

**CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY, MARCH 17, 2024**

**A. SEC. FTL Jr. QUOTED**

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

**Red tide alert: Public warned vs eating shellfish**

**B. DA FAMILY**

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

**Phl eyes meat imports**

**Shellfish Bulletin No. 05: Series of 2024 (March 15, 2024)**

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

**Shellfish Bulletin No. 05: Series of 2024 (March 15, 2024)**

**MANILA BULLETIN**

**Price of onion down by P20/ kilo despite army worm infestation**

**DOH, BFAR issue red tide warning in 6 coastal areas**

**BUSINESS MIRROR**

**3 new tilapia strains make aquaculture possible in brackish, estuarine waters**

**The resurgence of farm tourism**

**ABANTE**

**Mga opisyal, empleyado ng NFA walisin – Villar**

**Shellfish ban muna – DOH, BFAR**

**PILIPINO STAR NGAYON**

**Shellfish bawal munang kainin sa 6 lugar – DOH, BFAR**

**PEOPLE'S JOURNAL**

**Red tide up in 6 Visayas, Mindanao areas**

**DA lifts suspension of 23 NFA employees**

**C. AGRI-RELATED STORY**

**THE MANILA TIMES**

**Don't wait until after retirement to start farming**

**PH to buy Avian flu vaccine**

**D. FOREIGN STORY**

*No stories*

Date: MAR 17, 2024 Page: 1 2 4



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## Red tide alert: Public warned vs eating shellfish

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

The Department of Health (DOH) warned the public over the weekend not to eat all types of shellfish due to the toxic red tide affecting some coastal areas in the country.

"All types of shell-

fish (mussels, oysters, clams, etc.) and *alamang* (*Acetes* sp.) gathered in coastal waters in six provinces are not safe to eat due to paralytic shellfish poison or toxic red tide," the DOH

Turn to Page 4

## Red tide

From Page 1

said in a statement. It cited Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources data which identified the coastal waters of Milagros in Masbate; Dauis town and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur; San Pedro Bay in Samar; Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar and San Benito in Surigao del Norte as being affected by red tide. The DOH also said that fish, squids, shrimps (except their heads)

and crabs are still safe to eat so long as these are fresh and washed thoroughly, with internal organs removed before cooking. Signs and symptoms of paralytic shellfish poisoning have a rapid onset and can be felt within 12 hours after eating unsafe shellfish, it added.

"These include numbness around the mouth or face, dizziness, pricking sensation and/or paralysis of hands and feet, body weakness, rapid pulse, difficulty talking, swallowing or breathing and headache," it added, aside from the possibility of abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhea.



# Phl eyes meat imports from Czech Republic

By HELEN FLORES

**PRAGUE** – The Philippines is eyeing the importation of meat products from Czech Republic, President Marcos said yesterday ahead of the visit of Czech agriculture officials and business delegation to the country next week.

In an interview with the Philippine media who covered his three-day state visit here, the President said the **Department of Agriculture (DA)** is now conducting exploratory talks with its Czech counterpart for the country's livestock products.

"Our interest really is the trade in meat products. They (Czech) export beef – Secretary Kiko told me earlier. They have technologies to make medicine to improve the condition of their livestock," Marcos said, referring to Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Laurel joined Marcos' visits to Germany and Czech Republic.

"That's what we're looking at. Not only will we procure, but hopefully we'll produce it locally. So we will have our own source," the President said.

"It's really in terms of trade, because we don't grow the same products. We do not have seasons like they have here. But in terms of livestock, I think there's a lot – we'll get a lot of new technology," he added.

Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture of Czech Republic are expected to visit the Philippines next week to formalize the agreement.

"They have an avian flu vaccine. They



**President Marcos and Czech Republic President Petr Pavel pose with business leaders after witnessing the signing of MOUs aimed at unlocking the potential business partnership between the two countries across various sectors, including the semiconductor and IT-BPM sectors, among others.**

are coming close to developing a swine flu vaccine," he said.

"Those are the kinds of areas that we're looking at. It's really in terms of trade because we don't grow the same products," he said.

The President said Laurel visited a cattle and dairy farm here to see what can be applicable to the Philippines.

He said the delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture of Czech Republic was supposed to visit the Philippines later this year, but was moved to next week because of his state visit here.

During Czech Republic Prime Minister Petr Fiala's visit to Manila in April last year, he expressed the readiness of his

government to support the Philippines in the agriculture sector, among others.

In February, the DA has issued Special Order 152, allowing the agency to send an inspection team to the Czech Republic to check their meat products.

Under the agency's Administrative Order 16 issued in 2006, countries are required to apply for accreditation seeking to export animals, meat and meat products to the Philippines.

Last year, the DA lifted the ban on poultry imports from the Czech Republic as the European country contained an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza or bird flu.



Date: MAR 17, 2024 Page: 83



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**Shellfish Bulletin No. 05**  
Series of 2024  
15 March 2024

Shellfishes collected and tested from coastal waters of **Milagros in Masbate**; coastal waters of **Dauls and Tagbilaran City in Bohol**; **San Pedro Bay in Samar** and **Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar**; **Dumanquilas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur**; and coastal waters of **San Benito in Surigao del Norte** are still positive for Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) or toxic red tide that is beyond the regulatory limit.

**Do not harvest  
Do not sell  
Do not buy  
Do not eat**

**All types of shellfish and *Acetes* sp. or alamang gathered from the areas shown above are NOT SAFE for human consumption.** Fish, squids, shrimps, and crabs are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking.

The following areas continue to be **FREE from toxic red tide**: coastal waters of Cavite, Las Piñas, Parañaque, Navotas, Bulacan, and Bataan (Mariveles, Limay, Orion, Pilar, Balanga, Hermosa, Orani, Abucay, and Samal) in Manila Bay; mariculture areas in Infanta, coastal waters of Bolinao, Anda, Alaminos, Sual, and Wawa, Bani in Pangasinan; mariculture areas in Rosario, and Sto. Tomas in La Union; coastal waters of Pampanga; Masinloc Bay in Zambales; Pagbilao Bay, Pagbilao, and coastal waters of Walay, Padre Burgos in Quezon; Honda, and coastal waters of Inner Malampaya Sound, Taytay in Palawan; coastal waters of Mandon in Masbate; Sorsogon Bay, and Juag Lagoon, Matnog in Sorsogon; coastal waters of Borongan, San Dionisio in Iloilo; Sapian Bay (Ivisan and Sapian in Capiz; Mambuquio and Camand, Batan in Aklan); coastal waters of Atavas, Batan, and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aklan; coastal waters of Pontevedra; Panay; Pilar; Roxas City and President Roxas in Capiz; coastal waters of E.B. Magalona, Talisay City, Silay City, Bacolod City, Hinigaran, and Victorias City in Negros Occidental; Tambobo, and Sili Bays, Siaton; and Bais Bay, Bais City in Negros Oriental; coastal waters of Daram, Calbayog, and Zumarraga, Cambatutay, Irong-irong, Mequoda and Villereal Bays in Samar; coastal waters of Guluat in Eastern Samar; coastal waters of Leyte, Calubian, Ormoc, Sogod, and Carigara Bay and Cancabato, Tacloban City in Leyte; Tantanang Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay; Murcielagos Bay in Zamboanga del Norte and (Sapang Dalaga, and Ballangao) in Misamis Occidental; Panguil Bay, Tangub City, and coastal waters of Ozamiz City in Misamis Occidental; coastal waters of Baroy in Lanao del Norte; Taguines Lagoon, Benoni, Mahinog in Camiguin; Balite, and Pujada Bays, Mati City in Davao Oriental; Tagabuli Bay in Davao del Sur; Malaleg Bay in Davao Occidental and Davao del Sur; coastal waters of Hinatuan, and Cortes, and Bislig Bay in Surigao del Sur. **Moreover, Langa Bay in Surigao del Sur are now free of the toxic red tide.**

ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO  
Director

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P.S. March 17, 2024



Date: MAR. 17 2024 Page: B4



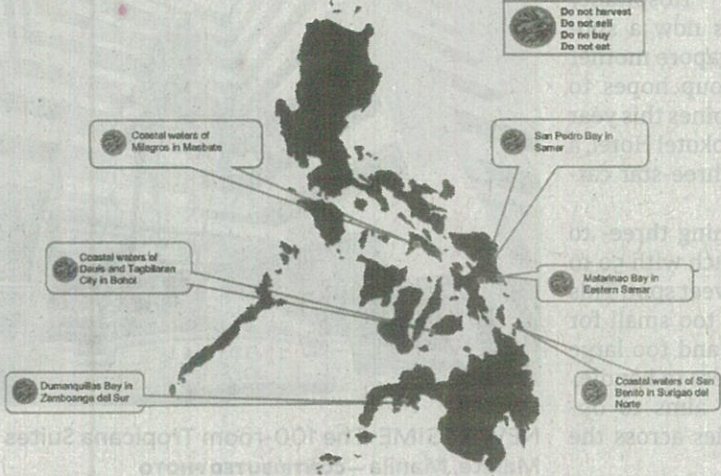
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**ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO**  
Director



Date: MAR 17 2024 Page: 3



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## Price of onion down by ₱20/kilo despite army worm infestation

By JEL SANTOS

Despite the infestation of armyworms in some farms, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said the price of onion went down by ₱20 per kilo because of the additional planting of arable lands.

The agriculture department had earlier reported that several farms cultivating onions had been hit by armyworm infestation.

"Patuloy na bumababa ang presyo ng sibuyas. In fact, bumaba ng ₱20 ang presyo ng sibuyas from ₱100 per kilo last week – ito 'yung red, iyong pula at saka iyong puti – ngayon ay nasa otsenta na lang or ₱80 (The price of onion continues to decrease. In fact, the price of onions dropped by ₱20 from ₱100 per kilo last week – the red one, the red ones and then the white ones – now it's only around ₱80)," Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, the spokesperson of the DA, said during a televised public briefing on Friday, March 15.

Based on the price monitoring of the DA last March 15, local red onion ranges from ₱60 to ₱120 a kilo in Metro Manila markets. Meanwhile, local white onion is retailed for ₱50 to ₱120 per kilo.

De Mesa stated that over 10,300 hectares have been planted with onions this year, noting that such is a 70 percent increase from 7,000 hectares in 2023.

He admitted that armyworms, locally known as "harass", had an effect on the production of onion but said that it only had minimal effect.

According to the DA spokesperson, around 17.8 hectares of onion farms have been "totally damaged" so far.

"Base sa datos na ito ay hindi pa ganon kalaki iyong na-damage bagama't patuloy iyong ating tinatawag na monitoring at iyong ating Regional Crop Protection Center ay nakikipag-ugnayan sa ating mga magsisibuyas para siguraduhin na tulungan sila na hindi lumala iyong epekto ng harabas (Based on this data, the damage has not been that great, although what we call monitoring continues and our Regional Crop Protection Center is in contact with our farmers to make sure that we help them so that the effects of the army worse do not get worse)," said De Mesa.



Date: MAR 17, 2024 Page: 1 25



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## DOH, BFAR issue red tide warning in 6 coastal areas

By ZEKINAH ELIZE ESPINA

The public was urged to refrain from consuming shellfish harvested from six areas of the country due to the presence of paralytic shellfish poison or the "toxic red tide."

In a statement issued on Saturday, March 16, the Department of Health (DOH) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

(BFAR) identified areas under toxic red tide warning as the coastal waters of Milagros in Masbate, Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol, Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur, San Pedro Bay in Samar, Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar, and San Benito in Surigao del Norte.

Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa emphasized the importance of swift action in

► 5

## DOH, BFAR issue red tide warning in 6 coastal areas 1◀

cases of symptoms after consuming contaminated shellfish, urging individuals to seek immediate medical attention at the nearest emergency room.

"Prevention is the best: do not eat tahong, talaba, halaan, other shellfish, and alamang from areas identified with toxic red tide," he said.

Herbosa also urged the public to always read advisories from BFAR and the DOH.

Moreover, he directed all hospitals to "prepare for these cases and to report them accordingly."

The symptoms of paralytic shellfish poisoning, as per DOH, can emerge within 12 hours of ingestion, encompassing numbness, dizziness, weakness, and gastrointestinal discomfort.

Other symptoms may include

numbness around the mouth or face, pricking sensations, difficulty in speech or swallowing, and headaches, DOH said.

The health department stressed that all varieties of shellfish, such as mussels, oysters, clams, and alamang (*Acetes* sp.), collected from these regions are deemed "unsafe for consumption."

However, the DOH clarified that fish, squid, shrimp (except their heads), and crabs remain "safe" to eat if they are fresh and thoroughly washed, and their internal organs, including gills and intestines, are removed before cooking.

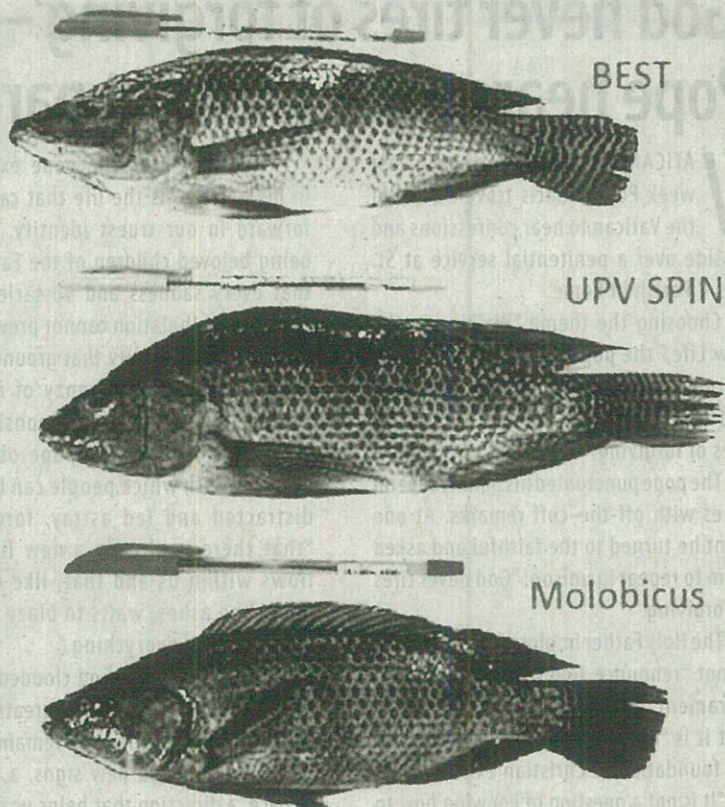
Related to this, the DOH called for vigilance and adherence to safety guidelines to safeguard public health against the dangers of toxic red tide contamination.



Date: MAR 17 2024 Page: AS



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THE new three newly developed tilapia strains—BEST, SPIN and Molobicus—at 109 days of culture in high-salinity coastal estuarine ponds. PHOTO FROM UPV PROJECT TEAM

## 3 new tilapia strains make aquaculture possible in brackish, estuarine waters

**A**RE you curious about the tilapia you have been eating? Did you know that tilapia strains that can be produced in both brackish water and estuarine environments have already been developed by Filipino researchers?

The University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV), with strong support from the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-PCAARRD), has developed the UPV-Saline-Tolerant Population of Improved *Nilotica* (SPIN) tilapia strain.

This strain was designed to thrive in brackish water and estuarine to prevent mass death due to saltwater (saline water) intrusions, caused by rising seawater levels, in tilapia-producing areas.

An estuary is an area where a freshwater river or stream meets the ocean. In estuaries, the salty ocean mixes with a freshwater river, resulting in brackish water. Brackish water is somewhat salty, but not as salty as the ocean, the National Geographic.org said.

### Most affordable, but declining production

FOR years, tilapia has been one of the most affordable fish in the country, and has been significantly contributing to the national economy.

Moreover, tilapia is the second largest aquaculture-produced fish species in the Philippines with a total production of 281,114-metric tons, valued at P24.26 billion in 2021.

However, the tilapia industry is currently exhibiting minimal or slow growth with an average annual production rate of 0.82 percent from 2012–2021.

The declining production trend has been attributed to the congested and saturated production systems in lakes and cages.

Thus, tilapia harvests in freshwater lakes and fishponds appeared to have reached its maximum capacity.

Dwindling water quality caused by mismanaged production and eutrophication (excessive plant and algal growth) of rivers and lakes are also factors linked to declining tilapia production.

To advance the industry production, tilapia farming is expected to expand toward the estuarine and brackish coastal areas.

It is found that brackish water ponds and estuarine water cages have high potentials for the growth and expansion of tilapia farming.

### Best performing Philippine tilapia strain

BESIDES the UPV SPIN, two other saline-tolerant tilapia strains were developed in the Philippines, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources-Brackish water Enhanced Selected Tilapia (BFAR-BEST), and the BFAR-Molobicus strains.

To test the growth and production performance of these Philippine-developed saline-tolerant tilapia strains in different saline and brackish water ecosystems, UPV is conducting an investigatory research project, "Field testing and performance evaluation of saline-tolerant Philippine Tilapia strain cultured in different geographical brackishwater ecosystems." It is also funded by DOST-PCAARRD.

The project aims to identify the ideal Philippine saline-tolerant tilapia strains for specific brackish water and high salinity coastal and riverine ecosystems.

Research results indicate that UPV SPIN and BFAR BEST tilapia strains exhibited faster growth and high survival rate in brackish water, high-saline pond culture systems, as well as in brackish water estuarine earthen ponds.

These strains attained the harvestable size of 250 grams in about 100 days of culture.

On the other hand, UPV SPIN showed the best growth performance in estuarine cage culture sites, compared to the two other tilapia strains.

### Why the need for saline-tolerant tilapia strains?

THE Philippines, being archipelagic, is surrounded by a wide range of brackish estuarine waters.

Its freshwater is being used not only for the culture of inland aquatic resources, but also for human household needs, consumption and agricultural irrigation purposes.

Due to the limited carrying capacity of freshwater, and to mitigate the declining water supply for aquaculture use, tilapia aquaculture is expected to expand its production in brackish and estuarine waters.

But this is only possible through the use of saline- or salt-tolerant strains. This initiative hopes to significantly broaden and improve tilapia quality and production.

The adoption of the UPV SPIN strain technology in brackish water cages presents a notable advantage over other marine fish being cultured.

With the technology's simple and cost-effective fry production, along with less technical needs in tilapia culture operations, it is highly accessible to small-scale, coastal fisherfolk.

It eliminates the need for significant investments and highly skilled technicians to run the aquaculture operation, thereby ensuring economic benefits in estuarine and coastal communities. *Rizza B. Ramoran/S&T Media Service*



Date: MAR. 17, 2024 Page: A4



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# The resurgence of farm tourism



FAMILY escapade at South Farm Panglao



RAFFIA Weaving at Bohol Farms in Dauis BERNARD L. SUPETAN



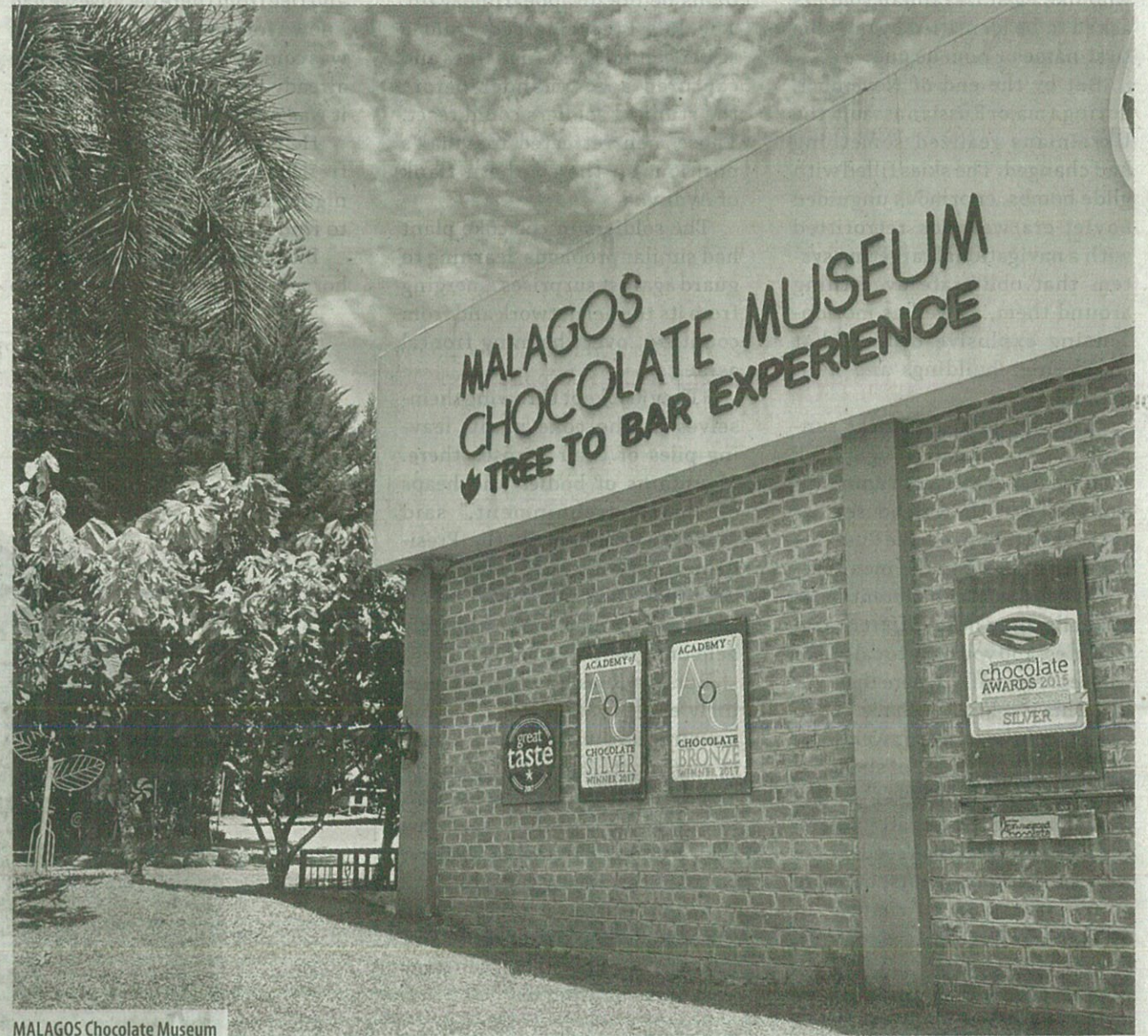


By BERNARD L. SUPETRAN

**T**HE province of Bohol has been trending on social media this week due to the sighting of a resort built at the foot of the famed Chocolate Hills in the outskirt town of Sagbayan. But unknown to many, the charming island has been riding high on a string of high-profile events which continue to put the spotlight on this global getaway.



AGRICULTURE Secretary Francis Tiu Laurel  
at a Zamboales pompano aqua farm



MALAGOS Chocolate Museum



# BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business



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Date: MAY 17, 2024 Page: A4

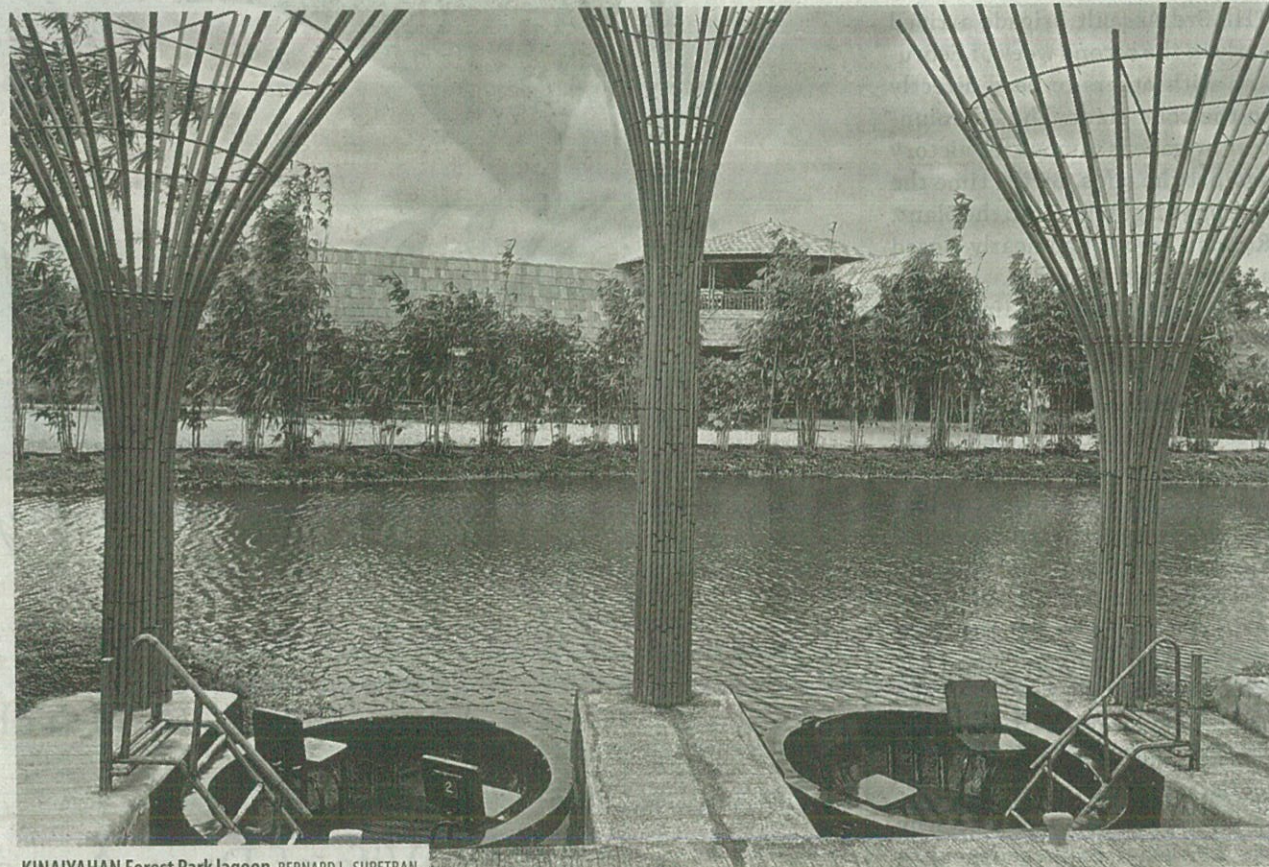
One of the major events it has hosted in recent weeks is the 7th Philippine Farm Tourism Conference in the resort island of Panglao which marked the post-pandemic resurgence of this industry sub-sector.

Returning after a five-year dormancy, the 3-day event was spearheaded by the International School of Sustainable Tourism (ISST) led by its president, Mina Gabor, and featured a powerhouse lineup of speakers from the government, business, and agriculture sectors.

The former Department of Tourism secretary noted that during the Covid-19 quarantine restrictions, farm sites were among the few establishments which continued to operate because of its vital role in securing food supply. She said that with the full reopening of tourism a few years back, Bohol can put its best foot (and food) forward and offering more diverse and immersive experiences to guests.

Themed, "Farm Tourism: Consciousness for Healthy Living and New Experiences," the conference focused on the cultivation of fruit and vegetable farms, aquaculture and artisanal fisheries, and environmentally-sustainable investments.

And much like an intensive crash course, it included useful lectures on farm-to-table dining,



KINAIYAHAN Forest Park lagoon BERNARD L. SUPETRAN

processing fruits and vegetables, right marketing and revenue, value-added benefits of artisanal fisheries, reviving the country's multi-million seaweeds industry, and the prospects of pompano fish aquaculture in the coastal villages.

Bohol Governor Erico Aristote Aumentado and first district

congressman Edgar Chatto led the provincial executives in welcomed the over 200 delegates and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to host the unique event. They noted that farm tourism will support the province's earth-friendly initiatives after being given by the Unesco the prestigious

Global Geopark accolade last year because of its rich terrestrial and marine biodiversity.

The gathering also opened opportunities for networking and business matching among participants with the presence of regional and chapter heads of supporting institutions, Bureau of Fisheries



# BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

Date: MAR. 17, 2024 Page: A4



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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), and Philippine Exporters Confederation (Philexport).

Capping the conference is the prestigious Lakbay Bukid Awards which was conferred on five individuals and organizations which have contributed to the growth of farm tourism in Asia.

The fourth batch of awardees included millennial farmer Francis Joseph Perdigon from Butuan City; Dr. I Wayan Alit Artha Wiguna of Cau Chocolates of Bali, Indonesia; Tan Inong Manufacturers which produce artisanal rock salt, Borneo Eco Tours of Sabah, Malaysia headed by Albert Teo Chin Kion, and Malagos Agri-Ventures Corp.

of Davao City, which is known for its recreational facilities, cacao farm and chocolate museum.

The winners also received a US\$1,000 prize from the family of the late tourism stalwart Bobby Joseph, which was personally awarded by his widow, Ida Rosario Joseph.

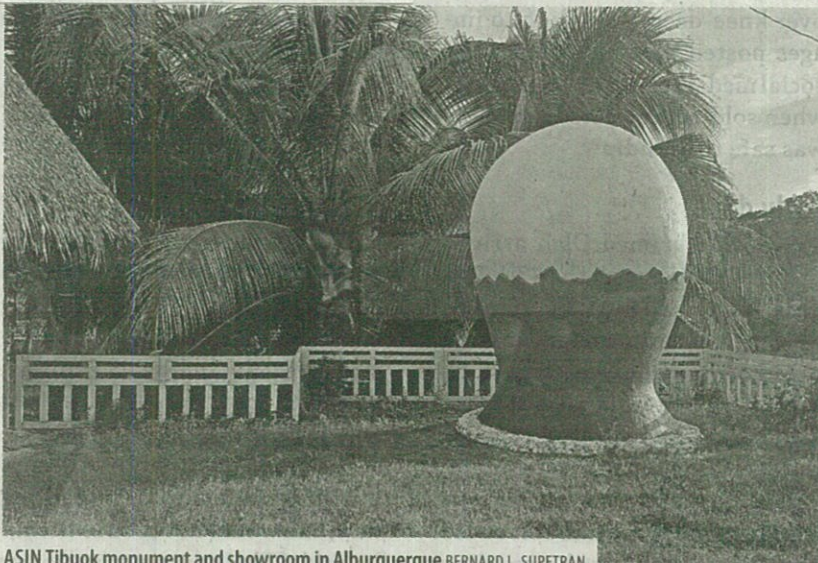
For a consummate and immersive experience, delegates toured Bohol's farm tourism sites which are catching the attention of guests who are enamored with its fine beaches, islets, scuba diving sites and the iconic Chocolate Hills.

Farm sites which are now tourist-ready are the Loboc Cacao Farm, Asin Tibuok makers in Albuquerque, Lasang Cacao Farm in Maribojoc, Green Thumb Farm in Corella, Manay's Farm in San Miguel, the Jagna Recycling Facility and Eco Farm, and the Ubay Stock Farm. The latter is the country's oldest and largest government livestock facility with an area of 3,600 hectares.

Also in the itinerary were the more touristic Kinaiyahan Forest Park, a bamboo farm and restaurant in Bilar; South Farm, an upscale agri-site which is affiliated with the posh Oceanica Resort Panglao (formerly South Palms), and the multi-awarded Bohol Farms in Dauis, a farm tourism pioneer and a must-visit for its organic cuisine and quaint accommodation.

The confab is also supported by the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca), ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, the Department of Tourism, Tourism Promotions Board, the Department of Trade and Industry, and Philippine Airlines.

With the mantle of hosting next year's conference turned over to Gen. Santos City, farm tourism advocates can't wait to fly down south in Mindanao to see its vaunted fishing industry, exotic culture, and the booming farm tourism sector of the Soccsksargen Region.



ASIN Tibuok monument and showroom in Albuquerque BERNARD L. SUPETAN





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## Mga opisyal, empleyado ng NFA walisin - Villar

INIREKOMENDA ni Senador Cynthia Villar ang pagbuwag sa Na-

tional Food Authority (NFA) dahil sa malimit na pagkakasangkot umano sa maling paggamit ng pondo ng gobyerno.

Ayon kay Villar, chair ng Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, dapat puwersahin na ang mga nagtatrabaho sa NFA ng early retirement upang mabuwag na ang ahensiya.

"Puwede silang magoffer ng early retirement para wala nang empleyado. Pag wala nang empleyado mas madali nang i-abolish kasi walang magko-complain na dineprive mo ng hanapbuhay," giit ng senador sa interview ng DWIZ nitong Sabado.

Aniya, noong panahon ni dating Finance Secretary Sonny Dominiguez, pinagretiro ang kalahati ng workforce ng

**Abante**  
**NEGOSYO**

NFA pero kalahati pa ang patuloy na nagtatrabaho ngayon.

Nitong nagdaang araw ay muling nakaladkad sa kontrobersya ang NFA matapos magbenta ng stock ng bigas sa dalawang pribadong trader.

Naniniwala si Villar na may kumita sa transaksyong ito lalo pa't ibinenta ang bigas sa mababang presyo.

"Talagang kapag pagkakitaan nawawala ang values," patutsada ng senadora.

Kapag nabuwag ang NFA, ang pondong nilalaan dito ng gobyerno ay puwede umanong ilipat na lamang sa mga magsasaka bilang subsidy. Ang NFA ay nilikha ni dating Pangulong Ferdinand E. Marcos noong Setyembre 26, 1972.





## Shellfish ban muna - DOH, BFAR

BINIGYAN ng babala ng Department of Health (DOH) at ng Department of Agriculture - Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) ang publiko laban sa pagkain ng lahat ng uri ng shellfish sa anim na lugar sa bansa matapos na matukoy na kontaminado ang mga ito ng red tide.

Ayon sa DA-BFAR Shellfish Bulletin No. 05, series of 2024, na may petsang Marso 15, 2024, tinukoy ng DOH ang mga lugar na may toxic red tide na kinabibilangan ng coastal waters ng Milagros sa Masbate; coastal waters ng Davao at Tagbilaran City sa Bohol; Dumanquillas Bay sa Zamboanga del Sur; San Pedro Bay sa Samar; Matarinao Bay sa Eastern Samar; at sa Coastal Waters ng San Benito sa Surigao del Norte.

Nalaman na bukod sa lahat ng uri ng shellfish, gaya ng tahong at tulya ay hindi rin ligtas na kainin ang alamang na makukuha sa mga naturang lugar.

Kaugnay nito, ligtas naman umanong kainin ang mga isda, pusit, at mga alimango maliban sa kanilang mga ulo, basta't sariwa at nahugasan itong mabuti at mainam kung aalisin muna ang hasang at bituka.

Nagpaalala rin ang DOH at DA-BFAR na ang mga palatandaan at sintomas ng paralytic shellfish poisoning ay mararamdaman sa loob ng 12 oras pagkatapos kumain ng hindi ligtas na shellfish.

Makararanas din ng pamamanhid ng paligid ng bibig o mukha; pagkahilo; pricking sensation o pagka-paralisa ng mga kamay at paa; panghihina ng katawan; mabilis na tibok bg pulso; hirap sa pagsasalita at paglunok. (Juliet de Loza-Cudia)



Date: Mar 17, 2024 Page: 4



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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

### Shellfish bawal munang kainin sa 6 lugar - DOH, BFAR

Pinagbabawal muna ng Department of Health (DOH) at Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) sa publiko ang pagkain ng lahat ng uri ng shellfish sa anim na lugar sa bansa matapos na matukoy na kontaminado ang mga ito ng red tide.

Batay sa inilabas na DA-BFAR Shellfish Bulletin No. 05, series of 2024, na may petsang Marso 15, 2024, tinukoy ng DOH ang mga lugar na may toxic red tide na kinabibilangan ng coastal waters ng Milagros sa Masbate; coastal waters ng Dausi at Tagbilaran City sa Bohol; Dumanquillas Bay sa Zamboanga del Sur; San Pedro Bay sa Samar; Matarinao Bay

sa Eastern Samar; at sa Coastal Waters ng San Benito sa Surigao del Norte.

Bukod sa lahat ng uri ng shellfish, gaya ng tahong at tulya, hindi rin ligtas na kainin ang alamang na makukuha sa mga naturang lugar.

Sa kabila nito, ligtas namang kainin ang mga isda, pusit, at mga alimango, maliban sa kanilang mga ulo, basta't sariwa at nahugasan itong mabuti at mainam kung aalisin muna ang hasang at bituka bago lutuin.

Ang mga palatandaan at sintomas umano ng paralytic shellfish poisoning ay mabilis sa simula at mararamdaman ito sa loob ng 12 oras. Magkaron din ng pamamanhid ng paligid ng bibig o mukha; pagkahilo; pricking sensation o pagka-paralisa ng mga kamay at paa; panghihina ng katawan; mabilis na tibok ng pulso; hirap sa pagsasalita at paglunok. Maaari ring makaranas ng pananakit ng tiyan, pagsusuka at pagtatae o diarrhea. (Doris Franche-Borja)



Date: MAR 17, 2024 Page: 13



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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## Red tide up in 6 Visayas, Mindanao areas

THE Department of Health (DOH) yesterday warned the public against consuming shellfish from six areas in the Visayas and Mindanao due to paralytic shellfish poison or toxic red tide.

The DOH and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said the advisory covers all types of shellfish, including mussels or tahong, oysters, clams, and alamang sourced from the coastal waters of Milagros in Masbate; Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; Dumanquilas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur; San Pedro Bay in Samar; Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar; and San Be-

nito in Surigao del Norte.

"Bring patients with symptoms after eating unsafe shellfish to the nearest emergency room immediately. Prevention is the best. Do not eat tahong, talaba, halaan, other shellfish, and alamang from areas identified with toxic red tide," Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa said.

"Always read advisories from DA-BFAR and the DOH. All hospitals are directed to prepare for these cases and to report them accordingly," he added.

The DOH said fish, squids, shrimps (except their heads), and crabs are safe to eat so long as

they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs, such as gills and intestines, are removed before cooking.

It noted that the signs and symptoms of paralytic shellfish poisoning have a rapid onset and can be felt within 12 hours after consuming unsafe shellfish.

These include numbness around the mouth or face; dizziness; prickling sensation and/or paralysis of hands and feet; body weakness; rapid pulse; difficulty talking, swallowing, or breathing; and headache.

There may also be abdominal pain, vomiting, and diarrhea. (PNA)



Date: MAR 17, 2021 Page: 7



LIBRARY  
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## DA LIFTS SUSPENSION OF 23 NFA EMPLOYEES

**THE Department of Agriculture has confirmed the lifting of the preventive suspension of 23 officials and employees of the National Food Authority (NFA).**

In a television interview on Friday, Ombudsman Samuel Martires said the lifting came after investigators found erroneous data from the lists submitted by the DA.

The 23, which included an assistant branch manager in a warehouse in

Batangas province, are among the 141 NFA officials and employees suspended amid the ongoing probe into the alleged questionable sale of rice buffer stock.

"Tyan ay magandang balita para sa mga empleyado dahil sila ay na-suspend without pay," Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said during the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon public briefing.

"So, malaking tulong sa kanila na ma-lift para

makatulong ulis ang kanilang pamilya," he added.

A total of 108 suspended NFA employees submitted their 26-page motion for reconsideration before the Office of the Ombudsman on Wednesday.

"The affected employees are deeply saddened by the undue haste by which the Office of the Ombudsman carried out its preventive suspension without even substantiating the alleged involve-

ment of each concerned employee in the alleged anomalous sale of rice buffer stocks. Their functions are just ministerial job," legal counsel Rafael Rayco said in a separate statement.

The initial order of the Ombudsman was six-months suspension without pay while the probe is ongoing.

The DA earlier said it would look into the transactions of NFA as far back as 2019. **PNA**





## Don't wait until after retirement to start farming

**M**ANY of my employed middle-aged friends, whether chatting online or in person, have expressed a desire to pursue farming upon retirement, like I did. They seem captivated by the pictures of fresh, pesticide-free vegetables and tropical fruits I occasionally share on Facebook Messenger. In posting these photos, I unwittingly portray a romanticized image of farming post-retirement, glossing over the challenges faced by my family and caretakers in producing these crops in the uplands.

However, let me be clear: there are numerous benefits to farming after retirement. It offers retirees a meaningful use of time and a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Engaging in activities such as gardening, caring for animals and outdoor chores promotes physical activity, which is conducive to good health and overall well-being. Moreover, farming fosters a



### VIEW FROM THE SOUTH

**DR. LALAY  
RAMOS-JIMENEZ**

connection with nature, allowing retirees to appreciate the outdoors and breathe unpolluted air, which can have positive effects on stress reduction and mental health. Additionally, growing their own food, including fresh, organic vegetables, affords retirees more control over their diet. Farming can also generate income to supplement their retirement savings or pension.

But there exist significant downsides and challenges for retirees venturing into farming. The occupation is physically demanding, and keeping up with labor-intensive activities becomes increasingly difficult with age. Personally, I feel the strain on my joints when trekking on rough pathways

toward the farm. Financial risks abound. These include crop failure; adverse weather conditions such as droughts, heavy rain and strong typhoons; and market instability, which can induce stress, particularly if farming constitutes a primary source of retirement support. Moreover, maintaining a farm incurs numerous additional costs, including labor, equipment, inputs and losses from farm thieves. Time commitment is substantial, which retirees may not always have or wish to allocate to other activities. For those new to farming or lacking experience, a steep learning curve necessitates training and hands-on experience to acquire essential skills and knowledge. Depending on the farm's location, such as in the uplands with limited access to community resources, health services and social activities, retirees may experience social isolation. That is why it is important for

retirees to join farmers' associations to build social relationships within their communities.

In general, farming can be a fulfilling pursuit for physically fit senior citizens willing to invest time and effort. However, it is crucial to carefully consider the challenges and lifestyle adjustments before embarking on this path.

In my view, those contemplating farming as a post-retirement occupation would be wise to begin preparations at a younger age while still holding a regular job. Whether one owns farmland or intends to purchase one, beginning work on the property during weekends or holidays is advisable. Maintaining a regular job provides a stable income source, mitigating financial risks associated with farming. Any income derived from farming can complement earnings from employment, enhancing financial security. Balancing farming with a regular job enables individuals to sustain

a healthy work-life balance, enjoying the benefits of farming and outdoor activities during leisure time without solely relying on farming for income.

I am acquainted with couples who have acquired or inherited small farms in rural areas while holding high-pressure jobs in business and academia. They tend to their small farms during their free time, primarily as a means of relaxation from work pressures. Caretakers are employed to ensure property security and maintenance. Farming as a hobby or side activity has enabled them to develop valuable skills related to organic farming, animal husbandry and aquaculture, either through direct observation or by attending training provided by agricultural and fisheries experts. Weekend farming can also serve as a social activity, fostering connections with other hobby farmers and participation in community events such as farm-

ers' markets or agricultural fairs. Moreover, it has prompted them to view farming as a business enterprise. Consequently, when these individuals eventually leave their high-pressure jobs or retire, their weekend farming experiences have equipped them with the necessary skills to transition to full-time farming. Over time, the trees and other high-value crops they planted during their youth have matured, serving as additional sources of income. Some of them are operating successful farm-tourism enterprises that cater to various types of clients.

Part-time engagement in farming during one's working years lays the groundwork for a successful transition to full-time farming in retirement. By starting early and integrating farming into their lives alongside regular employment, retirees can prepare for and embrace farming as a meaningful and sustainable occupation in their later years.





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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

## PH to buy Avian flu vaccine

**PRAGUE:** President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday said he is considering procuring avian influenza vaccine from the Czech Republic as he expressed interest to explore trade in meat products between the two countries.

In an interview with the Philippine media delegation during his three-day state visit to the Czech Republic, Marcos said the Department of Agriculture is conducting exploratory talks with its Czech counterpart for the country's livestock products.

This, after Czech President Petr Pavel announced that he would send a business delegation, led by Czech Agriculture Minister Marek Vyborný, to Manila next week and establish cooperation that would support the food security initiatives of the Philippines.

"They have an avian flu vaccine, coming close to developing a swine flu vaccine. So, that's what we are looking at," Marcos said during an interview with the Philippine media here.

"Not only will we procure perhaps, but hopefully, we'll produce it locally. So that we will have our own source of the vaccine," he added.

Marcos said the Philippines is also interested in the new technology being used by the Czech Republic to ensure the quality of meat and livestock products in the country.

"So, those are the kinds of areas

that we're looking at. It's really in terms of trade because we don't grow the same products, we do not have seasons like they have here in the Czech Republic," he said.

"But in terms of livestock, I think we can get many forms of new technology."

Marcos said representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic are expected to visit the Philippines by next week to formalize the agreement.

Czech Republic Prime Minister Petr Fiala visited Manila in April last year when he sat in a bilateral meeting with Marcos and expressed the readiness of his government to support the Philippines in the agriculture sector, among others.

Meanwhile, the Philippines and Czech Republic signed three agreements aimed at promoting trade and investment between the two nations on the last day of Marcos' visit in Prague.

Marcos and Czech President Petr Pavel witnessed the signing of deals during the Philippines-Czech Business Forum at Czernin Palace.

Among the agreements signed was the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Foundation Inc. (Seipi) and the Electrical and Electronic Association of the Czech Republic (ELA).

Under the deal, Seipi and ELA

will establish a long-term collaborative relationship in the field of electronics that would include participation in the global network of leading technology and innovation centers or engagement of small and mid-sized companies.

The IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines Inc. (Ibpap) and the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic (SPCR) also signed an Agreement of Mutual Cooperation to promote commercial and industrial relations.

The cooperation deal between the Ibpap and SPCR covers exchange of better practices on policy and regulations; development and promotion of information technology (IT) competencies; and certification or facilitation of responsible implementation of artificial intelligence.

Also signed was the agreement of mutual cooperation between the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the SPCR to promote trade and investment between the two countries.

There will be exchanges of trade missions, organization of trade and investment seminars, and exchange of market information between the PCCI and the SPCR.

In his speech, Marcos said the signed MoUs unlocked the vast potential in the business partnership between the Philippines and the Czech Republic.

**CATHERINE S. VALENTE**