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Global food prices drop 13.7% in 2023: FAO



Phl seeks to boost agri exports to Japan

By **CATHERINE TALAVERA**

The Philippines wants to increase its agricultural exports to Japan as the government continues to push for zero tariffs for bananas, as well as the revival of shipment of local mangoes to the East Asian country.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is already coordina-

ting with the Department of Trade and Industry to secure a preferential tariff rate for Philippine bananas, which is under threat from rising shipments from Cambodia, Laos, Mexico and Vietnam. Japan gives a zero or preferential tariff for bananas coming from these countries.

"Philippine bananas are staples for Japanese consum-

ers, accounting for 22 percent of their food basket. The Philippines proximity to Japan allows the country to deliver low-cost bananas and other tropical fruits compliant with Japanese food standards," the DA said.

Based on Japan's tariff schedule as of Jan. 1, 2024, bananas imported from the Philippines from Oct. 1 to March 31 are imposed a tariff of 18 percent. This is higher than the eight percent tariff slapped on Philippine bananas during the summer season or from April 1 to Sept. 30.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the review of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) would be a good initial opportunity "to discuss the Philippines' appeal for lower tariff on bananas."

The DA said it is also seeking to revive the Japanese market for Philippine mangoes, whose export had declined sharply since Japan adopted in 2011 stricter sanitary and phytosanitary standards, especially

the maximum residue limit.

During the ASEAN-Japan Summit in December, Laurel led ceremonies to mark the re-entry of Philippine mangoes to Japan, with the presentation of the tropical fruit to his Japanese counterpart.

Agriculture Attache Aleli Maghirang is hopeful that fresh Davao mangoes' re-entry into the Japanese market would spur "greater confidence to our exporters to continue supplying to Japan."

Laurel has ordered the immediate improvement of testing laboratories to align the Philippine food code with those of importing countries like Japan, and the enhancement of farming practices and production of good quality planting materials for expansion and replanting.

The DA wants a bigger slice of Japan's food market—the fifth largest in the world with total purchases of agricultural products worth \$87 billion in 2022 alone.

In the first nine months of 2023, Philippine agriculture

exports to Japan reached \$679 million. In 2022, total agricultural exports to Japan reached \$916 million, higher than the \$894.4 million in the previous year.

In line with its goal of increasing the agriculture exports to Japan, the DA has scheduled the inaugural meeting of the Philippines-Japan Joint Committee on Agriculture in the second quarter of the year.

"This very first meeting of the joint agriculture committee of the two Asian neighbors here in the Philippines will provide an avenue to follow through the agri-fisheries trade and market access discussions started in Japan," Laurel said.

In February last year, the Philippines – through the DA and Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries – signed the memorandum of cooperation on agricultural cooperation, which created the Philippines-Japan Joint Committee on Agriculture.

Laurel said the meeting

would be an opportunity to discuss technical and project collaborations under the memorandum of cooperation.

He emphasized that the upcoming meeting is a follow up to his discussions with Japanese officials and businessmen in December, when he accompanied President Marcos at the ASEAN-Japan Summit.

The meetings hope to open more export opportunities for Philippine fish and tropical fruits, such as pineapple, bananas, avocado, mangoes, durian, mangosteen and okra.

Laurel said the upcoming joint committee meeting would also be an opportunity to discuss the Asean-Japan MIDORI Cooperation Plan.

In October, together with other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Philippines signed the MIDORI plan, which aims to promote cooperation projects using Japanese technology and sharing experiences to build resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems for future food security.



Agri-fisheries eyes measures to modernize sector

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

Regional agricultural and fisheries councils in the country have made several recommendations to hasten the development and modernization of the Philippine agricultural sector, according to the **Department of Agriculture (DA)**.

In a statement yesterday, the DA said regional agricultural and fisheries councils met with **Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.** to submit their recommendations.

"The recommendations presented by the councils were varied and included issues affecting the production of rice, fish, and other aquatic resources, poultry and livestock, corn and feed crops, high value crops, including rubber and fiber crops, coconut, as well as domestic trade and mechanization," the DA said.

Among the recommendations are the establishment of cold storage facilities for vegetables, including onions, laboratories for biosecurity concerns, as well as the construction of farm-to-market roads or other modes for faster movement of agricultural products.

The regional councils also pushed for the construction of more irrigation facilities and the establishment of local nurseries and seed banks to ensure high quality

planting materials and seeds.

They also recommended the creation of a Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

In addition, the councils called for the establishment of a data center for timely agricultural statistics.

Other recommendations made by the regional councils include the conversion of rice competitive enhancement funds to rice price subsidy; mechanization of farm processes, including those for high value crops and fiber; widening and intensifying soil testing to optimize land use and productivity; establishment of inland fisheries and hatcheries in upland areas; revival of direct farmer linkage to market via Kadiwa centers; the timely release of hybrid seed and fertilizer interventions; and the implementation of the higher biofuel blend to help the coconut industry.

Laurel welcomed the private sectors' push for greater spending on agricultural infrastructure and mechanization to hasten the farm sector's modernization, increase productivity, and ensure the country is food secure.

"If we can work together well, then I think we can move forward faster," Laurel told the regional agricultural and fisheries councils.

The Agriculture chief said the dialogue with regional councils gave him a clearer perspective on how to pursue agricultural modernization.

He said a 10-point agenda is now being finalized by the DA to address issues holding back the progress of the country's farm sector and its stakeholders, particularly farmers and fisherfolk.

Laurel said more infrastructures, including warehouses, seaports, food terminals, and roads would be built to help bring down the cost of food.

"The DA is also working towards digitalization and a thorough review of the minimum access volume to rationalize food importation," he said.

Laurel said more consultations would be undertaken in the future and pledged to find funds needed to substantially address all the issues and recommendations submitted by agricultural and fisheries councils across the country.

The DA stressed that agriculture accounts for four in every 10 jobs in the Philippines, but the sector's contribution to the domestic economy is less than 10 percent.

"A dramatic improvement in the farm sector could generate more jobs and lead to faster growth of the economy, not to mention tame inflation and lessen dependence on imported agricultural products," it said.



DA eyeing SRP on rice next week

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The suggested retail price (SRP) of rice could be released next week amid the spike in the retail price of the staple food, according to the **Department of Agriculture (DA)**.

"The technical committee met this morning. Hopefully, by next week, we can release the SRP. It will depend on Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service (AMAS)," Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said yesterday.

AMAS is currently consulting with stakeholders about the proposed SRP, he added.

De Mesa on Saturday announced that the DA is mulling the implementation of SRP on the grains to contain the unabated increase in the retail prices of rice.

"High retail price of rice is expected as we are going into the lean season. We don't have

local production as our source is only imports. The price of imported rice is also high," he said.

Former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor cautioned the DA on implementing the SRP, which he said could affect the farmgate price of palay during the next harvest.

"(The proposed SRP) should be reviewed thoroughly as the first to be affected will be the farmers in the next harvest season, which will be around April. Traders will try to recover their losses because of the SRP in the form of lower farmgate prices of palay," Montemayor said.

"I don't think the prices of rice will stabilize. Most likely, it will further increase. In 2022, imported rice was only \$400 per ton. Last year, it increased to \$640, or 44 percent increase," he pointed out.

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DA eyeing From Page 1

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. should continue the ongoing consultations with stakeholders to address the upward trend in the retail price of rice, he said.

Based on monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets yesterday, local regular milled rice was sold for as high as P53 per kilo; local well-milled rice, P55 per kilo; local premium rice, P63 per kilo; local special rice, P68 per kilo; imported well-milled rice, P58 per kilo; imported premium rice, P61 per kilo and imported special rice, P65 per kilo.

Price subsidy

Meanwhile, AGRI party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee yesterday sought the

immediate passage of a bill establishing a "price subsidy" program for farmers, as prices of rice continue to spike.

In a statement, Lee said his proposed measure would ensure farmers' profit and entice them to boost production.

In House Bill 9020 or the Cheaper Rice Act, the DA and other concerned agencies would have to buy rice from local farmers at higher prices or an additional P5 to P10 per kilo.

The rice would have to be sold to consumers at cheaper rates.

"If we want to bring down the prices of rice to P20 per kilo, this Cheaper Rice Act is the answer to that," he claimed.

Lee was referring to President Marcos' campaign promise to lower the price of rice. More than a year into office, Marcos has not fulfilled this promise.

Based on Philippine Statistics Authority data, rice inflation reached 19.6 percent in December 2023, the highest since the recorded 22.9 percent rice inflation in March 2009.

Lee said the government should not rely on importation to achieve cheaper rice and instead focus on improving rice self-sufficiency, which "HB 9020 aims to achieve."

Tariff cuts

A fishers' group strongly criticized the extension of reduced tariffs for selected agricultural products approved by President Marcos last December.

In a statement yesterday, Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) argued that the prolonged tariff cut "reflects the administration's commitment to import-liberalization policies, which have burdened local agricultural producers."

Executive Order No. 50 extended the reduced most favored nation tariff rates on pork, corn and rice until the end of 2024.

Pamalakaya said the measure was ostensibly aimed at making agricultural products more affordable amid the El Niño phenomenon, but the PSA's report on rice inflation in 2023 showed it reached its highest level since March 2009.

The group noted that the government's data highlight that opening doors to imported agricultural prod-

ucts does not prevent price increases.

Marcos has been persistent in import-liberalization policies that favored foreign capital instead of strengthening local agri-fisheries production through sufficient state support such as subsidies and production facilities, they argued.

Pamalakaya reiterated its support for House Bill 405 or the Rice Industry Development Act, which aims to provide rice farmers with affordable production inputs like seeds, fertilizers and tools.

The group earlier called on the DA to stop fish imports, as the Philippines has imported over 250,000 metric tons of various pelagic fish, mostly from China and Taiwan, since 2018.

— With Sheila Crisostomo, Mark Ernest Villeza

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PRIVATE SECTOR SUBMITS WISH LIST

FARM COUNCILS SEEK RICE SUBSIDY IN LIEU OF COMPETITIVENESS FUND

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

As rice prices remain high, the private sector has proposed the reallocation of funds intended to boost farmers' competitiveness to subsidize rice instead.

In a statement, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said one of the recommendations submitted by agricultural and fisheries councils nationwide is the conversion of Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) into a rice price subsidy.

RCEF, funded by rice tariff collections exceeding P10 billion, is meant to provide financial assistance to farmers, including the titling of agricultural lands, expansion of crop insurance coverage and crop diversification.

Half of the budget or P5 billion is earmarked for the distribution of farm machinery to rice farmers. Some P3 billion is budgeted to give away high-yielding seeds and P1 billion to boost farmers' capacity and provide credit support.

RCEF was mandated under the Rice Tariffication Law of 2019, which liberalizes the importation, exportation and trading of rice as well as lifts the quantitative import restriction on this household staple.

In a meeting with Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., the private sector stakeholders also proposed the construction of cold storage

facilities for vegetables, including onions. They also cited the need for laboratories to address biosecurity concerns and farm-to-market roads or other modes for faster shipment of agricultural products.

Regional councils likewise recommended the development of more irrigation facilities, local nurseries and seed banks to ensure high-quality planting materials and seeds, inland fisheries and hatcheries in upland areas.

They are asking the DA to widen and intensify soil testing to optimize land use and productivity, distribute hybrid seed and fertilizer to farmer-beneficiaries in a timely manner and revive direct farmer linkage to market via Kadiwa centers.

Industry stakeholders are pushing for the creation of a separate department for fisheries and aquaculture for the implementation of the higher biofuel blend to help the coconut industry.

Laurel said more consultations would be held as he vowed to secure funds to substantially address all the issues and recommendations.

"If we can work together well, then I think we can move forward faster," he said.

The DA said additional infrastructure, including warehouses, seaports, food terminals and roads, would be built to help lower food prices.

It is finalizing a 10-point agenda to address agricultural sector challenges. INQ



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Record rice output seen despite El Niño

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has set this year's rice production forecast at not lower than 20 million metric tons (MT) despite the El Niño threat.

Assistant Secretary and DA spokesman Arnel de Mesa told reporters that rice output could hit another record.

"Last year the target was 20 million metric tons; [this year] it shouldn't be lower than 20 million MT," he said on Monday.

The 20 million MT rice target for 2023 was likely achieved, de Mesa claimed, topping the previous record of 19.96 million MT in 2021 and last year's 19.76 million MT.

Citing the latest report from the Philippine Rice Information System (Prism), de Mesa said production was already at 18.8 million MT as of October 2023.

Harvests for the rest of the year included, he claimed that "we can easily breach the 20 million MT target."

De Mesa said that mitigation measures such as the planting of hybrid varieties of rice would help mitigate the impact of the El Niño weather pattern, which is expected to lead to dry spells or even drought conditions across

the country.

In a related development, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said that a private sector push to boost agricultural infrastructure and mechanization to raise productivity was welcome.

The DA chief noted that various stakeholders had submitted recommendations to address issues regarding rice, fisheries, poultry and livestock, high-value crops, and domestic trade and mechanization.

"The DA is also working toward digitalization and a thorough review of the minimum access volume to rationalize food importation," Laurel said.

He claimed that more infrastructure, including warehouses, seaports, food terminals, and roads, would be built to help bring down the cost of food.

The DA is also finalizing a 10-point agenda, and "more consultations will be undertaken in the future," Laurel said, along with the provision of "funds needed to substantially address all the issues and recommendations submitted by agricultural and fisheries councils across the country."

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



Roadmap to address agri issues

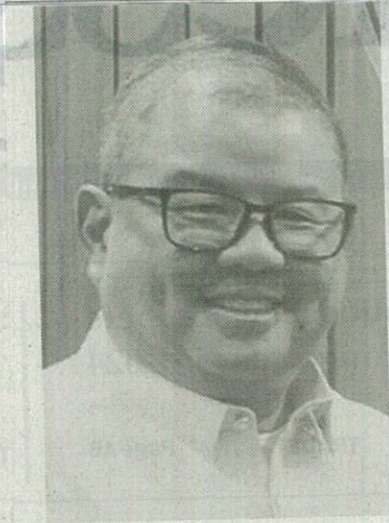
BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is finalizing its 10-point agenda that will address issues holding back the progress of the country's farm sector and its stakeholders, particularly farmers and fisherfolk.

The agency said in a statement yesterday the roadmap will take into account inputs from all stakeholders from consultations done with DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Some of the recommendations include the establishment of cold storage facilities for vegetables, including onions and laboratories for biosecurity concerns as well as the construction of farm-to-market roads or other modes for faster movement of agricultural products.

The DA said other recommendations call for the conversion of rice competitive enhancement funds to rice price subsidy; mechanization of farm processes, including those for high value crops and fiber; and the establishment of local nurseries and seed banks



LAUREL

to ensure high quality planting materials and seeds.

Local food producers also called for the widening and intensification of soil testing to optimize land use and productivity; the establishment of inland fisheries and hatcheries in upland areas; revival of direct farmer linkage to market through rolling stores; and the timely release of

hybrid seed and fertilizer interventions.

DA added the private sector also recommended for the construction of more irrigation facilities; implementation of the higher biofuel blend to help the coconut industry; creation of a Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture; and the establishment of data center for timely agricultural statistics.

"The DA is also working towards digitalization and a thorough review of the minimum access volume to rationalize food importation," Laurel said.

He added the agency will strive to find funds that would substantially address all issues and recommendations submitted by agricultural and fisheries councils across the country.

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DA chief pushes for more farm infra projects in medium term

BY CAI U. ORDINARIO

@caiordinario

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is pushing for more infrastructure projects for the farm sector in the medium term.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said this is part of the 10-point agenda for the DA in the medium-term.

These infrastructure projects include warehouses, seaports, food terminals, and roads, which are all considered crucial in bringing down the cost of food.

"The DA is also working towards digitalization and a thorough review of the minimum access volume to rationalize food importation," Tiu Laurel said.

Based on the latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), food inflation eased to 5.5 percent in December 2023 from 5.8 percent in November 2023 and

10.6 percent in December 2022.

In the full year of 2023, food inflation averaged 8 percent, which was still higher than the 6.1 percent posted in 2022.

The price of rice, the country's food staple, increased 19.6 percent in December 2023 compared to the 15.8 percent posted in December 2022.

Rice has a weight of 8.87 percent in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for All Income Households and as much as 17.87 percent in the basket of goods for the Bottom 30 percent of households.

"If we can work together well, then I think we can move forward faster," Tiu Laurel said in a recent meeting with regional agricultural and fisheries councils.

During the meeting, the councils presented their recommendations which, included issues affecting the production of rice, fish and other aquatic resources, poultry and livestock, corn and

feed crops, high value crops, including rubber and fiber crops, coconut, as well as domestic trade and mechanization.

The list of recommendations include the establishment of cold storage facilities for vegetables, including onions, as well as laboratories for biosecurity concerns; conversion of rice competitive enhancement funds to rice price subsidy; and mechanization of farm processes, including those for high value crops and fiber.

The councils also pushed for the establishment of local nurseries and seed banks to ensure high quality planting materials and seeds; widening and intensifying soil testing to optimize land use and productivity; and the establishment of inland fisheries and hatcheries in upland areas.

They also called for the revival of the direct farmer linkage to market via Kadiwa centers; the timely

release of hybrid seed and fertilizer interventions; and implementation of the higher biofuel blend to help the coconut industry.

The councils also pushed for the creation of a Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the establishment of data center for timely agricultural statistics.

Tiu Laurel said the dialogue with regional councils gave him with a clearer perspective on how to pursue agricultural modernization.

This is crucial, the DA said, since agriculture accounts for four in every 10 jobs in the Philippines but the sector's contribution to the domestic economy is less than 10 percent.

A dramatic improvement in the farm sector could generate more jobs and led to faster growth of the economy, not to mention tame inflation and lessen dependence on imported agricultural products.



DA seeking for a bigger share of Japan's food, fishery market

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

@joveemarie

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) on Monday revealed it is actively pursuing increased market share for Filipino farmers and fisherfolk in Japan.

The DA said Japan imported a total of \$87 billion worth of agricultural products in 2022, the fifth largest in the world that year.

During the Asean-Japan Summit, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said discussions were held with Japanese officials and businessmen to explore additional export opportunities for Philippine fish and tropical fruits.

He said the aim is to expand exports of products, such as pineapple, bananas, avocado,

mangoes, durian, mangosteen, and okra to the Japanese market.

As a follow-up to the meetings in Japan, Tiu Laurel said the DA has scheduled the first meeting of the Philippines-Japan Joint Committee on Agriculture in the second quarter of this year.

"This very first meeting of the joint agriculture committee of the two Asian neighbors here in the Philippines will provide an avenue to follow through the agri-fisheries trade and market access discussions

started in Japan," he said.

Laurel said the joint agriculture meeting in the second quarter would also be an opportunity to discuss technical and project collaborations under the memorandum of cooperation signed in February last year and the Midori Cooperation Plan.

In October, together with other members of Asean, the Philippines signed the Midori plan, which aims to promote cooperation projects using Japanese technology and sharing experiences to build resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems for future food security.

The DA is also coordinating with the Department of Trade and Industry to secure a preferential tariff rate for Philippine bananas, whose leading share of the Japanese market is under threat from Cambodia, Laos, Mexico, and Vietnam. Banana exports from these countries to Japan enjoy a zero or preferential tariff.

Philippine bananas are staples for

Japanese consumers, accounting for 22 percent of their food basket.

The Philippines's proximity to Japan allows the country to deliver low-priced bananas and other tropical fruits compliant with Japanese food standards.

Tariff review

LAUREL said Manila looks at the review of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement as a good initial opportunity "to discuss the Philippines's appeal for a lower tariff on bananas."

Under the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA), the tariff on Philippine bananas is pegged at 8 percent from April 1 to September 30, and then increased to 18 percent for imports between October 1 and March 31.

In addition to banana exports, efforts are underway to revive the Japanese market for Philippine mangoes, which faced challenges due to stringent sanitary standards adopted by Japan in 2011.

The recent re-entry of Philippine mangoes into the Japanese market was celebrated during the Asean-Japan Summit, with Laurel highlighting the importance of this achievement and directing improvements in testing laboratories to align with international food codes.

Agriculture Attaché Aleli Maghirang, who is assigned at the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo, said she is hopeful that fresh Davao mangoes' re-entry in the Japanese market will spur "greater confidence in our exporters to continue supplying to Japan."

Japan stands as the second-largest market for Philippine agri-food exports, boasting a trade surplus of \$824 million in 2022. The strategic initiatives discussed and planned between the Philippines and Japan underscore the importance of collaborative efforts to strengthen agricultural trade relations and promote the export of high-quality Philippine agricultural products.

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More agri infra to bring down food prices

By JEL SANTOS

More agricultural infrastructures, including warehouses, sea-ports, food terminals, and roads, will be built to help bring down the cost of food in the country, Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

Laurel stated this after meeting with representatives of the private sector to listen to their recommendations in pushing for greater spending on agricultural infrastructure and mechanization to hasten the farm sector's modernization, increase productivity, and ensure

food security.

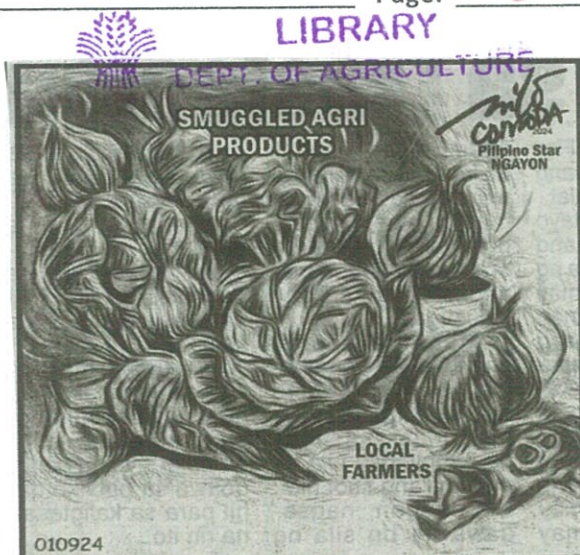
"If we can work together well, then I think we can move forward faster," Laurel told regional agricultural and fisheries councils, who gathered at the DA office in Quezon City to submit their recommendations to the agriculture chief.

The recommendations presented by the councils were varied and included issues affecting the production of rice, fish and other aquatic resources, poultry and livestock, corn and feed crops, high value crops including rubber and fiber crops, coconut, as well as domestic trade and mechanization.

The regional councils are pushing for the establishment of cold storage facilities for vegetables, construction of farm-to-market roads, conversion of rice competitive enhancement funds to rice price subsidy, and mechanization of farm processes, including those for high value crops and fiber.

They also proposed the establishment of local nurseries and seed banks to ensure high quality planting materials and seeds, widen and intensify soil testing to optimize land use and productivity, establishment of inland fisheries and hatcheries in upland areas.

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Editorial

Agri smuggling patuloy pa rin!

NAKALULUNGKOT ang sinapit ng mga magsasaka ng gulay sa Cordillera noong Disyembre dahil halos wala silang kinita dahil sa pagbaha ng mga smuggled na gulay. Sa halip na ang kanilang aning carrots, repolyo, broccoli at cauliflower ang bilhin, ang mga imported na gulay ang nasa merkado at nabibili sa mas mababang halaga. Siyempre ang mga tao, gusto ay makabili ng mura para makatipid at mapagkasya ang budget.

Dahil hindi nabibili ang mga lokal na gulay, nagsobra-sobra kaya napilitang ipamigay na lamang ang mga ito kaysa mabulok. Kabilang sa mga ipinamimigay ang kamatis, carrots at repolyo. Ang ilan na hindi na maipamigay ay hinahayaan na lamang sa gilid ng kalsada.

Maski sa Bicol ay sobra-sobra rin ang aning repolyo kaya ipinamimigay na rin sa mga tao. Nagkaroon din ng sobra-sobrang ani ng kalabasa sa nasabing rehiyon kaya ipinamimigay na rin ang mga ito kaysa masira lamang.

Noong nakaraang taon, maraming kamatis ang itina-pon dahil nabulok lamang. Sobra-sobra ang ani ng kamatis at walang magawa ang mga magsasaka kundi itapon.

Nakarating kay Agriculture Sec. Francisco Tiu Laurel ang reklamo ng magsasaka ng gulay na walang tigil ang pagbaha ng agri products at apektado na ang kanilang kabuhayan. Agad bumuo si Laurel ng committee na magba-blacklist sa mga walang konsensiyang negosyante na lumalabag sa Republic Act 9184 o ang Government Procurement Act of 2002. Sakop ng kautusan ni Laurel ang manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, contractors at consultants sa agriculture sector.

Ang agarang pagbuo ng committee ay isinagawa dahil na rin sa pagkuwestiyon ng mga mambabatas kung bakit naging inutil ang Bureau of Plant Industry na i-blacklist ang mga importers na sangkot sa pagtatago at pagmamaniplula ng agri products.

Harinawang may mangyari sa aksiyon ni Sec. Laurel para naman hindi maging kaawa-awa ang kalagayan ng mga magsasaka ng gulay na matagal nang nahihirapan dahil sa walang patlang na pagpasok ng smuggled agri products.

Palakasin din sana ang Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act na binuo noong 2016 na ngayon ay inutil na. Layunin ng batas na labanan at masawata ang smuggling ng agricultural products na nananabotahe sa ekonomiya at pumapatay sa mga lokal na magsasaka. Nakasaad sa batas na mapaparusahan nang mabigat ang agricultural smugglers. Pero pitong taon ang lumipas, wala ni isa mang naparusahang agri smugglers. Lalo pang naging talamak ang pagpasok sa bansa ng agri products. Samplan ang mga salot na agri smugglers at walang konsensiyang traders.



Agri growth seen at below 3% in 2023

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

The agricultural sector is poised to have recorded modest growth below three percent last year, according to an official of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"I have to check the numbers of PSA (Philippine Statistics Authority), but looking at the quarters, there is positive growth. But it's not three to four percent, lower than three to four percent," Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesperson Arnel de Mesa said in an interview yesterday.

De Mesa said livestock and poultry remained the growth drivers of the sector last year.

"In the third quarter, corn and sugar fell, but rice production remained high," he said.

The agriculture official said the country is likely to have breached its production target for rice of 20 million metric tons last year.

"Based on the latest report, we can achieve 20 million metric tons," he said, citing that production already reached 18.8 million MT in October 2023.

In December, the country's agricultural output could grow in the fourth quarter of the year due to more favorable weather conditions, de Mesa said.

He noted favorable production in the country's crops sector.

"We expect that the growth of the livestock and poultry sub sectors will continue and hopefully we can recover in the fisheries sector because in the third quarter, this was the subsector with the largest decline," De Mesa said last month.

"We're hoping that the sector will recover in the fourth quarter," he said.

Latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the country's farm production declined by 0.3 percent in the third quarter, due to lower outputs in the crops and fisheries sector, marking the second consecutive quarter that farm production declined.

The value of agriculture and fisheries production stood at P412.41 billion from July to September.

The 0.3 percent decline was lower than the 1.2 percent drop in the second quarter, but a reversal of the 1.6

percent growth recorded in the same quarter last year.

Sun Life Financial	Investment Funds of Variable Life Insurance Contracts	
	JAN. 5, 2023	DEC. 29, 2023
Equity Fund (PHP)	3.4975	3.4188
Bond Fund (PHP)	2.2295	2.2464
Bond Fund (USD)	1.8673	1.9050
Balanced Fund (PHP)	2.7454	2.7204
Money Market Fund (PHP)	1.1889	1.1883
My Future 2025 Fund (PHP)	2.6760	2.6660
My Future 2030 Fund (PHP)	2.4949	2.4704
My Future 2035 Fund (PHP)	2.4511	2.4167
My Future 2040 Fund (PHP)	2.4740	2.4325
My Future 2045 (PHP)	1.0034	0.9846
My Future 2050 (PHP)	1.0021	0.9825
My Future 2055 (PHP)	0.9995	0.9795
Income Fund (PHP)	1.5590	1.5703
Opportunity Fund (PHP)	1.2303	1.2189
Growth Fund (PHP)	1.2871	1.2575
Global Income Fund (USD)	0.8758	0.8892
Global Opportunity Fund (USD)	1.2424	1.2651
Dynamic Fund (PHP)	0.8983	0.8903
Growth Plus Fund (PHP)	0.8724	0.8507
Index Fund (PHP)	0.9656	0.9397
Captain's Fund (PHP)	0.8494	0.8174
Opportunity Tracker (PHP)	0.9137	0.9086
Sun Dollar Maximizer Primo (USD)	0.9333	0.9319
Sun Dollar Maximizer Primo 2 (USD)	0.9260	0.9244
Sun Peso Maximizer Fund 1 (PHP)	0.8870	0.8864
Sun Peso Maximizer Fund 2 (PHP)	0.9488	0.9483
Global Growth Fund (USD)	1.2137	1.2311
Dollar Money Market Fund (USD)	1.0296	1.0289
Global Opportunity Payout Fund (USD)	0.8577	0.8679
Peso Global Growth Fund (PHP)	0.9503	0.9639
Peso Global Income Fund (PHP)	0.9172	0.9274
Peso Global Opportunity Fund (PHP)	0.9381	0.9526
Peso Global Opportunity Payout Fund (PHP)	1.0327	1.0413
Sun Peso Maximizer Hybrid Income (PHP)	0.9629	0.9629
Peso Global Sustainability Growth Funds (PHP)	1.0278	1.0429
Sun Peso Maximizer Hybrid Income 2 (PHP)	0.9705	0.9705
Sun Peso Maximizer Hybrid Income 3 (PHP)	0.9740	0.9740
Sun Dollar Maximizer Pro Income	0.9740	0.9740

These investment funds are specific to variable life insurance contracts and are not considered mutual funds. Variable life insurance products are regulated by the insurance Commission. Daily unit prices are also available at www.sunlife.com.ph

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Cebu experiencing cabbage oversupply

An official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) has confirmed the oversupply of cabbage in Cebu after a viral video showed farmers giving away their produce for free.

At a press conference yesterday, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said the production of cabbage, particularly in Cebu, has increased to 33,000 up to 38,000 metric tons from the normal level of 20,000 MT.

Earlier, farmers in Benguet gave away their cabbage for free after farm-gate prices dropped to P1 per kilo.

Traders blamed the entry of smuggled vegetables for the slump in the prices of local high-

land vegetables.

"Those were bought by a trader, who distributed these for free. A certain Mrs. Velardo distributed about 1,200 kilos of cabbage," De Mesa said, referring to the free cabbage in Cebu.

De Mesa said the farm-gate price of cabbage at the Dalaguete Trading Post went down to P11 per kilo. Last month, the price ranged between P18 and P26 per kilo.

He said the oversupply of highland vegetables was due to good weather.

"The level of production is also good in Southern Tagalog and the Visayas. We expect high demand during the last quarter toward this quarter," De Mesa said.

- Bella Carias



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PH palay output in '23 tipped to hit record high

Planting conditions improved despite onset of El Niño, says DA

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

Local palay output is expected to have hit a record high 20 million metric tons last year, mainly due to better planting conditions despite the onset of the El Niño weather phenomenon.

Citing data from the Philippine Rice Information System, **Department of Agriculture (DA)** spokesperson Arnel de Mesa said domestic production already stood at 18.8 million MT as of October last year, when the last quarter harvest was just beginning.

Given this, De Mesa expects the total palay output for 2023 to “easily breach” 20 million metric tons, eclipsing the record 19.96 million MT reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in 2021.

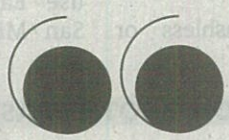
He attributed the higher output to the improved farm

conditions last year, particularly in the first six months when not too many typhoons hit the country.

• New targets

The country's palay output steadily grew from 2019 to the record 19.96 MT in 2021 before declining to 19.76 million MT the following year.

The DA is yet to finalize its



The country's palay output steadily grew from 2019 to the record 19.96 MT in 2021 before declining to 19.76 million MT the following year

targets for 2024 but expects palay output to remain at the 20 million MT level given the possible constraints on production due to the El Niño weather phenomenon, which is characterized by below normal rainfall.

De Mesa also projected that the country's total agricultural output in 2023 posted “positive growth,” but below the targeted 3 to 4 percent range as the produc-

tion of some key sectors lagged.

In the third quarter of 2023, for example, the output of corn and sugar declined but rice production expanded. The DA also saw gains in the livestock and poultry subsectors.

Lower harvests

In 2022, the country's farm output dipped by a slight 0.1 percent, smaller than the decline of 1.7 percent and 1.2 percent in 2021 and 2020, respectively, according to the PSA.

Agricultural production had declined for three consecutive years following a modest increase in 2019 mainly due to lower crops and fishery harvests.

Separate data from the PSA showed agriculture output slipped by 0.3 percent in the third quarter of 2023, shrinking for the second quarter in a row, mainly due to typhoons and higher farm costs. **INQ**

BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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RICE PRICES SOAR A laborer in Tondo, Manila, bears sacks of rice as the Department of Agriculture (DA) explores the possibility of implementing a suggested retail price (SRP) for rice due to the alarming 19.6-percent increase reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority in December, the highest surge in over 14 years. NONIE REYES





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Palay production targeted to exceed 20 million MT in 2024

THE palay production target has been set at no less than 20 million metric tons (MT) this year, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

"Last year, our target was 20 million MT, so it shouldn't be below than (that)," DA Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa told reporters on Monday.

Mr. De Mesa added that the DA is taking steps to mitigate the impact of El Niño on rice production during the dry season.

"The harvest (tends to be higher) during the wet season, because the area planted to rice is bigger especially for rain-fed areas. El Niño will hit during the dry season and the water in the dams is still good," he added.

The El Niño is expected to bring dry spells and drought to 63 provinces.

The government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), has said that the most intense phase of El Niño may run until the second quarter.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., has ordered the creation of an interagency task force to address the effects of the weather phenomenon.

"Our mitigation measures are already in place. One of our strategies is to plant hybrid (seed), at least 1 million hectares, this dry season due to their higher yields," Mr. De Mesa said.

He added that the DA is expecting the land planted to hybrid seed to offset the loss of riceland that cannot be cultivated due to the lack of water.

Meanwhile, Mr. De Mesa said that rice prices will continue to rise entering the lean months between harvests.

"Right now, rice prices are a bit higher because we are entering the lean season, and we have no more local production," he added. "Our only source is imports and the price of imports is high right now."

The DA has said that it is expecting 500,000 MT of imported rice to arrive as the government

builds up reserves in preparation for the worst of El Niño.

The government has also extended the lowered tariffs on rice via Executive Order No. 50. Rates for rice imports were kept at 35% regardless of the minimum access volume and country of origin.

As of Jan. 8, the price of well-milled rice in Metro Manila markets was P40-55 per kilogram, while regular-milled rice was fetched P43 to P52 per kilo. — **Adrian H. Halili**



Agri officials making big push to enhance dry-season rice harvest

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it will meet with rice farmers to identify strategies to boost production for the dry-season crop.

In a special order, the DA authorized the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program (MRIDP) to consult with the rice industry to identify and map areas deemed vulnerable during the dry season.

According to the government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), droughts and dry spells brought about by El Niño will affect about 63 provinces and dampen their rice output.

PAGASA expects El Niño to intensify this month, persisting until May.

It added that the consultations will develop plans

for distributing seed, fertilizer discount vouchers, soil ameliorants and biocontrol agents.

The Visayas agriculture cluster, which includes Region 6, 7, and 8, will meet on Jan. 9, while the Mindanao cluster meeting (Regions 9 to 11) will meet on Jan. 11.

It added that the date has not been set for the Calabarzon, Mimaropa, and Region 5 cluster meetings.

The MRIDP aims to stabilize the rice supply at between 24.99 million metric tons (MT) and 26.86 million MT, in the process lowering growth in rice prices to less than 1% annually.

It also seeks to increase farmer incomes by 54% and ensure adequate reserves held by the National Food Authority. — **Adrian H. Halili**



Mga magsasaka 'iyak' sa bagsak-presyong gulay

Ibinebenta na lamang sa halagang P20 kada kilo ang mga gulay sa Provident Village sa Marikina City dahil sa umano'y oversupply sa ani ng mga magsasaka. Hindi na umano ma-

dala ang mga gulay sa palengke na gaya ng mga repolyo at labanos sa mga palengke sa Metro Manila dahil sa dami ng suplay kaya naman ibinagsak na lamang ito sa Marikina.

Kuwento ni Lynette Bernado, ang may-ari ng tindahan na pinagbagsakan ng mga gulay, galing ang mga ito sa kanyang mga kaibigan sa Benguet. Nakiusap umano ang mga ito na ipasalo

ang gulay sa kanya dahil labis na ang suplay nito sa Pangasinan, Balintawak at Divisoria.

Nangako naman si Bernardo sa mga magsasaka na tutulong siya sa pagbebenta ng mga gulay.

Samantala, ipinahayag ni Department of Agriculture (DA) spokesperson at Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa na posibleng dahil sa magandang panahon kaya nagkaroon ng overproduction ng mga gulay.

Pero hindi pa rin aniya tiyak kung talaga oversupply na matawag ang nangyari.

Layon ng DA na palakasin pa ang mga Kadiwa Center sa mga rehiyon para matulungan ang mga magsasaka na maibenta ang kanilang produkto. (Natalia Antonio)



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Marcos: 51% of 6-year FMR project finished

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday announced that his administration has completed more than half of the target 131,410.66 kilometers of the government's Farm-to-Market Road (FMR) Network Program — achieved in only a year and a half since he assumed office.

"I am happy to share a significant update on the Farm-to-Market Road Network Program. Our original target is 131,410.66 kilometers in six years, but I can now report that we have already completed 51 percent," Marcos said in a video statement.

Of the target, the President noted that the

government has already constructed 67,328.92 kilometers, which is 32 times the number of road trips from Aparri to Jolo.

"It is a testament to the magnitude of accomplishment of the government. It is not an initiative only to do with agriculture; it is a connection between all the different communities. But, of course, its main purpose is to connect the markets and the producers, especially with our agricultural sectors," he said.

Marcos assured the public that, under his watch, the government would work double time until all road networks were completed

as part of his administration's "Build, Better, More" initiative.

Last September, Marcos tasked pertinent national agencies to determine areas for the development and construction of FMRs. This includes roads that are heavily used and are not in good condition but with a high volume of traffic.

He likewise ordered the rehabilitation and repair of FMRs damaged by flood and other natural disasters to ensure the unhampered transport and delivery of goods.

KRISTINA MARALIT



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67K km farm-to-market roads completed

MORE than half of the targeted 131,410.66-kilometers of farm-to-market roads to be constructed nationwide under the six-year term of his administration had been completed within the first one and half years of his office, President Marcos Jr. said.

The President, in a video message released yesterday, said the Farm-to-Market Road Network program showed 67,328.92 kil-

ometers of the targeted road has been completed, which is equal to "32 times of road trips from Aparri to Jolo."

The President said the administration will continue working until the completion of the target 131,410.66 kilometers before the end of the administration and will continue to "Build, Better, More."

- *Jocelyn Montemayor*

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PBBM: 51% of FMR projects completed

WITH the completion of more than half of the targeted farm-to-market roads (FMR) of his administration last year, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said more farmers and communities were given better access to urban centers.

In a brief video message, the Chief Executive disclosed 51 percent of the 131,410 kilometers of the Farm-to-Market Road Network Program were already built since last year.

"We have built 67,328.92 kilometers, which is equivalent to 32 times the [distance] between Aparri to Jolo," Marcos said partly in Filipino.

He noted that the network is a priority of his administration since it will benefit not just the agriculture sector. "It is a testament to the magnitude of accomplishment of the government," Marcos said.

"It is not an initiative [that is exclusive to the] agriculture sector. It is a connection between all

the different communities but of course its main purpose is to connect the markets and the producers—to our agriculture sectors especially," he added.

The President said the remaining kilometers of the road network would be completed in the coming years as part of his administration's Build Better More initiatives.

In another development, Malacañang reported the Kalinga at Inisyatiba Para Sa Malinis na Bayan (Kalinisan) program during the weekend resulted in the collection

of 2.6 million kilograms of trash.

Citing a report from the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the 2,646,948 kilograms of waste came from 9,189 participating barangays nationwide.

Most or 103,249 of the participants came from Cagayan Valley followed by Central Luzon (103,044) and Calabarzon (117,161).

The agency noted 580,000 volunteers and 109,939 local officials participated in the clean up drive as part of the celebration of the National Community Development Day last Saturday. **Samuel P. Medenilla**

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PBBM: 51% of 6-year farm-to-market network plan completed in just 18 months

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

President Marcos has vowed to "build better more" after reporting that his administration has already completed 51 percent of its target farm-to-market roads across the country in just 18 months.

Marcos announced this in an Instagram and Facebook Reel on Monday morning, Jan. 8.

In the video, the President, citing an accomplishment report, said that the administration has already built 67,328.92 kilometers, or 51 percent ► 5

of its 131,410.66-kilometer target under its farm-to-market road network program.

"Katumbas ito na para tayong pabalik-balik mula Aparri hanggang Jolo ng 32 times, kaya't mahaba-haba po ito (This is a long one because it is equivalent to going back and forth from Aparri to Jolo 32 times)," he said.

With this, Marcos expressed confidence that his administration can

reach the target.

"Mukhang mabubuo naman natin yung ating 131,410 kilometers. Nakapag-51 percent na tayo (I think we can reach the 131,410-kilometer target. We're already at 51 percent)," he said.

"Patuloy naman nating gagawin ito (We will continue doing this). So, we will continue to build better more," he added.

He said the accomplishment would benefit many sectors.

"It is a testament to the magnitude of the accomplishment of the government," he said.

"It is not an initiative only to do with agriculture. It is a connection between all the different communities. But, of course, its main purpose is to connect the markets and the producers," he added.



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Gov't touts farm roads built

THE PHILIPPINE government has built around 67,328.92 kilometers of farm-to-market roads last year, which is more than half of its goal of building 131,410.66 km in six years, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. said on Monday.

"It is a testament to the magnitude of accomplishment of the government," he said in a video posted on his Instagram account. "It is a connection between all the different communities, but of course its main purpose is to connect the markets and the producers — to our agricultural sectors."

He said the past year's accomplishments amount to about 51% of the administration's goal to build over 131,000 km of farm-to-market roads in his six-year term. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**



Farm-to-market road program ng Marcos admin, 51% natapos na

Matapos ang isa't kalahating taon sa puwesto, ipinagmalaki ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na natapos na ang 51% ng Farm-to-Market Road Network Program ng Marcos administration.

"I am happy to share a significant update sa ating Farm-to-Market Road Network program. Ang ating dapat na maging target is 131,410.66 kilometers sa anim na taon, maaari ko nang mai-report na 51 percent of that nabuo na natin," sabi ng Pangulo sa maikling video message.

Mula sa naturang target, 67,328.92 km na ang naipagawa o 32 beses na road trips mula Aparri hanggang Jolo.

"It is a testament to the magnitude of accomplishment of the government. It is not an initiative only to do with agriculture, it is a connection between all the different communities but of course its main purpose is to connect the markets and the producers— sa ating mga agricultural sectors lalo," pahayag ni Marcos.

Pangako pa ng Pangulo sa publiko, tatapusin ang 131,410.66 kilometrong target bago matapos ang administrasyon.

Palalakasin din umano nito ang "Build, Better, More" program. (Gemma Garcia)



Ngayon araw na ito ay ibabahagi ko sa inyo ang isang farm na accredited ng Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Agriculture (DA), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) TESDA at iba pang ahensiya ng

malawak na farm at organized ang loob nito.

Hitik sa bunga ang mga tanim gaya ng miracle fruit, sweet sampaloc, mulberry, papaya, mangga at iba pa sa loob ng farm. Dahil alagang mabuti ng mga tauhan ni Sir Romy



Ang
Magsasakang
REPORTER

ni MER LAYSON



pamahalaan na makikita sa Sta. Ana, Pampanga.

Ito ay ang St. Isadore the Farmer Farm and Resort Center na pag-aari ni Romy Cordova. Makikita ito sa ng Sta. Ana at Arayat, ang complete address ay 434 Purok 5, San Isidro, Sta.



Ang mga tanim sa St. Isadore the farmer farm.

kay Geeson Cunanan, Farm Manager at Agriculturist ng St. Isadore the farmer farm sa programang Masaganang Bu-

Agri tourism site...

ST. ISADORE THE FARMER FARM & RESORT CENTER

Ana, Pampanga.

May lawak na 28-ektarya ang St. Isadore the farmer farm at kumpleto ang pasilidad nito. Maaari silang mag-accomodate ng iba't ibang okasyon, tulad ng trainings, seminars, wedding, debut, reunion at iba pa.

May malaking swimming pool, spa, fully furnish na mga kuwarto, maluluwag at malinis. May nipa hut o kubo, malawak na taniman ng palay, gulay, prutas, maraming alagang hayop tulad ng manok, itik, bibe at iba pa sa St. Isadore the farmer farm.

Masarap ang iba't ibang pagkain dito dahil fresh from farm to table ang lahat ng niluluto.

Ang nasabing farm ay may concept din sila na pick and pay ng mga gulay at prutas.

Purely natural and organic ang mga produce na gulay, prutas sa St. Isadore dahil sila mismo ang gumagawa ng natural na pataba sa mga halaman tulad ng vermicast, compost, chicken manure, carbonized Rice hull, cocopeat, Fermented Fruit Juice (FFJ) Oriental Herbal Nutrient (OHN) Fish Amino Acid (FAA) at marami pang mga organic na concoction.

May magandang viewdeck na makikita ang sunrise at sunset view na tinawag na casa Pablo viewdeck sa St. Isadore the farmer farm.

Very fantastic at relaxing ang scene sa

Cordova ang mga ito.

Mababait at masisipag din ang mga personnel ng St. Isadore the farmer farm.

Dahil sa accredited ng iba't ibang ahensiya ng pamahalaan ang St. Isadore the farmer farm bilang agri-tourism site ay maraming estudyante ang nag-o-on the job training (OJT) mula sa

na si Alex Layson at marami pang iba.

Kung nais ninyong magkaroon ng remarkable event ay gawin ninyo ang inyong okasyon sa St. Isadore the farmer and resort center.

Maaaring magpa-book ng ano mang okasyon sa St. Isadore the farmer farm and resort center dito sa



Ang Magsasakang Reporter at Romy Cordova, owner ng St. Isadore the Farmer Farm and Resort Center.

iba't ibang college state and university lalo na ang mga agriculture student.

Hindi lang magagaling at bihasa, dahil mga award winning ang mga instructor na agriculturist sa St. Isadore the farmer farm.

Isa sa mga tumutulong at consultant ng nasabing farm ay ang award winning agriculturist ng Mahalagat Pampanga

pamamagitan ng pagtawag sa 0919-273-01-58 o mag-email sa events.augustus@gmail.com

Sabihin lang po ninyo na nabasa ninyo sa kolum ng Magsasakang Reporter ang tungkol sa St. Isadore the farmer farm.

Sa darating na araw ng Linggo, Enero 14, 2024 ay mapapanood ninyo ang panayam at farm tour

hay 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 sa Radyo Singko 92.3 News FM.

Maaari rin kayong manood at mag-subscribe at mag-follow sa aking Youtube Channel na ANG MAGSASAKANG REPORTER at Facebook na Mer Layson at Facebook page na Ang Magsasakang Reporter, TV host Vlogger, Tiktok na Magsasakang Reporter para sa iba pang kaalaman at m 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



World food prices drop 13.7% in 2023

PARIS (AFP) – World food prices fell in 2023, with considerable declines for grains and oils as supply concerns eased, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization said Friday.

Overall, world food commodity prices fell by 13.7 percent in 2023 against the previous year, Rome-based FAO said.

The FAO's cereals price index fell 15.4 percent, "reflecting well supplied global markets" compared to 2022, when prices soared after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a major grain exporter.

While supply concerns eased for wheat and maize, the opposite was true for rice due to the impact of the El Niño weather phenomenon and India restricting exports.

Rice prices jumped by 21 percent last year.

The vegetable oil price index posted the biggest fall last year, dropping by 32.7 percent, thanks to improved supplies and reduced use for biofuel

production.

In contrast, sugar prices jumped by 26.7 percent overall, though they retreated from their highs in December, thanks to Brazil stepping up exports and reduced use for biofuels.

While the FAO's overall index dropped, consumer food prices in many countries are rising, often faster than the overall inflation rate.

"The fact that food commodity prices drop doesn't necessarily mean a drop in food prices," noted economist and food industry specialist Bruno Parmentier.

The FAO index measures commodity market prices, and it can take a while for these to filter through to supermarket shelves. They represent only a fraction of the cost of processed final products.

"Flour only represents four to eight percent of the price of a baguette," said Parmentier. "Most of it is the cost of labor and production costs" such as energy, water and rent, he added.



People trade live chickens at a market in the Shola district ahead of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christmas celebrations in Addis Ababa.

AFP



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India's agricultural exports seen up

NEW DELHI- India's agricultural exports will rise in fiscal 2023/24 from last year despite curbs on wheat, rice and sugar, the nation's trade minister said on Monday, amid efforts to diversify shipments.

The world's second-largest producer of wheat, rice and sugar, India restricted exports of these commodities last year in a bid to rein in rising domestic prices.

These restrictions are likely to cause a shortfall of about \$4 billion to \$5 billion this year, Reuters

reported last month.

"We had agri exports in the aggregate of about \$53 billion in 2022/23, and we expect the number to increase in the current year despite the restrictions placed on export of rice, wheat or sugar," trade minister Piyush Goyal said in his address to a conference in New Delhi.

Data from state-run trade body APEDA showed that exports of meat and dairy, cereal preparations, and fruits and vegetables rose between April and November this year.

India is likely to project higher economic growth estimates of around 7 percent for the 2023/24 fiscal year ending in March, compared with earlier government forecasts.

An increased estimate of annual gross domestic product is widely expected after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) revised its own growth forecast last month to 7 percent for the current fiscal year, from an earlier estimate of 6.5 percent.

- Reuters



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Soybeans inch higher

SINGAPORE- Chicago soybeans rose for the first time in three sessions on Monday, with bargain-buying underpinning prices, although ample old-crop supplies and improved weather in top exporter Brazil limited the upside potential of the market.

Corn firmed after last week's losses, while wheat fell 0.8 percent.

"The market is under supply pressure, we have plenty of beans around," said one Singapore-based trader. "Both Brazil and US have a lot to sell."

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) rose 0.1 percent to \$12.58 a bushel. The market dropped earlier on Monday to its lowest since Oct.

12 at \$12.54-1/4 a bushel.

Corn added 0.2 percent to \$4.61-3/4 a bushel and wheat lost 0.8 percent to \$6.11 a bushel.

Soybean futures are facing headwinds as rains have reduced concerns about crop losses in Brazil, the world's biggest exporter of the oilseed.

US exporters are likely to face stiff competition from Brazil in the soybean market this year.

Brazilian soybean exports will reach at least 1.3 million metric tons in January, a sharp increase from the 940,000 tons exported in the same month last year, according to projections released on Friday by Anec, a grain exporters group. - *Reuters*



Global food prices drop 13.7% in 2023: FAO

PARIS, France (AFP) – World food prices fell in 2023, with considerable declines for grains and oils as supply concerns eased, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization said Friday.

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"The fact that food commod-

ity prices drop doesn't necessarily mean a drop in food prices," noted economist and food industry specialist Bruno Parmentier.

The FAO index measures commodity market prices, and it can take a while for these to filter through to supermarket shelves. They represent only a fraction of the cost of processed final products.

"Flour only represents four to eight percent of the price of a baguette," said Parmentier. "Most of it is the cost of labor and production costs" such as energy, water and rent, he added.