

**CLIPPINGS FOR WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2022**

**A. SEC. FTL Jr. QUOTED**

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR**  
**CTALK: Developed but undelivered**

**THE MANILA TIMES**  
**Forever hoax**

**REMATE**  
**Editoyal: Presyo ng bigas sumirit na naman**

**B. DA FAMILY**

**BUSINESS MIRROR**  
**With P7.8-B wastage, bill mandates half-cup rice**  
**'Fiber crop industry ready to emerged as new employment-generating sector'**

**MANILA BULLETIN**  
**90% of palay harvested – DA**

**THE MANILA TIMES**  
**NFARMC approves adjustment of sardine closed fishing season**  
**Closed fishing season for sardines begins in Zamboanga Peninsula**  
**'Half-cup rice' is not about reducing what we eat**

**THE MANILA TIMES**  
**Hog raisers want to speed up processing of permits**  
**Iloilo province faces pork shortage**

**MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT**  
**PhilFIDA told to maximize opportunities in fiber industry**  
**Meat imports down 9.7%**

**PEOPLE'S JOURNAL**  
**PBBM urges PhilFIDA to continue supporting PH fiber industry**

**C. AGRI-RELATED STORY**

**BUSINESS MIRROR**  
**Editorial: How govt can protect farmers and consumers**

**MANILA BULLETIN**  
**5 LGUs hailed for excellence in fisheries code compliance**

**BUSINESS WORLD**  
**Crop volumes drop 3.1% in third quarter**

**D. FOREIGN STORY**

**BUSINESS WORLD**  
**London cocoa hits record high; coffee, sugar also up**





## CTALK CITO BELTRAN

### Devolved but undelivered

**F**ilipinos have started to realize that the Local Government Code that promoted the devolution of various programs from national to local government was one huge mistake, and nowhere is that huge mistake more evident than in the area of agriculture.



Unlike health and education where LGUs have no choice but to deliver basic services to their voters and family members, not all LGUs are dependent on agriculture or have a need to deliver programs and services. Many provincial governments, cities and municipalities prefer urbanization and commercialization. While in areas where farms and farmers are still a major presence, many local officials are ignorant or disenchanted with agricultural development, or simply ignorant. They would rather buy and sell real estate than fertilize the soil.

Yes, agricultural services have been devolved but they are undelivered! This being the case, why is there no auditing, reporting or evaluation of failed or undelivered services covered by the Local Government Code? Because of devolution, the Department of Agriculture (DA) was robbed of authority and operating funds to carry on delivering services that they have done for decades.

This massive failure to deliver or indifference has contributed to increased poverty of farmers, not to mention lowered productivity of Philippine agriculture. In some LGUs, farms and farmers have even become victims of petty extortion and corruption by way of restrictive ordinance or permits for every little thing.

So, where's all the money going? Why is no one being held accountable for failing to deliver devolved services for education, health and especially agriculture? I respectfully suggest to **DA Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel** to form a task force or professional research group either from UP Los Baños or ask Malacañang to study and investigate how extensive the damage has been due to devolved but undelivered services. Sec. Laurel can then sit down with DILG Sec. Benhur Abalos to discuss the matter.

If LGUs are remiss in or incapable of delivering the mandate of devolved services, then it only follows that those LGUs should surrender the authority and responsibility as well as any funding for such services. I am certain that Sec. Laurel can count on the support of numerous organizations in agriculture such as the Federation of Free Farmers whose leader, a former agriculture secretary, has demanded a review of this failure and oversight. They might even have useful data.

With sufficient evidence, the DA and sector representatives can submit a joint resolution for a partial revision of the Local Government Code, specifically in areas of undelivered agricultural services. I know that the late senator Nene Pimentel had all the best intentions and vision but unfortunately, people and politics change, and imperfect laws must do likewise.

News reports indicate that Sec. Laurel has made the first move of appointing his chief of staff; calling in the resignation of contractual/political appointees while numerous groups have called for a revamp of the entire department.

In this connection, I make this shameless lobby for Sec. Laurel to make efforts to classify the multi-billion-peso game fowl industry as a legitimate sector under the DA.

For the longest time, ignorant or opportunistic groups have persisted in placing the game fowl industry under the Games and Amusement Board. Before that, there was a Game Fowl Board, but both bodies focused only on the *sabong* or cockfighting part and branding it as another form of gambling. It has always been classified as a sport and national past time and never gambling.

In the meantime, there was never any genuine or proper representation of game farm owners, cockpit operators, animal feed and health product manufacturers, as well as breeders and sellers of game fowl, equipment and breeding stocks. Collectively, all this amounts to billions of pesos in trade, not even counting the thousands that the industry employs.

Former DA secretary Manny Piñol, who is an avid breeder, has also voiced the need to classify the game fowl industry as a legitimate sector of agriculture due to the huge financial, commercial and agricultural resources the sport and industry commands.

But because of the DA's failure or missed opportunity, the game fowl industry has been subjected to harassment, red tape, anti-business policies and outright corruption for the last three years, beginning from 2020. Instead of self-regulation or proper representation, business and commercial trade in various areas of *sabong* and game fowl production were undermined and became a milking cow of DA and non-DA officials.

"Disease control" or avian flu cases were exaggerated and used as a means of imposing unrealistic and unreasonable requirements such as mandatory registration of game farms before any inter-island sale or export of game fowls could be done. The source had to be inspected and certified by the Bureau of Animal Industry before permits or clearances would be issued.

But in order to comply with all the requirements, one would need a lawyer, a veterinarian, a DA vet to draw blood samples, SEC registration, business permit, BIR registration, etc. I remember how early this year, the biggest commercial trade show for game fowls and breeders was almost cancelled because DA-BAI officials threw in every obstacle or requirement up to the last minute.

All of this killed thousands of backyard breeders who used to sell one to two dozen roosters or hens in a year to augment their income. If we have more poor Filipinos in the last three years, this is part of the reason; government took away their part-time income. Many *sabungeros* have more land, more assets and invest more time on their farms than some businessmen do. Please treat "us" with respect.

\* \* \*

E-mail: [utalk2ctalk@gmail.com](mailto:utalk2ctalk@gmail.com)

★





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Forever hoax

### MIDWEEK COMMENTS

MARLEN V.  
RONQUILLO



The two are of real relevance to the undying hoax from our agricultural mandarins that P20/kg rice is still possible. Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., the new Agriculture secretary, issued a statement saying that while the promised P20/kg rice is not possible right now — he qualified it with “not yet” — there is still a possibility for rice that cheap. “Not yet” is a statement that refuses to provide closure to a campaign promise that will never happen, not now, not during the term of Mr. Ferdinand Marcos Jr., not in a thousand years. And this came from someone who is supposedly a believer in data and hard empirical evidence.

Mr. Laurel reportedly wants to resurrect the dead Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) to get hard data for his decision-making. But this is what most people do not get. How can a real believer in data and empirical evidence believe in the hoax that P20/kg rice is still within the realm of the possible? You cannot square off belief in empirics and hard data with the belief that someday, somehow, P20/kg rice is still possible.

That the farmgate price for soggy palay is P16 means that the cheapest and low-quality local rice has to start at P40/kg. The maximum recovery for every sack

of palay milled is 60 percent. You have to factor in the drying cost, the milling cost and the transport expenses. Even under Mr. Laurel’s version of empirical heaven, it is impossible to source rice at P20/kg unless under an environment of massive state subsidies, which the heavily indebted government cannot afford. Or, unless you are selling plastic rice.

The second takeaway is self-explanatory. If Isabela cannot be shielded from occasional supply shocks, what province or region can? Every rice-producing region in the country is vulnerable to climate-induced supply shocks or another version as deadly: crop infestation. There is no rice-producing area without major vulnerabilities.

Put the two together — the cheapest rice that is barely edible cannot be lower than P40/kg and that every rice-producing area in the country is vulnerable to supply shocks — and what you have is the impossibility of selling rice at P20/kg from domestically supplied rice.

What about imported rice? Can it be the source of cheap rice? No, and no way are the two answers.

“Tightness” is how people well-versed with the dynamics of the global rice market describe its current status. In a matter of a few years, or starting in 2030, market experts said the market would be characterized by “extreme tightness.” Starting that year, Vietnam will cut its current 7.1 million metric tons (MT) of rice exports to about 4 million MT. Remember

that in the greed-driven, reckless, rice importation of 2019, the first year of the Rice Tariffication Law, Vietnam supplied 2.7 million of the 3.1 million MT we imported. Historically, we are getting 80 percent of our rice imports from Vietnam, and starting in 2030, we will have to find other costlier sources. Not that Vietnam rice is cheap. But it quotes the most competitive rice tenders, which local retailers resell at 10 percent to 20 percent higher than locally produced rice.

The already unstable global rice market started to feel the jitters this year following India’s decision to stop exporting rice. With that decision, rice prices surged. And there is China’s huge presence in the global rice market. China can quote the highest tenders and get the volume it wants. The China leftovers in the global market would be then chased by rice-short countries like the Philippines, of course, at elevated prices.

The real world, which means the domestic rice supply and the global rice market, cannot supply cheap rice, more so at P20/kg. Rice at that price exists only in the realm of the bizarre and the unreal, in the fever dreams of the Marcos people who cling to this forever hoax. The accession of Mr. Laurel should have been the perfect timing to bring closure to the hoax. Instead of going for sanity and rationality, Mr. Laurel dangled the qualifier “not yet” to give the hoax another day in the public sphere.

LAST month, grains traders from Isabela province set up shop in the rice-farming areas of Pampanga, not to sell rice, which is their specialty and trademark, but to put up palay-buying stations at prices better than what the local grains traders offered. For palay with moisture content of 14 percent or below, premium palay, the offer that farmers did not refuse was P22 per kilogram. It was P18 to P19 for palay outside the desired moisture content and P16/kg for the really soggy kind.

The Isabela-based grains traders do not venture outside the province unless there is a need to do so. Isabela is known for its grain surpluses, whether rice or yellow corn. During my hog-raising days, the default position of hog raisers in my area was to call Isabela-based yellow corn suppliers if the yellow corn produce in the eastern towns of Pampanga and nearby areas in Tarlac province could not cope with orders. Isabela is the synonym of “plenty” when it comes to grains, the Philippine version of the American Midwest. The palay-buying of the Isabela traders in Pampanga last month may have something to do with either inadequate or failed harvests.

There are two takeaways from the recent palay-buying by Isabela traders in my province. First, soggy palay, the cheapest kind, is priced at P16/kg at the farmgate. Second, even Isabela, a province reputed for its grain stability, is rocked by supply instability from time to time.



Date: 15 NOV 2023 Page: 5



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



## EDITORIAL

### PRESYO NG BIGAS SUMIRIT NA NAMAN

NOONG Nobyembre 3, itinalaga ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. bilang kapalit niyang kalihim ng Department of Agriculture si Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., isang negosyante. Pagmamay-ari niya ang Frabelle Fishing Corporation.

Kamakalawa naman, inamin ng bagong kalihim ng DA na hindi siya nakapagtapos ng pag-aaral at walang katotohanan ang ulat na alumnus siya ng University of Santo Tomas.

Sinabi niya na maaga siyang nagpamilya dahil sa edad na 19 ay tumayo na kaagad siyang ama sa kanyang anak. Naghanap-buhay siya upang maitaguyod ang kanyang anak.

Ayon kay Laurel, ang karagatan ang naging paaralan niya kaya naman mula sa pagiging maliit na kompanya sa pangangisda ay napaunlad at napalaki niya ang kanilang negosyo na umabot na sa pagsusuplay sa iba't ibang panig ng mundo.

Sa pag-upo ng bagong kalihim ng Kagawaran ng Pagsasaka, sa kanya ngayon umaasa ang marami sa mamamayan na maibababa ang presyo ng bigas. Noong si Pangulong Marcos ang nakaupong kalihim, ang presyo ng regular milled rice ay P41 habang ang well-milled rice ay P45. Ito ay habang ang presyo ng iba't ibang klase ng bigas ay napakataas ng presyo.

Ngayon, hinahanap ng mga tao ang pangako ni Pangulong Bongbong na P20 bawat kilo ng bigas. Sabi pa ng mamamayan lalo na ang mga nasa laylayan ng lipunan, kahit P25 kada kilo ay masaya na sila kung maipatatupad ito ni Laurel.

Pero wala pang isang buwang nakaupo si Laurel bilang kalihim, sy sumirit na naman pataas ang presyo ng bigas sa mga pamilihan. Sa bodega pa lang ay nagtaas na ng halos P60 bawat 25 kilos o kalahating kabang bigas.

Saan na naman kaya pupulutin ang mamamayan o ang manggagawa na ang sahod ay sapat lang sa pamasaha pagpasok sa trabaho at pagkain na dalawang beses na lang sa isang araw?

Dapat talagang masuheto ang problema sa bigas o makontrol ang presyo nito upang sa ganoon ay hindi napagsasamantalahan ang pangkaraniwang tao. Mabuti ang mayayaman, kayang bumili ng mamahaling bigas, paano naman ang sampung kahig - isang tuka?

Date: NOV. 15, 2023 Page: A14



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## WITH P7.2-B WASTAGE, BILL MANDATES HALF-CUP RICE

**W**ITH an estimated P7.2 billion worth of rice wastage, former health secretary and now House Deputy Majority Leader Janette Garin recently filed a bill that mandates restaurants, canteens, eateries, and food establishments to provide a half-cup rice serving option.

Garin has filed House Bill 9536, mandating restaurants, canteens, eateries, and food establishments to make half-cup rice serving options available.

Dubbed the "Rice Waste Reduction Act of 2023," the bill is geared towards curbing rice wastage, aligning with broader sustainability goals.

Garin said her bill aims to minimize food waste, encourage balanced and sustainable eating habits, and promote healthier meal portions.

"By implementing this measure, the legislation envisions a future where individuals are more conscious of their food choices, establishments prioritize responsible serving practices, and society as a whole benefits from a more sustainable and balanced approach to food consumption,"

Garin said.

Establishments found in violation of the law could face penalties, starting at P10,000 for the first offense, P20,000 for the second offense, and P30,000 for subsequent offenses.

The Iloilo lawmaker urged her colleagues to support the legislation and have it immediately implemented.

"I hope my fellow lawmakers will back this legislation. A significant amount of rice goes to waste, which could otherwise benefit more people. It's time to enact this and reduce rice wastage," Garin said.

Citing data from the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), the country incurs an estimated P7.2 billion worth of rice wastage, based on 2015 calculations. Notably, 46 cities, including Quezon City, Manila, Davao, Cebu, Puerto Princesa, Baguio, and Iloilo, have already implemented the half-cup rice serving option.

"It is high time to implement this measure nationwide, as it can play a pivotal role in addressing the country's rice self-sufficiency goals," Garin said. *Jovee Marie N. Dela Cruz*



Date: NOV. 15, 2023 Page: A4



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## 'Fiber crop industry ready to emerge as new employment-generating sector'

THE country's fiber crop industry is now ready to emerge as a new employment-generating sector, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said on Tuesday.

In his message for the 2023 National Fibercrops Summit (NFS), the Chief Executive recognized the economic and livelihood potential of the sector.

He directed **Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA)** to continue to provide the necessary support to the fiber crop stakeholders.

PhilFIDA is an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA) responsible for promotion and development of the fiber industry.

"I therefore urged the PhilFIDA to remain steadfast in utilizing its mission of providing research, production, education, and trade regulation support so that the fiber industry can take advantage of new avenues for development and growth," the President said.

PhilFIDA held the NFS at the DA Convention Hall in Diliman, Quezon City on Tuesday to gather inputs from stakeholders on how to address the concerns in the production and processing of top priority fiber sources, namely, abaca, cotton, pineapple, salago, and silk.

Also discussed were fiber quality, market demand, quality standards, and trade regulations.

**Samuel P. Medenilla**



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## 90% of palay harvested – DA

By JEL SANTOS

**A**t least 90 percent of palay in the country has been harvested, the Department of Agriculture (DA) announced on Monday, Nov. 14.

"We have harvested about 90 percent of palay across the nation, bought at ₱22 per kilogram," DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said in a statement.

With this wet season harvest, the agriculture department assured Fili-

pino consumers of "enough affordable supply of rice in the market."

According to De Mesa, the volume is currently sold at an average of ₱23 to ₱25 per kilo farmgate price.

The DA noted that the average retail price for regular well-milled is

at ₱42.80 while the prevailing price for well-milled is at ₱45.

The possible movement in price is an adjustment as only a few areas remain harvestable from the current wet season, the agency official said.

De Mesa said the country is expecting a total yield of 3.063 million metric tons (MMT) for November and December.

"Based on data and information from the Philippine Rice Information System, it is generally a good harvest year for the Filipino rice farmers," he said.

The national rice outlook for the year will reach around 20 MMT, he continued.



IN ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA WATERS

LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# NFARMC approves adjustment of sardine closed fishing season

**T**HROUGH a resolution, the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC) unanimously approves the adjustment in the implementation of the closed fishing season for sardines in the waters of the Zamboanga Peninsula.



Starting this year, the waters of East Sulu Sea, Basilan Strait and Sibuguey Bay will be closed to sardine fishing from November 15 to February 15, a measure simultaneous to the implementation of closed fishing season for small pelagics — including sardines — in the Visayan Sea.

The adjustment stems from research conducted under the National Stock Assessment Program of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) in Region 9. The research shows that the spawning period of mature sardines peaks during the months of October until January. The previous duration of the closed season from December 1 to March 1 excludes the month of November.

"Our policies are continuously subjected to reviews and assessments. If scientific research [finds] our measures in need of improvement, then we commit to modifying our programs, based on scientific evidence," Department of Agriculture BFAR National Director Demosthenes Escoto says.

Under a provision of the BFAR Administrative Circular 255 of 2014, the implementation of the closed season must be constantly reviewed by BFAR, NFRDI, the academe and industry experts to determine the best management strategy that will ensure the sustainability and conservation of the sardines.

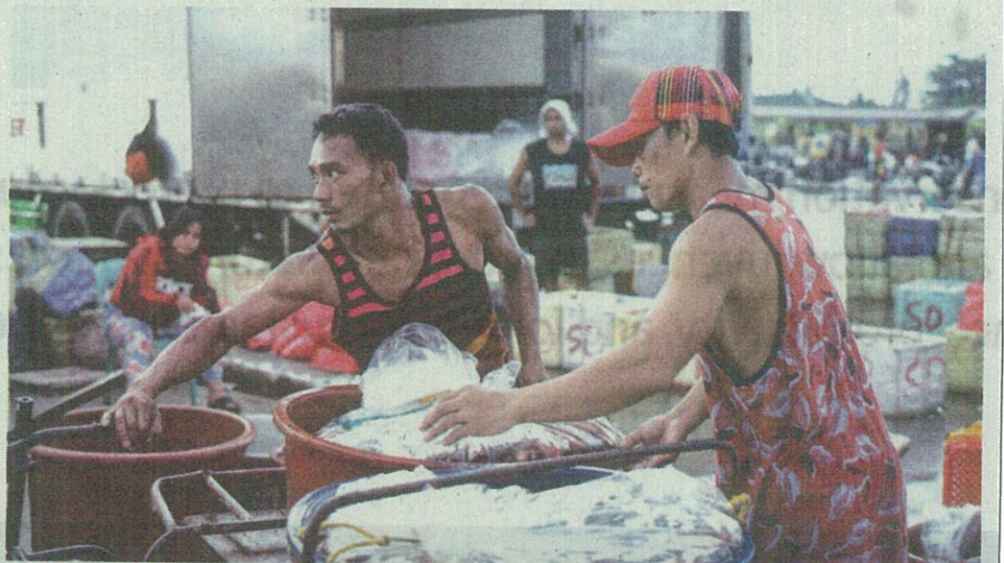
The closed fishing season is a conservation measure, which protects valuable fish species during their spawning period and allows juveniles to grow and mature, and fish stocks to replenish; thereby, ensuring the abundance and productivity of Philippine marine resources for years to come.



The Zamboanga Peninsula Regional Development Plan 2023 to 2028 by the National Economic and Development Authority indicates that in 2021, the Zamboanga Peninsula maintains its position as the country's 2nd-largest fish producer and leading sardine producer, contributing approximately 61% to the country's sardine production. PHOTO FROM THE NATIONAL FISHERIES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



The annual 3-month closed fishing season for sardines allows sardine species to reproduce and grow without the pressure of fishing activities. PHOTO BY GREGG YAN FROM THE OCEANA PHILIPPINES WEBSITE



Sardines are vital resources in coastal areas, securing the nutrition, livelihood and ecosystem of the seas and the communities they sustain. PHOTO FROM THE OCEANA PHILIPPINES FACEBOOK PAGE





## Closed fishing season for sardines begins in Zamboanga Peninsula

BY VINA MEDENILLA

ASIDE from serving as an affordable source of protein for millions of Filipinos, sardines play an essential role in sustaining the livelihood of individuals in seaside communities that rely heavily on the production and processing the said fish for their sustenance and income. Sardines are also integral to the marine food web, acting as a primary food source for various predators such as tuna and mammals.

Unfortunately, climate change, overexploitation and overfishing — exacerbated by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing practices — among other factors, continue to pose threats to the sustainability of sardine production in the country.

In a bid to mitigate the further depletion of sardines and combat the challenges hovering over the sector, the government has been carrying out conservation measures such as the imposition of closed fishing seasons and the National Sardine Management Plan (NSMP).

Signed by former Agriculture secretary William Dar in 2020, the NSMP states that sardines account for around 15 percent of the country's total fish harvest with a substantial amount of its production coming from the East Sulu Sea or Sulu archipelagic waters.

The closed fishing season policy for sardines in Zamboanga Peninsula has previously been put into effect through the Department of Agriculture - Department of the Interior and Local Government (DA-DILG) Administrative Order 1 series of 2011. The policy designates no-fishing zones for the commercial-scale harvest of sardines in a 13,987-square-kilometer area of the Zamboanga Peninsula waters. The DA-DILG order is succeeded by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Administrative Circular 255 after the previous policy lost

effect in March 2014.

BFAR Administrative Circular 255 implements the sardine closed fishing season — observed from December 1 to March 1 of every year — with the purpose of conserving sardines in the East Sulu Sea, Basilan Strait and Sibuguey Bay.

However, commencing this 2023, the closed fishing season for sardines in these three areas

now begins on November 15 of the current year and concludes on February 15 of the following year. The change is the result of research conducted by BFAR and the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute, indicating that mature sardines reach their peak spawning period from October to January.

The 3-month fishing ban for sardines safeguards the species from being harvested during their spawning period or at a rate faster than they can reproduce. This approach secures the abundance and productivity of sardines in the future; thereby, minimizing the risk of sardine extinction.

The law prohibits any person, association or company to kill, catch, or cause the killing, catching or taking of any sardine species in the conservation area during the closed fishing season. Among the mentioned sardine species include tunsoy (*sardinella lemuru*), tamban-kasig (spotted sardinella), tamban-lapad (fimbriated sardines), tamban-yapad (goldstripe sardinella) and tulis (round dwarf herring).

Zamboanga City, the country's sardine capital and major sardine producer, has seen positive results from the closed fishing season over the years.

In data by BFAR's National Stock Assessment Program, the landing of sardine species in the Zamboanga Peninsula has consistently increased from 2016 to 2020 with an average yearly growth of 19.66 percent. The most notable surge has been in 2020, reaching 42.87

percent, which is equivalent to 298,306.89 metric tons. This represents a notable difference of 89,515.57 metric tons from the recorded catch in 2019.

Given the importance of sardines to the country and its marine ecosystem, proper management and compliance with responsible and safe fishing practices are crucial to ensure a balance in the production and harvest of sardines in the long run. This will be possible with the support of concerned government agencies, fishermen and other industry stakeholders.

The 13th closed fishing season for sardines in Zamboanga Peninsula starts today, Nov. 15, 2023. Fishermen can resume catching sardines in conservation areas on Feb. 15, 2024.



# The Manila Times®

Date: NOV. 15, 2023 Page: A12



**LIBRARY**  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## 'Half-cup rice' is not about reducing what we eat

THE Department of Agriculture is encouraging Filipinos to have a half-cup serving of rice instead of one full cup in every meal. This was the message of the DA's Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) at our Malacañang briefing last week. This is not a mandate. It is just a suggestion. The idea is not to control our individual consumption but to curb the wastage of cooked rice, especially in restaurants. Hazel Antonio, PhilRice development communication division head, said at least 2 tablespoons of rice are wasted by each Filipino per day, or 385,000 metric tons of rice per year.

November is National Rice Awareness Month by virtue of Proclamation 524, signed on Jan. 5, 2004, by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. There have been annual campaigns in the past focusing on supporting local rice farmers. But this year, the message of Phil Rice goes further. The campaign is anchored on the message "Be Riceponsible," a witty play on words calling for citizens to promote better health, conservation and support for Filipino farmers.

I liked that the DA chose to do the me-



**URBANISTA**  
**DAPHNE**  
**OSEÑA PAEZ**

dia launch at the weekly press briefings organized by the Presidential Communications Office in Malacañang. It certainly reached a wider audience. The DA regional offices did simultaneous launches in malls and offices nationwide. PhilRice has had good support from the private sector through the years. A partnership with network studios got them A-List celebrities like Piolo Pascual and Toni Gonzaga as advocates in the past.

This year's campaign has the "A-Ba-Ka-Da" mantra: A is for "adlay, mais, saba, atbp. ay ihalo sa kanin." For additional nutrition, the DA is using this campaign to push other produce to supplement rice. B is for "brown rice ay kainin." Many know that brown rice is the healthier choice than well-milled white rice. I didn't realize that brown rice was not a variety but the result of a milling method that leaves some rice bran intact.

K is "kanin ay huwag sayangin." Interestingly enough, this is the message that got the most media mileage. Days after this campaign broke, legislators were quick to express interest in sponsoring bills mandating restaurants to make half-rice the default order. And D is "dapat bigas ng Pilipinas ang bilhin." This one is a strong and relevant message that went under-noticed.

I thought it was brilliant and bold of PhilRice to campaign for a branded "Best Buy Philippine Rice" now. Having had President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as Agriculture secretary for almost 16 months gave the almost dormant Philippine agriculture sector the attention it badly needed. It had been neglected for almost 30 years. Many of BBM's policies are centered on the importance of investing in technology, research, post-harvest facilities, farm-to-market roads and financial support, all in an effort to boost local production. Gone are the days of indiscriminate importation of rice and other produce. The priority is a regular review of local production backed by research and data before imports are considered. DA assistant secretary Arnel de Mesa says the Philippines just harvested

about 90 percent of palay bought at P22 per kilogram. De Mesa says the volume is currently sold at P23-25/kg farmgate price, with the average retail price for regular well-milled at P42.80/kg and the prevailing price for well-milled at P45/kg. Those are figures as of November 14th.

In our conflicted and unstable world now, with the wars in Ukraine and Gaza and El Niño extended dry spell in the first quarter of 2024, food security has become every country's concern. In the case of the Philippines, not only do we have to play catch-up for decades of neglect, but we also have to undo the reliance on imports from other countries. For now, it is a balancing act that we have to continue to play, as it'll take time for our local farming system to catch up.

PhilRice's "Be Riceponsible" campaign message could not have come at a better time. Reduce rice wastage in restaurant tables. Choose to buy Philippine rice. Choose brown over white for better health. No one is controlling one's desire to have "unli rice." But everything comes with a price. You either pay for it in terms of pesos or diabetes.





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Hog raisers want to speed up processing of permits

**CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro:** To avoid losing money, hog raisers here are asking the provincial government and regulating bodies to expedite the processing of necessary permits that would allow them to ship their pigs outside the island.

They said that the longer their pigs stay in the farms tagged as pink or yellow zones, the higher the chances that the pigs will get infected by the African swine fever.

Nelson Mangako, president of Animal Raisers of Oriental Mindoro Association (Aroma), in an exclusive interview with *The Manila Times*, said that pigs that are free from ASF should be allowed to be shipped and traded elsewhere.

However, Mangako said it takes a "long time" to get clearance from the provincial government and the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) of the Department of Agriculture at the ports of Pola, Bansud and Mansalay.

"We are worried that the infections would catch up with our pigs, especially those coming from the pink and yellow zones. We are requesting that government agencies deploy more people at the piers," Mangako said during the interview on Tuesday, adding that pink and yellow zones are areas adjacent to villages with positive cases of ASF.

Mangako said that, as of this writing, 8,000 pigs have been infected by ASF in the province.

"That's equivalent to P90 million at 75 kilograms per pig and P150 per kilo," he said.

Provincial Veterinary (ProVet) officer Dr. Grimaldo Catapang said on Tuesday that the delay in the transporting of the pigs at the three ports in the province is caused by the tedious process of hauling them to the boats.

He said that some haulers are not equipped with the necessary machineries to handle pigs.

"Right now, I am here at the Port of Bansud and we are overseeing the hauling of the pigs to the three boats currently deployed here. These boats are going to the Visayas regions," Catapang said over the telephone on Tuesday.

On Sunday, November 12, Gov. Humerlito Dolor said a state of calamity has been declared in the towns of Roxas, Mansalay, Bulalacao, Bongabong, Bansud, Pinamalayan and Naujan due to reports of ASF infection.

The declaration was approved by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan in a special session on Saturday.

Pola Mayor Jennifer "Ina Alegre" Cruz also declared a state of calamity in the municipality.

Catapang, meanwhile, clarified that the towns Naujan and Bulalacao have been cleared of the infections and are now considered as pink zones after a series of testing undertaken by the ProVet.

**IRE JOE V.C. LAURENTE**





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Iloilo province faces pork shortage

BY RJAY ZURIAGA CASTOR

**ILOILO:** The swine product inventory of Iloilo province currently stands at 33.12 percent sufficiency, which indicates a shortage of pork for the Christmas season, the Provincial Veterinary Office (PVO) said on Tuesday.

"In our inventory, we are only 33.12 percent sufficient, which means that we have a shortage in our pork products," said PVO chief Darel Tabuada in a radio interview. Tabuada said that the shortage

is evident in the increased shipment of pork products within the province.

The hog inventory, previously at 277,421 heads before the detection of the first African swine fever (ASF) cases in the province in October 2022, has now decreased to 75,478 heads as of November 2023, marking a drop of 72.79 percent.

PVO data revealed that from January to October this year,

14,914 swine heads had been shipped into the province from Aklan, Antique, Guimaras, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental and Oriental Mindoro.

In a September interview, Gov. Arthur Defensor Jr. said that imported hog products are supplied to establishments like restaurants. However, he is uncertain whether these imported meat products reached the retail markets.

Defensor also noted that, based

on their assessment, hog products available in the market are still primarily sourced from local hog breeders and slaughterhouses.

Meanwhile, Tabuada stressed that the provincial government and the Department of Agriculture (DA) are working hard to clear from ASF the 28 affected towns in Iloilo.

The PVO is currently collecting the requirements of the towns for the ASF status upgrade. These

requirements include the ASF ordinance, farm registry, disease investigation report, and training of a barangay biosecurity officer.

The DA will assess and identify the towns eligible for an upgrade from a red zone or infected zone to a pink zone or buffer zone.

"Hopefully, we can achieve a 50 percent submission rate from the 28 towns affected by ASF. That would be sufficient to start our sentinel program," Tabuada added.





## PhilFIDA told to maximize opportunities in fiber industry

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. yesterday asked the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA) to sustain its research, production, education and trade regulation to seize new opportunities for the development and growth of the country's fiber industry.

The President, in his message at the 2023 National Fibercrops

Summit, said the fiber crops industry is not only ready to become one of the drivers of economic growth, but can also provide livelihood opportunities in communities.

The President also reaffirmed his administration's commitment to uplift the lives of farmers and to advance economic prosperity in rural communities.

PhilFIDA, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA) responsible for promoting the accelerated growth and development of the fiber industry, organized the summit Tuesday that was held at the DA-BSWM Convention Hall, Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City.

With the theme "HIBLA

BIDA!!!", it seeks to highlight fiber crops in the country, such as abaca, cotton, piña, salago and silk.

It also intends to discuss possible solutions to several challenges facing the fiber crop industry, such as fiber quality, market demand, quality standards and trade regulations. - *Jocelyn Montemayor*





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Meat imports down 9.7%

THE country imported 1.02 billion kg of imported meat in the first 10 months of the year, 9.7 percent lower than the 1.13 billion kg of meat imported in the same period in 2022, according to data from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

Pork comprised bulk of the meat imports at 504.3 million kg or 49.5 percent of total but 17 percent lower than the 607.1 million kg imported in 2022.

Chicken followed with 359.23 million kg or 35.3 percent of all imported meat and 9.6 percent higher than 2022's 327.68

million kg.

Beef imports stood at 120.64 million kg or 11.8 percent of all meat imports in the period. The volume is 20.9 percent lower than last year's 152.62 million kg.

Buffalo imports fell 15.8 percent to 33.65 million kg from 39.96 million kg while turkey imports dropped 5.9 percent to 391,630 kg from 416,218 kg.

Lamb imports surged by 4.8 percent to 669,029 kg from 638,526 kg while imports of duck meat jumped 220.8 percent to 252,783 kg from 2022's 78,796 kg.





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

# PBBM urges PhilFIDA to continue supporting PH fiber industry

**PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. urged the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA) yesterday to continue providing research, production, education, and trade regulation support to the country's fiber industry to seize new opportunities for its development and growth.**

In his message during the 2023 National Fibercrops Summit organized by PhilFIDA, Marcos said that the gathering signals the readiness of the fiber crops industry to not only drive economic growth but also provide livelihood opportunities in communities throughout the nation.

"I therefore urged the PhilFIDA to remain steadfast in utilizing its mission of providing research, produc-

tion, education, and trade regulation support so that the fiber industry can take advantage of new avenues for development and growth," President Marcos said in his message.

"As we stand at the crossroads of agricultural innovation, let this summit be a testament to our shared commitment to shaping a resilient and flourishing future for your industry. I trust that this gathering will be a conducive platform

where ideas flourish, collaborations thrive, and the seeds sown today blossom into a harvest of success for our nation."

The President gave his assurance that the government will remain resolute in working to uplift the lives of Filipino farmers, and advancing economic prosperity in rural communities.

At the same time, he expressed hope that with the combined efforts of government, growers,

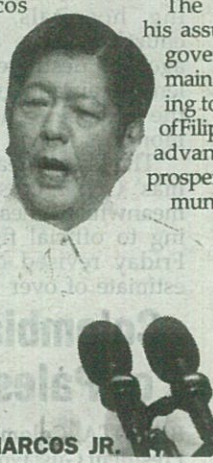
farmers associations, and the private sector, the country can usher in a new era of growth and development in the agriculture sector toward national progress.

PhilFIDA is an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA) responsible for promoting the accelerated growth and development of the fiber industry in the Philippines, such as abaca, also known as Manila hemp, and cotton.

The event will be attended by government luminaries, industry visionaries, and experts who will collaborate to strategize, brainstorm innovations, and shape policies to invigorate the nation's fibercrop industry.

PCO

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.





## editorial

NOV. 15, 2023  
PAGE: A14

# How govt can protect farmers and consumers

MUCH has already been written about the ills plaguing the agrifood sector, based on past studies and papers. Literature on the sector is replete with analyses about the possible root causes of the problems that bedevil farmers and possible ways forward to hurdle the obstacles that prevent the agrifood sector from meeting domestic demand. The government itself had even prepared roadmaps, which reviewed the production of crops and the industry that rely on them to determine the factors that limit their productivity.

Despite the existence of literature produced by the best minds in the country, the productivity of the Philippine agriculture sector continued to lag. In fact, latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) indicated that the share of the farm sector to GDP shrank in recent years. Agriculture now accounts for less than 10 percent of GDP, a far cry from the 20 percent a decade ago.

That is why the pronouncement of lawmakers that they intend to intensify the scrutiny of the country's food trade is a welcome development. (See, **"House to intensify scrutiny of PHL food trade," in the BUSINESSMIRROR, November 6, 2023**). Apart from governors and mayors, congressmen are also in a good position to assess the farm sectors in their locales and identify the problems that need immediate attention. A thorough review of the state of the farm sector in their respective areas will allow them to craft policies that would improve food security not only in their district, but also in the entire country.

An "intense scrutiny" of the country's food trade would also give lawmakers other ideas for deterring hoarders and profiteers. They can work with their constituents to find solutions that will stop price manipulators from taking advantage of the weaknesses in the system. They can even take the first step in establishing databases and other mechanisms that would shield their farmers from predatory practices that keep them in a perpetual cycle of poverty.

While the onion crisis may now be behind us, there is no guarantee that it will not be repeated and it is possible that profiteers will try to earn from other commodities. (See, **"The latest price spike is seen in potatoes-DA," in the BUSINESS-MIRROR, October 31, 2023**). Several traders have made a killing from pricing farmers' produce at very low prices and hoarding commodities so they can triple or even quadruple their profits. These traders will not stop just because government officials and lawmakers threatened to jail profiteers, many of whom they have yet to unmask.

We hope that the lawmakers will fulfill their promise of conducting a thorough review of the country's food trade to help the national government agencies identify profiteers and break cartels. The national government, for its part, must see to it that those found guilty of profiteering and hoarding are punished. They must be locked up, possibly for a long period of time, to prevent them from further harming food producers and consumers. That's also one good way to protect the country's food security.





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## 5 LGUs hailed for excellence in fisheries code compliance

By CHITO CHAVEZ

Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Benhur Abalos on commended Tuesday, Nov. 14, five top performing local government units (LGUs) in the Fisheries Compliance Audit (FishCA) "for their effective management of their municipal waters in compliance with fishery

laws and policies."

Abalos said this year's FishCA awardees are Tanza, Cavite (first place), Naic, Cavite (second place), Sasmuan, Pampanga (third place), Balanga City, Bataan (fourth place), and Macabebe, Pampanga (fifth place).

The DILG is implementing the FishCA with the help of other agencies and non-governmental organizations to assess and monitor the compliance of all coastal LGUs in the Manila Bay Watershed Area to Republic Act 8550 or the Philippine Fisheries Code. It covers 32 LGUs in the National Capital Region, Region 3 (Central Luzon), and Region 4-A (Calabarzon).

While the number of LGUs with passing compliance rate had increased, Abalos urged low to moderately compliant LGUs

to replicate the best practices of the top-performing coastal LGUs for sustained livelihood and food security in communities.

Abalos said the LGUs were assessed based on several key indicator areas such as "existence of basic municipal/city fisheries ordinance and coastal resource management plan and implementing instrument; functional post-harvest facilities like fish landing sites, fish ports, ice plants, and cold storage; registry of municipal fisherfolk and municipal fishing vessel and gears; creation of municipal/city fisheries and aquatic resources management council; deputation of fishery law enforcement officers/fish wardens; and existing collaboration on coastal resource management."

In compliance with the Supreme Court's continuing mandamus requiring the DILG, 12 other government agencies and the concerned LGUs to clean up Manila Bay, the department issued several directives to reinforce the responsibilities of LGUs in regulating and monitoring fishery activities in municipal waters.





LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Crop volumes drop 3.1% in third quarter

CROP PRODUCTION in the third quarter fell 3.1% year on year to 17.11-million metric tons (MT), the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

In a report, the PSA said sugarcane, coconut, rubber, and cassava led the decline.

Sugarcane production fell 26% to 1.39 million MT, while coconut output dropped 1.9% to 4.05 million MT. Rubber volumes fell 12.7% to 93.24 thousand MT, and cassava output slipped 3% to 573.51 thousand MT.

In an earlier report, the PSA said the value of crop production fell 0.4% to P222.69 billion for the quarter. This accounted for 54% of overall agricultural production.

The PSA said fisheries, livestock, and poultry sectors output rose by value during the quarter. —

**Adrian H. Halili**





## London cocoa hits record high; coffee, sugar also up

NEW YORK — London cocoa futures on the ICE exchange set a record high on Monday buoyed by further signs of shrinking supplies, while coffee and sugar prices also rose.

**COCOA:** March London cocoa settled up £27 or 0.8% to £3,503 per metric ton, after setting a record high of £3,513.

Prices have risen some 75% so far this year, with poor crops in Ivory Coast and Ghana — which produce two-thirds of the world's cocoa — set to lead to a third consecutive global deficit this season.

Dealers said the market had become technically overbought and so could suffer a short-term setback in the near future.

"The market needs to gain a footing above £3,500 in the immediate term to confirm a further bullish outlook," Sucden Financial said in a note.

Cocoa arrivals at ports in top grower Ivory Coast had reached 350,000 tons between Oct. 1 and Nov. 12, down 25% from the same period last season.

March New York cocoa rose \$50 or 1.2% to \$4,064 a ton, after peaking at \$4,073 — a 45-year high.

**COFFEE:** March arabica coffee rose 2.65 cents or 1.6% at \$1.732 per pound (lb).

The market has been supported by short covering by financial investors, dealers said, adding that a favorable outlook for the 2024 harvest in top grower Brazil is keeping a lid on prices.

There was no change on certified arabica stocks on Monday, but ICE said that 4,400 bags of Brazilian coffee were pending grading.

Brazil exported 24% more coffee in October, exporters said.

January robusta coffee rose \$82 or 3.4% to \$2,503 a ton.

**SUGAR:** March raw sugar settled up 0.42 cent or 1.5% at 27.71 cents per lb, some way off the 12-year high of 28.14 cents set last week.

Dealers said weather conditions in top producer Brazil are favorable and should allow the country to crush most of its cane by the end of this month.

Egypt has issued an international tender to buy at least 50,000 metric tons of raw sugar.

December white sugar rose \$9 or 1.2% to \$756.30 a ton. — **Reuters**