storage and the imported (bulbs) continue to arrive, the retail price should only be P160 (per kilo). If it is P220, P240, it is already overpriced," So said.

Based on latest monitoring of the Department of Agriculture (DA), local red onions are sold as high as P240 per kilo; imported white onions, P210 per kilo; imported red onions, P140 per kilo and local white onions, P170 per kilo.

Red onions are priced as high as P240 per kilo in Pateros Market; P200 per kilo in La Huerta Market in Parañaque City and Navotas Agora Market.

So said farmers in Mindoro are suffering losses amid the low prices in cold storage facilities.

"The farmers in Mindoro complained as they bought the onions at a high farmgate price and stored them at the cold facilities,"

So noted.

He added that the farmers procured the onions at P70 per kilo and paid for the rent of the cold storage facilities.

"I don't know what will be the action of the DA but nobody complied with the suggested retail price (SRP) when it was implemented," So said.

Last year, the DA imposed P250 per kilo SRP for onions in December but the retail price went as high as P720 per kilo amid allegations of hoarding and manipulation.

So said there is ample supply of the bulbs with the expected increase in the demand during the holiday season.

"The Bureau of Plant Industry has yet to release an updated inventory (of onions) but there is no reason for the retail price to go up as even imported red onions are coming in," he noted.

According to So, the DA should address the spike in the retail price of the bulbs and stop the unreasonable increase.

The retail price of onions started to increase by P30 per kilo on Nov. 7, setting the price at P220 per kilo in Metro Manila markets compared to the prevailing prices a week ago. As for DA's price watch on Nov. 2, the highest retail price of local red onions was only P190 per kilo.

— Bella Cariasio

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Be RICEponsible: Each year, wasted rice can feed 2.5 M people

Rice is our staple food. To Filipinos, no meal is complete without rice. Unfortunately, because it is a staple, many people have developed the bad habit of taking more than enough rice on one's plate – and leaving to waste what is not consumed.

Each Filipino wastes at least two tablespoons – or 10 grams of rice – annually. The accumulated amount can feed at least 2.5 million people each year, according to the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice).

The government agency has a cost for that waste – ₱7 million worth of rice – a significant amount especially when viewed as a fund that could be used to feed more hungry people. And there are many hungry people in the population. A recent survey conducted by OCTA Research said that 11.3 million Filipino households, or 43 percent, described themselves as food-poor in the second quarter of 2023; and 3.9 million families experienced hunger in the second quarter of 2023 (16 percent of them went hungry often or always). A household is listed as having five members.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, “based on the preliminary results of the family income and expenditure survey in 2021, poverty incidence among the population was recorded at 18.1 percent,” which is 19.99 million Filipinos.

We cannot afford to waste rice. It is a situation that each of us can take an active role to solve.

Rice wastage has been traced to many bad habits, one of them, the “takaw-mata” attitude, a term describing persons who get too much food on their plates simply because it looked appetizing. Dining out at food establishments, which many now do, has also been identified as a source of rice wastage due to the minimum one-cup rice order, the “unli-rice” promo, and the food buffet.

While some may not think twice about ordering more than a cup of rice for a meal, there are many who are unable to consume a cup and leave much to be wasted. The “unli-rice” and buffet always attract the “takaw mata” attitude to add more to the waste.

Already, there are some 46 local government units that have passed ordinances for restaurants to serve half-cups of rice. To extend this practice around the country, Dr. Karen Eloisa Barroga, PhilRice deputy executive director, said the agency plans to revive Senate Bill 1863, the proposed “Anti-Rice Wastage Act” which was filed by then senator Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. in 2013. The bill seeks to impose fines on establishments that refuse to serve half-cup rice orders.

The agency, which is attached to the Department of Agriculture, has also started to disseminate data on rice wastage to food establishments to encourage them to implement measures to cut the waste.

The fact that our annual rice wastage can feed at least 2.5 million people is the focus of the “Be RICEponsible” campaign launched by PhilRice last Thursday to mark National Rice Awareness Month. Presidential Proclamation No. 524 signed in January 2004 had proclaimed November for this observance. Activities during the month aim to boost awareness not only on cutting rice wastage but also on efforts to address malnutrition and poverty, and attain rice self-sufficiency.

Many of us have heard this from our elders who used to say – Finish what's on your plate because many go to sleep hungry. Today, government agencies have placed figures that tell us how much rice we waste and how many people feel hungry more than once a day.

It is time to “Be RICEponsible!”



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Congress centers on coffee, cacao, coconut

ILOILO CITY: The first national Coffee, Cacao and Coconut (Cocanut) Congress hosted by this city from November 8 to 10 aims to improve the production of three high value crops.

The three-day congress convened over 800 participants that include farmer cooperatives, trading companies, research institutions, exhibitors, and producers from across the country. They gathered to explore technologies and innovations in coffee, cacao, and coconut farming and discuss how these crops can adapt to the effects of climate change.

Sen. Cynthia Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, said that the cultivation of the three high-value crops can be intercropped with livestock, dairy, and poultry, among others.

"When we develop the coconut industry, we don't only develop coconut. We develop coffee, cacao, dairy, and native animals because they are additional incomes to the coconut farmers," she said.

The senator, however, noted several challenges that confront the market of these crops including, low farm productivity, lack of good agricultural practices, scarcity of high yielding planting materials, processing, access to credit, and economies of scale.

"There is a need to establish a sustainable and competitive coffee, cacao, coconut industries, and I believe that this is the objective of this Cocanut Congress," Villar added.

Villar also encouraged farmers to



SECURING THE FUTURE Sen. Cynthia Villar (3rd from left) and Department of Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban (4th from left) lead the ribbon-cutting ceremony that formally kicked off the first national Coffee, Cacao and Coconut Congress at the Iloilo Convention Center in Mandurriao district, Iloilo City, on Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023. PHOTO BY RJAY ZURIAGA CASTOR

recognize the potential of coffee given the country's warm and humid climate which is ideal for the crop's cultivation.

"Similarly, cacao has very good potential for increased income for farmers," she added.

The senator also stressed that the country's coconut production can still be improved despite the Philippines being a major exporter and the second-largest producer of coconut in the Asean countries.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., in his message delivered by Department of Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban,

said the Cocanut Congress is a significant platform to collectively recognize the role of the high-value crops to the country's economic growth.

"By fortifying our production and export capabilities in these three sectors, we must strengthen our production capabilities and extend our reach beyond our borders to increase the international demand for our fine coffee, cacao and coconut produce," he said.

He added that enhancing the presence of these crops in the global market will create countless job opportunities

for businesses, farmers, and local communities and advance economic growth.

Marcos emphasized that the government is committed to the development of coffee, cacao and coconut industries, and the advancement of all agricultural products and services.

"We continue to invest in innovation that will lead to lower food prices and increased income for our farmers. Through technology, research, and sustainable practices, we aim to secure a bright and prosperous future for our agricultural sector," he added.

RJAY ZURIAGA CASTOR



■ DA-RFO2 OIC Executive Director Rose Mary Aquino (left) leads a tour during the 6th Regional Organic Agriculture Congress. PHOTO FROM THE OFFICIAL DA REGION 2 FACEBOOK PAGE

Organic agriculture farmers seek sustainability

TO boost the organic agriculture industry, experts and practitioners recently gathered at the 6th Regional Organic Agriculture Congress held at the DA Cagayan Valley Research Center (DA-CVRC) Annex at Baligatan, City of Ilagan in Isabela, showcasing their products, interacting with potential buyers and learning marketing opportunities.

This collaboration between the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) and the National Organic Agriculture Program (NOAP) opened an avenue to exchange knowledge, share experiences and discuss strategies. Other objectives were to promote sustainability and contribute to economic growth.

In an audiovisual presentation, Sen. Cynthia Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Food and Agriculture, thanked the organic farming farmers, saying, "We still have a long way to go, but we have come a long way ... I assure you that your efforts and commit-

ment will soon be rewarded."

DA Undersecretary for Special Concerns Zamzamin Ampatuan expressed hopes that the 6th Regional Organic Agriculture Congress will have a snowball effect and spur investment in the industry in the future.

Carolyn Tumamao, DA-Regional Field Office 2 (DA-RFO2) information officer, said the meeting will provide the farmers with "sufficient knowledge and skills to experiment with organic farming."

Roberto Busania, DA-RFO2 officer in charge (OIC) regional technical director for operations and extension, urged the farmers to "keep up with the discovery of modern technologies so as not to fall behind in the global market. We must go on digital transformation now."

Imelda Guillermo, Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center Region 2 director, highlighted NOAP's scholarship grant that encourages "more young

people to learn entrepreneurship through organic agriculture."

Ten scholars from the Youth Scholarship Grant on Organic Farming will each receive one P150,000 in addition to the P5,000 monthly allowance after going through an intense examination and training in organic farming during the 21-month internship.

Meanwhile, citing updates of Republic Act 11511, or the "Act Amending the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010," Dale Raseth Cabanes, NOAP development management officer, emphasized the responsibilities of local governments in the implementation and promotion of organic agriculture.

In his message read by Cabanes, Director Bernadeth San Juan, NOAP national program coordinator, told farmers not to turn their backs on organic farming but to continue to be advocates and practitioners.

DA-RFO2 OIC Executive Director Rose Mary Aquino said that

despite the less than 1-percent of organic agriculture area in the region, their promotional activities are increasing "gradual appreciation of adopting organic agriculture farming including the application for certifications."

Aquino also challenged the farmers who received composting facilities from the DA to form an association to strengthen their "capabilities as an organized group to engage in commercial production of organic fertilizers."

Gina Nilo, the director of the Geomatics and Soil Information Technology Division of the Bureau of Soils and Water Management in Region 2, noted that the construction of irrigation and disaster-resistant facilities will be increased.

Representing Isabela 1st District Rep. Antonio "Tonypet" Albano, Board Member Emmanuel John Añes pointed out, "Organic way of living is not a method but a commitment for the future."

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

Date:

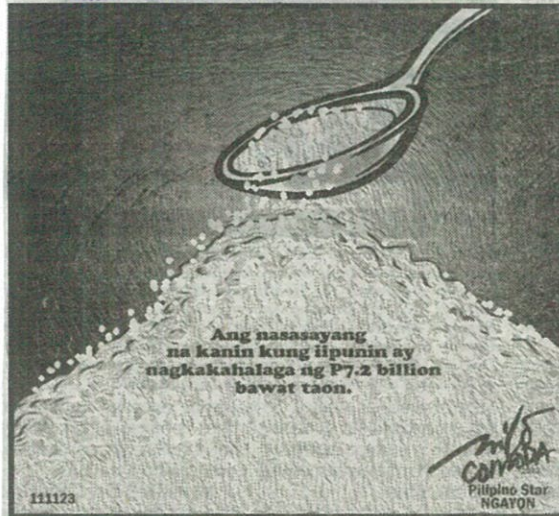
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Editorial

Maraming kanin ang nasasayang

MAHAL ang bigas. Ang pinakamurang bigas ay naglalaro sa P40-45 bawat kilo. Pero sa kabila nito, marami pa rin ang nasasayang na kanin. Ang mga nasasayang na kanin ay karaniwang nanggagaling sa mga fastfood restaurants lalo na ang mga nag-o-offer ng "unli-rice". Ayon sa report, maraming kanin mula sa mga restaurant ang humahantong lamang sa mga basurahan. Kadalasan, may mga inorder na kanin na halos hindi nabawasan at itinaapon na.

Ang mga nasasayang na kanin ay pinatunayan ng isang opisyal ng Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rice Research Institute (DA-PhilRice) at sinabing dalawang kutsara ng kanin bawat araw ang nasasayang sa bawat tao. Ayon kay Dr. Karen Barroga, executive director ng DA-PhilRice, sa dalawang kutsarang kanin na nasasayang araw-araw, nagkakahalaga ito ng tinatayang P7.2 billion bawat taon. Ang nasasayang na kanin ayon pa kay Dr. Barroga ay maaaring magpakain ng 2.5 milyong Pilipino.

Marami raw sa mga Pinoy ang takaw-mata. Oorder nang maraming kanin subalit hindi naman uubusin. Kailangan daw magkaroon ng disiplina na kung gaano lamang karaming kanin ang kayang ubusin ang dapat orderin para hindi nasasayang. Hiling ni Barroga na ipatupad ng local government units (LGUs) ang ordinansa na pagbibigay ng mga restaurant ng kalahating cup ng kanin para maiwasan ang pag-aaksaya sa kanin.

Ngayong Nobyembre ay National Rice Month Awareness at magandang pagkakataon para maipabatid sa mamamayan ang kahalagahan ng pagsisi-nop sa kanin na numero unong pagkain ng mga Pilipino. Maglunsad ng kampanya ang lokal na pamahalaan upang hindi maaksaya ang kanin.

Kumilos din sana ang mga mambabatas na gumawa ng batas na nagbabawal sa mga restawran na mag-offer ng "unli rice". O kaya himukin ang mga restaurant na mag-serve ng kalahating cup ng kanin para walang maaksaya. Kung maipatutupad ang pag-serve ng kalahating cup, maiwasan na ang pagtatapon ng mga tirang kanin.

Ang pag-aaksaya ay isa rin sa mga dahilan kung bakit hanggang ngayon, patuloy sa pag-angkat ng bigas ang bansa. Walang katapusang pag-aangkat na sa dakong huli ay tinatapon din ang mga tirang kanin. Iwasan sana ang pag-aaksaya sa kanin.



DA encourages Filipinos to avoid rice wastage, buy locally produced rice

AS the country observes the National Rice Awareness Month, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is encouraging consumers to avoid rice wastage and to buy locally produced rice to help the farmers boost their income.

Dr. Karen Eloisa Barroga, Deputy Executive Director for Development of DA-PhilRice, said in a Palace press briefing that under the DA's "Be RICE-possible" campaign, the agency is involving the consumers in preventing rice wastage which is around P7 million a year, aiding local farmers and providing the public with healthy food choices.

"This time we are involving the consumers para po ang... dahil ang rice ay ating staple food so it's important that it's not just a matter of technology pushed na iyong farmers ang inaano nating mag-produce ng rice," Barroga said.

"But also, the consumers, they have a role to play by avoiding wastage sa ating food - and doing that is also very helpful for our health," she said.

For her part, Dr. Hazel Antonio, the "Be RICEpossible" campaign lead, said the DA is continuing with the message since last year until 2028,

highlighting the importance of patronizing locally produced rice to help local farmers.

"I think our farmers appreciate the hard work. Pero this time, we're encouraging every consumer to buy their products kasi isa din sa mga goals ng DA, specifically ng PhilRice under the rice program, ay tulungan iyong ating mga farmers to market their products as milled rice na instead na ibenta nila as fresh palay sa farmgate," Antonio said.

This is the reason why the Filipino farmers' income is low, getting only about 49 percent of the consumer prices, she said.

In a P50 kilo of rice, they only get less than P25 minus production inputs, Antonio explained, noting that they are encouraging farmers to sell milled rice instead of fresh palay to boost their income.

"So, now, we're partnering with institutional buyers to buy from them directly. Just recently nga, mayroon kaming nakuhanag order from Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction Network, so they will be buying more than seven million worth of rice mula sa ating mga farmers," Antonio said.

With regard to rice consumer wastage, Barroga said around two table-

spoon of rice is wasted by every person each day, costing around P7 million every year.

Such amount could feed 2.5 million Filipinos, she said, underscoring the importance of carrying out measures to prevent rice wastage.

As to the cause of these wastages, Barroga said that a significant volume of rice is being spoiled during fiesta celebrations as people get more rice than they can consume.

"Actually the campaign says, get only what you need and what we have done in the past was to encourage a half cup serving as default 'no,' she said.

"And some of the provinces actually and cities, restaurants in the cities and provinces partnered with us to make sure that we could have a default serving of half cup of rice para hindi sayang iyong ano... maiwasan natin ang wastage."

The country celebrates every November the National Rice Awareness Month pursuant to Presidential Proclamation No. 524 signed on January 5, 2004 aimed at heightening public awareness on efforts to attain rice self-sufficiency and address malnutrition and poverty. PCO



Trust is organic

I was reading literature on Organic Farming and the high cost of third-party certification which prevents farmers from trying to even qualify for such papers that consumers are not even aware of. The education and awareness about "What is Organic?" is very low, even after the Organic Law was passed in 2010. The law states that 2 percent of the national budget must be earmarked for organic agriculture.



The law was amended to include Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) or a mechanism where you ask a group of farmers to work on trust basis among and between themselves that they indeed guarantee each others' organic practices. Ultimately, a certification is only as good as who issued it and when. Because after certification, anything could happen to the farm. So I personally go by the age-old practice of knowing your farmer, or growing what you need for your household and selling the excess.

Back in 2004, after an organic conference we attended in Uganda, we undertook a certification process for two coffee farms in Benguet. Both underwent a two-year process under the sponsorship of German NGO GIZ (formerly called DED) and our foundation. I am happy to know that almost 20 years hence, the Benguet State University coffee farm is still organic and would pass any international standard because of the stewardship of Prof. Val Macanes. Today, the coffee farm will be the site of our agroforestry training under Naturland, also a German association of organic farmers globally. Together with Philippine Coffee Board and another non-profit, ECHOsi Foundation, we will again train coffee farmers to grow organic coffee and other crops.

As I was catching up on readings for our Organic Agriculture class in UP Open University, I reviewed my knowledge of laws leading to what the state of organic agriculture is in the country today. Sadly, the market for organic products is usually people diagnosed with disease and their relatives and people of higher income (because they can afford the premium of about 10 percent over conventional produce). Majority of the population still do not care to choose organic due to challenges in accessing these produce and also the claim of higher costs.

For me, it has always been about taste. Thankfully, I have my taste buds intact and I am able to taste non-organic vegetables which have a "petrol-like" taste as compared to the sweetness of natural organically-grown vegetables. Exposure and practice is all it takes.

I do not want to shift to organic because the doctor said so. I want to eat organic because that is how Nature intended it to be. So rather than just check organic certifications, we take some effort in finding the farmer. And visiting his or her farm. Then building that trust between farmer and consumer.

Having grown organic vegetables for more than 10 years, you can tell by the taste and smell if it is organic. Practice indeed, makes perfect.

So where do you start knowing more about organic products? As they always say, when the student is ready, the teacher will come. So when you are ready to embrace the shift to eating only organic fare, you will first teach your senses. Taste, smell and try each vegetable so that your mental memory markers will go to work. In sensory exercises, coffee tasters need to expand their taste of many substances, like natural food and fresh produce. For how will you know what a stone fruit tastes like if you have never tasted a stone fruit? And how will you taste peach or apricot if you have never tried a fresh sample of the fruit? The best yardstick is always a natural version of the fruit or vegetable. A processed fruit may already be laced with sugar for preservation techniques. A processed or pickled vegetable may have vinegar and salt and will not reveal the vegetable's natural flavor. Fresh is best. Teach your senses is job number one.

Second is to find reliable suppliers. Not only in terms of consistency of supply but actually seeing how they are grown. I have been to a few farms whose practices I admire and believe in.

When we were going to open our ECHOstore in Davao, we first checked the supply of organic vegetables or what they now call the value chain and the supply chain. Today, ECHOstore Davao's owner has her own organic vegetable farm like our Luzon example.

Third is to visit weekend markets where organic suppliers sell their produce. In the Slow Food movement these are called Earth Markets – where farmers and producers directly sell to consumers. You will most likely meet the farmer who milks the carabao, the farmer who grows the vegetables and the producers of seasonal fruits like lanzones, avocado and the like. Beware of seasonal fruits being available year-round. Except for banana and papaya, everything else has a season. Mangoes have been developed to produce year-round but I also stay away from these due to its high-sugar content and more often than not, the heavily sprayed varieties.

Do I want to live to a hundred as my friend has jokingly asked? Maybe not, but I want to eat healthy and avoid disease. I do not want to shift to organic because the doctor said so. I want to eat organic because that is how Nature intended it to be. So rather than just check organic certifications, we take some effort in finding the farmer. And visiting his or her farm. Then building that trust between farmer and consumer.



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Rice output rises to 5.04 million metric tons in Q3

By XANDER DAVE CEBALLOS

Palay output, or unmilled rice, rose 0.4 percent from the previous quarter to 5.04 million metric tons in the third quarter, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

The rice production from July to September was higher than the 5.03 million metric tons recorded in the second quarter.

The PSA said the seasonally adjusted farmgate price of palay during the

quarter swelled to ₱20.24 per kilogram or 7.9 percent from ₱18.76 per kilogram in the previous quarter.

In a separate report, the PSA said that well-milled rice cost an average price of ₱51.67 per kilogram in the second phase of October, slightly higher than the average retail price of ₱51.25 in the first phase of the same month.

However, it is lower by 0.2 percent than the ₱51.77 per kilogram price of well-milled rice ► 4

in the second phase of September.

Of the regions, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao experienced the highest average retail price of well-milled rice at ₱57.31 per kilogram, while Region 1 had the lowest price at ₱46.10 per kilogram.

The PSA also reported monthly declines in other agricultural commodities including a kilogram of Baguio beans that cost an average retail price of ₱108.33, down 23.3 percent; dressed chicken at ₱195.13, down 0.8 percent; and red onion at ₱185.55, down 4.6 percent.

Refined sugar also experienced a decline of 1.6 percent from the second phase of September at ₱95.19 to ₱93.64 per kilogram average retail price in the same phase of October.

Meanwhile, carabao mango and galunggong saw monthly increases from average retail prices of ₱174.14 and ₱198.2 per kilogram to ₱180.76 and ₱201.58 per kilogram, respectively.



Agri commodity prices mixed in October – PSA

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

PRICES of a number of agricultural commodities such as rice and pork increased while those of vegetables and some condiments fell during the second phase of October, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported on Friday.

Data from the government showed that the average price of well-milled rice reached P51.67 per kilogram (kg) from October 15 to 17, an increase of 0.8 percent from P51.25 per kg of the previous phase, or from October 1 to 5.

On a monthly basis, the price was lower by 0.2 percent from P51.77 per kg posted in the second phase of September.

The highest price of a well-milled rice was P57.31 per kg and was registered at the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Eastern Visayas (Region 8) followed with P55.41 per kg.

Ilocos Region (Region 1), meanwhile, posted the lowest retail price at P46.10 per kg followed by

Western Visayas (Region 6) with P47 per kg.

Average price of regular milled rice, meanwhile, was P45.78 per kg during the same period. This shows an increase of 1.1 percent from its average retail price of P45.27 per kg in the first phase of October 2023.

During the period, the price of regular milled rice was highest in Eastern Visayas at P48.88 per kg, while the lowest price was P40.95 per kg posted in Cagayan Valley (Region 2).

Similarly, the average retail price per kilogram of pork liempo went up by 0.4 percent and was recorded at P338.11 per kg from its average retail price of P336.57 per kg in the same phase in October.

By region, Northern Mindanao (Region 10) registered the highest average retail price of pork liempo at P372.72 per kg, while the lowest average retail price was reported in Cagayan Valley at P296 per kg during the second phase of October.

Data from the PSA also showed that declines in prices were logged in some agricultural commodities such as sugar, onion, beans and chicken.

At the national level, the average price of a kilogram of refined sugar was P93.64 or 1.6 percent lower from the P95.19 a kg posted during the first phase last month.

The highest average retail price of a kilogram of brown sugar was logged in Eastern Visayas at P106.08 during the period, while the lowest average price was seen in BARMM at P84.50 a kg.

Prices of red onions and other commodities

An average retail price of P185.55 per kg was reported for red onion during the second phase of October, indicating a decline of 4.5 percent from the P194.45 per kg in the same phase last month.

Among regions, Region 10 (Northern Mindanao) had the highest average retail price of the bulb at P228.92 per kg, while the National Capital Region logged the lowest average retail price of red onion at P142.75 per kg.

Vegetables such as Baguio beans and string beans both posted declines in prices by 23.3 percent and 10.8 percent, respectively.

During the period, average price of Baguio beans was recorded at P108.33 per kg and was lower relative to the previous month's P141.25 per kg.

The average price of string beans also went down to P91.08 per kg from September's average price of P102.12 per kg.

In the same period, a kilogram of dressed chicken had an average retail price of P195.13 per kg. This shows a decrease of 1.2 percent from P197.46 per kg posted the previous phase.

Northern Mindanao recorded the highest average retail price of dressed chicken at P213.79 per kg. The lowest average retail price was logged in Central Visayas (Region 7) at P165.00 per kg.