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Phl pineapple exports grew by 5% in 2023

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IN PREPARATION FOR PRESIDENT'S HANOI VISIT FROM JAN. 29 TO 31

DA APPLIES FINISHING TOUCHES TO PH-VIETNAM RICE DEAL

By **Julie M. Aurelio**
@JMAurelioINQ

Agriculture officials are "almost done" with the working draft of the country's proposed five-year rice trade agreement with Vietnam, which they hope will be signed during President Marcos' state visit to Hanoi later this month.

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. gave the assurance on Tuesday following his meeting with the President.

"We were given instructions by the President [in December] to draft and finalize the memorandum of agreement with Vietnam so that it can be signed when he goes on a state visit to Vietnam by the end of January.

We have the working draft; it's almost done," he said during a briefing in Malacañang.

Mr. Marcos will go on a three-day state visit to the Vietnamese capital from Jan. 29 to Jan. 31 to meet with Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong and boost bilateral ties between their countries.

Manila and Hanoi have agreed to finalize a rice trade

agreement, which involves Vietnam exporting rice to the Philippines to ensure its neighbor's food security.

Rice supply guarantee

Asked for details on the rice trade deal, Laurel said: "Basically it guarantees that they will be supplying rice to us even in calamity situations. That is part of our food safety.

That is good for us."

The agriculture secretary also assured the public of a sufficient rice supply in the country based on inventories made in December and early this month.

Laurel said the Philippines recorded an ending rice stock of 20 million tons at the end of last year and it was eyeing a similar volume for 2024 in

preparation for El Niño, a climate pattern associated with warmer and drier conditions.

"As far as supply is concerned, we have enough supply of rice. We have healthy stocks of rice for December and January, and there's additional rice coming. But prices are hard to predict because world prices of rice are going up because of El Niño," he added. INQ

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NEWS

DA still far from being 'data-driven'

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on Tuesday admitted that the government still lacked the necessary data to use as the basis for its programs for farmers and fishermen. This is the biggest challenge in fulfilling President Marcos' directive to develop a "data-driven information system" for the sector to avoid supply gluts that cause wastage of agricultural commodities. —STORY BY MELVIN GASCON

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DA must be 'data-driven' to curb cycles of glut, scarcity

By Melvin Gascon
@melvingasconINQ

President Marcos on Tuesday ordered the Department of Agriculture (DA) to develop a "data-driven information system" for every planting season to address the overproduction of agricultural products in the market, according to the Presidential Communications Office.

In a press briefing, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. admitted the government still lacked the necessary data to use as basis for its programs, such as the peso value of excess agricultural products lost to wastage.

"Well, as for the study of the statistics, that has really been my problem from the start. As I have already said in my first-ever presscon, we actually don't have the data to quantify the total [amount of losses]," he told reporters.

While Laurel lamented the lack of official government data on the losses due to oversupply, he said that based on his firsthand experience, the agricultural sector usually suffers a 30-percent loss in income due to wastage from the lack of facilities along the supply chain.

The DA chief said he was surprised to get the same data after talking with a farmer from Benguet on Friday at the Food Terminal Inc. (FTI) trading complex in Taguig.

"I was surprised that he said the same thing that was on my



Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

mind when I asked 'How much of your produce is lost [to wastage] as it reaches Metro Manila markets?' He answered 'one ton, roughly 30 percent,'" Laurel said.

A data-driven agricultural system can also prevent the frequent shortages in commodities such as rice, sugar, meat, garlic and onion that has affected Filipino consumers.

3-year food security plan

Laurel and other DA officials met with President Marcos in Malacañang on Tuesday morning to present the agency's three-year plan for the country's agricultural sector, with the main thrust of ensuring food security.

The "Para sa Masaganang Bagong Pilipinas" program, according to Laurel, included digitalization aimed at uplifting the agri-fisheries sector by equipping decision-makers, farmers, food producers and consumers

with accessible technology and advanced tools.

During the meeting, the President told agriculture officials that farmers should be equipped with the "necessary information" to limit their production of agricultural products to those that could be sold in the market.

"It's another part of data-driven decisions that we give to the farmers, the producers—on what is marketable at this time, this season," he said.

"This way, we will no longer be hearing the news that our farmers have over-produced, or that they cannot sell their produce and have just either allowed it to rot or given it away," the President added.

DA officials agreed, saying that with "accurate, real-time data, stakeholders can make smarter, data-driven decisions and efficiently manage emergencies and day-to-day operations."

The World Bank earlier noted that improving the collection and use of data and harnessing the power of digital tools would enable small farmers to increase efficiency and promote equity, pointing out that data-driven digital agriculture would improve crop yields, reduce waste, support transparent pricing, lower costs, and strengthen farm resilience, among others.

No cash aid

Aside from causing losses to farmers, the problem of overproduction is also straining the government's resources,

and Laurel projected that the DA would be able to provide a solution to the vegetable glut only "in 13 to 14 months" with the establishment of more cold storage facilities.

Laurel admitted that the DA lacked the immediate response to help farmers deal with the current oversupply of vegetables and crop pests.

"As of now, we have no aid for [our farmers] because technically there's no fund to help them," he said, referring to farmers who were reported to have been throwing away their produce due to overproduction.

The DA chief clarified that they have drawn up a list of possible interventions that would help farmers, but these would not involve the giving of financial aid.

"As much as possible, we are trying to find ways to help them, of course. I think that is the job of the government. But as of the moment, our team at the DA's trying to figure out what we can give them, and as far as cash *ayuda* (aid) is concerned, I am actually not a believer in that," he said.

"I'd rather give [them] farm implements [such as] seeds, fertilizer, or something else. But definitely, we will try our best to help because that's our mandate," Laurel added.

He expressed optimism that the planned establishment of cold storage facilities to go with the addition of more Kadiwa stores would help address the problem faced by

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farmers when they have excess produce.

"Whenever we have incidents like that, it's either the farmers store their excess production—and that's subsidized by the government—or it could be arranged that the government buys those excess

products at a certain price to be distributed through Kadiwa," he said.

But even with the planned interventions, Laurel was cautious about making projections on the impact that these would have on the country's food security, such as lowering the cost of rice.

"The price of rice depends on the world market. But as-

suming everything is stable and the country would not be hit by calamities or all of that, hopefully, at least that would cause a 5-percent reduction in prices," he said.

The P20-a-kilo rice, which was a campaign promise of President Marcos, remains "an aspiration, a target," Laurel noted.

He also called on local gov-

ernment units to help solve the oversupply problem as part of their devolved functions, and their personnel guiding farmers in planning their production.

The DA also aims to create more water-impounding facilities and set up solar-powered irrigation systems to help mitigate the impact of the oncoming El Niño phenomenon. INQ



DA to build more Taguig cold storage facilities

By **CATHERINE TALAVERA**

The Department of Agriculture (DA) plans to construct more cold storage facilities at the Food Terminal Inc. (FTI) in Taguig City as part of its strategy to address overproduction and minimize post-harvest losses of agricultural products, particularly vegetables and

other high-value crops.

In a statement yesterday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. shared his plan of constructing a chiller warehouse dedicated to vegetables and other high-value crops at a 1.3-hectare section of the FTI property.

Laurel said the facility would be equipped with a

processing plant and trading area, and prioritize farmers' produce for buffer stocking.

"The project will cost P500 million and will require 12 months to complete," the DA said.

Laurel said half of the warehouse would be allocated to the coil system, while the other half of the facility would be

evaporator type.

In a briefing with FTI officials, Laurel acknowledged the problem of the time to time oversupply of tomatoes and cabbage.

"That's why there is a need to immediately put up storage in the FTI. My direction is to build a network for chilled cold storage systems," Laurel said.

The Agriculture chief also told FTI

officials to purchase excess produce of farmers and supply them to Kadiwa centers.

"If there is overproduction, instead of throwing it away, the FTI should buy it so we can put it in the Kadiwa program," he said in Filipino.

"The plan is also to strengthen the Kadiwa program of the DA. I plan to bring back the Kadiwa to the FTI after two years," he said.

Laurel highlighted the department's plan to centralize all agriculture logistics management matters, including FTI, to the soon-to-be-formed logistics office of the DA.

"I will move all the cold storage of the DA to the logistics office, which will conduct research and inventory of all facilities within the Philippines to ensure synchronization," he said.



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DA: 30% of crops wasted due to poor logistics

By **ALEXIS ROMERO**

Nearly a third or 30 percent of the country's agricultural produce is wasted because of a poor logistics system, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said yesterday, as it cited the need to invest "heavily" in post-harvest facilities to reduce losses and lower commod-

ity prices.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said a lot of infrastructure, including agri-industrial ports and cold storage facilities, must be built to address the oversupply of vegetables and other crops.

"We also have a very big move on the logistics – 30 percent of our produce, especially

of vegetables, is gone because of wastage because of the poor logistics system in our food supply chain. If we can lessen, or hopefully almost eliminate, those losses, that will be equivalent to at least 10 to 15 percent less cost for our vegetables and high-value crops like fruits," Tiu Laurel said.

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DA From Page 1

Tiu Laurel admitted that there is no accurate data to quantify farm losses and that the 30 percent estimate was based on his experience in the business sector as owner of a cold chain logistics company.

According to Tiu Laurel, the country is losing about 12.7 to 15 percent of its rice production or about 450,000 tons per year because of the lack of post-harvest facility.

"No major post-harvest facility was funded by the government in the last 40 years; only small ones, piecemeal which is actually irrelevant or useless, what a waste. So, that's why we need really to fund these projects but we cannot build small, we have to build bigger," the agriculture chief said.

"Let's not say no investment – it's like minimal investment... I cannot say there is none but the effect of the investment in the past administrations is insignificant. I'm not privy to the direction of the past administrations, but for me, I just can say it was a wasted opportunity."

In post-harvest facilities alone, P93 billion is needed in the next three years to save P10.7 billion annually on wasted rice and corn, he said.

"For cold storage, my budget this year is only P1 billion so I will focus all of that on four cold storage (facilities) to address that vegetable issue; but that can only cover part of Luzon. So, if we try to solve the problem as soon as possible, assuming 2025... I need additional P5 billion to address the vegetable cold storage issue of the whole nation," the DA secretary added.

Tiu Laurel said the government would be building a 5,000-pallet position cold storage for high-value crops and vegetables to serve cooperatives and farmers and address the oversupply problem.

He said the issue should also be addressed by local governments since the function related to agricultural workers has been devolved to them.

Modernization

The DA has revealed its three-year plan aimed at making the agriculture and fisheries sectors a viable investment option, aligned with the goal to modernize the sector.

Tiu Laurel unveiled before Cabinet

members yesterday his plan to increase agricultural productivity, lower food cost, ensure food security and make farming and fisheries a more bankable investment alternative.

"Our goal is to modernize Philippine agriculture to spread benefits across the entire value chain," he said.

To achieve this vision, Tiu Laurel laid out a three-year plan that involves expanding and improving available agri-fishery areas to increase production as well as mechanize and modernize agriculture and fishery production systems.

The plan also seeks to develop post-harvest systems and infrastructure as well as efficient logistics systems for input and production output.

He said the multi-year program on post-harvest facilities will cost around P93 billion, which could be recovered in under nine years.

He added that the DA will appoint an assistant secretary for logistics to help optimize costs for everyone involved in the value chain, from producers to consumers.

The agriculture chief pointed out that its program to digitize DA operations seeks to uplift the agri-fisheries sector by equipping decision makers, food producers and consumers with accessible technology and advanced tools.

Moreover, the DA chief is also looking at pushing legislative reforms to update certain laws and regulations that will allow the agency to better respond to challenges facing the farm and fisheries sector.

Galunggong price going down

The DA is expecting the prices of galunggong or local round scad to go down in March because of the end of the closed fishing season this month.

Speaking to Malacañang reporters yesterday, Tiu Laurel noted that the season of galunggong fishing in the Philippines is from March to June. "The catch won't be that much by the lifting (of the closed fishing season) by February. But by March, I expect prices to drop," he said in Filipino. "If the price is P200 (per kilo) now, it may decrease to P150, P130."

Data from the DA showed that prices of galunggong ranged from P200 to P320 per kilogram as of Jan. 15, while imported galunggong was from P180 to P260 per kilo.

— With Romina Cabrera,
Catherine Talavera



Phl to sign 5-year rice deal with Vietnam

By **HELEN FLORES**

The Philippines is expected to forge a five-year rice deal with Vietnam during President Marcos' state visit later this month to ensure stable supply even during calamities, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday.

Tiu Laurel said they have prepared a working draft for a memorandum of agreement (MOA), which would guarantee the supply of the staple to the Philippines.

"We were given instructions when we were in the ASEAN meeting in Japan by the President to draft, finalize the MOA with Vietnam, so that it will be signed during his state visit to Vietnam this end of January," he said, referring to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Asked about the salient points of the MOA, Laurel said it guarantees that Vietnam would supply rice to us even in calamity situation.

He gave assurance that rice supply in the country is sufficient based on the inventories conducted in December and January, in addition to the upcoming rice imports.

"As far as supply is concerned we have enough supply of rice. For December, our stock is quite healthy, January is healthy. There's additional rice coming," he said.

Tiu Laurel could not say whether the increase in rice supply would result in lower prices amid fear of tight supply due to El Niño.

"But as far as the price is concerned, it's hard to predict. The problem is the world price increases because of El Niño," he said.

Tiu Laurel said even rice producing countries such as Thailand and Vietnam also experience high rice prices.

"The prices of rice in Thailand, which is a major rice producing country, and Vietnam is also going up as of the moment. Even Malaysia and Indonesia (prices) also increase," he said. "We have to really manage the situation and we are looking at it on a day-to-day basis."

The country had an ending rice stock of 20 million tons last year. It is eyeing a similar volume this year because of the possible effects of El Niño, which is projected to persist until April, Tiu Laurel said.

Asked whether bringing the price of rice to P20 per kilo remains a goal of the agency, he said it's an "aspiration."

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EDITORIAL

Going to waste

By the estimates of the Department of Agriculture, up to 30 percent of crops go to waste due to poor logistics. Cordillera farmers will probably say the percentage is much higher; they recently had to sell their highland vegetables at a loss or simply give the crops away after farmgate prices hit rock bottom amid a flood of imports.

New Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel said the country also loses from 12.7 to 15 percent of its annual rice production – about 450,000 metric tons – due to the lack of post-harvest facilities. In the past 40 years, Laurel said, the government has not funded any major post-harvest facility. Laurel stressed the need to invest “heavily” in such facilities to cut agricultural losses and reduce prices of commodities. He estimates that adequate logistics services can mean from 10 to 15 percent lower retail prices for vegetables and high-value crops.

Perhaps Laurel, who ran a major fishing business and cold chain logistics firm before he joined the government, can actually do something about these problems beyond talking about them, which is largely what several administrations have done.

With a budget of P1 billion for this year for cold storage, Laurel says the DA can build four such facilities for vegetables and high-value crops, all of them in Luzon. He estimates that P5 billion is needed to set up cold chain facilities in other parts of the country that can be operational by next year. He sees no immediate solution to the problem of overproduction and says there is no cash aid or *ayuda* available for farmers affected by the glut in cabbage, carrots and other crops.

Laurel says he is no believer in cash dole-outs and instead prefers to distribute seeds and fertilizers to farmers. Unveiling his department’s three-year plan yesterday, he said it includes investing in post-harvest facilities particularly for rice and corn, expanding agriculture and fishery areas and modernizing the agri-fishery production system. He said President Marcos also wants a data-driven information system for keeping track of agriculture production.

Such measures have been discussed for many years now. With all the problems involving agricultural production that the nation faces, it’s time to move beyond talk.



FOCUS ON AGRICULTURE — President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. (fourth from right) presides over a sectoral meeting on the Department of Agriculture's (DA) plans and programs at the State Dining Hall of Malacañan Palace on Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2024. (Noel B. Pabalate)

DA: 30% of agri produce wasted due to poor logistics system

By JEL SANTOS

Approximately 30 percent of the Philippines' agricultural produce is wasted because of poor logistics system, Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. revealed on Tuesday, Jan. 16.

In a Malacañang press briefing

following President Marcos' sectoral meeting with the DA, Laurel said the agriculture department has "a big move in logistics" as he noted the produce wasted due to poor logistics.

"Thirty percent of our produce, especially of vegetables, is gone because of wastage, because of poor

logistics system in our food supply chain," he said. "If we can lessen or hopefully almost eliminate the loses, that would be equivalent to at least 10 to 15 percent less cost in our vegetables and high-value crops like fruits."

However, Laurel admitted that the country



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DA: 30% of agri produce wasted due to poor logistics system 1◀

currently has no accurate data to quantify the said losses in agricultural produce.

“Wala tayong accurate data to quantify the total kung ilan ba tala-ga. I got the 30 percent actually from my own experience in the business sector, having run a cold chain logistics company before (We do not have accurate data to quantify the total and get an accurate figure. I got the 30 percent actually from my own experience in the business sector, having run a cold chain logistics company before),” he said.

Data-driven decisions

Underscoring the importance of data, President Marcos said farmers should be equipped with the necessary information to limit the production of agricultural products that are only sellable in the market.

He stressed the need to give

farmers the technical know-how for them to better decide what to plant in every season.

“It’s another part of data-driven decisions that we give to the farmers, the producers. Kung ano ang mabenta (What is in demand) at this time, this season,” President Marcos said. “So that hindi natin maririnig yung mga balita na nag-over produce, hindi mabenta, nabulok na lang, pinamimigay na lang (So that we would no longer hear news of over production, unsold and spoiled produce, and products just given away).”

Laurel said that with accurate and real-time data, stakeholders can make smarter, data-driven decisions and efficiently manage emergencies and day-to-day operations.

This would also pave the way toward a resilient sector that thrives

in the modern, digital world, Laurel said.

It was recalled that upon his appointment, Laurel said he was planning to revive the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) in order to establish critical sectoral data and information required for developing timely and appropriate policies to develop the local agriculture sector.

During the sectoral meeting, President Marcos also pushed for the upgrade of the processing of goods as well as to develop the necessary facilities so farmers will gain more value for their products.

Laurel said the DA will build 5,000 pallet position cold storage for high-value crops, which include vegetables, to address wastage.

The DA chief also presented to the chief executive a three-year plan for the country’s agricultural sector to ensure food security.

The plan includes the digitalization aimed at uplifting the agri-fisheries sector by equipping decision-makers, farmers, food producers, and consumers with accessible technology and advanced tools. (With a report from Betheena Unite)



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Rice supply sufficient

Marcos expected
to sign supply
deal with Vietnam

By BETHEENA UNITE and RAYMUND ANTONIO

There is a sufficient rice supply in the country based on the inventories made in December and

January, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Laurel Jr. said.

"As far as supply is concerned, we have enough supply of rice—December, medyo healthy ang ating stocks (our stocks are quite

healthy). January is healthy, there's additional rice coming," Laurel said in Palace briefing on Tuesday, Jan. 16. "But as far as the price is concerned, it is difficult to predict. Ang problema iyong world price is

tumataas eh 'no dahil sa El Niño (The problem is the world price which is rising due to El Niño)."

The DA chief pointed out that even rice-producing countries like Thailand and Viet- ► **5**

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Rice supply sufficient 1◀

nam also experience high rice prices.

"Rice prices in Thailand, which is a major rice-producing country, and Vietnam are also rising as of the moment. Even in Malaysia and Indonesia, prices are rising. So, we have to really manage the situation and we are looking at it on a day-to-day basis," Laurel said.

The country has an ending rice stock of 20 million tons last year and it is eyeing for a similar volume this year because of the possible effects of the El Niño phenomenon that is forecast to persist until April, Laurel further said.

Rice deal with Vietnam

Laurel also bared that President Marcos is expected to sign a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Vietnam during his state visit there later this month to ensure the unimpeded supply of rice to the country.

"We were given instruction when we were in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) meeting in Japan by the President to draft, finalize the MOA with Vietnam so that during

the trip this end of January, a state visit to Vietnam, it can be signed and we already have the working draft and almost done," he told reporters.

The Agriculture chief also explained the gist of the agreement with Vietnam.

"It basically guarantees us that they will be supplying us rice, continuously supplying us rice even in calamity situation," Laurel said. "So, that's part of our food safety. So, that's good for us."

The official likewise revealed that "there was no real agreement" with Indonesia on the importation of rice.

In September 2023, Marcos welcomed Vietnam's offer of a five-year rice supply deal to stabilize the country's rice stock.

This happened during the bilateral meeting between the President and Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh on the sidelines of the 43rd ASEAN Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia.

As of May 2023, the Philippines imported some 1.5 million tons of rice, amounting to \$772.4 million, from Vietnam.



DA bares plan to boost agri production

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) aims to increase productivity, lower food costs, ensure food security, and make farming and fisheries bankable investment alternatives in three years, **Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said Tuesday.**

Laurel said that the DA would invest heavily in postharvest facilities to enhance product recovery and lower the prices of rice and corn.

He said the government would need P93 billion to build postharvest facilities in the next three years to save rice and corn wastage.

"We're losing about 12.7 to 15 percent of our rice production due to lack of postharvest facility. So, we need P93 billion for the harvest facilities for rice and corn. For the cold storage, my budget this year is only P1 billion, so we will focus on four cold storage to address that vegetable issue — but that can only cover part of Luzon," Laurel said.

"So, if we try to solve the problem as soon as possible, assuming 2025... I need additional P5 billion to address the vegetable cold

storage issue of the whole nation. How to get the money... I'm still new at the government, so I'm still trying to figure that out also," he added.

The DA chief said a postharvest facility would soon rise in Dingras, Ilocos Norte, which can store 120 metric tons (MT).

The DA plans to build similar facilities in Concepcion, Tarlac; Dumangas, Iloilo; and Musuan Maramag, Bukidnon.

Under the Masagana Agri-Food Infrastructure Modernization (Mafim) program of the National Food Authority, the government will build 196 dryers, 48 silos, 221 warehouses, 57 rice mills, 24 corn mills and 638 handling equipment all over the country.

"We also have a very big move on the logistics — 30 percent of



■ Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

our produce, especially of vegetables, is gone because of wastage, because of the poor logistics system in our food supply chain," Laurel said.

"If we can lessen or hopefully almost eliminate those losses, that will be equivalent to at least 10 to 15 percent less cost on vegetables

and high-value crops like fruits," he added.

In addition, Laurel said he intends to reorganize DA to make it less regulatory.

Laurel said the DA would also appoint an assistant secretary for logistics to help optimize costs for everyone involved in the value chain, from

producers down to consumers.

"This initiative involves streamlining transportation, distribution, and management processes for inputs and outputs, aiming to achieve a sustainable and cost-effective agricultural system," he added.

Last December, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. directed the

DA to report on the status of the construction of cold storage facilities and provision of postharvest facilities by January 2024, focusing on its implementation.

The DA established 268 cold chain facilities nationwide as of November last year.

By June 2028, the DA aims to complete 47 additional cold chain facilities.

Data-driven

President Marcos on Tuesday ordered the DA to implement a data-driven information system in every planting season to address overproduction.

In a meeting with DA officials in Malacañang, Marcos said farmers should be provided with the information they need to limit the production of agricultural goods that are only marketable.

"It's another part of data-driven decisions that we give to the farmers, the producers. Kung ano ang mabenta (What is in demand) at this time, this season," the President said.

Marcos also stressed the need to give farmers the technical know-how to help them pick what to plant each season.



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Poultry from Ohio, California banned

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has imposed a temporary ban on the importation of poultry products from Ohio and California in the United States following avian influenza or bird flu outbreaks.

In a memorandum order, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said restricting the entry of domestic and wild birds and their products from the two states was necessary to prevent the spread of the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), particularly the H5N1 subtype.

"The rapid spread of H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in the United States of America in a short period of time since its first laboratory detection necessitates a wider coverage of trade restriction to prevent the entry of HPAI virus and protect the health of the local poultry population," he said.

Reports submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture to the World Organization for Animal Health in December 2023 confirmed outbreaks of bird flu in California and Ohio.

In line with this, the importation of domestic and wild birds,

and their products, including poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs and semen have been prohibited until further notice.

The processing, evaluation and issuances of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances were also suspended.

Shipments already in transit and were slaughtered or produced 14 days before the first bird flu outbreak in the locality will be allowed. The first bird flu outbreak in California was recorded on Nov. 20, 2023. For Ohio, it was Nov. 21, 2023.

Data from the DA's Bureau of Animal Industry showed that the US shipped 149.46 million kilograms (kg) of poultry meat to the Philippines from January to November 2023. This was 37.9 percent of the total poultry imports last year.

In terms of the overall meat imports, the US was the country's second-top source, delivering about 203.48 million kilos.

Brazil remained as the biggest supplier of meat imports, shipping 369.38 million kg or 33.11 percent of the country's total meat imports.

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



Transport, power costs critical to success of cold storage network

By **Adrian H. Halili**
Reporter

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) needs to address logistics and utility issues if its plan to set up a network of cold storage facilities is to succeed, according to analysts.

Monetary Board member V. Bruce J. Tolentino said there may be "infrastructure issues such as transport and electric power issues that need to be resolved first."

"There may also be policy issues such as LGU (local govern-

ment unit) permits, etc. that are constraining the speedy transport of goods," Mr. Tolentino said in a Viber message.

At a Palace briefing on Tuesday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., said the DA has allocated about P1 billion for the construction of four cold storage facilities this year.

The DA is planning to put up sites in Taguig, Quezon, Mindoro, and La Union or Baguio.

He added that an additional P5 billion is needed to build more facilities elsewhere in the country.

On Monday, the DA said the network will stockpile high-value crops and vegetables and smooth

out periods of shortage or oversupply.

Former Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said the vegetable industry has not been receiving significant funding in recent years.

"Financial resources will be needed to up the game in terms of boosting productivity (and) sustaining fresh supplies, (enabling) affordable prices year-round," Mr. Dar said in a text message.

The first facility to be constructed will rise on a 1.3-hectare site at the Food Terminal, Inc. complex in Taguig City at a cost of about P500 million.

The DA said cold storage will reduce post-harvest losses and allow commodities to be stored during periods of oversupply, allowing farmers to generate revenue from their harvests regardless of supply conditions.

Mr. Dar said the facilities will also maintain the quality of produce, raising the likelihood of farmers getting good prices.

"Spoilage will be minimized, and prices can be stabilized. Hoarding as well can be (reduced) if not eradicated," he added.

Mr. Tolentino said that there is a need to undertake a thorough assessment of the economic and financial feasibility

of constructing more cold storage facilities.

"This assessment must include in-depth consultation with private sector players to find out why these private players have not invested in cold storage facilities themselves," he added.

Mr. Laurel concurred that the government has failed to invest in major post-harvest facilities in decades.

"No major post-harvest facility has been funded by the government in the last 40 years. *Puro mga tingi-tingi* (the facilities have been retail in scale) which are irrelevant or useless... we cannot build small; we need to build big," he said.

Raul Q. Montemayor, Federation of Free Farmers national manager, said that keeping products within cold storage facilities will mean expenses for farmers, who, "must be linked to as many markets as possible, electronically if possible, so that they can dispose of their products at the soonest possible time."

Mr. Montemayor added that product standards need to be developed and applied to assure quality produce for consumers.

"Logistical support for transport will be essential so that products are delivered promptly to buyers," he said.



Marcos to sign 5-year rice supply deal during Vietnam state visit

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. is expected to sign a five-year rice supply agreement with Vietnam when he visits that country later this month, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

The proposed deal ensures a reliable supply of rice from Vietnam even when supply is constrained, Mr. Laurel said at a Palace briefing.

"It basically guarantees us that they will be continuously supplying us rice, even in a calamity situation," he said.

Mr. Marcos in September said Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh had proposed the five-year rice supply deal on the sidelines of the 43rd Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit in Indonesia in September.

"There was an agreement to draft a memorandum of agree-

ment (MoA) or memorandum of understanding and we were given instructions (by the President) when we were in the ASEAN meeting in Japan to draft, finalize the MoA with Vietnam," Mr. Laurel said, "so that during his trip at the end of January, the state visit to Vietnam, it will be signed."

The Philippines imported 3.5 million tons of rice last year.

Mr. Laurel described the supply of rice in December as "healthy," due to the expected arrival of imports to bridge the period of scarcity between domestic harvests.

But rice prices have been increasing all over the region mainly due to El Niño, he noted.

"We have to really manage the situation and we are looking at it on a day-to-day basis."

Mr. Laurel added that tensions between the Philippines and Chi-

na over territorial disputes have had no impact on agricultural trade between the two countries.

"As of now, there is no impact."

Mr. Laurel added that the Philippines has been "shipping durian to China and it looks promising."

The durian export deal was signed during a state visit to China in January.

The Philippine pineapple industry is also heavily reliant on China, with Chinese imports of Philippine pineapple up 22% year on year in the first seven months of 2023.

Mr. Laurel said the Philippines is seeking to address food security by mitigating post-harvest losses.

Mr. Laurel said the government will need P93 billion to build post-harvest facilities over the next three years, to keep P10.7 billion worth of rice and corn a year from going to waste.

"No major post-harvest facility was funded by the government in the last 40 years," he said, adding that any such projects were "actually irrelevant or useless."

"That's why we need really to fund these projects, but we cannot build small, we have to build bigger," adding that "mini" projects of limited scale have been ruled out.

He said the Department of Agriculture has a P1-billion budget this year to build cold storage for vegetable produce, but the funds "can only cover part of Luzon."

"If we try to solve the problem as soon as possible, assuming 2025... I need an additional P5 billion to address the vegetable cold storage issue of the entire country," he said. "How to get the money? I'm still new at the government, so I'm still trying to figure that out." — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**



DA sets 3-year program to prevent wastage, increase output

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is embarking on a three-year "Para sa Masaganang Bagong Pilipinas" plan which will address product wastage and increase production.

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., during the sectoral meeting in Malacanang, yesterday said the program entails the construction of 47 cold chain facilities until 2028 on top of the 268 completed last year.

Laurel said four chiller storages worth P1 billion will be built in either La Union or Baguio City, in

Taguig City, in Sariaya in Quezon, and in Occidental Mindoro.

Post-harvest facilities, each with a capacity of 120 metric tons, are being built in Dingras in Ilocos Norte, in Concepcion in Tarlac; in Dumangas in Iloilo and in Musuan Maramag in Bukidnon, among others.

Laurel said the DA will build pallet position cold storage facilities for high-value crops and vegetables in coordination with the farmers, farmer cooperatives and local government units to help address concerns on oversupply of agricultural products especially vegetables.

The cold storage facilities are eyed for completion and operation by June next year.

P93B needed

Laurel said the government will need P93 billion in the next three years to build post-harvest facilities for rice and corn.

He said these facilities will help prevent a wastage of P10.7 billion worth of rice and corn a year. He said at least 12.7 to 15 percent of the rice produced yearly is wasted due to lack of post-harvest facilities.

Laurel said the government will also continue to try its best to reach

the P20 per kilo of rice promised by Marcos during the presidential campaign.

The additional cold storage and post-harvest facilities are part of DA's three-year plan which also included expanding agri-fishery areas for increased production, modernizing agri and fishery production systems, and infrastructure development such as building more ports and agri-industrial ports to improve the logistics system.

Laurel intends to reorganize DA to make it less regulatory but developmental in regulations and food safety.

No doleouts; fisheries code amendment

Laurel, in a press briefing meanwhile, said the DA has no budget to provide assistance to vegetable farmers including the onion growers, who have been affected by the oversupply and wastage, and pests, respectively.

He said the DA will come up with a protocol in the next two weeks but noted he does not believe in cash handouts. He said he prefers the provision of agricultural implements such as seeds and fertilizers.

Laurel said the proposed amendments to the Philippine

Fisheries Code and draft Executive Order on Strategic Agriculture and Fisheries Development Zones was also discussed during the sectoral meeting with the focus on the Users of Municipal Waters (Section 18).

The proposed amendment would potentially allow commercial fishing vessels to operate in municipal waters at a depth of 35 meters or more.

He said the President emphasized the importance of identifying major fishing grounds and of regularly monitoring the status

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DA

of fisheries in collaboration with local governments in light of the proposed amendments to Section 18.

Rice price a concern Laurel also assured the public supply of rice in the country is "heathy" based on the current inventories.

Laurel said supply would be augmented by upcoming rice deliveries from overseas.

He said the country had an ending rice stock of 20 million tons last year and is eyeing a similar volume this year.

Laurel said the prices of rice, however, is a bit of a concern and hard to predict especially with El Niño.

He said even rice producing

countries like Thailand and Vietnam are experiencing high rice prices.

Asked about the status of the Philippines' five-year rice agreement with Vietnam, Laurel expressed hope the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) would be signed during President Marcos' trip to Vietnam later this month.

He said among the provisions of the proposed MOA is the guarantee from Vietnam that it would continue to supply the Philippines with rice supply even during calamity situations.

"So that is part of our food safety. So that is good for us," he said.



Imposition of SSG duties on imported Indonesian coffee undergoes review

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS

✉@jearcalas

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is reviewing the imposition of special safeguard duties (SSG) on imported coffee following the recent bilateral meeting between Manila and Jakarta.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. confirmed on Tuesday that the DA is undertaking the necessary policy review regarding the SSG on imported coffee products.

"We are reviewing that po," Laurel said in a news briefing at Malacañang.

During his recent state visit to the Philippines, Indonesian President Joko Widodo sought President Marcos Jr.'s help in resolving Indonesia's issue with the latter's continued imposition of SSG on imported coffee products.

The DA is the concerned agency when it comes to the imposition of the trade remedy on involved agricultural commodities like coffee.

The Philippines imposes a price-based SSG on imported coffee products, a mechanism it started implementing in 2018 after the government saw a surge in coffee imports, which are priced way below the trigger price of the country.

SSG duties is a trade mechanism that a country can impose on imported products that fall below a so-called trigger price by slapping additional duties in order to protect domestic output against unfair market price competition.

Indonesia was one of the badly hit trade-partners by the Philippines since it started imposing the SSG on imported coffee products, resulting in lower imports

since 2019.

In March 2023, the Philippines maintained that it continued slapping SSG on imported coffee products, particularly instant coffee, as long as the items are below the country's trigger price to extend necessary protection to local farmers.

The country's instant coffee

imports from January to October 2023 declined by about 11.73 percent to 138.898 metric tons from 157.366 metric tons recorded volume in the same 10-month period of 2022, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

PSA data showed that the value of instant coffee imports during

the reference period fell by 10.2 percent year-on-year to \$422.509 million from \$470.748 million.

Indonesia was the Philippines's top supplier of instant coffee during the 10-month period with a total shipment volume of 121.51 metric tons valued at \$332.48 million, according to the PSA.



DA chief sees flat rice output growth for PHL in 2023 amid El Niño threat

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

[@sam_medenilla](#)

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) expects a flat growth in rice output this year due rising incidents of droughts caused by El Niño.

Manila is now set to finally sign a new memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Hanoi during the up-

coming visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to Vietnam to guarantee the country's rice supply during

such calamity.

Despite ongoing government efforts to sustain and boost food production this year, DA Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said the country is expected to produce the same amount of "healthy stock" of rice in 2023 by the end of the year.

"Technically, if I am not mistaken, our [rice] production for [2023] is 20 million tons and 2024 [production] should be almost the same due to El Niño," Laurel said in a news conference in Malacañang on Tuesday.

To ramp up food production, Laurel said they are eyeing to build more water impounding areas and

facilities as well as install more solar power irrigation in more areas as soon as possible.

The government will also tap imports to ensure national food security during the challenging times.

Laurel announced that they are almost done in drafting the five-year supply deal with Vietnam, which was first announced during the 43rd Asean Summit in Indonesia last September.

He said they were instructed by the President to complete the draft before his next state visit to Vietnam in the coming weeks.

"[It] basically guarantees us that they will be supplying rice,

even in a calamity situation. So that is part of our food safety. So that is good for us," Laurel said.

The government is currently trying to implement measures to secure the country's food supply during the first half of the year amid the worsening impact of El Niño, which is expected to cause higher global food prices.

He noted rice prices have increased in major rice producing countries like Thailand, Vietnam as well as Malaysia and Indonesia due to effects of El Niño.

"So, we have to really manage the situation and we are looking at it on a day-to-day basis," Laurel said.



Draft sa Ph-Vietnam rice deal ‘halos tapos na’

HALOS tapos na ang ‘draft’ para sa rice trade agreement sa pagitan ng Pilipinas at Vietnam.

Layon nito na tiyakin ang suplay ng bigas sa Pilipinas.
“From what I understand, there is no real agreement in that Indonesian meeting but there was... no agreement signed meaning... but there was an agreement to draft the MOA or MOU and we were given instructions, when we were in the ASEAN meeting in Japan, by the President to draft, finalize the MOA with Vietnam,” ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. sa press briefing sa Malakanyang.

“So that pagdating ng trip this coming end of January, state visit to Vietnam, mapirmahan na and we have the working draft na, almost done na,” ayon pa rin kay Laurel sabay sabing nakatakda ang state visit ng Pangulo sa Vietnam sa pagtatapos ng buwan.

Aniya, magagarantiya ng kasunduan na magsu-suplay ng bigas ang Vietnam sa Pilipinas kahit pa sa panahon ng kalamidad.

Matatandaang, sa naging pagdalo ng Pangulo sa ASEAN Summit sa Jakarta, Indonesia, kapwa nagkasundo ang Pilipinas at Vietnam na isapinal ang rice trade agreement na magiging epektibo sa loob ng limang taon.

Sinabi naman ni Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh na tatapusin ng dalawang bansa ang “an inter-government agreement on rice trade so that our rice export to the Philippines will ensure food security in the Philippines.”

“We look forward to having a stable framework of cooperation on rice trade for a long period of at least five years,” ayon kay Pham.

KRIS JOSE

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DA: 30% ng agricultural produce ng Ph, nasasayang

UMAMIN si Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na 30% ng agricultural produce ng bansa ay nasasayang o natatapon lamang dahil sa mahinang logistics system.

"We also have a very big move on the logistics 'no - 30% of our produce, especially of vegetables, is gone because of wastage 'no, because of the poor logistics system in our food supply chain," ayon kay Laurel sa press briefing sa Malakanyang.

"If we can lessen or hopefully almost eliminate iyong losses na iyon, that will be equivalent to at least 10 to 15% less cost sa ating mga vegetables and high-value crops like fruits," dagdag ni Laurel.

Ani Laurel, magtatayo ang Department of Agriculture ng 5,000 pallet position cold storage para sa high-value crops at mga gulay na magsisilbi sa mga magsasaka at kooperatiba.

"The national government like the DA should coordinate and plan with them to address this. But, that's a work-in-progress that we will do; but in order to have a quick solution to this problem, hopefully after 13 or 14 months... latest, June next year, nandiyan na iyong facility to address that," ayon kay Laurel.

Sa kabilang dako, sa isang pagpupulong kasama si Pangulong President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., ipinresenta ng DA ang kalagayan ng probisyon ng cold storage at postharvest facilities, plano para bawasan ang presyo ng agricultural commodities at palakasin ang agricultural production, at maging ang panukalang amiyendahan ang Philippine Fisheries Code at draft Executive Order hinggil sa Strategic Agriculture and Fisheries Development Zones.

Matatandaang, noong nakaraang Disyembre ng nagdaang taon, inatasan ni Pangulong Marcos ang DA na iulat ang pagtatayo o konstruksyon ng mga cold storage facility at probisyon ng postharvest facilities ngayong buwan ng Enero 2024, nakatuon sa implementasyon nito.

KRIS JOSE



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NEWS BRIEF

DA: Mga post-harvest facility puro pipitsugin

Walang malaking post-harvest facility na pinondohan ng gobyerno sa nakalipas na 40 taon.

Ito ang prangkang pahayag ni Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. sa press briefing sa Malacanang matapos dumalo sa sectoral meeting na ipinatawag ni Pangulong Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr.

Ayon sa kalihim, puro maliliit at tingi-tingi ang mga post-harvest facility ng mga nakalipas na administrasyon na hindi

naman nakatulong sa mga magsasaka kaya na kapanghihinayang.

"No major post-harvest facility was funded by the government in the last 40 years, puro maliit, patingi-tingi which is actually irrelevant or useless, sayang," ani Laurel.

Dahil dito, kailangan aniyang pondohan ang mga ganitong proyekto, hindi maliliit kundi malalaking post-harvest facilities para mapakinabangan ng mga nasa sektor ng agrikultura.
(Aileen Taliping)



DA tiniyak sapat na supply ng bigas

Tiniyak ng Department of Agriculture na sapat ang supply ng bigas sa bansa.

Sa press briefing sa Malacañang nitong Martes, sinabi ni Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na maganda ang supply ng bigas nitong nagdaang Disyembre 2023 gayundin ngayong Enero dahil padating ang inangkat na bigas.

Ang may kaunting problema lamang ayon sa kalihim ay ang pabago-bagong presyo ng bigas sa world market dahil sa epekto ng El Niño kaya kailangang bantayang mabuti.

"Ang prices din ng bigas sa Thailand which is a major rice producing country at Vietnam

ay tumataas din, so even Malaysia and Indonesia so we need to really manage the situation and we are looking at it on a day-to-day basis," ani Laurel.

Kasabay nito sinabi ni Laurel na isinasapinal na nila ang MOA para sa patuloy na pag-aangkat ng bigas sa Vietnam, at ihahabol ito sa nakatakdang biyahe ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. sa Vietnam ngayong Enero.

Samantala, inilabas naman ng Department of Trade and Industry ang bagong suggested retail price ng mga basic necessities at prime commodities kung saan tila binasbasan na ng DTI ang tinatawag ng ilang supermarket owners na

'shrinkflation'.

Ang SRP ng Nescafe classic na 25 grams na pouch ay 23 grams na lamang ngayon. Pinayagan ng DTI ang pagtaas ng SRP ng asin at ilang sabon.

Ang Fidel iodized rock salt na 250 grams ay P11 na ngayon sa Luzon samantalang P10 lamang ito noong Pebrero 2023. Ang 500 grams naman na Fidel coarse iodized salt ay P21.25 na ngayon mula sa P19.50 noong Pebrero 2023.

Ang iodized salt na Fidel Free Flowing green ay P12.75 na ang SRP sa Luzon mula sa P11.75 at P13.50 na ito sa Visayas at Mindanao mula sa P12.75. (Aileen Taliping/Eileen Mencias)



Galunggong bagsak presyo sa Marso

AASAHANG bababa ang presyo ng galunggong pagsapit ng buwan ng Marso dahil sa pagtatapos ng close fishing season ngayong Enero.

Sa press briefing sa Malacañang, sinabi ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. na sa buwan pa ng Marso

lalakas ang panghuhuli ng galunggong kaya mula sa presyong P200 kada kilo sa kasalukuyan, posibleng bababa ito ng mula P150 hanggang P130 kada kilo.

“Ang talagang season ng Pilipinas sa galunggong catching is March, April, May, June. Iyong

lifting ng end of February, mahina pa iyong huli niyan. But by March, i-expect bababa ang presyo,” ani Laurel.



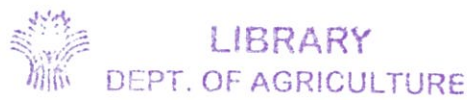
Ang taunang fishing ban sa galunggong ay nagsisimula noong Nobyembre 2023 at magtatapos ngayong Enero 2024, alinsunod sa Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 na ipinatutupad sa ilang lugar sa bansa.

Layon nito na magkaroon ng

pagkakataon na makapagparami sa panahon ng “breeding season” upang mas marami ang magiging huli pagsapit ng Marso.

Inatasan naman ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. ang DA na palaguin ang aquaculture industry upang mabigyan ng hanapbuhay ang maraming Pilipino.

“Nag-emphasize si Presidente na kailangan natin iincrease ‘yong aquaculture. At the end of the day that is what will feed our people,” wika ni Laurel matapos ang pulong sa Chief Executive. (Aileen Tali-ping)



More cold storage sites planned

By Joel dela Torre

THE government is looking forward to build more cold storage facilities as part of a broader strategy to address overproduction and at the same time minimize post-harvest losses.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. stressed this point as he bared the plan to have these spaces at the Food Terminal in Taguig City that will serve as storage area for agri harvests.

FTI is a government firm under the DA.

"Ang immediate problem na nakikita ko ay iyong oversupply from time to time ng tomatoes and cabbage. Kaya dapat magtayo tayo agad ng storage sa FTI. Ang direction ko is to build a network for chilled cold storage systems," Secretary Tiu Laurel said during a briefing with officials of Food Terminal, Inc. in Taguig City.

In the said dialogue, FTI officials were also encouraged by

the DA chief to purchase excess produce of farmers and supply them to Kadiwa centers.

"Kung may overproduction, kaysa itapon, bilhin na lang ng FTI, mailalagay panatiniyan sa Kadiwa program. The plan is also to strengthen iyong Kadiwa program ng DA. Plano kong ibalik sa FTI ang Kadiwa after two years," Tiu Laurel said.

Part of the department's plan he added, is to centralize all agriculture logistics management matters, including FTI, to

the soon-to-be-formed Logistics Office of the DA.

"Lahat ng cold storage ng DA, ililipat ko lahat sa logistics office, which will conduct research and inventory of all facilities within the Philippines to ensure synchronization," Laurel explained.

It will also be equipped with a processing plant and trading area, and will prioritize farmers' produce for buffer stocking.

The project will cost P500 million and require 12 months to complete.

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DA, asa pa sa P20 kilong bigas

Umaasa pa rin si Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laure Jr. na mangyayari ang P20 kada kilo na presyo ng bigas sa bansa na ipinangako noon ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Sinabi ni Laurel sa pu-

long balitaan sa Malakanyang na puspusan ang ginagawang hakbang ng pamahalaan para mapataas pa ang produksyon ng bigas sa bansa.

Iginiit pa ng kalihim na inspirasyon pa rin at target nila na mapababa sa P20

NI GEMMA GARCIA

ang presyo ng bigas sa bansa sa pamamagitan ng pagpapatayo ng farm to market roads at mga storage facility.

Mas mabuti na anyan na may goal ang gobyerno para lahat ay pilitin

na matupad ito kahit na anong hirap.

Sa kasalukuyan ay nasa 1.2 milyon na sakanan pa umano ang walang irigasyon at kailangan ng P1.2 trilyong pondo.

Mas mabuti na rin anyan na may target na kailangang abutin ang pama-

halaan para mapababa ang presyo at kapag nagawa na ang mga interventions na ito ay bababa na ang presyo ng bigas ng hanggang 5 porsiyento.

Nilinaw naman ni Tiu na sa ngayon ay nakadepende pa rin ang presyo ng bansa sa world market.

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Imbes ayuda, magsasaka bibigyan na lang ng buto, binhi

Walang aasahang ayuda sa gobyerno ang mga magsasakang nalugi dahil sa pagkasira ng kanilang mga pananim na gulay.

Sa press briefing sa Malakanyang, sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel na sa ngayon, technically ay walang pondo ang gobyerno na pang-ayuda sa mga magsasaka.

Naniniwala rin si Laurel na hindi epektibo ang ayuda at sa halip ay mas makakabuti kung bibigyan ang mga magsasaka ng buto, abono at iba pa.

Iginiit pa ng kalihim na kung maaari ay hahanap sila ng paraan para matulongan ang mga magsasaka na siya namang trabaho

at mandato ng gobyerno kaya sa kasalukuyan ay patuloy nilang inaalam kung ano ang maaaring ibigay sa mga ito.

Sa ngayon ay pinagsusumikapan umano ng gobyerno na makapagpatayo ng mga cold storage facility para maiwasan ang pagkabulok ng mga ani.

Gayundin ang bilhin ang mga sobrang gulay at ibenta ito sa mga Kadiwa stores.

Umapela rin si Tiu sa mga lokal na pamahalaan na tugunan ang over supply population ng mga magsasaka para sila ang mag plano ng produksyon ng mga inaaning gulay ng mga magsasaka. (Gemma Garcia)

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Presyo ng galunggong bababa sa Marso

Posibleng bumaba na sa Marso ang presyo ang galunggong sa merkado. Ito ay dahil matatapos na ang closing fishing season ngayong buwan ng Enero.

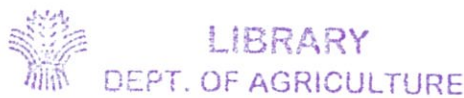
Sa press briefing sa Malakanyang, sinabi ni Agriculture Secretary **Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.** na sa kasalukuyan ay nasa P240 ang presyo ng galunggong kada kilo.

Ayon kay Laurel, asahan nang mas maraming huli ang mangingisda pagsapit sa buwan ng Marso kung kaya maaring bumaba ang presyo nito sa P130 hanggang P150 kada kilo.

Iginiit pa ng kalihim na ipinag-utos na ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na palakasin ang aquaculture sa bansa dahil kailangan maparami ang isda sa pamamagitan ng pag-aayos ng mga habitat nito at pagpahingain ang mga fishing grounds ng ilang taon.

Ipinag-utos din umano ng Pangulo na palakasin ang seaweed industry para may dagdag na kabuhayan ang mga mangingisda.

Sa ngayon, sinabi ni Laurel na may ayudang ibinibigay ang DA sa mga mangingisda gaya ng mga bangka, koope-ratiba at iba pa. (Gemma Garcia)



30% ng agri products nasisira lang

Tinatayang nasa 30 porsiyento ng agricultural products sa bansa ang nasisira o nasasayang kada taon.

Ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, ito ay dahil sa mahina ang logistics system ng food supply chain ng Pilipinas.

Sa pulong balitaan sa Malakanyang, sinabi ni Tiu na kung maayos lang sana ang logistics system ng bansa ay mababawasan sana ng 10-15 porsiyento ang presyo ng mga gulay at high value crops tulad ng prutas.

Nilinaw naman ng kalihim na ang 30% wastage ay base lamang sa kanyang personal na karanasan sa pagnenegosyo at hindi base sa datos, subalit kinumpirma rin ito sa kanya ng kanyang kausap sa Food Terminal Inc. (FTI).

Sinabi rin ni Tiu na sa ginanap na sectoral meeting nila kay Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ay inilatag nito ang 3-year plan na para sa "Masaganang Bagong Pilipinas" na naglalayong pataasin ang produksyon ng agri-fishery industry.

Subalit para maipatupad ang nasabing programa ay nangangailangan umano ang gobyero ng P93 bilyong pondo sa loob ng tatlong taon at karagdang P5 bilyon para sa cold storage facility matapos ang tatlong taon.

Habang nasa 5,000 pallet position cold storage facility naman ang kailangan para sa cold storage facility, subalit sa ngayon ay hindi pa umano alam kung saan kukunin ang pondo para rito.

(Gemma Garcia)



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CLOSED SEASON IN KEY AREAS

NATIONWIDE FISH HARVEST UP NEARLY 6% IN DECEMBER

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

Despite the temporary ban at some fishing grounds, regional ports nationwide delivered 5.7 percent more fish supply in December from the previous year's volume, but retail prices in Metro Manila hardly budged.

The Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) reported that fish unloading volume had reached 47,952.79 metric tons (MT) last month, up from 45,355.24 MT in December 2022.

Although the volume in December was better than year-ago level, it declined from the 49,718.43 MT output in November, the highest volume recorded by the PFDA in 2023. This was due to the closed fishing season in certain areas.

During the reference period, the temporary fishing ban affected volume at fish ports in Navotas, Zamboanga and Sual in Pangasinan.

Fishing season in the Visayan Sea and Zamboanga Peninsula has been closed since Nov.

15, 2023 until Feb. 15 this year. Meanwhile, fishing activities in Northeast Palawan had been prohibited from Nov. 1, 2023 to Jan. 1 this year.

The government temporarily bans activities at major fishing grounds for a certain period annually to conserve various marine species and address overfishing and climate change concerns.

But to make up for the anticipated decline in supply due to the closed fishing season, the **Bureau of Fisheries and**

Aquatic Resources had authorized the importation of 35,000 MT of fish from end-October and December last year.

Meanwhile, retail prices of fish in Metro Manila remained almost the same in December despite the slight increase in supply.

Milkfish (*bangus*) retail prices ranged from P140 to P240 per kilogram compared with P180 per kg in the same period a year prior, while tilapia was priced from P110 to P160 per kg versus P140 per kg. INQ



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Central Luzon farmers get assistance

FARMERS belonging to different cooperatives and associations in Region 3 (Central Luzon) received aid from government agencies.

In Pampanga, 54 farmers' cooperatives and associations (FCA) and local government units (LGU) received P126 million worth of agricultural machineries from the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) under the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The initiative was realized through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) mechanization program.

The grant included 22 hand tractors, 20 four-wheel drive tractors, 15 rice combine harvesters, 13 riding-type transplanters, two walk-behind transplanters, four precision seeders, one mobile rice mill, five 12-ton recircu-

lating dryers, one six-ton recirculating dryer, and seven single pass rice mills.

Gov. Dennis Pineda said the assistance will significantly enhance farmers' yields and thanked the DA and the Senate Committee on Agriculture for responding to the needs of their agri-sector, especially the farmer associations of Pampanga.

Vice Gov. Lilia Pineda, on the other hand, emphasized the provincial government's dedicated efforts to provide essential assistance to the agricultural sector in the province.

About 222 FCAs and LGUs have already benefited from the 448 agricultural machinery and postharvest facilities awarded in the province since the RCEF's implementation in 2019, which is pegged at around P544 million.

Meanwhile, farmers belonging to

the Masinloc Federated Farmers Association (MFFA) in Zambales can now produce their own organic fertilizer after the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) turned over a shredding machine for their use.

The grant amounting to P250,000 was given under the Shared Service Facility program of the agency aimed to provide updated know-how among micro, small, and medium enterprises through better access to technology, increase their productivity and efficiency, and provide livelihood for the community.

"The equipment provided to the MFFA can produce a lot of organic fertilizer compared to their manual production," DTI Provincial Director Enrique Tacbad said in a statement.

JERRY M. HERNANDEZ



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PHILIPPINE STAR/MICHAEL VARCAS

Regional fishport volumes up 10.6% in Dec.

FISH volumes landed at regional fish ports rose 10.6% year on year in December to 47,952.79 metric tons (MT), the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) said.

In a statement, the PFDA said the General Santos Fish Port Complex landed 25,005.44 MT of fish during the period, up 2.58% from a year earlier.

It added that the Bulan Fish Port Complex in Sorsogon recorded a 2.59% jump in landed fish at 1,174.00 MT.

The Davao Fish Port Complex landed 1,215.12 MT, up sharply from 310.72 MT a year earlier.

The PFDA said that the Iloilo and Lucena fish ports landed 1,724.49 MT and 1,521.27 MT, respectively, with volumes recovering from the previous month's decline.

Due to the closed fishing season in Visayan and Northern Palawan waters, the Navotas Fish Port reported a decline in landed fish in December at 16,506.60 MT.

The Zamboanga Fish Port Complex landed 772.975 MT of fish for the month, due to the closed sardine fishing season in the Zamboanga Peninsula, the PFDA reported.

Closed fishing seasons also affected the fish port in Sual, Pangasinan, which landed 32.9 MT of fish for the month.

The closed fishing season occurs annually as a means of replenishing the population of fish, according to the **Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)**.

BFAR announced early last year that sardine fishing was banned between Nov. 15 and Feb. 15. This coincided with the closed fishing in the Visayan Sea for small pelagic fish, including sardines.

Sardine fishing was also banned in northern Palawan between Nov. 1 and Jan. 31, while a closed season for herring and mackerel in the Visayan Sea was declared between Nov. 15 and Feb. 15. — **Adrian H. Halili**



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House measure promoting extensive use of organic and biofertilizers filed

A LAWMAKER has filed a bill promoting the extensive use of organic and biofertilizers to ensure a more affordable option for farmers while addressing other concerns such as food security and environmental sustainability.

"This bill seeks to accelerate the transition from inorganic to organic fertilizer use as a viable solution to the aforementioned concerns," Cagayan de Oro Rep. Lordan G. Suan said in filing House Bill No. 9751.

The measure proposes the establishment of a National Organic and Biofertilizers Support Program for farmers with up to five hectares of land for rice, sugar and corn production.

The program also includes a P5,000 voucher per hectare and its equivalent value for a fraction of a hectare, to be given every crop season.

In addition, farmers will be given training under the Department of Agriculture (DA) on the proper use of organic or biofertilizer, which will be part of all existing government fertilizer assistance programs.

A groundbreaking aspect of the bill is its integration of organic and biofertilizers into existing government fertilizer assistance programs.

To incentivize the production and distribution of these eco-friendly fertilizers,

the measure proposes that companies involved in their manufacture within 10 years of its enactment into law will be exempted from tariffs and duties on importing materials and equipment.

"The reduction of the productive capacity of the land due to chemical saturation is even more evident with the heavy use of inorganic fertilizer," Mr. Suan noted.

This aligns with President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.'s call last year to enhance the use of biofertilizers, aiming to decrease reliance on imported petroleum-based fertilizers.



Acknowledging the need for a balanced approach, the Philippine Rice Research Institute recommends a combination of organic and inorganic fertilizers, potentially saving farmers between P2,000 to P4,000 per hectare, depending on factors such as amounts used, timing, and fertilizer type.

"There will still be a mix," Mr. Marcos was quoted in a Palace statement. "But we will reduce our dependence on imports."

The Philippines' agricultural output fell by 0.3% P412.41 billion in the third quarter of 2023 due to lower crops and fisheries production, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority has shown. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**



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 **Sulat kay Editor** 

Presyo ng galunggong

Dear Editor,

May magandang balita ang Department of Agriculture, baka raw bumaba na ang presyo ng galunggong sa buwan ng Marso. Mula sa P200 bawat kilo, posibleng bumagsak ito sa P150 hanggang sa P130 ang bawat kilo. Sana nga magkatotoo. Dati kasi, ang mga Pinoy para makatipid ay bumibili na lamang ng galunggong. Pero dahil parang presyong pang-mayaman na rin ang GG, napipilitan na lang ang iba na bumili ng de-lata tulad ng corned tuna. Kung walang-wala talaga, instant noodles na lang ang ulam.

Sa mahal ng galunggong, mas mabuti pang bumili ng dressed chicken. Lagyan mo lang ng sayote o papaya at manghingi dahon ng malunggay sa kapitbahay, may tinola ka na. Kung mas matipid na reka-do, gawing adobo na lang. Mas masarap namang mag-ulan ng manok kaysa sa galunggong. Ang hirap lang kung puro manok, biro ng iba ay baka tubuan ka ng pakpak. Isa lang naman ang gusto nating ipaliwanag, may opsyon pa rin kung paano makakatipid sa pagkain ngayong panahon na panay ang pagtaas ng presyo ng bilihin.

Concerned citizen



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REP. BRIAN YAMSUAN

Abante BASTA BICOLANO, SARO

Bago nagtapos ang taong 2023, bawat isa sa mahigit na dalawang milyong magsasaka ng palay ay nakatanggap ng P5,000 na ayuda mula sa gobyerno. Ang ayuda ay mula po sa sumobra sa P10 bilyong koleksiyon ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) mula sa taripa na pinapataw sa imported na bigas.

Sa ilalim po kasi ng batas na tinatawag na Rice Tariffication Act, may P10 bilyon na nilalaan para sa Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund o RCEF. Ito ay magmumula sa koleksiyon ng taripa mula sa mga naaangkat na bigas.

Pinapatupad na rin po ang Cash Assistance to Filipino Farmers Act na kung saan nakasaad na ang sosobra sa P10 bilyon na koleksiyon mula sa taripa ng imported rice ay direktang ibibigay sa mga rice farmer bilang cash assistance. Ang mga kuwalipikadong makatanggap ng ayuda ay ang mga nagsasaka ng mababa sa dalawang ektaryang lupa.

Sa 2022, sumobra ng P12.7 bilyon ang koleksiyon kaya't pinagutos ng Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. na ipamahagi ito sa mga magsasaka ng palay sa halagang P5,000 kada benepisyaryo nitong huling linggo ng Disyembre 2023.

Sa 2023, ang huling tala ay lumagpas na po na sa P25 bilyon ang nakolektang taripa mula sa rice imports, kaya't makakatiyak muli na mabibigyan ng ayuda ang mga magsasaka ng

palay sa 2024.

Pero mas mahalaga po sa ayudang binibigay sa mga magsasaka ay ang mga programang nasa ilalim ng P10 bilyong RCEF dahil ang popondohan nito ay mga pasilidad para maiimbak ng maayos ang kanilang mga ani at mga programa para sa pagpapalago ng mga binhi. Bahagi rin ng RCEF ang pondo para sa abot-kayang pautang sa mga magsasaka at mga farmers' cooperatives, at pagbili ng modernong agricultural equipment para gamitan na ng mga makabagong makina at teknolohiya ang pagtatanim at pag-aani ng palay.

Bukod diyan, naibalita na rin po natin na may P31 bilyong pondo ang National Rice Program (NRP) ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ngayong taon sa ilalim ng pambansang badyet sa 2024.

Ang halagang ito ay mas mataas ng P600 milyon kaysa sa badyet para sa NRP sa 2023, at halos doble sa P15.78 bilyon na inilaan noong 2022.

Sa P31 bilyong pondo ng NRP ngayong 2024, malaki po ang inilaan para sa irigasyon dahil ang inaasahan ay tatagal pa ang El Niño na magdadala ng matinding tag-init. Malaki rin po ang pondo para mapataas ang ani at maproteksyunan ito mula sa peste at mga darating na kalamidad. Tinaas din ang badyet sa ilalim ng NRP para sa training ng mga magsasaka.

Ang pondo po sa NRP ay bukod pa sa ibang national programs na nakasaad sa pambansang badyet para sa mga magsasaka at mga proyektong pang-agrikultura na ang magpopondo ay mga lokal na pamahalaan.

Umaasa po tayong kung magtutulongan ang DA at lahat ng ahensiyang

may kinalaman sa pagpapataas ng produksyon ng bigas, maitatawid natin ang pagsubok na dala ng El Niño ngayong taon.

Hindi rin po malayong matupad na ang pangako ng Pangulong BBM na maibenta sa mababang presyo na P20 kada kilo ang bigas.

Ang susi po para matupad ang pangakong ito ay ang modernisasyon ng sektor ng agrikultura sa bansa. Hindi lamang po para sa produkto ng bigas, kundi maging para sa iba ring produkto tulad ng gulay, prutas at iba pang ani para naman po hindi mapag-iwanan ang ibang mga magsasaka.

Tiwala po tayo na kung magagamit nang maayos ang P31 bilyong pondo para sa NRP at iba pang badyet para sa agrikultura, ay hindi lamang po bababa ang presyo ng bigas at iba pang pagkain kundi tataas rin ang kita ng ating mga magsasaka.

Bago mailathala ang ating kolum ay nakatanggap tayo ng magandang balita. Ang Bicol Saro Party-list po ng inyong lingkod ay nasa Top 3 ng mga Best Performing Party-list Representatives sa pinakahuling independent 'Boses ng Bayan' survey na isinagawa ng RP-Mission and Development Foundation (RPMDF) noong December 27 hanggang January 5. Nakakuha po ang Bicol Saro ng mataas na 87.1 percent rating sa survey, kaya't tayo po ay nasa 3rd place, kasama ang 4Ps Party-list.

Dios mabalos po sa lahat ng aming masusugid na mga tagasuporta. Makakaasa po kayo na lalo pa naming pagbubutihin ang aming paglilingkod para maging maginhawa at ligtas ang buhay ng ating mga kababayan. Muli, maraming salamat po!

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

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FAO ESTIMATE

PH GREW PINEAPPLE EXPORTS BY 5% IN 2023, BUOYED BY BRISK CHINA DEMAND FOR 'PREMIUM' FRUITS

Philippine pineapple exports grew by 5 percent in 2023 as shipments to China increased in line with the projected up-trend in global trade.

The Food and Agriculture

Organization (FAO) estimated in a report that the Philippines, the world's second largest supplier of pineapples, had exported 611,873 metric tons (MT) of pineapple last year, higher than 582,537 MT re-

corded a year prior.

"Industry sources reported that imports of pineapples from the Philippines to China benefited from higher Chinese demand for premium quality

pineapples," the FAO said.

"In this regard, the long shelf life, year-round production cycle and attractive price to quality ratio of the MD2 pineapples, the main variety cultivated in the

Philippines, proved to be a particularly strong selling point," it said.

Citing preliminary data from January to July 2023, the country grew its pineapple shipment to China by 22 percent.

China is the leading consumer of pineapples coming from the archipelago, accounting for about 46 percent of its overall pineapple exports.

—JORDEENE B. LAGARE INQ



Phl pineapple exports grew by 5% in 2023

By **CATHERINE TALAVERA**

Pineapple exports from the Philippines are seen to have increased by five percent last year, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Based on its latest major tropical fruits market review, the FAO said the country's pineapple exports could have grown to 611,873 tons in 2023 from 582,537 tons a year ago.

The FAO cited preliminary trade data from January to July last year which showed a 22 percent increase

in pineapple shipments to China, the leading recipient of pineapples from the Philippines.

China accounted for a 46 percent share of Philippine pineapple exports during the period.

"Industry sources reported that imports of pineapples from the Philippines to China benefited from higher Chinese demand for premium quality pineapples," the FAO said.

"In this regard, the long shelf life, year-round production cycle and attractive price-to-quality ratio of the MD2 pineapples, the main variety

cultivated in the Philippines, proved to be a particularly strong selling point," the FAO said.

Aside from China, other top markets of Philippine pineapple exports include Japan and South Korea, with shares of 30 percent and 13 percent, respectively.

"Shipments of Filipino pineapples to both destinations expanded by some five to seven percent over the period," the FAO said.

Meanwhile, the FAO noted that the average export unit value of shipments of pineapples from the

Philippines to world markets stood at \$585 per ton in the seven months of 2023, a two percent increase from the previous year.

The FAO report also noted that preliminary trade data showed that global exports of pineapples are anticipated to grow by around four percent in 2023, to 3.2 million tons.

It attributed the growth of global pineapple exports to higher supplies from Costa Rica, the world's largest exporter with a market share of some 65 percent.

"According to industry informa-

tion, weather conditions in key Costa Rican growing areas were favorable for the cultivation of pineapples during the first half of the year, resulting in higher yields and thus higher supplies for export," the FAO said.

Pineapple exports from Costa Rica are expected to have increased by three percent to around two million tons.

Aside from the Philippines and Costa Rica, other top exporters of pineapples include Ecuador and Mexico, with an export volume of 120,000 tons and 60,000 tons, respectively.



Pineapple export growth estimated at 5% due to strong demand — FAO

PHILIPPINE pineapple exports may have increased year on year by 5.04% to 611,873 metric tons (MT) in 2023 due to increasing demand, according to preliminary data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In its market review, the FAO said that long shelf life, a strong price-to-quality ratio, and the year-round production cycle were behind the attractiveness of pineapple exports.

It added that the average export unit value of Philippine pineapple is \$585 per MT, based on preliminary data for the first seven months of 2023.

The Philippines is the second-largest exporter of pineapple after Costa Rica.

China was the market for 46% of Philippine pineapple exports.

"Imports of pineapple from the Philippines to China benefited from higher Chinese demand for premium-quality pineapple," the FAO said.

It added that imports by China may have increased by 7% last year to about 250,000 MT.

"Amid changing consumer preferences, import growth in recent years has been driven by growing demand for more premium pineapple, with the MD2 variety from the Philippines particularly sought after," the FAO said.

MD2 is the most commonly planted pineapple variety in the Philippines.

Other export markets, like Japan and South Korea, also expanded between 5-7% in 2023. Japan accounted for about 30% of the Philippine pineapple exports, and South Korea 13%.

The FAO said global pineapple exports likely grew 4% in 2023, to 3.2 million MT. This was due to higher output from Costa Rica, which has a market share of 65%.

"Weather conditions in key Costa Rican growing areas were favorable for the cultivation of pineapple... resulting in higher yields and thus higher supplies for export," it added. — **Adrian H. Halili**



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PH pineapple exports up 5%

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Philippines' pineapple exports grew by 5.1 percent last year, according to the 2023 major tropical fruits preliminary market review by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The report said the Philippines shipped a total of around 610,000 metric tons (MT) of pineapples in 2023, higher than the 580,000 MT recorded in 2022, making the country the second leading

exporter of the fruit to global markets.

In 2021, the Philippines shipped around 549,000 MT of pineapples.

FAO said the increase was mainly driven by higher demand for Philippine pineapples from China, which is also the leading recipient of the fruit export from the country.

The report also cited industry sources as saying imports of pineapples from the Philippines to China benefited from higher Chinese demand for premium

quality pineapples.

"In this regard, the long shelf life, year-round production cycle and attractive price-to-quality ratio of the MD2 pineapples, the main variety cultivated in the Philippines, proved to be a particularly strong selling point," the report said.

Meanwhile, Japan and South Korea also remained as key import markets for pineapples from the Philippines, the report said.

Average export unit value

of shipments from the Philippines to world markets stood at \$585 per MT over the first seven months of 2023, a year-on-year increase of 2 percent, FAO added.

According to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the country produced a total of 2.91 million MT of pineapple in 2022, up by 1.9 percent from 2.86 million MT in 2021.

The PSA has no data yet on the country's pineapple production for 2023.



editorial

Needed initiatives to fill PHL's cold storage gap

LOGISTICS is a popular sector in an archipelagic country like the Philippines. Many areas in the country would have to be accessed by boats or planes. Some areas would require a combination of transport options before visitors or residents can reach them.

Tourists and businessmen alike understand the difficulties of reaching some areas that they want to visit or invest in. Plane service in some provinces, for example, is not offered on a regular basis. Inter-island ships ply certain routes only on certain days.

The lack of transport options in some food-producing provinces in the Philippines makes it imperative for these areas to have their own cold storage facilities. These cold storage facilities, which could be expensive to put up, help prolong the shelf life of certain produce. Farmers, fishers and traders tap these facilities to prevent them from incurring losses caused by the spoilage of their products.

Having these cold storage facilities would also enable farmers and fishers to keep surplus produce, instead of just throwing away excess food items. The Philippines still continues to grapple with food waste, and having these cold storage facilities will help policymakers, particularly local leaders, to plan their output accordingly and prevent shortages.

The lack of cold storage facilities, for instance, was cited as one of the top culprits behind the onion crisis experienced by urban consumers in the latter part of 2022. The Cold Chain Association of the Philippines said it requires P6 billion to double the industry's storage capacity for onions. (**See "Expanding onion cold chain capacity to cost P6B—group," in the BUSINESSMIRROR, January 24, 2023**). The group estimated that the capacity of cold storage facilities for onions nationwide is about 100,000 metric tons (MT), which is only 27 percent of the annual supply of 360,000 MT.

CCAP had urged the government to consider various fiscal interventions, such as loan packages, to hike the country's cold storage capacity. The government was also told to explore the feasibility of public-private partnerships in building additional facilities.

Closing the gap in the cold storage needs of local food producers would obviously require huge investments. It would also entail political will on the part of the government to put in place these interventions immediately. These facilities and other infrastructure projects like farm-to-farm roads are particularly crucial in areas where middlemen continue to prey on hapless planters and fishers who don't have direct access to markets.

These things must be done as soon as possible if our government leaders are really serious about improving the state of the country's agriculture. Without these reforms and investments in farm infrastructure, the state and even the private sector would have a hard time convincing the youth to take up farming as their primary source of livelihood. This is because "business as usual" would mean that the country's food producers would continue to rack up losses due to spoilage and ridiculously low prices dangled by traders and middlemen for their produce

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PHL REMAINS 2ND LARGEST PINEAPPLE EXPORTER—FAO

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS
@jearcalas

THE Philippines remained as the world's second largest exporter of pineapples as its total shipments last year rose by 5 percent on an annual basis to over 600,000 metric tons (MT).

In its latest assessment, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that the Philippines kept its global stature last year after it exported some 611,873

MT of pineapples, some 29,336 MT over the 582,537 MT it shipped in 2022.

FAO attributed the higher shipments to growing demand from China, the top buyer of Philippine pineapples, for premium quality fruits last year.

"Preliminary trade data for the period up to July 2023 show a 22 percent year-on-year increase in shipments to China, the leading recipient of pineapples from the Philippines at

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Pineapple...

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a share of some 46 percent over this period," the FAO said in its report about the global tropical fruits market published recently.

"Industry sources reported that imports of pineapples from the Philippines to China benefited from higher Chinese demand for premium quality pineapples. In this regard, the long shelf life, year-round production cycle and attractive price-to-quality ratio of the MD2 pineapples, the main variety cultivated in the Philippines,

proved to be a particularly strong selling point," it added.

The FAO explained that the Philippines also sustained its strong exports to Japan and South Korea, which are part of its top three markets for pineapples.

"Further key import markets for pineapples from the Philippines remained Japan and South Korea over the first seven months of 2023, at quantity shares of some 30 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Shipments of Filipino pineapples to both destinations expanded by some 5 to 7 percent over this period," the FAO explained.

The FAO added that the average export unit value of shipments from the Philippines to world markets rose by 2 percent year-on-year to some \$585 per MT over the January to July period of last year.

"Amid changing consumer preferences, import growth in recent years has been driven by growing demand for more premium pineapples, with the MD2 variety from the Philippines particularly sought after," it pointed out.

Costa Rica remained as the world's top largest exporter of pineapples with over 2 MMT in shipments last year.



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Soybeans, corn steady

CANBERRA- Chicago corn and soybean futures regained some ground on Tuesday after data showing strong US production and stockpiles pushed prices to multi-year lows in the previous trading session.

Wheat also rose from a six-week low.

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was up 0.6 percent at \$12.31-1/2 a bushel after slipping to \$12.03 on Friday, its lowest since November 2021.

The US market was closed on Monday for the Martin Luther King Day holiday.

Soybeans had already been falling as rainfall in top producer Brazil improved the supply outlook, and on Friday the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) raised yield numbers for recently harvested US crop and said stocks were slightly higher than analysts had expected.

Soybeans are now down 5 percent so far this month. -
Reuters