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Long-term permits urged for aquaculture to meet fish demand

THE GOVERNMENT needs to issue more long-term permits for aquaculture to meet growing demand and as the rest of the industry observes sustainable practices like closed fishing seasons, a fisheries advocate said.

"One of the ways to boost fisheries production is to give permits to those who would like to raise fish long term," Asis G. Perez, co-convenor of Tugon Kabuhayan said by telephone.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco T. Laurel, Jr. said in a House committee earlier that the Philippines' fish resources are depleted.

For the fourth quarter, the Department of Agriculture projects a 38-day deficit in the supply of fish.

Mr. Laurel added that importing 35,000 metric tons (MT) of fish will not be sufficient to satisfy demand.

Additionally, the closed fishing season for sardines in northern Palawan and the Zamboanga Peninsula have also affected supply. Both seasons started in November and will run until Jan. 31 and Feb. 15, respectively.

Under the Philippine Fisheries Code, closed fishing seasons are imposed to help certain fisheries regenerate.

Mr. Perez, who was also a former director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), added: "We have many bodies of water that can support fish, such as dams and lakes. If operators are given a sufficient number of years, they will invest more."

"If they are allowed, then by next year maybe we will only need a few imports. Aquaculture operators set up quickly," he added.

The BFAR released a memorandum circular in August, which allowed the import of frozen round scad or *galunggong*, bigeye scad, mackerel, bonito, and moonfish. The import period runs from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31.

"For next year, (we really need) to brush on our production so we end up importing less," Mr. Perez said.

During the third quarter, fisheries production rose 2.1% by volume to 1.02 million MT, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. — **Adrian H. Halili**

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FOOD PRODUCTION SHOULD BE NATIONAL PRIORITY

SINCE 2015 when our population was 101 million, our rice production has not sufficiently coped with the demand for a rice-dependent population. Growing at 1.4-1.5 percent average yearly and estimated at 115 million by the end of 2023, there has not been any long-term government management strategy. The Commission on Population and Development as an oversight body has not been heard of on population management. Soon the other basic food products will join the price spiral with the demands of a burgeoning population that no one seems to be directly in charge of.

Perish the thought of bringing down to P40 the

price per kilo of rice—that's not even the core problem. We have been one of the biggest importers of rice for many years at close to four trillion metric tons yearly, sourced mostly from Vietnam and some from Thailand, because our production falls short of our need, including having the stock reserve for replanting and stop-gap supply on emergencies. Supply is the core problem we must squarely face.

Former agrarian secretary William Dar said in 2021 that they "will continuously implement programs to sustain the good performance of the local rice industry ... targeting 20.48 million MT that will be supported by the P10-billion Rice

Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, which will include programs like promotion of inbred rice production and hybrid seeds, loan facilities, and training for farmers." So, why aren't we producing the 20 million MT yet?

Crisis after crisis has since plagued the agriculture industry: dry weather, and, ironically, floods in unlikely places during harvest time, lack of transport and milling facilities, failed seedling dispersal programs, loss of farmland to housing subdivisions by greedy developers, etc. There's neither nothing new in all these lapses nor excuses. In fact, the Department of Agriculture (DA) has substantial funds from its 2023 budget

unspent as of Oct. 31, according to the Department of Budget and Management.

What is difficult for ordinary folks like us to understand is why hasn't the DA been on the road to producing a sufficient supply of rice, pork, chicken, and the other basic food items we can't live without, minimizing the crisis; and meanwhile, import if we must, to bridge the gap in requirements?

Why can't Congress likewise put an end to the budget charade and put to optimal use for the general good the billions of confidential and intelligence funds for our food production?

MARVEL K. TAN,
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Ilocos Norte land assessment to open up more land for farming

THE Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) said it will conduct a land assessment in preparation for opening up more land to farming.

In a statement, the BSWM said that it has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Ilocos Norte province to begin the project.

"(The project) aims to identify and provide an inventory of soil and water resources and evaluate them for their optimal yet sustainable utilization," it added.

The bureau said that the project will aid in formulating land use policy with a view

towards expanding food production, manufacturing, and housing supply.

The BSWM's deliverables include 11 maps of prime agricultural land in Ilocos Norte which may not be used for any other purpose. The project will run for 18 months.

"The Province of Ilocos Norte is set to achieve its goal for sound land use and planning for agri-environmental development by conserving, preserving, and adhering to sustainable management of soil and water resources for agriculture," the bureau said. —

Adrian H. Halili

BATANGAS TOWN SAYS FIRM BOTCHED IRRIGATION PROJECT

THE municipal government of Lobo, Batangas, considered one of the country's 18 biodiversity hotspots, is asking state agencies to cancel the permits of a mineral extraction and processing company for violating environmental laws and local ordinances.

In separate complaint letters to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary Juan Miguel Cuna,

Environmental Law Enforcement and Protection Services OIC Director Reuel Sorilla and Lobo Mayor Lota Manalo accused the Efren Ramirez Construction and General Services Corp. (ERCGSC) of committing at least nine violations that warrant the revocation of its Industrial Sand and Gravel (ISAG) permit and Mineral Processing Permit (MPP).

►IrrigationA2

The Manila Times®

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■ IRRIGATION FROM A1

Batangas town says firm botched irrigation project

Manalo said that in 2012, seven Lobo barangay signed a memorandum of agreement with ERCGSC to dredge and desilt the Lobo River as part of an irrigation project.

In 2017, Barangay Nagtaluntong was excluded from the project to avoid damaging the water intake facility there.

However, ERCGSC continued dredging operations in Nagtaluntong despite the suspension of its ISAG permit.

The firm had been extracting river materials within 1 kilometer of the water reservoir, "resulting in damage to NIA (National Irrigation Administration) infrastructure," according to the complaint.

"We would like to respectfully request for the immediate revocation of all ISAG permits and mineral Processing Permits issued to ERCGSC," the complaint stated.

Manalo said the firm is also engaged in the manufacture of culverts, sea wave breakers and hollow blocks for commercial purposes, in violation of its MPP.

She said the Environmental Management Bureau limited ERGSC operations to the processing or crushing of sand and gravel materials.

The company "should have secured a separate ECC (Environmental Clearance Certificate) permit," Manalo said.

She also noted that while the re-

port of the DENR regional director stated that ERCGSC passed ECC's pollution test, many residents living near its crushing plant "have complained about the noise and dust resulting into their sickness."

"In fact, others were already brought to the hospital. This clearly violates the terms and conditions of the ECC," Manalo said.

ERCGSC also does not pay the Load Safety Inspection Fee (LSIF) on time, the mayor said.

"We would like to stress that the LSIF covering July 1 to December 31, 2017, LSIF covering January 1 to December 31, 2018, and LSIF covering January 1 to December 31, 2019, were paid only last April

11, 2023," Manalo said.

ERCGSC also violated the "zoning" requirement because it built its crushing and batching plants on residential and agricultural land.

"It must be emphasized that the zonal classification of the land of ERCGSC's batching plant is commercial, but its operation falls within the category of industrial. On the other hand, the classification of the land where its crushing plant is located is mixed residential and agricultural, but what ERCGSC is doing is commercial. Hence, it is impossible for ERCGSC to be given a permit," Manalo said.

The company also has no business permit for its crushing plant

in Barangay Poblacion and batching plant in Barangay Mabilog na Bundok, she added.

Manalo said the town had requested Congress to allocate P400 million to repair the damage to the town's irrigation system. The request has been endorsed by Rep. Gerville Luistro and Rep. Gus Tambunting, while Rep. Shernee Tan Tambut endorsed P125 million for the repair.

Manalo said it took more than 10 years to build the Lobo Bridge, the longest bridge in Region 4A, and six years ago, P87 million was spent for retrofitting, but "ERCGSC damaged and continuously damages our bridge connecting Barangays Poblacion and Olo-Olo."

Overloaded heavy equipment from ERCGSC might have weakened the bridge's structure. "This certainly would pave the way for its possible collapse in the near future," Manalo said.

Manalo said ERCGSC violated Paragraph 14 of its ECC for failure to achieve a safe, non-polluting, and self-sustaining post-disturbance landform and Paragraph 21 for failure to pay the LSIF.

The lease on the land owned by the municipality where the firm's crushing plant is located has expired, but it has refused to vacate the site.

If ERCGSC's permits are not revoked, allocating funds to fix the irrigation system "would be an exercise in futility tantamount to irreparable damage which cannot be remedied at any given time," Manalo said.

WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL



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Vessel tracking urged to combat smuggling

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is proposing the use of vessel tracking for small boats as a measure to combat smuggling and the illicit tobacco trade.

DA Undersecretary Deogracias Victor Savellano added that tobacco smuggling poses health risks and causes government to lose revenues.

"With its complex nature, we need a whole-of-nation approach in this fight. We should involve all agencies, including DND (Depart-

ment of National Defense) and the National Security Council," Savellano said in a statement on Monday.

He added that the government should look into strengthening border control while also investing in technology in the fight against smuggling.

The DA suggested using the

automatic identification system or AIS, a transponder system that allows information exchange between ships and ship stations.

"An AIS system will enhance collaborative agreements between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines on the enforcement of anti-smuggling laws over these questionable areas," said DA.

The agency said the government should shoulder the cost of AIS as it may be quite expensive to adopt, especially for small fishermen.

Part of the AIS technology is an app called "Marine Traffic," a tracker that identifies vessels,

including small boats, which, according to the department, are being used in smuggling.

"Its economic benefit may turn out to be huge since the illegal trade problem is even causing huge economic losses to the country," it added.

Current practice only allows vessels with a huge capacity to acquire the system that enables their tracking at sea.

Since jongkong, or small boats, are not required to install such a system making them untraceable, DA said that this allows tobacco smugglers "to easily run away with their illegal trade."



Govt prodded to invest in vessel tracking system to curb smuggling

THE government should consider acquiring an Automatic Identification System (AIS), a vessel tracking method, in the fight against smuggling and illicit tobacco trade, which had grown into gigantic proportion, making these not only an economic, but also a national security threat.

Former Congressman Jericho "Koko" Nograles warned that agriculture smugglers and perpetrators of illegal tobacco trade have unbelievably become "bigger and bolder."

The magnitude of agriculture smuggling, illegal tobacco trade, and all related illegal trades leads to suspicions of their threat to national security. Illegal activities have even been linked to financing terrorism.

"The problem wasn't as bad as now," said Nograles during the Anti Illicit Trade Inter Agency Dialogue. "Then, barely two years ago, the legitimate tobacco industry was just getting pinched. Now it's bleeding."

A serious victim of illegal tobacco trade is the consumer himself who is exposed to risks of adverse health effect brought about by unregulated tobacco manufacturing.

"We are fighting illegal tobacco

smuggling because it is posing serious health risks to consumers while the government suffers from foregone revenue in billions," according to Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Deogracias Victor B. Savellano during the same dialogue.

"With its complex nature, we need a whole-of-nation approach in this fight. We should involve all agencies, including the DND [Department of National Defense] and the National Security Council," he said.

Tobacco smuggling's impending victims also are legitimate tobacco manufacturers that are paying their tax dues.

"If smuggling and illegal tobacco trade continues, the legitimate industry will close. They will pack and go. These will accelerate their decision making to say 'it's the end.' That is goodbye to people who are willing and happy to pay taxes," said Nograles.

Government should look into strengthening its border control while also investing in human resource training, automation, digitalization, and technology in the fight against smuggling, said Savellano.

Automatic identification system or AIS is a transponder system enables information exchange between ships and ship stations (Marine Online).

As there are dotted gray lines between countries' territories at sea, the question on which country has jurisdiction on policy enforcement over this area arises.

An AIS system will enhance collaborative agreements between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines on the enforcement of anti-smuggling laws over these questionable areas.

"These dotted gray lines have become a good business for smugglers," said Nograles, explaining it must be another reason why illegal activities have been flourishing.

As part of the AIS technology, a tracker of vessels, an app called "Marine Traffic," is capable of identifying vessels, including small boats that are now apparently being heavily used in smuggling.

The small boats, called "jongkong," are able to dock on

any small island, which may have caused the huge growth in illicit trade activities.

The AIS technology may be very expensive for small fishermen. But if government shoulders the costs, its economic benefit may turn out to be huge since the illegal trade problem is even causing huge economic losses to the country.

"The new Coast Guard has proposed it [AIS], but it's too expensive. But we find ourselves in a situation now that is so absurd that the losses could actually pay for the solution," said Nograles.

Under prevailing practice, only vessels with huge capacity are required to acquire the system that enables their tracking at sea.

And jongkong boats are not required to install such system, making these untraceable, enabling tobacco smugglers to easily run away with their illegal trade.

If government invests in such system, Nograles suggested government might even find it easier to guard its territorial rights over West Philippine Sea.



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DA rolls out agri map in bid to boost PHL rice production

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS

[@jearcalas](#)

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) rolled out its updated color-coded map to help farmers determine suitable crops in their areas, particularly for that cultivating rice paddy.

The DA said it successfully updated its National Color-Coded Agricultural Guide (NCCAG) Map for the first time since the digital tool was launched in 2017.

"The NCCAG map is a database of map overlays that shows the natural suitability of economically important crops and the eight [8] major hazards based on projected climate scenarios for 2050," the DA said on Monday.

"It overlays data on soil properties,

elevation, slope, rainfall pattern, temperature, and climate change-induced multi-hazards," the DA added.

The updated NCCAG map utilizes the latest maps from various mapping agencies and introduces new features as it seeks to emphasize statistical data integration.

DA Climate Resilient Agriculture Office (CRAO) Director Alicia G. Ilaga said updating the map was critical in ensuring that the digital tool is providing "accurate" and "reliable" information to farmers. The DA CRAO led the updating of the NCCAG map.

"The thematic datasets used in the NCCAG Map are obtained from different mapping source agencies, which generate new sets of data every five years. Updating the map ensures that all information remains accurate and

up-to-date," Ilaga said.

"This initiative aligns with their commitment to providing tools that assist in providing valuable insights and facilitate well-informed planning and decision-making processes regarding agricultural suitability, climate hazards, and land cover data," Ilaga added.

The updated NCCAG map has increased its number of covered crops to 21 from 20 and included a new layer called Rice Suitability Zones (RSZ). The RSZ provides data on the current and potential expansion areas for rice cultivation while providing information on soil properties vital to rice growth, according to the DA.

"The database features maps that are vital to crop growth and survivability such as water availability and

climate data, as well as location-specific information on socio-economic conditions," the DA said.

"NCCAG Version 2.0 also integrates the Climate Risk Vulnerability Assessment [CRVA] Maps of 63 provinces nationwide and includes location and data on the DA's AMIA [Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture] Villages," the DA added.

Since its launching, the DA said the NCCAG has been "instrumental" in "advising farmers on crop selection for optimal production and identifying climate risks in agricultural areas."

"It also serves as a guide for national government agencies and local government units for the location-specific deployment of technologies and support services based on climate risks," it added.

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DA launches updated agricultural suitability map

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) through the Climate Resilient Agriculture Office (CRAO) has launched the updated version of its National Color-Coded Agricultural Guide (NCCAG) Map.

The map is expected to further help increase farmers' productivity and income as a science-based decision-support tool.

The NCCAG map is a database of map overlays that shows the natural suitability of economically important crops and eight major hazards based on projected climate scenarios for 2050.

It overlays data on soil prop-

erties, elevation, slope, rainfall pattern, temperature and climate change-induced multi-hazards.

The database also features maps that are vital to crop growth and survivability such as water availability and climate data, as well as location-specific information on socio-economic conditions.

Alicia Ilaga, DA-CRAO director, said updating the NCCAG Map which was first activated and launched in 2017 is crucial to maintaining the system's accuracy and reliability.

"The thematic datasets used in the NCCAG Map are obtained

.....
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DA

from different mapping source agencies, which generate new sets of data every five years. Updating the map ensures that all information remains accurate and up-to-date," Ilaga said in a statement.

This initiative aligns with the

DA-CRAO's commitment to assist in providing valuable insights and facilitate well-informed planning and decision-making processes regarding agricultural suitability, climate hazards and land cover data, Ilaga added.

NCCAG's latest version also

features updated crop suitabilities and an additional crop, bringing the total number of economically important crops featured in the database from 20 to 21.

These are abaca, banana, cacao, cassava, coconut, coffee, corn, garlic/onion, legumes,

mango, palm oil, papaya, pineapple, rice, rubber, sugarcane, sweet potato, taro, vegetables, yam and bamboo.

The updated version also introduces a new layer called Rice Suitability Zones, based on data from the Philippine Rice Information

System, that identifies current and potential expansion areas for rice cultivation and provides information on soil properties vital to rice growth.

The latest version of the map also integrates the Climate Risk Vulnerability Assessment Maps of

63 provinces nationwide.

This allows users to choose from three distinct types of statistical data – crops suitability and multi-hazards, crops suitability and land cover, and multi-hazards – to provide a tailored and more user-friendly experience.



URC expands sugar milling capacity in Negros Occidental

Gokongwei-led Universal Robina Corp. (URC) is expanding the daily milling capacity in its sugar mill in Kabankalan, Negros Occidental to enhance efficiency and help more farmers improve income.

In a statement, URC president and CEO Irwin Lee said the company's sugar and renewables subsidiary SONEDCO still has room to grow.

"We talk about how big SONEDCO is and also how big it can be," he said, noting the goal for now is to further expand the mill's capacity from 12,000 tons per day to 14,000 tons per day.

"I know it's a big challenge, but we hope that with all the resources and support URC is giving, SONEDCO will get there," he said.

URC chairman Lance Gokongwei said the sugar industry "has shown its resilience for many, many decades."

"We will continue to invest a lot of energy and funds in ensuring that our partner farmers attain the highest productivity and highest income they can generate from their farms.

We will likewise ensure that our mills are as efficient and as productive as they can be, while investing in facilities for value-added services, such as sugar refineries, bio-mass energy production, and bioethanol and CO2 production," he said.

URC acquired SONEDCO—then known as the Southern Negros Development Corp. — from the Montelibano family in 1989. SONEDCO's core asset then was a sugar mill that could crush 4,000 tons of sugar canes per day.

The plant began expanding in the mid-1990s, doubling its crushing capacity to 8,000 tons of sugar canes per day. It is now processing up to 12,000 tons per day.

The expansion of its refinery stretched SONEDCO's production to 15,000 bags of refined sugar per day.

SONEDCO also upgraded its sugar mill with state-of-the-art technologies from Japan, Thailand and India to improve efficiency and energy use.

URC Sugar and Renewables (SURE) managing director Renato

Cabati said the group's late founder John Gokongwei Jr. saw the need back then for a sugar mill.

"At the time, we already had a branded foods group. It needed sugar. We were manufacturing candies, ice cream and snacks. Getting into the sugar business would support the branded food businesses, and Mr. John saw that," he said.

But "Mr. John" had his sights beyond running a sugar mill, as "he had a vision of not only expanding the sugar mill, but also of diversifying the sugar business," Cabati said.

SONEDCO produces refined sugar used by URC's branded consumer foods division for its Great Taste coffee, C2, biscuits, candies and other sweetened products. It also supplies bottler's grade refined sugar to other beverage companies.

Meanwhile, SONEDCO also has a biomass-fired cogeneration plant with a capacity of 46 megawatts (MW) exporting power to the national grid using bagasse, a byproduct of sugar milling, as fuel.

— Danessa Rivera



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Mati City fisherfolk get motorboat engines

SEN. Christopher "Bong" Go has raised the importance of helping fisherfolk overcome the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on their livelihood.

He witnessed on November 18 the handover of 10 motorboat engines donated by the Manila Metro Premier PH Eagles Club to fishermen in Mati City, Davao Oriental to boost the community-based fisheries sector.

Aside from the senator also present during the turnover ceremony were Davao Oriental 2nd District Rep. Cheeno Almario, Gov. Niño Sotero Uy, Mayor Michelle Rabat and Vice Mayor Lorenzo Rabat.

"The provision of motor banca engines is a strategic move aimed at empowering local fisherfolks, boosting their productivity, and ultimately contributing to the economic resurgence of the region," Go said in Filipino.

"We thank the Manila Metro Premier PH Eagles Club for this donation to uplift the livelihood of our fishermen. By empowering fisherfolks and investing in essential sectors, such as the fishing industry, we take meaningful strides towards a more resilient and prosperous future for all," he added.

The senator underscored the role played by the fishing sector in Mati City in creating jobs and improving livelihood.

Go said he co-authored Republic Act (RA) 11901 which broadened the financing system for agriculture, fisheries, and rural development.

RA 11901 offers improved access to credit for rural communities, particularly farmers, fishermen and agri-based workers to promote their well-being, competitiveness and productivity.

Go also co-authored RA 11953 or the "New Agrarian Emancipation Act" which empowers agrarian reform beneficiaries and supports their economic independence.

He filed Senate Bills 2117 and 2118 which ensure comprehensive crop insurance coverage for agrarian reform beneficiaries.

BERNADETTE TAMAYO



Ngayon araw na ito ay ibabahagi ko sa inyo ang Harbest Agribusiness Corporation na masasabi kong isa sa aking napuntahan na "The Best in Farming."

Naitatag ang Harbest Agribusiness Corporation noong 1997, na nagsimula bilang distributor ng iba't ibang farm input.

Nais ng pamunuan ng Harbest Agribusi-

productivity, agri-plastics for soil and seedling health, sustainable crop nutrition and protection inputs, climate-resilient greenhouse and irrigation systems, labor efficient machines like tractors and drones, and many more," sabi pa ni Macabio.

Bukod sa farm inputs ay nagbibigay din ng libreng seminar sa lahat ng mamamayan,



Ang Magsasakang REPORTER

ni MER LAYSON

pa ng pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman, nagbibigay ng free training at seminar ang Harbest Agribusiness.

Sa darating na araw ng Linggo, December

sa Radyo Singko 92.3 News FM.

Maaari rin kayong manood, mag-subscribe at mag-follow sa aking Youtube Chan-

HARBEST AGRIBUSINESS, THE BEST IN FARMING

ness na maibsan ang iba't ibang kahirapan at pagsubok na kinakaharap ng mga magsasaka sa bansa.

Ang Harbest Agribusiness Corporation ay pag-aari ni Toto Barcelona na malaki ang pagmamahal sa ating Inang Kalikasan.

Layunin ni Sir Toto na maiangat at mapagaan ang buhay ng bawat isang magsasaka sa bansa.

Small at large scale farming ay kayang icater ng Harbest Agribusiness.

Ayon kay Ivy Macabio, Nursery production at Sales Marketing officer ng Harbest ang vision nila ay "to pro-



Ang Magsasakang Reporter, kasama si Ivy Macabio at Mariz Teodocio ng Harbest.

grupo o Non Governmental Organization (NGO) ang Harbest.

10, 2023 ay mapapanood ninyo ang panayam kay Ivy Macabio at Mariz Teodocio at farm tour, gayundin ang sa tissue cultured room sa Harbest Agribusiness sa programang Masaganang Buhay TV at Radio Show ng Magsasakang Reporter.

Samantala, para sa iba pang tips at sikreto sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman sa pamamagitan ng organikong pamamaraan ay maaari po kayong manood at makinig ng aking TV at Radio program na Masaganang Buhay tuwing Linggo, alas-7:00 hanggang alas-8:00 ng umaga sa OnePH Signal TV, Channel 1 ng TV-5. Mapapakinggan din po

nel na ANG MAGSASAKANG REPORTER at Facebook na Mer Layson at Facebook page na Ang Magsasakang Reporter, TV host Vlogger para sa iba pang kaalaman at impormasyon sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman sa pamamagitan ng organikong pamamaraan.

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

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



Ang urban gardening set up ng Harbest.

vide a dignified life for the Filipino farmer, free from fear, hunger, and social injustice."

Habang ang kanilang mission ay "To find adaptable, practical, and high-quality solutions for the enhancement of agricultural productivity in the Philippines."

Mula sa main office ng Harbest sa No.5 Rosemarie St., Barangay Kapitolyo, Pasig City ay may 8 ng branches at 100 dealers at partners sa buong bansa ang nasabing kumpanya.

"Today, our catalog of solutions include quality seeds for better

Sa pagbisita ng Masaganang Buhay Team ng Magsasakang Reporter sa main office ang Harbest, pumukaw ng aming paningin ay ang ginagawang "plant tissue cultured" o cloning ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman.

Ayon kay Mariz Teodocio ng Harbest, anytime na mangailangan ng itatanim na halaman ang kanilang mga kostumer ay may punla silang available na puwedeng mabli.

"All year round po ay mayroon kami dahil sa ginagawa naming plant tissue cultured method," ani Teodocio. Sa mga nais matuto



Ang Plant tissue cultured laboratory room ng Harbest.



Bilang na ang araw ng mga agri smuggler, hoarder



REP. ZALDY CO

Magandang araw muli, mga kababayan kong Bicolano! Kamakailan ay ating nabaliitan ang pagkakadakil sa isang pinaghihinalaang large-scale onion smuggler.

Kinilala siya ng mga awtoridad na si Jayson de Roxas Taculog na nahulihan ng P78.9 milyong halaga ng puslit na sibuyas. Siya'y naaresto sa bisa ng arrest warrant na ipinalabas ni Judge Edilu Hayag ng Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 26.

Ang pagkakaaresto kay Taculog ay patunay na seryoso ang kampanya ng administrasyong Marcos laban sa agricultural smuggling. Kung inyong matatandaan, ipinangako ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. sa ikalawa niyang State of the Nation Address noong Hulyo na bilang na ang araw ng mga agricultural smugglers. Sa pagkakaaresto kay Taculog, pinatotohanan ng pangulo ang kanyang sinabi sa SONA.

Hindi lamang kaban ng bayan ang apektado ng smuggling, pinapahina rin nito ang sektor ng agrikultura. Nagagawa ng mga smuggler na maibenta sa mas mababang halaga ang kanilang pinuslit dahil hilan para malugi ang mga lokal na magsasaka.

Gumawa na po ng hakbang ang Mababang Kapulungan ng Kongreso, sa pangunguna ni Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, upang matuldukan ang agricultural smuggling. Aprubado na ng kapulungan ang House Bill No. 9284 o panukalang Large-scale Agri-Fishery Commodities or Tobacco Hoarding, Profiteering, Cartelizing, and other Acts of Market Abuse as Economic Sabotage Act.

Sa nasabing panukala, magiging life imprisonment at multang anim na beses ng halaga ng nakumpiskang produkto ang ipapataw sa mga mapapatonayang nagpupuslit ng produktong agrikultura.

Samantala, nais kong batiin ang mga nagwagi sa Albay Provincial Skills Competition, lalong lalo na sa dating iskolar na Tabaqueño ng Ako Bicol Party-list at Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Nagkamit ng gintong medalya sa kompetisyon si Jerson Bonganay, 19-taong gulang ng Tabaco City at dating mag-aaral ng Tektone Global Technologies Foundation, Inc. kung saan nahasa ang kanyang husay at galing sa pagwe-welding.

Nakakataba ng puso na isang scholar natin ang naging gold medalist sa Albay Provincial Skills Competition. Very inspiring ang kabataang tulad mo Jerson! Madami pa sanang kabataan ang matulungan natin lalo na pagdating sa kanilang technical skills and talents.

Ang aktibidad na inorganisa ng TESDA ay isinagawa sa San Francisco Institute of Science and Techno-

logy sa Malilipot, Albay noong nakaraang Nobyembre 9, 2023.

Pinasalamatan ni Jerson ang Ako Bicol at TESDA dahil bukod sa malaking tulong ay nakapagbigay pa ito ng oportunidad sa kanya. Sa kasalukuyan ay abala si Jerson sa paghahanda para sa gagawing Regional Skills Competition.

Sampung paaralan ang lumahok at nagpamalas ng galing sa nasabing kompetisyon. Nagwagi sa cooking competition si Jan Felix Lopez mula sa Daraga Human Resource Development Center (DHRDC); si John Maxel Ballon mula sa SFIST naman ang nanalo sa restaurant services habang si Jabez Villamarzo ng Bicol University College of Science (BUCS) ang nangibabaw sa larangan ng web technology.

Wagi naman sa mechanical engineering CAD si Justin Laganson ng Bicol University College of Engineering (BUCENG); at marami ang napabilib sa mechatronics ng senior high student (SHS) ng Tabaco National High School (TNHS) na si Napoleon Bosito Mateos.

Kahanga-hanga talaga ang galing nating mga Bicolano.

Samantala, gusto ko ring batiin ang koponan ng San Andres nang tanghalin silang kampeon sa Catanduanes Leg ng Ako Bicol Cup. Tinalo nila ang koponan ng Viga sa score na 82-62 sa Game 2 ng Best of 3 Finals ng Ako Bicol Cup.

Muli, binabati ko ang mga nagwagi sa Albay Provincial Skills Competition at sa Ako Bicol Cup Catanduanes leg.

Hanggang sa muli, mga kababayan kong Bicolano!



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Soybeans, corn slip

BEIJING- Chicago soybean futures ticked down on Monday as traders monitored the prospects of showers in drought-stricken Brazil, the biggest global supplier, while corn and wheat lost steam after a brief rally last week.

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was down 0.79 percent at \$13.14-1/2 a bushel.

"Rains are forecast to hit dry spots in Brazil over the next week, which are going to determine whether or not Brazil production stabilizes or starts to trend lower again," Doug Berg-

man, analyst at RCM Alternatives, noted.

The US Department of Agriculture confirmed private sales of 132,000 metric tons of US soybeans to China, and another 198,000 tons to unknown destinations, all for delivery in the 2023/24 marketing year that began Sept. 1.

Crop watchers have been paring their harvest forecasts for Brazil as the world's biggest soybean exporting nation faces a drought, but forecast of showers and easing heat helped ease some concerns over tighter yields. - *Reuters*