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Farmers' group decries high vegetable retail prices

A farmers' group yesterday decried the high retail prices of upland vegetables in Metro Manila markets even after farmgate prices in the Cordilleras have gone down.

Rosendo So, chairman of the Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura, said the wholesale price of cabbage in Benguet now ranges between P5 and P8 per kilo, but the retail price in Metro Manila is P90 per kilo.

Based on the latest monitoring of the Department of Agriculture (DA), the retail price

of cabbage in the National Capital Region ranged between P60 and P90 per kilo.

So said the wholesale price of carrots went down to P25 to P30 per kilo, yet its retail price is at P60 to P130 per kilo.

The wholesale price of broccoli also went down to P40 per kilo.

"We see that the prices of vegetables have normalized," So said as he confirmed an oversupply of tomatoes.

He cited a video showing the dumping

of at least four tons of tomatoes in the Cordilleras.

"Tomatoes are sold between P5 and P10 (per kilo) in (Nueva) Vizcaya. Our (wholesale) price of tomatoes is also low at P8 to P10 per kilo," So said.

Data from the DA showed the retail price of tomatoes remains high, between P30 and P100 per kilo, despite an oversupply.

So urged local government units (LGUs) to draft a plan that would prevent an over-

supply of tomatoes and other farm commodities.

"The plan of the LGUs should be fixed. We talked to (Agriculture) Secretary (Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.). By January, he will address the planting calendar so that this incident will not happen again," So said.

He said the wholesale price of tomatoes had reached as high as P90 per kilo, which prompted more farmers to plant the farm product.

— Bella Cariaso



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Group asks Marcos to intervene in sugar pricing

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

Sugar farmers are calling for government intervention amid the continued decline in prices of sugar, noting that it has been dropping to a level way below the comfortable profit margin for sugar producers, particularly small farmers.

Manuel Lamata, United Federation of Sugar Producers president, said in a statement issued yesterday that their group has asked President Marcos and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. for a possible state intervention as sugar prices continue to plummet to P2,500 in the past two weeks in Negros.

He said this is even lower in Bukidnon at P2,300 levels, way below the price levels of P3,200 in the same period last year.

"This is very disconcerting because mill gate prices are now at P50 per kilo which is way lower than our production costs. Moreover, retail prices continue to remain at P80 to P85 per kilo and the farmers are

clearly not profiting from the local market prices," Lamata said.

He emphasized that fuel and fertilizer prices are also on the rise and "if this continues, we cannot sustain the situation and farmers may not be inclined to produce for next year's milling season."

With this, Lamata said that consultation among the various sugar associations under their umbrella has led to an "urgent appeal for the national government to intervene and buy our sugar."

"Please help us and the five million dependents of the sugar industry who will clearly not be enjoying the holidays under this condition. We fear that many workers will be displaced and their dependents go hungry," Lamata said, adding that most farmers were hoping that the pronouncements of the President that sugar prices should not go down below P3,000 will start to kick in.

"We know President Marcos' heart is with and for the farmers as he has told us so, and we are calling for his intervention on this matter," he also said.



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Logistics improvements for agriculture to boost domestic food security

AN improved logistics sector can lower the cost of moving agricultural products and also help enhance food security in the country, an official of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (AmCham) told *The Manila Times*.

AmCham Agribusiness Committee Chairman Christopher Ilagan said in a Viber message that logistical costs make up between 20 and 40 percent of the price of agricultural products in the Philippines.

Also, the cost of storage and the movement of agricultural products have become pain points for farmers.

Ilagan said that an improved logistics sector with appropriate post-harvest infrastructure will help address those issues, which, in turn, can contribute to the advancement of food security in the country.

"Appropriate post-harvest infrastructure ... (and) improved logistics can help reduce spoilage and waste, while if done at scale, can produce more efficient logistics networks across the country," he said.

"Reducing the amount of handling across the supply chain through the same improved infrastructure will remove the middle layers that require their respective margins," he added. "Also, the lower costs of storing and moving agricultural products can result in Filipinos have improved availability, accessibility and affordability to food and agricultural products."

Ilagan is also upbeat about the pronouncement of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu

Laurel Jr. that one of his priorities is to enhance logistics and reduce middlemen in the agri-fishery value chain.

"Given its (logistics) substantial contribution to the price of agriculture products, a focus on how to reduce logistics costs, Sec. Tiu Laurel Jr. proposed a sound policy," he said.

Ilagan is also upbeat on Laurel's proposal to boost the farming sector through the utilization of technologies, mechanizing farming, expanding irrigation coverage, and providing farmers with better seeds.

In April, Ilagan said that Philippine agriculture has the potential to be globally competitive, but this will depend on policies and programs implemented for the sector.

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



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Ban on bird/poultry imports lifted by DA

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has lifted the temporary ban on poultry products originating from Ireland and the Netherlands.

In separate memorandum orders issued by the DA, the entry or importation of domestic and wild birds and their products including poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs, and semen from Ireland and the Netherlands is now allowed.

In the case of Ireland, this was supported by the official self-declaration report of the country in the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) that all cases of the H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) of bird flu have ended.

Supporting documents were also submitted by Ireland's Chief Veterinary Officer, Veterinary services Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, showing that there were no additional outbreaks of the animal disease.

"In accordance to the provisions of the Chapter 10.4 of the WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Ireland is now free from HPAI," the memo signed by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. stated.

The DA said the risk of contamination from importing live poultry, poultry meat, and the other state products from Ireland

is negligible.

"All shipments coming from Ireland Port shall be allowed provided that the products were slaughtered/produced on or after November 20, 2023 as endorsed by the National Competent Authority of Ireland," the memo stated.

In a separate order, the DA also lifted the temporary ban on the importation of the same products originating from the Netherlands after it was declared free from HPAI.

The department, meanwhile, noted that all import transactions of the mentioned commodities shall be in accordance with its existing rules and regulations.

Entry of poultry products originating from the Netherlands was banned in August 2023. According to data from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), an agency under the DA, the Netherlands supplied the Philippines last year with 857,400 kilos of chicken, equivalent to 0.20 percent of the 411.07-million kilo total chicken imports in 2022.

In 2022, chicken imports ranked second with a 30.29-percent share in the country's total meat imports while pork accounted for the biggest share at 710.36 million kilos or 52.36 percent of the total.

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



Sugar producers ask govt to buy their produce

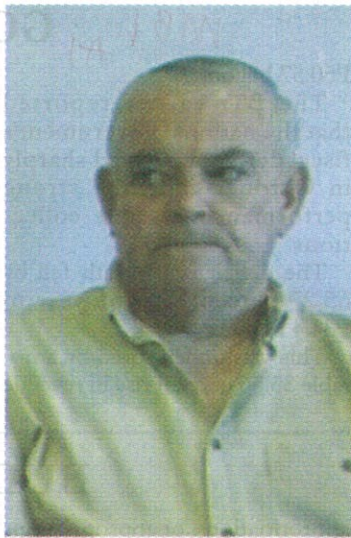
BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE United Federation of Sugar Producers (UNIFED) has asked the government to buy locally-produced sugar to encourage traders to increase their buying prices.

Manuel Lamata, UNIFED president, in a statement, asked for a possible state intervention from President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. as sugar prices have dropped to P2,500 per 50 kg bag (LKG) in the past two weeks in Negros.

Lamata said prices are even lower at P2,300 per LKG in Bukidnon which are way below the price levels of P3,200 in the same period last year.

Sugar Regulatory Administration millsite monitoring showed composite price of raw sugar as



LAMATA

of November 12 or two weeks earlier than UNIFED data, was at P2,658.71 per 50 kg bag, higher by at least P158.71 per LKG.

UNIFED said sugar millgate

prices have plunged way below production cost which is currently around P2,500 per LKG.

"This is very disconcerting because mill gate prices are now at P50 per kilo which is way lower than our production costs. Retail prices continue to remain at P80 to P85 per kilo and the farmers are clearly not profiting from the local market prices," Lamata said.

Lamata added fuel and fertilizer prices are also on the rise.

UNIFED fears local producers may not be able to sustain production for next year's milling season.

"Please help us and the five million dependents of the sugar industry who will clearly not be enjoying the holidays under this condition and we fear that many workers will be displaced and their dependents go hungry," Lamata said.

The group said farmers are

holding on to government's pronouncements that sugar prices should not go down below P3,000 per LKG.

Lamata said in a text message government can buy local sugar for at least P2,800 per LKG to encourage traders to increase their buying prices.

"Once government kickstart at that price, hopefully the traders will scramble and buy higher with the present state of fertilizer prices and fuel prices and labor. Our cost of production is hovering at P2,500 (per LKG) more or less. It's really bad for us now," Lamata said.

Based on DA's monitoring of public markets in the National Capital Region, prevailing retail price as of Friday ranges from P72 to P100 per kg for refined sugar, P70 to P96 per kg for washed sugar and P65 to P96 per kg for brown sugar.



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DA turns over farm machineries to N. Ecija

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Department of Agriculture (DA), through the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech), turned over P398.5 million worth of agricultural machinery and postharvest facilities to the province of Nueva Ecija last week.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. led the distribution of 125 units of machinery to 88 qualified farmers' cooperative and

association (FCA) which were procured under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

Laurel said the machinery awarded will be the key to harmonious relationship between farmers and the government.

Farm machines that were distributed include five units of four-wheel tractors, 22 units of hand tractors, nine units of walk-behind transplanters, 21 units of riding type transplanter, four units of precision seeders, 22 units of

rice combine harvesters, nine units of single-pass rice mills; 13 units of six-ton recirculating dryers, 13 units of twelve-ton recirculating dryers, four units of 1.5-ton per hour (tph) multi-stage rice mills, two units of 2-3 tph multi-stage rice mills and one unit of 4-5 tph multi-stage rice mills.

"This is the biggest one-day distribution of farm machines and it clearly demonstrates how PhilMech has sustained the distribution of machinery and conducted

various trainings for beneficiaries under the RCEF-mechanization program. Our ultimate aim is to modernize the countryside and make it contribute more to national economic development," said Dionisio Alvindia, PhilMech executive director, in a statement.

PhilMech said that in Nueva Ecija alone, a total of 935 units of various rice machinery and equipment were turned over to 444 FCAs from 2019 to 2023 under RCEF.

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DA keen on scheme that will boost farmgate prices of sugar

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS
@jearcalas

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is planning to implement a buy-and-sell scheme that seeks to raise the farmgate prices of sugar and pull down retail prices.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the DA is crafting a plan that would utilize government funds to buy sugar from farmers at higher farmgate prices and sell the same stocks to consumers at lower prevailing market prices.

Laurel said, however, that the plan requires clearance from President Marcos Jr. The DA aims to start the buy-and-sell program

by January.

He said this is the response of the DA to the continuous drop in farmgate prices of sugar despite the elevated retail prices of the sweetener. He noted that "somewhere down the sugar value chain, somebody is profiteering."

"Sugar prices are high at the retail [level] but farmgate prices are declining—it's now P2,550 [per 50-kilogram bag]. There's an intervention that we are planning to do with the clearance of the President wherein we will have some funds that will be used by GOCCs [government-owned and -controlled corporations] to buy sugar from the farmers at a higher price then we will sell it at lower price, which will hap-

pen hopefully by January," he said recently.

Last month, Laurel vowed that the DA would undertake certain interventions to address the "price disparity" of sugar in the market.

The United Federation of Sugar Producers (Unifed) on Sunday urged the government to do "much needed intervention" to prevent sugar prices, at the farmgate level, from plunging.

Unifed said the prevailing farmgate price for raw sugar has now dropped below the "comfortable profit margin" for sugar producers, especially for small-scale farmers.

The group said sugar prices continue to plummet and are now

averaging P2,500 in the past two weeks in Negros and are even lower at P2,300 in Bukidnon, way below the P3,200 recorded in the same period last year.

"This is very disconcerting because mill gate prices are now at P50 per kilo which is way lower than our production costs. Moreover, retail prices continue to remain at P80-P85 per kilo and the farmers are clearly not profiting from the local market prices," UNIFED President Manuel Lamata said.

"Furthermore, fuel and fertilizer prices are also on the rise and if this continues, we cannot sustain the situation and farmers may not be inclined to produce for next year's milling season."



Govt turns over P398.5-M farm equipment to N. Ecija planters

THE Department of Agriculture, through the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (DA-PhilMech) turned over last Thursday P398.5 million worth of agricultural machinery and postharvest facilities to the province of Nueva Ecija.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. led the distribution of 125 units of machinery to 88 qualified farmers' cooperative and association (FCA) under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) at the PhilMech center located at the Science City of Munoz.

"Pakiusap ko po na ingatan

at alagaan ninyo ang mga makinaryang ito. Bagaman ito ay libre, nararapat pa rin na gamitin natin ito ng may pagpapahalaga at pag-iingat," Laurel said.

"Kung kailangan nang dumaan sa maintenance, huwag nawa natin itong pababayaan upang mas matagal pa at mas marami pa ang makagamit nito."

Laurel said he is hoping that the machinery awarded will be the key to harmonious relationship between farmers and the government.

"Maging susi rin nawa ito ng pagkakasundo-sundo at hindi pagkaka-watak-watak ng samahan. Gawin po nating nagkakaisa ang ating mga samahan habang tayo

rin ay nakikipag-isa sa mga magagandang hangarin ng ating gobyerno para sa inyo at sa ating mga kababayan," he said.

The farm machines include five units of four-wheel tractors, 22 units of hand tractors, nine units of walk-behind transplanters, 21 units of riding type transplanter, four units of precision seeders, 22 units of rice combine harvesters, nine units of single-pass rice mills; 13 units of six-ton recirculating dryers, 13 units of twelve-ton recirculating dryers, four units of 1.5-ton per hour (tph) multi-stage rice mills, two units of 2-3 tph multi-stage rice mills, and one unit of 4-5 tph multi-stage rice mills.

"This is the biggest one-day distribution of farm machines, and it clearly demonstrates how PhilMech has sustained the distribution of machinery and conducted various trainings for beneficiaries under the RCEF-Mechanization Program. Our ultimate aim is to modernize the countryside, and make it contribute more to national economic development," PhilMech Executive Director Dionisio Alvindia said in a statement.

A total of 935 units of various rice machinery and equipment were turned over to 444 FCAs in Nueva Ecija from 2019-2023 under RCEF-Mechanization Program.



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'Import 500,000 MT rice to bring down prices'

By **BELLA CARIASO**

At least 300,000 to 500,000 metric tons (MT) of imported rice should arrive before March 2024 to bring down the retail price of the staple food whose cost has spiked in recent weeks, Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement (PRISM) said yesterday.

Green lanes should also be allowed to ensure the timely arrival of the imported rice amid the high demand during the holidays, PRISM co-founder Orly Manuntag said in an interview with **The STAR**.

"The harvest is almost finished, almost 100 percent complete and that is according to the **Department of Agriculture (DA)**. We have (harvest) in February but it's only very small. The government needs to ensure the arrival of imported rice through the private sector to be able to increase our stocks in the market," Manuntag explained.

"This December, the Bureau of Customs needs to have green lanes.

The rice are being inspected from the point of origin. We should not delay the release of the rice in the markets," he said.

Manuntag added that the arrival of 295,000 MT of imported rice from India is not enough to prevent the spike in the retail price of the grains.

He noted that based on data from the DA, at least 15 to 20 percent of rice supply needs to be imported as the country's sufficiency level is only at 80 percent.

Manuntag said that PRISM expects a 20 percent decline in the total rice importation compared to last year where it reached at least 3.8 million MT.

"Based on our estimate, it (rice imports) could only reach 3.1 million metric tons, or at most 3.2 million metric tons as we are already in December," he said.

The consumers should not expect that the P38 per kilo of rice will still be achieved, noting that the farmgate price of the National Food Authority reached as high as P26

per kilo including the P3 per kilo subsidy, according to him.

Based on monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of local regular milled rice was as high as P52 per kilo; local well-milled rice, P57 per kilo; local premium rice, P60 per kilo; local special rice, P68 per kilo.

Imported well-milled rice was sold at P52 per kilo; imported premium rice, P60 per kilo and imported special rice, P65 per kilo.

Farmers' group Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) yesterday said that the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) has evaded the issue of the possible five million metric tons (MMT) discrepancy in its palay production estimate in 2022 amid the continued spike in the retail prices of rice.

Based on the letter of FFF national chairman Raul Montemayor to PSA National Statistician Claire Dennis Mapa on June 22, he noted that the PSA itself reported that palay output in 2022 was 19.756 MMT equivalent to around 12.92 MMT of rice.



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Negros farmers told to prepare for El Niño

BACOLOD CITY: The Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPA) has called on the 31 local government units (LGUs) in Negros Occidental to prepare for the full effects of the El Niño phenomenon in the first quarter of 2024.

Provincial agriculturist Dr. Dina Genzola said that the province will experience extreme heat early next year based on the forecast of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

"Currently, we are experiencing 'moderate El Niño,' Genzola said.

She said the OPA has already received reports of areas experiencing drought and dying crops.

"It was alleviated by the onset of low pressure area (LPA) and shear line that brought rains in the affected areas," she pointed out.

She said the OPA has partnered with the **Department of Agriculture (DA)** to distribute drought resistant crops as alternative

livelihood for the farmers in the province should their crops be affected by drought.

Genzola said that they are also preparing for the possible attacks of pests and onslaught of plant diseases caused by El Niño.

She appealed to Negrense farmers to also save water.

Based on data from the OPA, 14,000 of hectares of the total 64,000 agricultural land in Negros Occidental are irrigated.

The provincial government plans to put up small dams or water catchment areas as part of mitigating measures, she said.

The provincial government has earmarked P15.38-million initial funding for El Niño preparations.

El Niño will bring in less rain than normal resulting in a long dry spell or drought.

Occurring every seven years, the extreme heat impacts agriculture as the water level goes down, affecting dams and irrigation, resulting in low agricultural product output.

EUGENE Y. ADIONG



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Taiwan's Young Agricultural Ambassadors team visits PH

BY IZA IGLESIAS

THE 2023 Young Agricultural Ambassadors composed of 12 Taiwanese with expertise in farming, forestry, fisheries, and animal husbandry visited the Philippines on November 13 to 18 as part of the New Southbound Policy Exchange Program.

In an interview with The Manila Times, deputy director-general Hsiao Kuangwei of Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Public Diplomacy Coordination Council, shared, "The participants hail from diverse backgrounds. Their areas of expertise include organic farming, aquaculture, fruit, vegetable and cultivation, as well as agricultural economics."

"For them, it's really a thorough trip in just seven days. They visited government agencies to learn about the current status of agricultural economic development and business opportunities, universities, research centers, private companies that are all related to agribusiness," he added.

The participants also gained insight into local farming produce market operations and marketing trends. They met with Taiwanese business people working in agriculture-related industries and visited successful factories and farms. The youths also engaged in exchanges with local producers, officials, and academics.

Among the government institutions members of the delegation – six university and graduate students, six agriculture entrepreneurs – visited are the Department of Agriculture and the House of Representatives' Committee on Agriculture. They also stopped by at the educational and research institutions such as International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Southeast Asia Regional Cen-

ter for Graduates Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca), Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (DoST-PCAARRD), Central Luzon State University (CLSU), Philippine Carabao Center and the PhilRice.

Moreover, the Ambassadors also met farmers' group from the Tabon San Jose Farmers' Association, Farmers' Market in Araneta City, and agricultural industry group and company Taiwan Association in the Philippines and the Green Era Biotech Corp.

"This visit will improve understanding about New Southbound Policy partner countries among the next generation of Taiwanese agricultural specialists and increase substantive agricultural cooperation between Taiwan and the Philippines," Kuangwei said.

"I have a very strong sense that Taiwan and the Philippines are really close and good neighbors so we should help each other. Maybe we have something that you can learn from us, but definitely, you also have something that we can learn from. For this trip, we try to explore and learn the insights from the rural agricultural development. The Young Agricultural Ambassadors were able to share their experiences with their counterparts through this program," he added.

Taiwan's MOFA and the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) have co-



■ Hsiao Kuangwei, deputy director-general of Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Public Diplomacy Coordination Council



■ This year's Young Agricultural Ambassadors hold field trips to the Philippines to learn about the current status of agricultural economic development and business opportunities in the country. PHOTOS BY JOHN ORVEN VERDOTE

organized the Young Agricultural Ambassadors New Southbound Policy Exchange Program since 2017. As of 2019, a total of 90 young agricultural ambassadors had been sent to six partner countries, including Thailand and India. Visits were temporarily suspended from 2020 to 2022 due to Covid-19, but with the easing of the pandemic, MOFA and the MOA have decided to restart the

program this year. The goal is to continue to provide more opportunities for the next generation of Taiwanese agricultural specialists to engage internationally and develop their capacity to innovate.

Apart from the Philippines, 12 other Ambassadors have been selected to conduct seven-day field visits and in-depth exchanges in another New Southbound Policy partner country, Indonesia.



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Rice imports down 14% as of end-Nov

RICE imports as of end-November were lower than the volume shipped a year earlier.

Inbound shipments totaled 3.03 million metric tons (MT) as of November 30, Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) data showed, down some 14 percent from the year-earlier 3.5 million MT.

For November alone, rice imports totaled 196,834.15 MT. Imports peaked in April at 516,895.173 MT.

Vietnam remained the country's top source of rice, having provided 2.68 million MT and accounting for 88.6 percent of total imports.

Thailand followed with 161,990.67 MT, Myanmar with 127,818 MT and Pakistan with 34,625.21 MT. India also shipped 13,734.79 MT of rice.

The remaining volume, 6,713.12 MT, was shared by Cambodia, China, Japan, Taiwan, Italy and Spain.

Meanwhile, BPI data also showed that the agency approved about 4,186 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances (SPSICs) from January to November.

From November 1-16, the BPI

approved 604 SPSICs with a corresponding import volume of 484,379.79 MT of rice.

To ensure compliance and proper use of permits, the department has shortened the effectivity of SPSICs. The Department of Agriculture (DA) has said that this will ensure enough supply of rice in the market.

In a December 4 memorandum circular, the DA said that "the actual product/consignment must be shipped out within 30 days from the date the sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance is issued, regardless of the country of origin."

Traders previously had up to 60 days from the date of permit issuance to ship in products from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations member countries, except Myanmar, and 90 days for those coming from Myanmar and other countries.

The DA said the rule change was aligned with a thrust to ensure enough supplies and buffer stocks of the staple.

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



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Sugar producers urge govt to act on prices

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE United Federation of Sugar Producers (Unifed) is calling for government intervention as prices of sugar continue to drop.

In a statement on Sunday, Unifed President Manuel Lamata asked for possible state intervention from President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

He said sugar prices have been dropping to P2,300-P2,500 per 50-kilo bag, way below the comfortable profit margin of P3,200 per bag.

"This is very disconcerting because mill gate prices are now at P50 per kilo, which is way lower than our production costs," said Lamata.

"Moreover, retail prices continue to remain at P80-P85 per kilo and the farmers are clearly not profiting from the local market prices," he added.

In Negros Occidental, prices of

raw sugar was posted at P2,500 per bag in the past two weeks while P2,300 per bag was recorded in Bukidnon.

Lamata added that these prices are lower and can be felt, especially by sugar producers and small farmers.

To help farmers gain profit, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is pushing for a suggested retail price (SRP) of refined sugar and urged retailers to sell the sweetener at P85 per kilo.

Based on the price monitoring report of the DA as of Dec. 1, 2023, prevailing prices of refined sugar was P88.36 per kilo, while washed

sugar was priced at P81.94 a kilo.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said on November 30 that they are in talks with the DA to push for the SRP and how it will be enforced.

Azcona said that they are looking for the possible involvement of the local government units and other agencies who can control the retail price of the commodity as the DA and SRA cannot participate in the adjustment of market price of sugar.

"We will see how we can fix it, but that's an immediate concern because prices are sliding down and farmers are affected," Azcona said.



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Agri dep't enlists LGU support to boost hog repopulation drive

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it has enlisted the support of local government units (LGUs) in providing qualified farmers with the facilities to revive hog populations after the African Swine Fever outbreak.

According to memorandum circular (MC) no. 54, signed by Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., LGUs have been tasked to help farmers with project implementation and finding land.

It added that the DA will fund the construction of biosecure facilities and animal housing, as well as feed and biologics and the procurement of piglets under its Integrated National Swine

Production Initiative for Recovery and Expansion (INSPIRE) program.

Qualified beneficiaries without existing facilities can avail of a P10-million funding package for a biosecure facility and 300 piglets, or P5 million for a conventional animal housing and 100 piglets.

"The minimum project package... can be availed of by organized and active (farmer cooperatives and associations or FCAs), and LGUs who desire to undertake modernized swine raising... using the community swine clustering model," the DA said.

It added that LGU recipients should not exceed 20% of the total number of targeted beneficiaries per region.

Additionally, MC 54 also allowed Regions 2, 3, 4-A, and 7 the authority to provide budgetary assistance to qualified FCAs.

"Considering the sizeable decrease in the breeder base population (in the regions) and considering (their) proximity to the National Capital Region, it is imperative to restore the region's flourishing pork production to ensure adequate pork supply," it said.

The DA earlier projected a 10-day deficit in pork supply due

to the increased demand during the end-of-year holidays. It is also considering more imports to add to the domestic supply.

The areas targeted for support are being counted on to establish multiplier and production farms aimed at creating "genetically superior gilts and finisher animals."

Qualified FCAs would need to have vacant farms, a minimum capacity of 300 sows and possess a biosecurity level two rating.

"The recipient shall pay the (DA) the equivalent amount in terms of breeders provided and distributed to other identified FCAs," it added.

— Adrian H. Halili



Cultivating hope with SM Foundation's urban gardening initiative

BY ANTONIO DELOS REYES

MOTHER and community leader Jennie Fernandez has always enjoyed gardening. Tending to her ornamental plants was one of her joys in life, especially when she had to close the doors of her small business during the pandemic. Little did she know that in 2023, the SM Foundation's (SMFI) Kabalikatang Kabuhayan (KSK) would give her a new shot at entrepreneurship through urban gardening.

The KSK program, a cornerstone of SMFI dedicated to strengthening rural and urban farming communities throughout the Philippines, offers training in diverse farming techniques and essential business principles. This initiative aims to empower and uplift the agripreneurial skills of farmers.

"Kakaiba 'yung experience



KSK Urban Farmer Jennie joins the market tour at SM City East Ortigas to learn more about marketing techniques.

"The urban gardening program has also allowed Jennie to generate additional income for her and her family. She shared that she used to run an online shop before, but the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown drove down sales, prompting her to cease operating her business."

ng KSK urban gardening. Dito namin natutunan na 'yung mga gulay, may iba't ibang conditions para umusbong ng maayos at lumago," she said.

Over the course of the program, Jennie and her fellow urban farmer-trainees successfully grew different vegetable crops, allowing them to harvest several times: "Nakapag harvest na rin kami ilang beses at ginagamit namin 'yung napitas namin na mga gulay sa pagluluto ng pagkain para sa mga pamilya namin. May mga naharvest din kami na nabenta naming sa patas na halaga sa aming mga kapitbahay."



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One of the batches from Kabalikat sa Kabuhayan's Urban Gardening initiative celebrate the end of their weeks-long training with a harvest festival. Joining the moving up festivities are volunteers from SM City East Ortigas.

As other members of their community gained interest in urban farming, Jennie is eager to share her new-found skills: "Marami nang lumapit sa amin kasi nakikita nila 'yung mga tanim namin. May group chat 'yung HOA namin at 'yun ang plano naming gamitin para i-disseminate sa iba 'yung itinuro sa amin at maanganyo sila na magtanim," she said.

The urban gardening program has also allowed Jennie to generate additional income for her and her family. She shared that she used to run an online shop before, but the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown drove down sales, prompting her to cease operating her business. "Pero ngayon, nakakapag business na ulit ako. Nabebenta ko 'yung mga naitanim naming na mga gulay at 'yung kinikita ko doon ay nagagamit ko para sa mga pangangaliangan namin sa pamilya," she shared.

Leveraging scale to continue growth

Telesforo Suico Jr., another KSK participant, saw urban gardening in a new light after joining the urban gardening initiative. "Hard work talaga



KSK urban farmers at the market tour in SM East Ortigas.

ang pagtatanim. Marami sa amin nanggaling sa ornamental plant background at pag gulay na ang pinag uusa-pan natin, dahil pagkain na talaga siya, dapat inaalagaan ng mabuti at pinaglalaanan ng oras,” he said.

He is also very upbeat about the prospects of urban farming and how it could empower the communities in Pasig. “Plano naming na magtayo ng cooperative in the future. Nag form na kami ng organizations and we’re planning

to register it in civil society organizations of Pasig. With that, magkakaroon ka ng personality and at the same time, magiging eligible kami for partnership with the government and makakakuha kami ng support sa mga projects na

plano naming gawin,” he said.

A collaboration
for agriculture

Both Telesforo and Jennie also attributed their newfound passion for farming to farmer-



Urban farmers from SM North EDSA also mark the end of their training through a harvest festival.

Malaya Business Insight

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teacher Dexter Dandan from Moca Family Farm Learning Center, SM Foundation's partner school. "Nagkaroon ako ng interest sa farming dahil sa teacher naming dahil nakaka enganyo 'yung enthusiasm at passion niya sa pagtuturo about farming," Telesforo said.

For his part, Dexter said that teaching the participants in Pasig has been very fulfilling for him. "We had to change how they engage with nature and find the proper methods that fit the area they are in, but it was great to see the interest of the students and the pride they felt when they harvested their produce," he said.

With the completion of the urban farming program in the area, Dexter is keen on teaching more people in different parts of the country. "We, together with SM Foundation, want to share what we know and what we have with other communities. Urban gardening can help address food shortages because households can be more self-sufficient. They can plant their food and at the same time, their produce can also be a source of income," he said.

"What is important is one's willingness to learn and the support of the family. It all adds up. If families and communities work together in the garden, they foster effective communication and collaboration. From there, they get better at communicating with others and the people in the community can help each other develop their skills to improve sales. It's not just about being self-sufficient, but also empowering each and everyone to become better business owners," he added.

More than just a way of bringing food to the table, the KSK urban farming program aims to provide its participants with the tools, learnings, and opportunities to create something bigger. With over 28,000 farmers having graduated from the KSK program, these individuals are capable of creating changes in their lives and communities, showing to others that there is a future in agriculture, especially when everyone works together.



SM Foundation's urban farmer-beneficiaries also celebrated their graduation at SM Center Muntinlupa.



Joining the roster of urban gardening initiative graduates are the farmers at SM City San Lazaro.

Aside from SM City East Ortigas, the urban gardening initiative was launched in over 20 locations nationwide. Meanwhile, KSK-SAP is a collaborative with various stakeholders, including local government units, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Tourism, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, SM Foundation, SM Supermalls, and SM Markets.



EDITORIAL

SOBRA NA, TAMA NA! PERO ANONG MAGAGAWA?

ISA na namang agresibong hakbang ang ginawa laban sa Pilipinas ng China nang muling bombahin ng coast guard nito ang tatlong barko ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources na may dalang suplay ng gasolina at pamasko sa mga mangi-ngisdang Pilipino sa Bajo de Masinloc sa Zambales.

Tinangka ng mga barko ng Chinese Coast Guard at maritime militia na harangin ang mga barko ng BFAR subalit nakalusot ang mga ito kung kaya't sa kanilang inis ay nagpakawala ng water cannons kung saan isa sa mga barko ang nagtamo ng matinding pinsala o nayupi ito dahil sa malakas na buga ng tubig na tumama.

Gayunman, nagawa pa ring makalapit ng 3 barko ng BFAR sa Scarborough Shoal kung saan naghilintay ang mga mangingisda subalit sadyang nangwawalanghiya ang CCG sapagkat dumaan ang isang sasakyan nito sa harap mismo ng mga sasakyan ng Pilipinas sa tangkang maharang ang resupply mission sa mga Pinoy na namumuhay sa Masinloc sa Zambales.

Nagawa pa ring mamahagi ng mga taga-BFAR ng gasolina at pang-noche Buena sa mga mangingisda sa lugar bagaman patuloy ang pagbuga ng water cannon ng mga ito.

Hindi ang pangyayari ang unang pagkakataon na binomba ng water cannon ng CCG ang barko ng Pilipinas. Bukod pa roon nagkaroon ng tensyon sa Scarborough Shoal nitong Setyembre 2023 nang maglagay ng mga boya ang China para hindi makapangisda ang mga Pilipino sa lugar subalit kalaunan ay pinutol ng sarili nating coast guard sa utos na rin ng Pangulong Marcos sapagkat ang base sa international law, ang Scarborough Shoal ay bahagi ng soberanya ng Pilipinas.

Kinondena naman ni Senator Francis Tolention ang ginawang hakbang ng China at sinabi nito na hindi dapat sirain ng hindi makatwirang pagsalakay nito ang ating Pasko.

Pero hanggang pagkondena o pagbatikos na lang ba ang kaya nating gawin? O baka naman umaasa lang tayo sa tulong ng mga bansang nagsasabing panig sila sa atin? Sobra na, tama na! Ano nga ba ang dapat gawin kapag aping-api na ang ating bansa sa mga ginagawang aksyon ng China?



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P60 PER KILOG BIGAS NAMUMURO

NAGBABALA ang rice price watchdog Bantay Bigas na posibleng sumipa sa P60 kada kilo ang presyo ng regular-milled rice dahil sa malaking agwat ng local supply at sumisirit na presyo ng bigas sa pandaigdigang pamilihan.

Sa huling monitoring ng grupo nitong Sabado, umaabot na sa P52 hanggang P54 ang bawat kilo ng regular-milled rice sa ilang pamilihan sa Metro Manila.

Pero ayon kay Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy Estavillo, pati na sa ibang panig ng bansa ay umaabot na sa P52 ang pinakamurang bigas tulad sa Aurora.

"Yon ang malungkot na realidad. Magpapasko pa

naman," wika ni Estavillo sa interview ng Teleradyo Serbisyo.

Aniya, inaasahang magpapatuloy ang pagsipa ng presyo ng bigas dahil sa mataas na demand ngayong kapaskuhan.

"Nakakatakot. Baka aabot talaga ng P60 per kilo 'yong mga regular-milled rice given na wala namang nagagawang concrete na solusyon 'yong gobyerno bagkus ay mag-import," saad ni Estavillo.

Inaasahan ng National Food Authority (NFA) ang pagdating ng inangkat na bigas mula sa India ngayong buwan pero hindi sila nakakasiguro kung makapagpapababa ito sa

presyo sa pamilihan.

"We will have more supply by December. Prices are something that we hope will go down. But considering there is no more supply from the local market, unfortunately, there will still be [a] challenge in the prices of rice for December," wika ni NFA Administrator Roderico Bioco sa hearing ng House Committee on Agriculture noong nakaraang linggo.

Binanggit naman ng Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG) na hindi lang sa Pilipinas tumataas ang presyo ng bigas kundi pati na rin sa Thailand at Vietnam.



CHINA SINAGAD PAMBU-BULLY

LALO pang tumindi ang pambu-bully ng China sa Pilipinas matapos bombahin ng water cannon ng China Coast Guard (CCG) ang barko ng Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) at dalawang civilian vessel na nagsasagawa ng resupply mission sa BRP Sierra Madre sa Ayungin Shoal nitong Linggo nang umaga, December 10.

Ayon sa PCG, binomba ng tubig ng CCG ang BRP Cabra, Unaizah Mae 1 at M/L Kalayaan habang nagsasagawa ang mga ito ng regular rotation at resupply mission sa Ayungin Shoal sa West Philippine Sea (WPS) nitong Linggo.

Binunggo pa umano ng CCG vessel ang UM1 habang ang M/L Kalayaan ay nasiraan ng makina kaya kailangan hatakin pabalik ng Palawan.

Pinalabas pa umano ng China na sinadya ng UM1 na banggain ang kanilang barko.

"Regular RORE to BRP SIERRA MADRE this morning. BRP CABRA, Unaizah Mae 1, and M/L Kalayaan water cannoned by China Coast Guard. M/L Kalayaan suffered serious engine damage. Contrary to China Coast Guard disinformation, UM1 rammed by CCG vessel," ayon kay PCG spokesperson for

the WPS Commodore Jay Tariela.



Nagkaroon umano ng malalang engine damage ang M/L Kalayaan dahil sa water cannon.

Dahil sa insidente, pinatawag ng Department of Foreign Affairs ang mga opisyal ng Chinese Embassy sa Maynila, kasabay ng paghahain ng panibagong diplomatic protest.

Noong Sabado ay binomba rin ng tubig ng CCG ang tatlong barko ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource na magdadala ng supply na gasolina at pagkain sa mga mangingisdang Pilipino sa Bajo de Masinloc.



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 **Sulat kay Editor** 

Mataas na presyo ng bigas

Dear Editor,

Mismong ang kalihim na ng Department of Agriculture ang nagsabing hindi siya bilib sa Rice Tariffication Law dahil imbes na bumaba, lalo pang tumaa ang presyo ng bigas sa bansa. Imbes na ang gobyerno ang bumili ng bigas sa abroad upang makontrol ang presyo at supply ng bigas, nasa kamay na ito ng pribadong sektor.

Kaya naman hindi maiwasang kontrolin ng pribadong sektor ang supply ng bigas upang sa gayon ay mapataas nila ang presyo nito. Ang nagdurusa ngayon ay ang mga consumer dahil sa palpak na batas na ginawa ng mga mambabatas.

Concerned citizen



SPEAKER DENOUNCES CHINA BULLYING TACTIC

By Jester Manalastas

SPEAKER Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez has strongly condemned the recent aggressive actions by the China Coast Guard (CCG) against three vessels of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in the West Philippine Sea.

Also, Romualdez expressed disappointment at China's rejection of the House of Representatives resolution denouncing its "illegal actions" in the WPS.

In a statement, the House leader pointed out that the attack on civilian BFAR vessels Datu Sanday, Datu Bankaw, and Datu Tamblot, which were on a crucial humanitarian mission on Saturday, is considered a blatant violation of international norms and a direct challenge to the sovereignty and rights of the Philippines.

"The use of water cannons and long-range acoustic devices against our vessels, causing

significant damage and distress to our crew, is unacceptable and unjustifiable," he asserted.

"These actions by the [CCG], in preventing our vessels from conducting a peaceful resupply mission to Filipino fishermen near Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal), demonstrate a brazen disrespect for the rule of law and established international agreements," he added.

Romualdez underscored the importance of reminding the international community that Bajo de Masinloc lies within the Philippines' 370-km exclusive economic zone, as established by the 2016 arbitral ruling, which China continues to ignore.

"The acts of intimidation and harassment against Filipino fishermen, who depend on these waters for their livelihood, are not only a violation of their rights but also an affront to human dignity. To prevent the

distribution of humanitarian support is not only illegal but also inhumane," the Speaker said.

Demanding immediate and concrete actions from Beijing to cease these aggressive activities, Romualdez reaffirmed the Philippines' stance on sovereignty and jurisdiction over Bajo de Masinloc and its territorial sea.

"We will not be intimidated nor will we stand down in the face of these unwarranted and illegal actions," the Speaker declared.

The Speaker called on China to respect the sovereignty of the Philippines, desist from actions that infringe upon it, and engage in peaceful dialogue to resolve disputes.

The Speaker ended the statement with a call on China "to respect our sovereignty, desist from infringing upon our rights, and engage in peaceful dialogue."

GET OUT

THE National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS) condemned the "illegal and aggressive actions" conducted by China Coast Guard (CCG) ships against three Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) vessels providing humanitarian support to Filipino fisherfolk off Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal) on Saturday.

The task force identified the BFAR ships as the BRP Datu Sanday, BRP Bankaw, and BRP Datu Tamblot, which were tasked to deliver oil subsidies and grocery packs to more than 30 Filipino fishing vessels as part of a humanitarian and support mission.

"Based on the reports received, as the BFAR vessels approached 1.4 to 1.9 nautical miles from Bajo de Masinloc, the CCG ships utilized water cannons to obstruct and prevent BFAR vessels from approaching the Filipino fishing vessels eagerly awaiting the oil subsidy and grocery packs. The water cannons had been used at least eight times at the time of reporting," the NTF-WPS statement read.

It also said the Chinese Maritime Militia (CMM) vessels were reported to have engaged in dangerous maneuvers and deployed what is claimed to be a long-range acoustic device against the BFAR vessels, causing severe temporary discomfort and incapacitation to some Filipino crew.

"Water cannon action resulted in insignificant damage to BFAR vessel Datu Tamblot's communication and navigation equipment, as it was directly and deliberately targeted by the CCG," it added.

The NTF-WPS statement insisted that the Chinese vessels leave Bajo de Masinloc immediately.

"We demand that the Chinese government take immediate action to halt these aggressive activities and uphold the principles of international law and desist from actions that would infringe on Philippine sovereignty and endanger the lives and livelihood of Filipino fishermen who have traditionally fished in the area. The NTF-WPS remains committed to protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea," the task force stated.

The NTF-WPS said the Chinese deployed rigid hull inflatable boats to drive away Filipino fishing vessels awaiting the distribution of supplies from the BFAR ships.

"To prevent the distribution

of humanitarian support is not only illegal but also inhumane," it added.

The NTF-WPS said Filipino fisherfolk reported that the CCG launched a small boat early Saturday morning to illegally install a floating barrier at the south-east entrance of the shoal.

Such actions of the CCG and CMM prevented the BFAR vessel from accessing the entrance of the shoal.

"We stress that Bajo de Masinloc is a high-tide feature with territorial sea, per the 2016 Arbitral Award. It forms an integral part of the Philippine national territory under the Constitution. The Philippines exercises sovereignty and jurisdiction over the shoal and its territorial sea. The 2016 Arbitral Award has also clarified that Filipinos have traditional fishing rights in the waters of Bajo de Masinloc protected by international law," the task force added.

It added that China's illegal exercise of maritime law enforcement powers, interference with Philippine vessels, harassment and intimidation of Filipino fisherfolk, or any other activity that infringes upon the Philippines' sovereignty and jurisdiction in Bajo de Masinloc are violations of the international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Arbitral Award.

Bajo de Masinloc, located 124 nautical miles off Zambales, is well within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

CHINA SAYS OTHERWISE

Sought for comment, the Chinese Embassy in Manila forwarded a statement from Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin, accusing the Philippines of "hyping up maritime disputes" with China while calling it to stop infringing on its sovereignty.

The Chinese side said Manila and Beijing should "return to the right track of resolving maritime disputes through negotiation and consultation as soon as possible and work with China to safeguard peace and stability in the South China Sea."

China claims sovereignty over Bajo de Masinloc, which it calls Huangyan Dao or Huangyan Island.

US, JAPAN CONDEMN CHINA

United States Ambassador MaryKay Carlson condemned and described China's actions as "aggressive and illegal."

Carlson said the BFAR ships were lawfully operating within the Philippine EEZ and that China's behavior "violates international law and endangers lives and livelihoods."

"We stand with our Philippine friends, partners, allies in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific," she said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

Japanese Ambassador Kazuhiko Koshikawa also sounded the alarm over the use of water cannons and reiterated Japan's recognition of the 2016 arbitral ruling.

"Seriously concerned about the dangerous actions by CCG vessels against Philippine vessels, which endanger lives and livelihoods and pose the threat to the peace and stability in the South China Sea," he said on X.

"We reiterate the importance of upholding international law, particularly UNCLOS and the 2016 Arbitral Award."

Canadian Ambassador David Hartman labeled China's actions as "dangerous and escalatory."

"The 2016 UNCLOS Tribunal Award is legally binding and useful for peacefully resolving disputes. Water cannons aren't!" Veron said. PNA

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Chinese envoy palayasin na!

Dahil sa panibagong pambu-bully ng China sa West Philippine Sea (WPS), dapat nang pauwiin sa kanilang bansa si Chinese Ambassador Huang Xillian.

Ayon kay Senador JV Ejercito, ang mga bagong pahayag ni Xillian laban sa gobyerno ay lalo lang nagpapalala sa tensyon sa WPS.

Patunay dito ang bagong pangha-harass ng Chinese maritime militia laban sa vessel ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) na naghahatid ng supply para sa mga mangingisdang Pinoy malapit sa Bajo de Masinloc sa lalawigan ng Zambales nitong Disyembre 8.

Matatandaan na sinabi ng National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS) na tatlong barko ng BFAR ang bagong target ng water canon attack ng Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) at inilarawan ang pag-atake bilang ilegal at hindi makatao.

Paliwanag pa ni Ejercito na ang muling paggamit ng water cannon ng CCG para pigilan at harangin ang mga barko ng

Pilipinas ay hindi "isolated incident" kundi bahagi ng kanilang pambu-bully na lagi nilang ginagawa nitong mga nakalipas na buwan.

Samantala, sama-sama rin kinondena nina Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri, Majority leader Joel Villanueva at Sen. Jinggoy Estrada ang panibagong insidente ng pambu-bully ng China sa Pilipinas.

Giit ng mga senador ang pag-atake ng China ay nagdulot ng malaking damage sa ari-arian at hindi lang nalagay sa alanganin ang buhay ng mga Filipino.

Isa rin umanong humanitarian mission ang ginawa ng BFAR subalit inatake pa rin sila ng China na walang mga puso.

Malinaw na paglabag sa karapatang pantao, batas ng dagat at nagpapakita ng kawalan ng paggaling sa soberenya ng Pilipinas ang ginawa ng CCG. (Gemma Garcia)

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Ang resupply boat ng Pilipinas na Unaizah Mae 1 na binangga at binomba ng tubig ng China Coast Guard sa bahagi ng Ayungin Shoal nitong Linggo ng umaga, ayon sa Philippine Coast Guard. Nitong Sabado lang ay may insidente na rin ng pambobomba ng China sa resupply mission ng **BFAR** sa Scarborough Shoal.

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Barko ng Pinas 'binomba' uli ng China, binangga pa

Matapos ang pag-wa-
ter cannon sa mga barko
ng Bureau of Fisheries
and Aquatic Resources
(BFAR) nitong Sabado,
ang mga barko naman
ng Pilipinas na magsasa-
gawa ng rotation and
resupply mission sa BRP
Sierra Madre ang binom-
ba ng tubig ng China
Coast Guard, kahapon

ng umaga.

Ayon kay Philippine
Coast Guard (PCG)
spokesperson for the
West Philippine Sea
Commodore Jay Tarriela,
sa pagtira ng water can-
non ng CCG, nasira ang
engine ng M/L Kalayaan.

Magsasagawa ng
RORE mission ang M/L
Kalayaan kasama ang

**NI DORIS
FRANCHE-BORJA**

BRP Cabra at Unaizah
Mae (UM) 1 BRP Sierra
Madre sa Ayungin Shoal
sa West Philippine Sea
nang bombahin ng CCG.

Nabatid kay Tarriela
na maging ang UM1 ay
binangga ng CCG vessel.
"Regular RORE to

BRP SIERRA MADRE
this morning. BRP
CABRA, Unaizah Mae 1,
and M/L Kalayaan water
cannoned by China Coast
Guard. M/L Kalayaan
suffered serious engine
damage. Contrary to Chi-
na Coast Guard disinfor-
mation, UM1 rammed by
CCG vessel," nakasaad
sa X ni Tarriela.

Kasabay nito, pinabu-
laanan ni Tariella ang
alegasyon ng CCG, na
ang barko ng Pilipinas
ang bumangga sa mga
CCG.

Ito ang bagong ag-
gression ng China sa

mga sasakyang pandagat
ng Pilipinas na sakop
ng Exclusive Economic
Zone (EEZ) ng bansa na
sang-ayon na rin sa 2016
UNCLOS Arbitral Award.

Taong 1999 pa nasa
Ayungin Shoal ang
BRP Sierra Madre na
isang World War II ship
grounded. Ito rin ang
nagsisilbing simbolo ng
pagmamay-ari ng Pilipi-
nas sa WPS.

Nitong Sabado, nang
walong ulit na bombahin
ng CCG ang tatlong barko
BFAR na nasa gitna ng
supply mission patungo
sa Scarborough Shoal.



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NO SWINE LOCKDOWN IN MINDORO – OFFICIAL

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro:

The Provincial Veterinarian's Office (PVet) and local hog raisers here have denied a report that the transportation of pigs would be banned because of African swine fever (ASF) infections.

In a telephone interview on Sunday, December 10, Dr. Grimaldo Catapang of the PVet said there is no truth to the reports that a lockdown in the transport of pigs from the province was imposed or would be imposed.

"The truth of the matter is, today, I am going to the Port of Bansud to supervise

the hauling of pigs from the different towns in the province," said Catapang.

"Just yesterday (Saturday, December 9), we had loaded at least 500 pigs in the port that would be brought to Metro Manila, Rizal and in the Visayas," he added.

On Saturday, Animal Raisers of Oriental Mindoro Association (Aroma) President Nelson Mangako issued a statement assuring local hog raisers that there is no lockdown in the transport of pigs from the province as he was told by the provincial government of Oriental

Mindoro.

"According to the provincial government, the reports of a lockdown is not true and we are still allowed to transport pigs if the municipality is still undergoing Responsive Active Surveillance and a Certificate of Free Status for those declared under the Red Zone," Mangako said in a statement.

In a text message on Sunday, Mangako explained that RAS is needed before the transport of pigs from towns that are ASF-free. A blood sample would be taken from hogs and a CFS

would be issued to those with negative results. On the other hand, positive results are tantamount to RAS cancellation.

"This is what we call the Test and Go system. We are also asking all hog raisers in the province to strictly implement our biosecurity protocol where only authorized personnel are allowed inside piggeries and cleanliness must be strictly observed," Mangako said.

Hog raising is a multimillion industry in the province.

IRE JOE V.C. LAURENTE



'PHL converts 600K hectares of irrigated lands'

By CAI U. ORDINARIO
@caiordinario

MORE than 600,000 hectares of irrigated lands were converted in the past decade, according to the latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

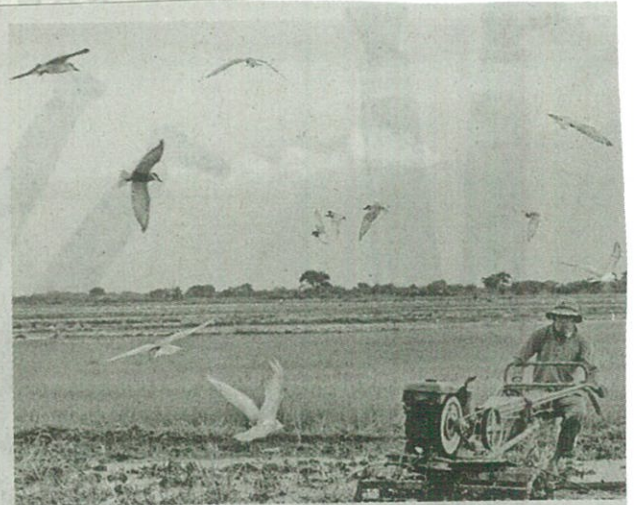
Figures from the PSA showed a total of 620,399.48 hectares were converted from 2012 to 2022, or average of 62,040 hectares annually.

In the past three years, land conversion increased to over 60,000 hectares annually in the 2020-2022 period.

The largest number of lands

converted in past decade was recorded in 2022 at 64,068.12 hectares while the smallest number was recorded in 2015 at 49,767.66 hectares.

Based on the data, most of these converted lands were National Irrigation Systems (NIS) reaching a total of 468,468.43 hectares fol-



A FARMER in Arayat, Pampanga, is plowing his rice field in preparation for the second cropping season in this BUSINESSMIRROR file photo.

lowed by Communal Irrigation Systems (CIS) at 151,176.91 hectares.

The largest number of NIS lands converted was in 2021 when it reached 46,268.61 hectares

while the smallest was in 2012 at 40,523.5 hectares.

Among regions, the largest conversions occurred in Central Luzon, the rice granary of the Philippines.

A total of 111,079.46 hectares of land was converted in the region between 2012 and 2022.

In contrast, the region that had the least conversions was the Bicol region where only 1,356.83 hectares of land were converted in the past 10 years.

The data on land conversion is part of the Compendium of Philippine Environment Statistics (CPES), a compilation of environment and related socioeconomic statistics collected from various government agencies.

The CPES has six components, namely: environmental conditions and quality, environmental resources and their use, residuals, extreme events and disasters, human settlements and environmental health, and environmental protection, management, and

engagement.

Component 2 of the CPES compiles statistics on environmental resources and their benefits to humanity. It has six subcomponents: mineral resources, energy resources, land, soil resources, biological resources, and water resources.

Last July, Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Undersecretary Luis Pangulayan said the agrarian reform program in the country will continue to work against the conversion of agricultural lands even with the signing of the New Agrarian Emancipation Act.

Pangulayan said the agrarian reform mandate is to monitor arable tracts of land in the country and prevent them from being converted into other purposes other than agriculture.



INFLATION TAMER

THE rice price ceiling imposed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. last September, in addition to other factors, helped ease food inflation rate in the country overall, a socioeconomic planning official said on Saturday.

National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon made the remarks when asked about the effect on prices by the President's price cap on rice in a news forum in Quezon City.

"Tyong rice price cap kasi natin, it was in September 'no. So, itong mga presyo na 'to was actually as of November at alam naman po natin na towards the end of September saka October, nagkaroon na rin ng anihan eh, iyon," said Edillon.

"So, yes, oo... naghalo-halo na po itong mga factors na ito," she added.



Aside from the government's price cap on rice, the suspension of pass-through fees by local government units (LGUs) also helped lower the

prices of basic goods, the NEDA official said.

Also according to Edillon, while the P20 a kilo of rice remains a goal

under the present condition, she said that the President's decision adjusting the buying price for fresh palay has benefitted many farmers.

"Tumaas, mga P23, P25 – may-roon pa ngang P25 eh. Palay po iyon ha, palay, hindi ba iyon bigas. So iyon, malaki ang naging ganasya ng mga farmers natin," said the NEDA official.

The NEDA official also suggested measures that could lower rice prices on the part of consumers, which is demand management.

Even the agriculture secretary, she said, has been advocating for the reduction in food wastage particularly rice.

"Una munang tanggalin mo, iyong wastage. And then susunod, siguro iyong kung ano talaga iyong healthy na diet. Mabawasan din natin siguro iyong incidence ng diabetes sa atin," she said.

PCO

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Presyo ng bigas posibleng pumalo sa P60/kilo

Nagbabala ang isang rice price watchdog na maaaring umabot ng hanggang P60 ang kada kilo ng regular-milled na bigas sa bansa hanggang sa panahon ng Kapaskuhan.

Ang babala ay ginawa ng Bantay Bigas bunsod na rin ng gaps sa lokal na suplay at tumataas na presyo ng international market.

Ayon kay Bantay Bigas spokesperson Cathy Estavillo, hindi lamang sa Kamaynilaan mataas ang presyo ng bigas, kundi maging sa mga rice producing provinces din.

Tinukoy ni Estavillo ang Aurora province, na nasa P52 kada kilo ang pinakamurang bigas.

Nakakalungkot aniya ang reyalidad, lalo na at magpa-Pasko pa naman.

Babala naman ni Estavillo, maaaring magpatuloy pa ang pagtaas ng presyo ng bigas sa panahon ng Kapaskuhan at umabot pa ng hanggang P60 kada kilo bunsod ng kawalan ng konkretong solusyon ng pamahalaan.

"Nakakatakot. Baka aabot talaga ng P60 per kilo 'yong mga regular-milled rice given na wala namang nagagawang concrete na solusyon 'yong gobyerno bagkus ay mag-import," aniya, sa panayam sa Teleradyo Serbisyo. (Mer Layson)

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Soil and water: Asia-Pacific's bread and butter

COMMENTARY

JONG-JIN KIM

Here, in the world's most populous region, a crisis is slowly unfolding that involves the earth beneath our feet. The soil that produces the food we eat and supports the livelihood of hundreds of millions of farmers and others, is under threat.

Often referred to as the "Skin of the Earth," soil acts as a silent steward, supporting the production of 95 percent of the food we eat in this region. It retains water, serves as a habitat for animals, and plays a key role in regulating our climate by storing more carbon than all the world's forests combined. But the ability of our soils to provide these ecosystem services is increasingly threatened after decades of soil degradation and water scarcity caused by overuse and misuse.

Soil and water rely on each other, and that's critical to feed a hungry world. In the Asia-Pacific region, some 90 percent of our freshwater is consumed in agricultural activities alone, considerably more than the 75 percent, on average, used by agriculture worldwide. Yet, more than three-quarters of the Asia-Pacific population are now grappling with water insecurity.

Much of this has been caused by mismanagement of our water and soil resources. Unsustainable practices have exacerbated the situation, contributing to the loss of biodiversity in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and further challenging the resilience of agrifood systems facing extreme weather events. The fact that soil is not a renewable resource makes its preservation an even more urgent matter: it can take up to a thousand years to form one centimeter of soil, yet this same centimeter can be destroyed in a few minutes through careless acts of degradation.

To better understand the close relationship between soil and water, it's a critical necessity for countries to work domestically and cross borders to ensure wider sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. While pressure

on this soil-water-food nexus is increasing, reversing the degradation is still possible. But we all need to take responsibility and act.

Together, we must promote soil and water management at all levels. We can do our part by changing habits to preserve fresh water each day. Meantime, policymakers and other stakeholders can collaborate in implementing sustainable soil and water management practices. This involves planning and action to ensure the more efficient use of fresh water, promoting sustainable use of fertilizers and pesticides, employing appropriate irrigation methods—including the ways we drain and pump water—and paying more attention to monitoring related data, such as soil and groundwater salinity levels.

Indeed, all land users, particularly farmers, need training on sustainable soil and water management and that means inclusive access to technology transfer. This is crucial for transforming our agrifood systems, making them more resilient to extreme climate events. By doing so, our soils can become richer in carbon and can hold more water, benefiting the interconnected relationship between soil, water, and plants. This not only improves the overall health of the region's environment but also enhances its ability to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Research has found that Asian soils can sequester 180 megatons of carbon per year if sustainable high-carbon input soil management practices are adopted. Addressing soil degradation requires comprehensive domestic and international efforts involving government policies, research initiatives, and awareness programs.

Initiatives like Thailand's Glinka World Soil Award and the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award, which acknowledged the late king's dedication to sustainable soil management and its role in food security and poverty reduction, serve as exemplary models of localized endeavors. These efforts aim to recognize and encourage sustainable soil practices, fostering awareness and responsible management.

Indeed, we mark Dec. 5 on our calendar as World Soil Day to remind everyone of its importance. Hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Soil Partnership strives to enhance soil governance and management for food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and sustainable development. In a world hungry for solutions, FAO is sowing the seeds of sustainability, emphasizing the importance of understanding and addressing the complex nexus between soil health, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and essential ecosystem services.

In doing so, we aim to help countries fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals and achieve better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all. As we navigate the multiple challenges of recovery from the pandemic, conflicts, and the need for systemic agrifood systems reform, we should celebrate World Soil Day beyond Dec. 5, as we call for collective action and a daily commitment to safeguard the Earth's lifeline: our soil, literally our bread and butter. *The Jakarta Post/Asia News Network*

Jong-Jin Kim is assistant director general and regional representative for Asia and the Pacific at the FAO.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer is a member of the Asia News Network, an alliance of 22 media titles in the region.



Sugar gains as mart readjusts after steep falls

NEW YORK — Raw sugar futures on ICE rose on Friday, although the spot contract still posted a 6.9% fall in the week, under pressure from increased supplies in top producer Brazil and the prospect of higher output in India.

SUGAR

March raw sugar settled up 0.33 cent or 1.4% at 23.36 cents per pound (lb), after dipping to a four-month low of 22.80 cents on Thursday. The contract lost nearly 14% in the last two weeks.

Dealers said India's move to direct sugar mills to focus on sugar output and not to use cane juice or syrup to produce ethanol was not as bearish as one might think, given it will still not allow for exports.

JSG Commodities Vice-President Jeff Dobrydney expects speculators to be flat or only slightly long currently, after the massive liquidation that he thinks was overdone

due to algo trading systems. He sees the level of 23 cents as a good reentry point.

A surge in EU imports of Ukrainian sugar is expected to continue for at least for another season, weighing on prices in the bloc.

The US will import more sugar at higher tariff, the USDA projected on Friday, and the market sees the need for even higher imports.

March white sugar rose 1.3% at \$654.40 a metric ton.

COCOA

March London cocoa settled up £54 or 1.5% to £3,570 a ton, after earlier setting a fresh record high of £3,573 per ton.

Top cocoa producer Ivory Coast has halted sales of cocoa export contracts for the 2024/2025 season due to concerns over low output, while number two producer Ghana's cocoa arrivals at ports have

dropped around 51% so far in the 2023/2024 season.

March New York cocoa rose 1% to \$4,240 a ton.

JSG cocoa analyst Eric Bergman believes the new European legislation blocking commodities produced on deforested land might limit the flow of African cocoa next year, giving support to prices. He sees New York cocoa around \$4,200/ton as fair value going into next year, considering the market fundamentals.

COFFEE

March arabica coffee fell 0.2% at \$1.7715 per lb, having hit a five-and-a-half-month high last week.

Dealers said weather problems in Brazil have been damaging both flowers and fruitlets on coffee trees, casting doubts over forecasts for a bumper crop this season.

January robusta coffee fell 0.8% at \$2,569 a ton. — **Reuters**



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TIM MOSSHOLDER/UNSPLOASH



US-UAE climate-friendly farming effort grows to \$17B at COP28 summit

FUNDING for a joint effort by the United States and United Arab Emirates (UAE) to advance climate-friendly farming around the world has grown to more than \$17 billion, the countries announced on Friday at the United Nations' (UN) Conference of the Parties (COP28) climate summit in Dubai.

The Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM for Climate) was launched in 2021 at COP26 in Glasgow and its funding comes from governments, companies, and nongovernmental organizations.

Globally, food and farming contribute about a third of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization.

Nearly 80 projects have been announced under the AIM for Climate initiative since 2021, with goals to expand agricultural research, implement sustainable farming practices, and reduce methane emissions.

"This partnership embodies our shared commitment to accelerating investments in transformative food systems and climate-smart agricultural innovations," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in a statement.

Funding for the effort has grown from \$13 billion in May, when the

US and UAE co-hosted an AIM for Climate summit in Washington, and from \$8 billion at COP27.

The new total includes \$12 billion from governments and \$5 billion from nongovernment parties such as companies and humanitarian organizations, said an AIM for Climate spokesperson.

The 27 new projects announced at COP28 range in size from \$500 million to \$150,000.

Partners in one of the largest initiatives, aimed at expanding regenerative agriculture, include Bunge, Google, The Nature Conservancy and the Brazilian state of Para. Regenerative agriculture generally refers to practices like reduced tillage of cropland and lower pesticide use.

For the first time, agriculture is a major focus at this year's climate summit, with a full day on Dec. 10 dedicated to food and farming topics.

"We are witnessing tremendous progress in transforming the global food and agricultural systems at COP28," said UAE Minister for Climate and the Environment Mariam Almheiri in a statement.

Advocacy groups want the nations and companies in attendance to pledge to tackle agricultural methane emissions in particular, most of which is from livestock production. — **Reuters**



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Commodities traders pledge at COP28 to protect South American grasslands

DUBAI — Eight of the world's top commodities traders have pledged to stop buying soy from farms that ruin South American grasslands, adding to previous commitments to shun growers that clear forests, a sector group said on Saturday on the sidelines of the COP28 climate summit.

The move could bolster conservation for Brazil's Cerrado, the world's most biodiverse savanna, at least half of which has already been destroyed for agriculture. Farming, forestry and land use account for more than a fifth of planet warming-emissions.

The firms, including Archer Daniels Midland, Bunge, Cargill, and Louis Dreyfus Company, agreed that by the end of the decade they will longer buy soy from farms that destroyed any non-forest natural vegetation in the Amazon rainforest, Chaco dry woodlands or the Cerrado, said Petra Tanos of the Tropical Forest Alliance.

The commitment adds to the sector's pledge last year to eliminate deforestation by 2025.

Tanos said the move is most consequential for the Cerrado, Brazil's most rapidly expanding agricultural frontier that includes

large stretches of grassland. In 2023, Cerrado destruction hit its highest point in eight years.

The Tropical Forest Alliance is a World Economic Forum initiative that works with commodities firms on environmental commitments.

Beyond the United States, the largest soy exporting nations are in South America, where natural vegetation is typically cleared to make way for farms.

In the lead up to United Nations COP28 climate change summit in Dubai, some of the companies announced even more aggressive commitments. Last month, Cargill announced it would eliminate deforestation and land conversion from its supply chains by 2025 in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.

Archer Daniels Midland committed to eliminating land conversion among its direct suppliers by 2025 and indirect suppliers by 2027 across sensitive South American biomes.

But the industry has a history of failing to meet past commitments. In 2010, hundreds of consumer brands pledged to reach "net zero" deforestation by 2020, but failed to meet the goal. — *Reuters*



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World food prices hold steady in November

LONDON — The United Nations food agency's world price index held steady in November, with lower international cereal prices offset by higher prices of vegetable oils.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 120.4 points in November, around October's levels which were the lowest since March 2021.

The November reading marked a 10.7% decline versus last November.

The FAO cereal price index decreased by 3% month on month in November, led by a sharp fall in maize prices, while those of wheat declined by 2.4%.

Vegetable oil prices, however, rose 3.4% from October.

"Palm oil prices rebounded more than 6% in November, chiefly underpinned by more active purchases by leading importing countries and seasonally lower outputs in major producing countries," the FAO said in a statement.

The agency's dairy price index rose 2.2% from October, led by high demand for butter and skimmed milk powder in Northeast Asia, and increased pre-holiday demand in Western Europe.

Sugar prices rose 1.4% month on month in November but averaged 41.1% higher than last November thanks to worsening production prospects in Thailand and India.

In a separate report on cereal supply and demand, the FAO raised its forecast for world cereal production this year to a record 2.823 billion metric tons versus 2.819 billion previously — representing a 0.9% increase from 2022.

"Looking ahead to next season, planting of the 2024 winter wheat crop is ongoing in the northern hemisphere and, reflecting lower crop prices, area growth could be limited," the FAO said.

Nevertheless, the agency sees world cereal stocks up 2.7% by the end of the 2024 season, while the cereal stock-to-use ratio is forecast at 30.8% in 2023/2024, "indicating an overall comfortable supply level." — *Reuters*



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A community member grabbing a piece of fruit at The Community Assistance Center food pantry, in Atlanta, Georgia, US. (Reuters Photo)

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Malaya Business Insight

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Soybeans, corn tumble

CHICAGO- US soybean futures fell on Friday after the Department of Agriculture's updated estimate of Brazil's soybean harvest fell toward the high end of trade expectations, easing concerns about global supplies of the oilseed.

Corn fell after the USDA left its forecasts for corn production in Brazil and Argentina unchanged, while wheat declined 1.6 percent on profit-taking after hitting a one-week high.

Declines in soybean futures set the tone. The USDA pegged Brazilian soy production at 161

million metric tons in a monthly report, down from its November estimate of 163 million but still the largest crop on record, if realized. Analysts surveyed by Reuters on average expected an estimate of 160.16 million metric tons.

"It (USDA's report) was in line with pretty much what we were expecting, even that Brazil soybean number," said Karl Setzer, partner at Consus Ag Consulting. "I just can't see anything here that would warrant altering your market stance."

- Reuters



UN cites global importance of potato for food security

THE United Nations has designated May 30 as International Day of Potato in an effort to raise awareness of a crop regularly consumed by billions of people and of global importance for food security and nutrition.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said the annual observance was championed by Peru, which submitted a proposal for adoption at the UN General Assembly last July 7.

The impetus for the Day, which builds upon the International Year of Potato that was observed in 2008, originates from the need to emphasize the significant role of the potato in tackling prevalent global issues, such as food insecurity, poverty and environmental threats, according to FAO.

"This International Day will shed light on the significant value of the potato—nutritional, economic, environmental and cultural. It will also highlight the contribution of the potato to global food security, poverty reduction and the livelihoods of millions, while emphasizing the key role of Indigenous Peoples knowledge and practices," said FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol.

The Day "will allow us to draw attention to the importance of this ancestral crop in sustaining efforts to reduce hunger, malnutrition and poverty; as well as to encourage agricultural development, food security, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem functions," Víctor García Toma, Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations told the General Assembly.

One crop, much potential

A MILLENNIA-OLD food with origins in the South American Andes region that made its way to Europe in the 16th century then spread around the world, the potato is much more than a source of nourishment.

FAO said potatoes are an important component of strategies to provide accessible and nutritious food and improved livelihoods in rural and other areas where natural resources,

especially arable land and water are limited and inputs expensive. The crop's versatility and ability to grow in a variety of conditions make it an advantageous crop choice.

Potatoes are also a climate-friendly crop as they produce low levels of greenhouse gas emissions in comparison to other crops.

"In the past decade, global production of potatoes has increased by 10 percent leading to growth in employment and income but, more work still needs to be done to harness the full potential of the crop in the quest to end hunger and malnutrition globally," the UN agency said.

In addition, there is a wide spectrum of diversity among potatoes, with over 5,000 improved varieties and farmers' varieties/landraces, many of which are unique to their original location in Latin America.

The 150 wild relatives of the cultivated potato show a wide genetic variation with a range of traits, including the ability to adapt to different production environments, resistance to pests and diseases, and different tuber characteristics. They are a repository of the heritable traits for the continued genetic improvement of the crop to respond to ever changing environmental conditions, new biotypes of pests and diseases and consumers' preferences.

Challenges

POTATO production faces several threats and challenges, especially pests and diseases, such as the virulent late blight and its various forms, as well as bacterial wilt, blackleg, Colorado potato beetle, lesser leaf blight, cyst nematodes, and numerous other.

The much-desired greater cultivation and consumption of potatoes, especially in developing countries, are also constrained by weaknesses along the crop's value chain, ranging from low availability of quality seeds and suboptimal agricultural practices, through inadequate storage and processing facilities to limited access to markets.

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The money food badly needs for climate fight is rolling in

SUPERCHARGING crop seeds to better withstand drought. Breeding cows that burp out less methane. And tracking cattle to prevent deforestation.

They're part of the arsenal the world needs for food's climate fight, and they're getting a big cash boost.

More than \$3 billion in climate finance has been pledged for food and agriculture since the start of the COP28 summit in Dubai, according to the organizers. On top of that, governments, philanthropies and private money are boosting funding for tackling methane in agriculture, ending deforestation and climate-smart innovation, as the summit finally puts food higher on the agenda.

Ensuring the food system limits and better copes with climate change is key to hitting green goals, especially as populations grow. From farm to fork, food makes up about a third of greenhouse gas emissions, while also being increasingly threatened by rising temperatures, erratic weather and changing rain patterns. More money will help speed up technologies and strategies needed for the battle.

"This has been an unprecedented COP for food and climate, the COP when food came of age as a central means of responding to the climate emergency," said Edward Davey, partnerships director at the Food and Land Use Coalition. "Now the onus is on all of us to hold ourselves accountable for the commitments made."

COP's official tally for food project funding does not include some other related announcements over the past couple of weeks, such as the \$10 billion Africa and Middle East SAFE Initiative, a public-private project officially launched on Dec. 3 to advance climate-smart agriculture.

The pledges still need to be followed with real money and action. Financing has for years lagged the amount pouring into many other sectors and the gap for what agri-food needs is "huge," said Barbara Buchner, global managing director at the Climate Policy Initiative.

The challenge is massive. The last three decades saw \$3.8 trillion of crops and livestock production lost due to disasters including floods and droughts, the United Nations' Food

and Agriculture Organization says. But beyond such headline-grabbing events, there lurks a slow and dangerous worsening of conditions for millions of farmers around the globe.

In India's Chhattisgarh state, farmers Lal Singh Rathore and Narayan Singh have seen soil gradually harden and get more depleted, while pests and diseases have multiplied. Argentinian honey maker Ana Laura Sayago's bees have struggled to get enough nectar as dryness stops flowers blooming and hives melt in heat. And in Uganda, Elizabeth Nsimadala's avocado seedlings were destroyed by prolonged drought.

"You prepared for just one month of drought and then you experience almost three-and-a-half months," said Nsimadala, who came to Dubai to push for change. "Climate change is upending farmers' livelihoods on a massive scale. It has really affected each and every farmer. We need drastic actions."

Many food experts hailed this year's COP for bringing more attention to food. Some 140 nations signed a declaration during the summit vowing to include food and agriculture

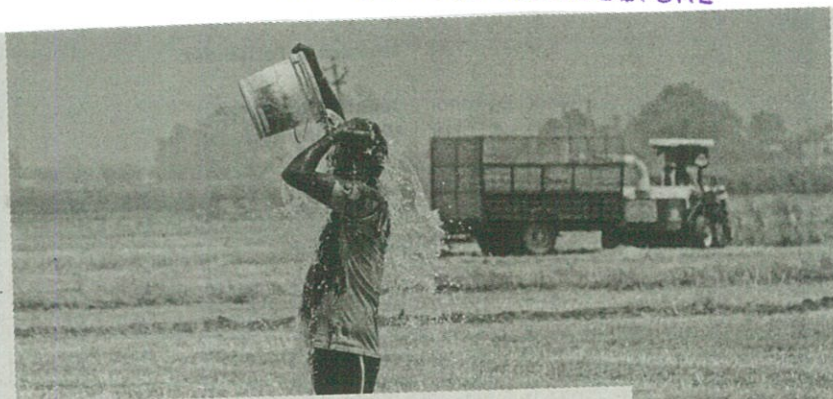
in their climate plans, and more than 130 recognized the need to shift to sustainable healthy diets. Ultimately those signatories will need to produce real strategies for achieving their pledges.

Sunday marks the Food, Agriculture and Water Day, a first-ever day entirely dedicated to food systems—which include everything from how food is grown and processed to distributed and eaten or wasted. The UN's FAO is also due to unveil a first comprehensive plan to bring the global industry in line with the Paris climate agreement.

Here are some key investments and food announcements during the summit:

Greener cows and saving forests

MUCH of food's climate footprint is linked to livestock, and more money is backing technologies and research on how to reduce methane they burp out. The Bezos Earth Fund is investing in wearable sensors that measure how much cows emit. Along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, it's also among backers putting some \$200 million into a program for breeding low-methane animals



A FARMER pours water on himself while working at a wheat farm in the Ludhiana district of Punjab, India, on Sunday, May 1, 2022. BLOOMBERG

and developing less potent feed additives.

Bloomberg's latest Supply Lines newsletter highlights how dairy giants like Nestlé SA and Danone SA have committed to disclose methane emissions within their supply chains, an important step for the private sector. It also mentions how Brazil's Para state is creating a traceability system, which should discourage purchases of cattle reared on deforested land.

Seeds, soil and family farms

SMALL-SCALE farms produce a third of the food consumed by nations, but get just a sliver

of climate funding. At COP28, smallholders in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia secured \$200 million in pledges from the Gates foundation and the United Arab Emirates to help adapt to climate change.

There's also a push for more climate-smart solutions, from using microbes that boost carbon in soil to turning organic waste into protein-rich feed. A US-UAE initiative called AimforClimate wants governments and companies to invest more in those kind of areas and has seen investments of more than \$17 billion, up \$4 billion since May.

Bloomberg News