

CLIPPINGS FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2024

A. SEC. FTL Jr. QUOTED

No stories

B. DA FAMILY

THE MANILA TIMES

Region 2 farmers warned of pests

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Rice inventory up 10% in January

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL

PhilRice urged to help farmers become competitive

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

THE MANILA TIMES

Farmers affected by El Niño get aid

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Fisheries output slips in 2023

MANILA BULLETIN

Filipinos' rice consumption expected to rise anew in 2024

ABANTE TONITE

33 baboy positibo sa ASF, tsinugi

D. FOREIGN STORY

THE MANILA TIMES

Cocoa price s reach record high

Bird flu still stalks Cambodia after boy dies



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Region 2 farmers warned of pests

TUGUEGARAO CITY: The Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Plant Industry (DA-BPI) has called on farmers to be watchful and vigilant against five harmful pests expected to hit the region in the first quarter of the year.

Mindaflor Aquino, DA Region 2 Crop Protection Center chief, said farmers in Cagayan Valley (Region 2) should always be vigilant in their area for any infestation that can destroy their crops.

Aquino said their call is based on the results of the analysis submitted by the DA-BPI through the

Crop Pest Management Division.

According to the DA-BPI, the top harmful pests are the rice stem borer, rodents (rats), brown plant hoppers (ulmog, bunhok, waya-way), bacterial and rice black bug.

"We are reminding farmers in the region to carefully monitor their area and crops for the possible impact of said dreaded pests resulting in large losses," Aquino said.

She said they have been receiving reports of these pests in the region and thus "we are

reminding farmers to immediately inform the Agricultural Extension Workers in their respective areas if something is noticed in their farms."

The DA-BPI is also encouraging farmers to contact the offices of the Regional Crop Protection Center in the City of Ilagan, the Regulatory Division at DA Regional Field Office 2 in Tuguegarao City or the offices of the provincial, city and municipal agriculturists for immediate action.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

Date: FEB. 16 2024 Page: B1



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Rice inventory up 10% in January

By JASPER EMMANUEL ARCALAS

The country's total rice inventory at the start of the year rose by almost 10 percent to over two million metric tons on the back of higher stocks in commercial entities.

Latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that rice stocks inventory as of Jan. 1 stood at 2.03 million metric tons (MT), 177,000 MT higher than the 1.85 million MT recorded in the same period last year.

"Month-on-month, the volume of rice stocks inventory recorded an increment of 6.9 percent from the previous month's 1.9 million metric tons," the PSA said.

The country's rice inventory last month was the highest in the past one year and was also the first time that stocks of the grain returned to two million MT level since December 2022.

PSA data showed that out of the three sectors that it regularly surveyed, only the commercial entities posted higher rice inventory during the reference period.

Rice stocks in the commercial sector expanded by half year-on-year to

"In comparison to the December 2023 rice stocks levels, a month-on-month increase was noted in the commercial sector by 14.8 percent, and in the household sector by 1.4 percent."

978,000 MT from 651,930 MT last year, according to the PSA.

Meanwhile, rice stocks in households and National Food Authority (NFA) warehouses in January declined on an annual basis.

The PSA said rice stocks in NFA warehouses plunged by 57.6 percent to 48,680 MT, while household inventory declined by 7.7 percent to one million MT.

The PSA added that households accounted for 49.4 percent of the January rice inventory followed by the commercial sector at 48.2 percent and NFA depositories at 2.4 percent.

"In comparison to the December 2023 rice stocks levels, a month-on-month increase was noted in the commercial sector by 14.8 percent, and in the household sector by 1.4 percent," it said.

"On the other hand, rice stocks inventory from the NFA depositories decreased by 14.8 percent," it added.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) earlier assured the public that the country would have sufficient rice supplies in the first half.

This would be made possible by the anticipated entry of rice imports coupled by the dry season harvest that is expected to peak around March or April, according to the DA.

The country produced a record high volume of palay or unmilled rice in 2023 at 20.059 million MT, 1.53 percent over the 19.756 million MT recorded output in 2022.

Date: FEB. 11, 2024 Page: 7



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PhilRice urged to help farmers become competitive

SENATOR Cynthia Villar called on the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) to support the farmers in order to be more competitive.

"I am sponsoring the Rice Tarification Law (RTL) extension bill and I look forward to Phil Rice support on this," said Villar during the Department of Agriculture-Phil Rice Annual Review of the RCEF Seed and Extension Programs.

Villar, chair of the Senate Agriculture and Food Committee, said the Philippines has not

yet experienced more output of palay per hectare at lower production cost until under the RTL in 2020.

"When RTL started in 2019, inbred palay production per hectare has been consistently going up from - 3.66 ton per hectare in 2019, 3.95 tons in 2020 and in 2023, 4.19 tons, because of the distribution of high quality inbred seeds to farmers, by PhilRice," she noted.

Also through the RTL, she said, PhilRice is mandated to lead the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement

Fund (RCEF) Certified Seed Development, Propagation and Distribution Program and co-lead the RCEF Extension Program.

"RCEF Rice Program has also synergized and strengthened the local farmers into seed producer cooperatives to support and participate in the nationwide high quality seed production and trade. It has established 756 Palay Sikatan Technology Demonstration sites in 404 cities and municipalities located in 58 provinces under its extension service mandate," she added.

ed.

Villar said some of the target goals of PhilRice are to conduct in-depth research and development on better palay inbred varieties and to produce breeder, foundation, and registered seeds; better distribution system and improve relationship with LGUs to optimize implementation efficiency.

At present, there are 164 inbred seed varieties and 15 new varieties developed by PhilRice under RCEF.

Camille P. Balagtas



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Farmers affected by El Niño get aid

BACOLOD CITY: The provincial government of Negros Occidental will release a financial assistance worth P2,500 for each farmer hit by the El Niño phenomenon, Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson said Thursday, February 8.

"I don't think that's enough, but I hope it could mitigate the effect of the dry spell or drought," Lacson said.

A report from the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPA) released by the governor to local media showed that Himamaylan City, Hinoba-an, Sipalay City, Isabela, Moises Padilla, Cauayan and Binalbagan are now experiencing the effects of the dry spell.

Lacson said the El Niño phenomenon has affected 374 farmers and 346.87 hectares of land from 37 villages in the province.

The damage so far has been estimated at P12,811,097.

"It is unfortunate that Negros Occidental, including Bacolod City, may experience drought starting the end of February up to May," the governor said.

Lacson said he has instructed provincial agriculturist Dina Gensola to submit the list of affected farmers qualified to receive the financial assistance.

Most of the affected areas depend on rain to irrigate their farmlands, he said.

The OPA has been doing a survey to determine the scope of the damage.

Lacson also reminded the public, especially the farmers, to maximize the use of water. **EUGENE ADIONG**

Date: FEB. 11, 2024 Page: B2



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Fisheries output slips in 2023

By JASPER EMMANUEL ARCALAS

Local fisheries production in 2023 slipped by 1.8 percent to 4.26 million metric tons from 4.34 million MT in 2022 as catch by both commercial and municipal fishers decreased, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

"Decreases in production were noted for commercial, marine municipal fisheries, and inland municipal fisheries subsectors," the PSA said in its recent fisheries situation report.

"Only the aquaculture subsector reported annual increment in production," the PSA said.

The PSA noted that commercial fisheries production declined by almost five percent to 820,300 MT in 2023 from 862,690 MT in 2022. The sub sector accounted for 19.3 percent of the country's total fisheries output last year, the PSA said.

Meanwhile, total municipal fisheries production, which contributed about a quarter of the overall output, fell by six percent year-on-year to 1.055 million MT from 1.126 million MT in 2022.

"On marine municipal fisheries, the total volume of production was estimated at 881,250 metric tons in 2023," it said.

"This was 7.3 percent lower than the 2022 level of 950,910 metric tons," it added while noting that the subsector contributed 20.7 percent of the total fisheries production last year.

Inland municipal fisheries production last year stood at 174,580 MT, almost flat compared to the 175,350 MT recorded volume in 2022.

PSA said domestic aquaculture, which was the lone subsector that grew during the period, expanded its output by 1.5 percent on an annual basis to 2.38 MMT. The PSA added that aquaculture constituted the biggest share of 56 percent to the total fisheries production in 2023.

The PSA reported that output reductions were observed in the following major species: milkfish (*bangus*, -8.9 percent), skipjack (*gulyasan*, -18.8 percent), frigate tuna (*tulingan*, -13.3 percent), fimbriated sardines (*tunsoy*, -33.5 percent) and threadfin bream (*bisugo*, -21.2 percent).

Meanwhile, the PSA added that production of the following grew last year: seaweed (5.3 percent), roundscad (*galunggong*, 11.2 percent), indian mackerel (*alumahan*, 17.6 percent) and yellowfin tuna (*tambakol / bariles*, 6.6 percent).

The Department of Agriculture earlier announced its plan to "revive" Laguna de Bay as one of the country's major sources of fish supply such as goby, mudfish, ayungin, bangus, catfish, tilapia, among others.



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Filipinos' rice consumption expected to rise anew in 2024

By CHINO S. LEYCO

Filipinos are projected to up their rice intake this year, solidifying the country's rank as the sixth-largest consumer of the grain worldwide, the latest report from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) indicated.

According to the USDA's Grain: World Markets and Trade report, it is projected that Filipinos will consume a record 16.5 million metric tons of rice in 2024, a three percent increase from the 16 million metric tons consumed in 2023.

This translates to an average of 151.3 kilos of rice per Filipino annually.

With higher consumption, the USDA has revised its estimates for the Philippines' rice imports. The latest projection now stands at 3.9 million metric tons this year, surpassing the previous estimate of 3.8 million metric tons.

The Philippines remains the world's top importer of rice, accounting for 25.7 percent of the global import requirements in 2024.

The country is also expected to continue to surpass China, the world's second most populous nation, in rice imports, with its expected import of only 2.3 million metric tons.

"Global consumption is up with more imports for Indonesia and the Philippines," the USDA said.

The USDA has also projected that the country's rice output may decrease to 12.5 million metric tons this year from 12.625 million metric tons last year due

to dry weather, or El Niño.

During President Marcos Jr.'s recent state visit to Hanoi, the Philippines and Vietnam signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Rice Trade Cooperation.

Under the MOU, Vietnam has committed to supplying the Philippine private sector with 1.5 million to two million metric tons of white rice annually at competitive and affordable prices for the next five years.



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33 baboy positibo sa ASF, tsinugi

Nasa 33 na alagang baboy ang pinatay matapos magpositibo sa African Swine Flu (ASF) sa bayan ng Peñablanca at Alcala, sa lalawigan ng Cagayan, ayon sa Cagayan Provincial Veterinary Office (CPVO) kahapon.

Ayon kay CPVO officer Dr. Myka Ponce, 12 mga baboy na pag-aari ng dalawang hog raiser na apektado ng ASF ang puwersahang pinatay sa Nabbabalayan, Peñablanca.

Sinabi ni Ponce, 17 na mga baboy naman sa Centro Sur at apat sa Tupang, Alcala ang nakitaan din ng nasabing sakit kayat pwersahan ang mga itong pinatay at ibinaon sa lupa.

Ani Ponce, agad nilang ipinagbawal ang pagpasok at paglabas ng mga live hogs at port meat sa mga apektadong lugar para mapigilan ang pagkalat ng ASF.

Isang massive disinfection naman para sa mga apektadong lugar ang ginawa, ayon sa ahensiya. **(Allan Bergonia)**



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Cocoa prices reach record high

LONDON: Cocoa struck record renewed peaks Friday in both London and New York, driven by a supply crunch over bad weather in top producers Ghana and Ivory Coast.

The New York price of cocoa zoomed to \$6,030 per ton, shattering its previous long-standing 1977 high of \$5,379.

London cocoa extended its record-breaking week to vault to a new peak at 4,786 pounds per ton.

The rocketing cocoa market has sparked fear over the knock-on impact on the price of chocolate, at a time when the

world's major economies are already grappling with elevated inflation.

"The ongoing [price] surge has been driven by a worse-than-expected deficit in 2023/2024, the third in a row, due to adverse developments in West Africa,"

noted Saxo Bank analyst Ole Hansen.

The West African nations of Ghana and Ivory Coast are the world's biggest producers of the commodity that is mostly used to make chocolate.

Both countries had been hit by

heavy rains that have sparked a tough year for the crop.

Producers now also face fresh turmoil due to the resurgence of the El Niño climate phenomenon, which causes drought in some areas and flooding in others.

AFP



Bird flu still stalks Cambodia after boy dies

PHNOM PENH: A 9-year-old boy in Cambodia has died from the avian influenza, the Southeast Asian kingdom's Health Ministry said on Friday, warning of a continuing threat from the virus that killed three other people last year.

The boy in northeastern Kratie province fell ill after eating poultry with his family, suffering fever, coughing and breathing difficulties

before dying on Thursday.

The ministry said tests confirmed the boy died from the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of the virus.

"According to the evidence, five chickens and three ducks had died at the patient's home, and they cooked the chickens and ducks for food to eat," the ministry said in a statement.

It said health officials were inves-

tigating the source of the virus and searching for more cases.

"The Ministry of Health again reminds all people to be vigilant about bird flu because H5N1 continues to threaten the health of our people," the statement said.

At least three people, including a 2-year-old girl, died from bird flu in the country last year.

Since late 2021, Europe has been

hit by its worst-ever outbreak of bird flu, with North and South America also experiencing severe outbreaks.

This has led to the culling of tens of millions of domestic poultry worldwide, many with the H5N1 strain, including 140,000 in the Czech Republic earlier this month.

The global outbreak is also responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of wild birds.

AFP