CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY, MARCH 20, 2024

A. SEC. FTL Jr. QUOTED

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
PH gets higher sugar export quota, widens sourcing of meat imports

B. DA FAMILY

MANILA STANDARD
WTO hikes sugar quota allocation for PH

THE MANILA TIMES
Coffee body seeks funds to boost local production

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
Sandigan junks fertilizer scam case vs supplier
Phl gets 25,000 MT US sugar allocation

BUSINESS WORLD
Industry pitches P6-B program to attain coffee self-sufficiency
Well-milled rice prices average P56.90/kg in early March

BUSINESS MIRROR
Editorial: Philippines misses business opportunity as chocolate takes center stage
DA grants meat export accreditation to Brazil, Germany, 2 other countries

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
El Niño damage hits P1.75B
DA sets programs on tilapia, milk

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON
Murang bigas mabibili na raw

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Editorial: Reviving our dying salt industry

MANILA BULLETIN
EU-PH FTA to benefit agri, garment – business chambers

THE MANILA TIMES
Cavite fishermen net a bounty of sardines

BUSINESS MIRROR
'Salt to spur hobs, investment generation, revive dying industry'

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Measures on agriculture environment top LEDAC list

D. FOREIGN STORY

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT
Wheat steadies after rally

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 2 0 MAR 2024 Page: A1 & A2

PH gets higher sugar export quota, widens sourcing of meat imports

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) has increased the allocated quantity of raw cane sugar from the Philippines that is eligible to enter the United States at the lower duty rate under the World Trade Organization tariff-rate quota (TRQ) for fiscal year 2024.

As this developed, the Department of Agriculture (DA) has granted a three-year meat exporters' accreditation to 99 companies from Brazil, Germany, Hungary and Poland following clearances issued by DA Inspection Missions, which visited these countries late last year.

The move further widens the country's options in securing imported meat supply.

Based on USTR's advisory, the Philippines was given an additional 25,300 metric tons (MT) on top of the earlier allocation of 145,235 MT and is now at a total of 170,535.

USTR's fiscal year 2024 is from Oct. 1, 2023 through Sept. 30, 2024.

For fiscal year 2023, the USTR has allocated a total of 145,235 MT of sugar from the Philippines under TRQ.

The USTR also issued additional allocations from the previous fiscal year but has not given the Philippines an additional allotment

See PH GETS ➤ Page A2

PH GETS

back then.

Historically, the country maintains its shipments of sugar to the US as the latter provides TRQ that allow countries to export specified quantities of a product at a relatively low tariff, but subject all imports of the product above a predetermined threshold to a higher tariff.

The Philippines is one of selected countries given with an annual allocation of sugar export to the US market at a premium.

Last December, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said up to eight producers, millers and traders have offered to supply 30,000 to 60,000 MT of raw sugar to the US market.

The Philippines last shipped raw sugar to the US market during crop year 2020-2021 involving 112,008 MT of commercial weight.

In a statement, the DA said its inspection missions found all 36 meat establishments in Germany, 48 in Brazil, three in Hungary and a dozen in Poland to be compliant with the animal health code of the World Organization of Animal Health as well as quarantine and meat inspection standards of the Philippines.

Exporter accreditation is necessary to ensure cattle, swine and poultry meat sourced from abroad are free of pathogens and other diseases that could pose a risk to Filipinos and the multi-billion-peso domestic livestock and poultry industry.

The 36 German companies are allowed to ship to the Philippines beef, pork and poultry meat, particularly chicken and turkey, while the 48 meat establishments from Brazil could export beef, pork and chicken, duck and turkey meat.

For Poland, the DA accredited 12 meat companies wherein six are for pork and another six for beef.

The DA also granted three companies from Hungary to export pork and poultry meat, including chicken, duck and geese, to the country.

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in the orders he signed before leaving for Germany earlier this week that these foreign meat exporters must also fully comply with existing regulations and conditions provided in the orders and their annexes.

Manila Standard

Date: MAR 20, 2024 Page: A4

WTO hikes sugar quota allocation for PH

By Othel V. Campos

THE Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) announced an increase in the allocation for the Philippines and select countries in the World Trade Organization (WTO) sugar tariff-rate quota (TRQ) for fiscal year 2024 amounting to 25,300 metric tons (MT) of raw cane sugar.

The Philippines was among the 20 countries that qualified for the increased allocation of raw cane sugar to enter the US at lower duty rate from Oct. 1, 2023 to Sept. 30, 2024.

The Philippines has the second highest allocation next to Brazil's 27,174 MT.

TRQs allow countries to export specified quantities of a product to the US at a relatively low tariff, but subject all imports of the product above a pre-determined threshold to a higher tariff.

On March 7, 2024, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced an additional in-quota quantity of the TRQ for raw cane sugar eligible to enter the US in FY 2024, in the amount of 125,000 metric tons raw value (MTRV).

The said quantity is in addition to the minimum amount to which the US is committed under the WTO Agreement which is at 1,117,195 MTRV.

USTR is allocating the additional quantity of 125,000 MTRV to the remaining 18 countries - Australia with 15,555 MT; Belize, 2,061; Bolivia, 1,499; Colombia, 4,498; Costa Rica, 2,811; Ecuador, 2,061; El Salvador, 4,873; Eswatini,, 29,998; Philippines, 1,687; Guatemala, 8,996; Guyana 2,249; Honduras, 1,874; Jamaica, 2,061; Mozambique, 2,437; Peru, 7,684; South Africa, 4,310; Thailand, 2,624; and, Zimbabwe with 2,249 MT.

The allocation of increased quantities of the raw cane sugar WTO TRQ to countries that are net importers of sugar are conditioned on receipt of the appropriate verifications of origin.

Certificates of quota eligibility must accompany imports from any country for which an allocation has been provided, the USTR said.

The Philippine Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) is yet to verify if the Philippines will reconsider to participate in the program.

According to the US Agricultural Food Service in the Philippines, the SRA issued Sugar Order No. 1 for marketing year 2023-2024 allocating 100 percent of the estimated 1.85 million MT production to the domestic market.

The estimated production could drop 10 to 15 percent depending on the severity of the ongoing El Niño phenomenon.

The Manila Times®

Date: MAR. 20, 2024 Page: B2

Coffee body seeks funds to boost local production

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE Philippine Coffee Board Inc. (PCBI) wants the government to invest in the coffee sector to address a disparity between supply and demand and lessen the country's dependency on imports.

PCBI Director Alejandro Mojica said the country currently produces around 30,000 metric tons (MT) of coffee beans per year, which falls short of the local demand of 150,000 MT.

Mojica also said that production of coffee remained low even as processing and marketing had been addressed and was seeing significant increases.

"What's disheartening is that many want to process, but there's not enough production," Mojica told reporters on Monday.

He added that one of the major problems with coffee production was the lack of seedlings. The Philippines' current production per hectare is at 0.3 MT or 300 kilograms, he added.

In comparison to Vietnam, this volume is relatively small as that country's production reaches around 2.20 MT per hectare or 2,000 kilos.

"The first thing we observed in order to address production is the need to meet the demand for seedlings. And the solution we see is for each region to have its own nurseries and promote it to the farmers," Mojica said.

In order to address the gap between the booming demand for coffee and local production, the PCBI urged the government to allocate roughly P6 billion for the next decade or equivalent to P600 million per year.

"The government has to spend P600 million a year in 10 years to get to self-sufficiency, but those are very conservative figures, you can do maybe more than a 1,000 seedlings per hectare," PCBI President and co-chairman Pacita Juan said

Mojica also said that they were studying a partnership with the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) to locate nearly 300,000 hectares of land that can be planted with coffee.

The PCA said there were about 1 million hectares of land planted with coconut available for intercropping with coffee.

Page _____ of _____

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: MAR. 20, 2024 Page: 8

Sandigan junks fertilizer scam case vs supplier

The Sandiganbayan has junked a fertilizer scam case against a private supplier due to the Office of the Ombudsman's inordinate delay in its investigation.

In its eight-page resolution promulgated on March 15, the court's Second Division granted the motion of Bernard Mangrubang, proprietor of B.T. Mangrubang Enterprises, for the dismissal of the case of falsification of public documents against him.

The Second Division found merit in Mangrubang's argument that the case must be dismissed on the ground of the ombudsman's supposed violation of his constitutional right to the speedy disposition of cases.

The court said Mangrubang was similarly situated with former Parañaque lawmaker Eduardo Zialcita and several other accused whose cases were dismissed in 2017 due to the ombudsman's "inordinate delay" in its investigation.

The Second Division had earlier dismissed the cases of graft, malversation of public funds and falsification of public documents filed by the ombudsman against Zialcita; former Department of Agriculture officials Dennis Araullo, Gregorio Sangalang and Raymundo Braganza and private respondent Margie Luz, president of the non-government organization Gabaymasa Development Foundation Inc.

Mangrubang was a co-accused only in the falsification case.

Filed by the ombudsman in 2016, all the cases stemmed from the alleged misuse of P5 million worth of funds allotted to Zialcita's district for the implementation of the DA's Farm Inputs and Farm Implements Program.

In its March 3, 2017 ruling, the Second Division noted that the complaint against Zialcita and the other respondents was filed by the ombudsman before the central office on May 2, 2011.

The Second Division noted that the ombudsman's Special Panel on Fertilizer Fund Scam issued a resolution on June 20, 2013 finding probable cause to file the cases in court, and yet, it was only on Feb. 16, 2016 that the cases were actually filed before the Sandiganbayan – a delay of more than four years from the date of the filing of the complaint. – **Elizabeth Marcelo**

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: MAR 20, 2024 Page: B4

Phl gets 25,000 MT US sugar allocation

By JASPER EMMANUEL ARCALAS

Washington has given Manila the green light to export 25,300 metric tons raw value (MTRV) of raw sugar to the US at lower tariff rates, the US Trade Representative announced recently.

The USTR announced the allocation of additional 125,000 MTRV of raw cane sugar under the tariff-rate quota (TRQ) system for its fiscal year 2024 that it set to end on Sept. 30.

The additional volume was among 20 eligible countries, including the Philippines, according to the USTR.

Under the TRQ, countries can export specified quantities of a product to the US at a "relatively" low tariff rate.

Brazil got the highest allocation at 27,174 MTRV, followed by the Philippines.

Last year, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) disclosed that it sought a sugar quota from the US to boost farm-gate prices of raw sugar by exporting some of the country's sugar supply amid a drop in domestic demand.

SRA administrator and CEO Pablo Luis Azcona earlier explained that some industry stakeholders are willing to export raw sugar to the US.

Azcona noted that the volume being volunteered by traders and millers to export to the US is between 30,000 metric tons and 60,000 MT.

The Philippines was earlier given by the US a sugar quota of about 145,235 MTRV for fiscal year 2024, which started on Oct. 1, 2023.

However, the Philippines did not allocate a single volume of raw sugar for US exports when it started its crop year 2023-2024 on Sept. 1, 2023.

The country has voluntarily stopped exporting raw sugar to the US in the past two fiscal years due to domestic supply problems.

BusinessWorld™

Date: MAR. 20, 2024 Page: 4/S1

DANG CONG-UNSPLASH

Industry pitches P6-B program to attain coffee self-sufficiency

THE Philippine Coffee Board, Inc. (PCBI) said at least P6 billion will be needed over 10 years to upgrade coffee production to self-sufficiency levels.

In a briefing on Monday, Pacita U. Juan, president and co-chair of PCBI, said that the government must work towards building up capacity on a staggered basis.

"The government has to spend P600 million a year in 10 years to get to self-sufficiency. But those are very conservative figures because you can do maybe more than 1,000 seedlings per hectare," Ms. Juan said.

PCBI estimates that the coffee industry produces 30,000-33,000 metric tons (MT) a year, well short of estimated demand of 150,000-200,000 MT.

The PCBI said that it is currently exploring a partnership with the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) for a coffee intercropping program within coconut farms.

Alejandro C. Mojica, a director at PCBI, said that the board is currently in talks with the PCA for the potential partnership.

"If we partner with PCA, it will be easier for us to locate the hectares that the coffee industry needs," Mr. Mojica said. "According to the PCA, they have readily available one million hectares."

The PCBI said that the industry needs 171,428 hectares to service coffee demand, assuming that each hectare produces 700 kilograms of coffee.

Ms. Juan said a model pilot farm for intercropping could be built by June.

"We want the PCA to consider us because they have the budget. We can help them (with their own objectives)," Mr. Mojica said.

The PCA is tasked with improving coconut farmer livelihoods and has access to a trust fund built up from recovered coconut levy assets.

An intercropping program would put the PCBI in a technical-assistance and marketing-support role.

Mr. Mojica said the main constraint for the coffee industry is seedlings, which is why the PCBI is proposing that each region build a nursery.

The PCBI said that around 120 million seedlings are needed, at a unit cost of P50 if the nurseries are to earn a suitable profits. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

BusinessWorld

Date: MAR 20, 2024 Page: 4/S1

Well-milled rice prices average P56.90/kg in early March

THE national average retail price of well-milled rice in early March was P56.90 per kilogram (kg), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported on Tuesday.

The PSA reported that prices rose 1.1% during the March 1-5 period, which it calls the first phase of the month, compared with the P56.29 per kg average in late February.

Central Visayas posted the highest average retail price during the period, with well-milled rice selling for P58.95 per kg.

The National Capital Region (NCR) recorded the lowest retail price with well-milled rice prices at P52.63 per kg during the period.

The PSA said that the average price for a kilogram of regular-milled rice was P51.14 per kg during the first phase of March.

It reported that the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao posted the highest average price of P53.81 per kg for this variety of rice, while NCR was at the low end at P44.23 per kg.

In a separate report, PSA reported that rice inflation surged to 23.7% in February from 22.6% in January and 2.2% a year earlier. It also marked the highest reading for rice inflation since the 24.6% recorded in February 2009.

During the period, brown sugar averaged P75.86 per kg., down from P76.47 in the second phase of February.

The PSA reported that prices of brown sugar were highest in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) at P88.10 per kg. The lowest regional price was reported in the Zamboanga Peninsula at P67.52 per kg.

Meanwhile, refined sugar averaged P86.90 per kg in early March. The high and low were set in NCR and Zamboanga Peninsula at P99.87 per kg and P78.98 per kg, respectively.

Red onion averaged P144.32 per kg in early March. The highs and lows were set in Eastern Visayas and Ilocos Region at P183.52 per kg and P84.17 per kg, respectively.

Pork *liempo* (belly) averaged P352.41 per kg in early March. Highs and lows were set in the Western Visayas and the Cordillera Administrative Region at P394.60 per kg and P308.60 per kg, respectively.

Galunggong or round scad posted an average retail price of P213.93 per kg in early March, little changed from the P213.92 per kg average during the second phase of February.

The average retail price for *bangus* or milkfish eased to P212.17 from the P213.17 posted in late February.

The Department of Agriculture said that prices of fish are expected to fall with the end of the fishing ban in parts of the Visayas and Mindanao. — **Lourdes O. Pilar**

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

MAR. 20, 2024
PAGE: A14

editorial

Philippines misses business opportunity as chocolate takes center stage

TASTEATLAS, an online food guide, released its list of top 100 deserts in the world on March 15. A cursory examination of the list shows that chocolate is a common ingredient of several of the world's favorite desserts. Sweden's kladdkaka, France's soufflé au chocolat, Italy's gianduiotto (pralines), and the United States' brownies are some of the chocolate-containing desserts that made it to the TasteAtlast list.

Chocolate is regarded as a comfort food by millions of consumers around the world. That is why demand for it remains strong despite the increase in the price of cacao in recent years. In fact, Bloomberg reported last week that cocoa futures even jumped to $7,000 a ton, which could lead to pricier candy bars and other desserts that make use of chocolate. ***(See, "Cocoa tops $7,000 a ton as chocolate makers hike prices, shrink packages," in the* BUSINESSMIRROR*, March 13, 2024).***

Cocoa prices, according to the Bloomberg report, have jumped by 68 percent for the year. This was caused by adverse weather conditions and structural concerns like aging and diseased trees in top growers Ivory Coast and Ghana. The two African countries produce a combined 1.2 million metric tons of cocoa a year.

The output and exports of the two African countries shows that the Philippines, where cacao can also be grown, will continue to pass up the opportunity to increase its export receipts from the crop. Based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the country produced 10,759.12 metric tons (MT) of cacao last year, or just a fraction of the output of the two African countries.

Data from the PSA showed that cacao produced last year was harvested from 32,945.08 hectares. Harvest area in 2023 barely expanded based on figures from the agency. There was also minimal increase in the productivity of these cacao areas and output did not even reach 1 metric ton (MT) per hectare.

Under the previous roadmap that came out nearly two decades ago, the Philippines had aspired to expand cacao output to 100,000 MT. Prior to 2010, the country could only produce 5,000 MT. Despite efforts to raise production and take advantage of a favorable international market for the crop, the 100,000-MT target remained elusive.

US-based conglomerate Mars Inc., maker of the M&M's and Snickers, told this newspaper in 2008 that the Philippines has the potential to earn $150 million in cocoa exports annually if it could expand its production area for cacao. Aside from the export market, the Philippine Cocoa Foundation noted that the domestic market also has a huge requirement for the crop. The 2016-2022 cacao roadmap prepared by the Department of Agriculture pegged the grinding requirement of local chocolate manufacturers at 40,000 MT annually.

It is imperative for the government to move beyond mere rhetoric and dedicate its efforts towards the growth and advancement of the local cacao industry. Despite the spike in the prices of the primary raw material for making chocolate, demand for the comfort food remains strong. The Philippines should seize the opportunity to harness its untapped potential in cacao cultivation and support manufacturers in producing an abundance of products that will meet the global demand for chocolate.

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

Date: MAR 20, 2024 Page: A5

DA grants meat export accreditation to Brazil, Germany, 2 other countries

By Andrea E. San Juan
@andreasanjuan

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said Tuesday it has granted a three-year meat exporters' accreditation to Brazil and Germany and some companies in Hungary and Poland following clearances issued by DA Inspection Missions, which visited these countries late last year.

This, after the DA Inspection Missions found 36 meat establishments in Germany; 48 in Brazil; three in Hungary and 12 in Poland to be compliant with the animal health code of the World Organization of Animal Health as well as quarantine and meat inspection standards of the Philippines.

In a statement Tuesday, the DA said, "Exporter accreditation is necessary to ensure cattle, swine and poultry meat sourced from abroad are free of pathogens and other diseases that could pose a risk to Filipinos and the multi-billion-peso domestic livestock and poultry industry."

The accreditation granted to Brazil, Hungary, Germany and Poland would expire in February 2027.

According to the Agriculture department, the 36 German firms are allowed to ship to the Philippines beef, pork and poultry meat, particularly chicken and turkey.

The 48 meat establishments from Brazil could export beef, pork and chicken, duck and turkey meat.

For Poland, the DA noted that it accredited 12 meat companies, of which, six are for pork and six for beef—to export hog and cattle meat to the Philippines.

Further, the agency said it granted a three-year accreditation to three firms from Hungary to export pork and poultry meat, including chicken, duck and geese, to the country.

The three accredited Hungarian meat establishments are MCS Voghid ZRT Pecsi Hutahoza, a shipper of frozen swine carcasses, hams, shoulders and other cuts, and edible offal; Kometa 99 ZRT, an exporter of frozen swine carcasses, hams, shoulders and other cuts, edible offal and pig fat; and Jeg-Sziget Hutahaz KFT., an exporter of pork, chicken, duck and geese.

In the orders he signed prior to leaving for Germany earlier this week, DA Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said these foreign meat exporters must fully comply with existing regulations and conditions provided in the orders and their annexes.

Data released by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) showed that the country's meat imports posted a double-digit decline in the January to November 2023 period.

Based on the data, meat imports reached 1.115 billion kilograms or 111.55 million metric tons (MMT) before the Holiday season started in 2023. This was lower than the 1.252 billion kilos or 1.25 MMT shipments that arrived in the same period of 2022.

In terms of origin, majority or 81 percent of the country's meat imports in the January to November 2023 period came from five countries, namely, Brazil, the United States, Spain, Canada and Australia.

Data showed shipments from the five countries reached a total of 904.808 million kilos; Brazil led the pack with shipments reaching 396.382 million kilos.

This was followed by the United States with 203.489 million kilos; Spain, 135.703 million kilos; Canada, 115.255 million kilos; and Australia, 53.979 million kilos.

Shipments from Brazil and the US were mostly chicken and pork. For Brazil, the bulk was composed of mechanically deboned meat (MDM) for chicken and pork cuts; while for the US, the bulk comprised Chicken Leg Quarters and pork offals. ***(Full story here: https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/01/08/phl-meat-imports-dip-double-digits-to-111-mmt-in-11-mos/)***

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 20 MAR 2024 Page: A1 & A2

El Niño damage hits P1.75B

BY JED MACAPAGAL

DAMAGE to the agriculture sector of the effects of El Niño affecting the country has surged to P1.75 billion from P357.38 million last February 25, according to latest data from the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center.

The DA attached agency in its advisory as of March 14, said damage from the weather phenomenon covers 32,231 hectares of areas tended by 29,437 farmers in the regions of Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula and Soccsksargen.

The breakdown of the damage is as follows: 48,332 metric tons (MT) on rice worth P1.13 billion; 18,966 MT of corn, P317.86 million; 7,794 MT of high value crops, P305.55 million; and 32 heads of livestock and poultry, P59,000.

The DA said it has provided a total of P379.06 million worth of assistance to affected farmers. These include high value crops with less water requirement like mung beans to affected farmers in Iloilo and Negros Occidental amounting to P990,000.

The DA also distributed hybrid rice seeds worth P7.87 million and fertilizers worth P7.63 million to non-vulnerable areas in Western Visayas for maximization of production to compensate for the losses.

Financial assistance from the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance Program has also been given by DA to 71,795 farmers in Mimaropa with a total amount of P362.56 million.

A total of 35 rice and 16 corn farmers in Ilocos, Central Luzon

See EL NIÑO ➤ Page A2

EL NIÑO

and Mimaropa regions have been indemnified by the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. with a total amount of P1.24 million.

Other initiatives include the conduct of cloud seeding operations to ease water shortage; installation of 570 water augmentation pumps; concreting of irrigation canals; desiltation of irrigation canals; adoption of the alternate wetting-and-drying method; and a quick turnaround strategy.

DA Regional Field Offices in Ilocos, Cagayan Valley and Mimaropa regions have also started endorsing the list of affected farmers to the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and Department of Labor and Employment for other forms of assistance such as provision of food packs and cash for work programs.

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 20 MAR 2024 Page: A3

DA sets programs on tilapia, milk

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has implemented two separate programs on tilapia and milk.

The DA, through a project of the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute is pursuing the development of insect-based feed using traditional and molecular approaches for sustainable production of Nile tilapia in the Philippines.

This will result in the development of a cost-efficient feed that promotes good health and boost the immunity of Nile tilapia fingerlings using black soldier fly larvae meal as protein substitute.

Taking part in the project are in the University of the Philippines Diliman Institute of Biology as well as the University of the Philippines Visayas College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences.

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) signed a memorandum of agreement with the National Dairy Authority (NDA) to introduce dairy animal production to indigenous cultural communities.

The project with NDA includes the establishment of dairy stock farms within different ancestral domains (AD) that will serve as multiplier farms for dairy cattle, dairy carabao and dairy goats. These AD areas are in Tanay, Rizal; San Ysiro, Antipolo City; Pangasinan; Marilog, Davao; and Malitbog, Bukidnon.

Meanwhile, the Philippines Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) expressed hope RA 11985 will address the gaps in the implementation of the ASIN Law or An Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide and create opportunities in rural areas. PCCI had lamented the fact that despite the implementation of the ASIN Law the past 27 years, some segments of the population still suffer from iodine deficiency.

PCCI also said the ASIN Law had serious adverse effects on local sea salt production and export.

Pilipino Star
NGAYON
Diyaryong disente ng masang intelihente

Date: MAR 20, 2024 Page: 4

Murang bigas mabibili na raw

MAKAKABILI na raw ng murang bigas sa halagang P46.00 bawat kilo ayon sa Department of Agriculture. Pabango lamang kaya ito matapos na mabuking na ibinibenta lamang ng National Food Authority (NFA) sa mababang halaga ang mga bigas na inangkat ng pamahalaan.

Ang tunay na mga presyo ng bigas sa mga palengke ngayon ay hindi naman bumaba sa P56.00 kada kilo. May posibilidad na ang bigas na mababa ang halaga ay tira-tira na lamang sa pinagkakitaan ng mga korap sa NFA. Paano bababa ang presyo ng bigas ngayon e natutuyo na ang mga sakahan dahil sa El Niño.

Katulad sa Western Visayas, halos lahat ng mga sakahan at bukirin ay nagbitak-bitak na dahil sa sobrang init kaya ang mga tanim na palay ay namatay na. Dapat gumawa ng hakbang ang pamahalaan para magkaroon ng pagkukunan ng sapat na patubig ang mga magsasaka para sa palayan.

Amuyin din ang mga nagsasamantalang mga negosyante na namimili ng bigas sa mga magsasaka. Kung ang NFA ay bumibili ng P23.00 kada kilo ng palay, bakit mahal pa rin ang bigas. Itinatago rin ang bigas at saka iniluluwas sa Metro Manila. Ang NFA rice ay inihahalo umano sa mga bagong ani. Ginigiling itong muli upang pumuti ang kulay ng bigas bago ihalo sa mga bagong bigas. Nangyayari umano ito sa mga rice mill sa Mindoro at sa iba pang lalawigan sa buong bansa.

Kaya nang ipahayag ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel na makakabili na ng murang bigas ang mamamayan sa halagang P46.00 per kilo, marami ang napailing na tila hindi naniniwala.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS

Date: MAR. 20, 2024 Page: A8

EDITORIAL

Reviving our dying salt industry

It is almost criminal that the Philippines imports some 92 percent of its annual salt requirement despite having more than 36,000 kilometers of shoreline and access to abundant saltwater.

The drastic reduction in areas devoted to salt production, chronic lack of government and private sector support, and misguided policies have been blamed for this shameful situation, wherein the Philippines brings in from countries such as Australia and China about 628,500 metric tons of salt a year, 92 percent of the annual demand of 683,000 MT, from just 15 percent in 1990.

Hopes are high, however, that the "dying" salt industry will be revived with the recent passage of Republic Act No. 11985 or the Philippine Salt Industry Development Act which mandates the government "to map out, identify, and designate public lands, including portions of municipal waters, as salt production areas" in Pangasinan and Mindoro where the remaining salt farms are concentrated.

Salt road map

The law signed by President Marcos last March 11 also calls for the formulation of a Philippine Salt Industry Development Roadmap that will spell out the programs for the development and management, research, processing, modernization, and commercialization of local salt.

A 16-member Philippine Salt Industry Development Council headed by the agriculture secretary will also be set up to ensure the "unified and integrated" implementation of the salt road map and speed up the modernization and industrialization of the long-neglected yet crucial industry.

Plus, tariffs to be collected from imported salt will be invested back into the local industry with the establishment of the Salt Industry Development and Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (Sidcef).

Over the next 10 years, half of the Sidcef will be earmarked for projects such as machinery and equipment including seawater pumps, salt harvesters, bagging machines, and dump trucks, with 40 percent of the fund going to the establishment of salt farm warehouses and storage areas, and 5 percent each for the conduct of extension services and development of modern salt production and processing technologies.

A crucial aspect of the law is the lifting of the requirement under RA 8172, or An Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide (Asin), for all locally produced salt to be iodized. Passed in 1995, the Asin law sought to address the rising incidence of iodine deficiency at that time. But it went overboard for even salt that is not used for food, such as for sanitation and water filtration, had to be iodized.

The requirement likewise did not apply to imported salt, thus it became more logical and viable to just import rather than spend on facilities to iodize salt.

Sen. Cynthia Villar, principal author of the Salt Industry Development Act, blamed this requirement under the Asin law for ultimately pushing the salt industry to the brink of death.

"The law, instead of promoting, became a deterrent in the development of the local salt industry. It has neglected to develop new areas and invite new investors; it made all salt food grade," she said in 2023.

Artisanal salt

The freshly minted Philippine Salt Industry Development Act should be able to cure this infirmity with iodization now optional for artisanal salt and salt that will not be used in food production.

The passage is timely as the Philippines is projected to need at least 300,000 more metric tons a year on top of the current demand of 683,000 because of the required use of salt to fertilize some 300 million coconut trees.

Gerard Khonghun, president of the Philippine Association for Salt Industry Networks, could not emphasize enough the importance of rallying around a strategy to increase local salt production, likening salt to a national food security issue.

"Salt self-sufficiency will contribute to the agro-industrial development of the Philippines. Salt is, therefore, a national food security issue—and without salt, we believe that the Philippines is vulnerable to a food supply chain crisis," said Khonghun.

He had warned in 2022 that if no intervention would be made, the Philippines would likely import as much as 96 percent of its salt requirements by 2030.

Coastal communities

This projection should not come to pass now that the landmark law has been passed.

The challenge now is to transform the sound provisions of the law into concrete actions, from the collection of all duties to the spending on effective programs in accordance with the provisions set out in the law as well as the establishment of the council and the faithful execution of its mandate.

It is after all only in the proper implementation of the laudable law can it live up to its promise to drastically increase local production to make the Philippines not just self-sufficient and perhaps even become an exporter.

This will reduce imports that drain foreign exchange, improve the livelihood of the coastal communities at the same time, and secure the supply of a basic mineral of which Filipinos cannot do without.

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: MAR 20, 2024 Page: B-1 & B2

EU-PH FTA to benefit agri, garments — business chambers

The European and German business chambers in the Philippines lauded the official resumption of negotiations for the European Union (EU) and Philippines' free trade agreement (FTA) saying the trade deal could unlock a wide range of benefits, including increased market access for Philippine agriculture products, garments, critical raw materials, digital trade, and energy.

The renewed talks were formally announced by Philippine Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Alfredo Pascual and European Commission Executive Vice President and Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis during a press briefing Monday evening, March 18 (Philippine time), in Brussels, Belgium.

The European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP), who had been actively supporting the FTA through facilitating dialogues with the business sector and policymakers, joined the related engagements on the FTA negotiations on March 18.

"For the Philippines, the FTA offers a wide range of benefits including increased market access for highly protected sectors such as agriculture and garments. Critical raw materials, digital trade, and energy sectors are also among those expected to benefit from the FTA," it said in a statement on March 19.

The Chamber also stressed that it hopes to conclude the FTA before the end of the Marcos administration in 2028, given that the EU Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) currently enjoyed by the Philippines will expire in 2027.

As stated by EC Commissioner Dombrovskis in the briefing, the FTA is expected to grow trade by up to six billion euros.

Aside from bolstering trade and investments, the ECCP remarked that the conclusion of the FTA will enable the improvement of economic policies on e-commerce, digital transformation, intellectual ▶B-2

EU-PH...

B-1◀

property, and procurement.; and accelerate innovation and technology.

"As negotiations progress, the ECCP remains committed to facilitating constructive dialogue and advocating for the interests of its members and the broader business community. The Chamber will continue to champion increased, sustainable trade and highlight the Philippines in the investment map," it added.

Meanwhile, the German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. (GPCCI) aims to utilize the FTA as a way to enhance the interests of German businesses in the Philippines, and integrate the insights from the German-Philippine business community.

"We are encouraged by the recent developments surrounding the resumption of the EU-PH Free Trade Agreement (FTA), particularly highlighted by President Marcos's remarkably successful visit to Germany last week—a visit that included a business forum we had the honor of co-organizing," said GPCCI President Stefan Schmitz in a statement.

GPCCI remarked that it continues to be optimistic about the trade relations of the EU and the Philippines, and fostering a conducive business environment for Germany and the country. (Khriscielle E. Yalao)

The Manila Times®

Date: MAR. 20, 2024 Page: A7

A BLESSING Fisherfolk in Rosario, Cavite, catch more than 800 kilograms of 'tamban' or sardines everyday in the past few weeks. PHOTO BY DENNIS ABRINA

Cavite fishermen net a bounty of sardines

ROSARIO, Cavite: Residents in this coastal town are celebrating the unusual amount of "tamban" or sardines caught by local fishermen in the past few weeks.

Mike Concha, president of a fisherfolk group in Rosario, said that a fishing boat can bring home an average of 48 buckets of sardines per trip.

"That's equivalent to around 864 kilos of tamban fish caught every day," Concha said.

"Before we only catch 5 to 10 buckets per day."

Concha said one bucket of sardines can be sold for P700 at the fish port.

"For almost a month now, our catch has always been like this," he added.

Concha said the artificial coral reefs planted in the waters off Rosario in 2021 may have contributed to the bountiful harvest of the fisherfolk here.

He also said the fishermen here thanked Tata Idrong or San Isidro Labrador, their patron saint.

DENNIS ABRINA

BusinessMirror
A broader look at today's business

'Salt law to spur jobs, investment generation, revive dying industry'

By Andrea San Juan
X @andreasanjuan

THE enactment into law of the Philippine Salt Industry Development Act is expected to generate new investments and new technologies to the country's salt industry on top of reviving the "dying" industry, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) said Tuesday.

The PCCI, in a news statement, welcomed the enactment into law of Republic Act No. 11985 or the Philippine Salt Industry Development Act.

With this, the business group said, "The law is expected to not only attract more farmers and producers to return to salt farming and production but also generate new investments and new technologies to elevate the industry and become competitive."

For her part, PCCI President Enunina V. Mango said she hopes that the new law will address the gaps in the implementation of the ASIN law or An Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide and create opportunities for people, especially in rural areas.

The PCCI head emphasized that the Philippines is an archipelagic country with over 7,000 islands and yet, it imports more than 90 percent of its salt requirement.

"It's a sad reality that we need to collectively address through the effective implementation of the law," Mangio said.

Moving forward, she noted, "We should aim for our country to become salt self-sufficient and minimize dependence in imports."

In 2022, PCCI, together with the Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. (Philexport) and Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), penned a letter to Congress expressing support for the passage of the Philippine Salt Industry Development Act.

"This made us wonder why after 27 years of implementation, we continue to suffer the consequences of iodine deficiency among certain segments of the population, aside from the serious adverse effects of the ASIN Law on local sea salt production and export," the letter of the groups noted.

Citing the statement of the business groups, PCCI noted the salt industry has the potential to generate 100,000 green jobs, especially in the countryside and save foreign exchange from importing 550,000 metric tons of salt every year, which constitutes around 93 percent of the salt requirement of the country.

In terms of export, the Philippines can take part in the share of the world export of salt, which exceeded $2.59 billion in 2021, the PCCI noted.

Further, the business group said in Asia alone, the total salt trade is estimated at 20,000,000 metric tons (MT) valued at $1.2 billion, mainly supplied by Australia and China.

The PCCI also emphasized that the Philippines has a "logistics advantage" as it is closer to its Asean neighbors compared to Australia.

For his part, William S. Co, PCCI Agriculture and Fishery Committee director, said there is no reason the country cannot produce enough supply of sea salt as "we are surrounded by waters."

Co also noted that the government should ensure the effective implementation of the law.

To help boost the competitiveness of the local salt industry, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signed RA 11985 or the Philippine Salt Development Act, which also slaps a 9-percent tariff on imported salt.

Prior to the new law, the tariff on imported salt commodities was only at 1 percent.

The new ad valorem rate will be applied on all imported salt, including table salt, denatured salt, pure sodium chloride, whether or not aqueous solution of containing added anti-caking or free-flowing agent, as well as seawater. ***(Full story here: https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/03/18/marcos-signs-law-slapping-9-tariff-on-imported-salt/)***

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 20 MAR 2024 Page: A1 & A2

Measures on agriculture environment top LEDAC list

THE Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) has released its approved list of priority measures targeted for passage by June 2024.

In a statement, the National Economic and Development Authority said 20 priority bills were identified, with focus on agriculture, environment, defense and digitalization, among other areas.

The Council reached this agreement during its fourth meeting yesterday.

LEDAC serves as a consultative and advisory body to the President on programs and policies essential to attaining the country's socioeconomic goals.

These measures include the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act; Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act; Philippine Maritime Zones Act; Real Property Valuation and Assessment Reform Act; and Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System.

Also included are Negros Island Region; Anti-Financial Accounts Scamming Act;

Value Added Tax on Digital Services; Amendments to the Government Procurement Reform Act; and the Blue Economy Act.

The Waste-to-Energy Bill; Mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps; Unified System of Separation, Retirement and Pension of

See MEASURES ➤ Page A2

MEASURES

Military and Uniformed Personnel; E-Government Act / E-Governance Act; and Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program Act are also part of the priority measures.

Completing the list are the Department of Water Resources; Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy bill; Enterprise-Based Education and Training Program Act; Open Access in Data Transmission Act; and Amendments to the Universal Health Care Act. - *Angela Celis*

Malaya
Business Insight

Date: 20 MAR 2024 Page: A6

Wheat steadies after rally

CANBERRA- Chicago wheat futures were unchanged on Tuesday after export-threatening Russian attacks on Ukrainian ports pushed them up more than 2 percent in the previous session, but prices remained near their lowest since 2020 amid plentiful supply.

Soybean and corn futures rose slightly.

The most-active wheat contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was flat at $5.42-3/4 a bushel.

The contract fell to $5.23-1/2, its lowest since August 2020, on March 11, amid a flood of cheap grain from top exporter Russia, which has had two large production years and expects a third this year.

Russian air attacks at the weekend damaged agricultural enterprises and destroyed several industrial buildings in the port of Odesa in Ukraine, another significant grain exporter.

The Black Sea port city of Mykolaiv was also hit, with Ukrainian strikes against Russian oil refineries and Vladimir Putin's re-election as Russia's president raising fears that tensions between the two countries might escalate.

- Reuters