

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY, APRIL 05, 2024

A. SEC. FTL Jr. QUOTED

MANILA STANDARD

Photo: Food workshop

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Laurel refutes mackerel, sardines supply shortage

DA forms team to go after agri smugglers

Israel offers to help Phl boost farm productivity

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

DA eyes fewer rice imports this year

MANILA BULLETIN

Laurel: Rice prices may not go down due to El Niño

THE MANILA TIMES

PH rice imports unlikely to hit 4 MMT

DTI to address fish import suspension

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

No price cut on rice till June; fish supply sufficient: DA

BUSINESS WORLD

Rice imports seen dropping below 4M MT on stronger-than-expected...

DTI to consult with canners after fish import freeze

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL

PH wants to emulate Czech Republic's dairy industry success

ABANTE TONITE

Agri chief: Taas-presyo ng bigas 'di maawat

B. DA FAMILY

MANILA STANDARD

LandBank loan enables retired cop to expand poultry business

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

USTR flags stringent agri import rules in Phl

MANILA BULLETIN

What dos rice farming have to do with drag?

THE MANILA TIMES

The imperative of agricultural development

BUSINESS WORLD

More rice deals needed – senator

ABANTE

54K magsasaka dumapa sa El Niño

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

W. Visayas El Niño agri damage now P770.5M

Across the country: Fish kill hits Pangasinan

MANILA BULLETIN

Photo: Work goes on

D. FOREIGN STORY

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

Corn extends gains



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



FOOD WORKSHOP. Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. vows to redouble efforts in serving the Filipino people with integrity and dedication as the agency heads into the second quarter of 2024. Speaking during the Food Security Cluster Communications Workshop at the Philippine Rice Institute on April 3, 2024, the DA chief underscores the need to deliver accurate and reliable information for a brighter and more resilient future for all Filipinos.



Laurel refutes mackerel, sardine supply shortage

By BELLA CARIASO

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. yesterday denied manufacturers' claims that the suspension of the importation of round scad or *galunggong* will result in a shortage of sardines and mackerel.

Laurel was reacting to the Canned Sardines Association of the Philippines' warning that Memorandum Order 14

would affect the supply and prices of canned mackerel.

"They will not lose their canned mackerel. Under the memorandum order, for the canners, they can still import the same amount of canned mackerel, but their value-added tax sales will be the basis," Laurel explained during the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon briefing.

This was issued following reports that

Turn to Page 2

Laurel From Page 1

imported fish stocks were being diverted to wet markets.

"The problem is the diversion. Even if they will be allowed to import but will be diverted, they will experience a shortage," he added.

Manufacturers can still import 10 percent more of what they are using now, Laurel said.

"I don't see any reason if they are afraid to experience possible shortages," he added.

At least 100,000 metric tons of imported round scad were diverted to wet markets during the last nine months and a crackdown on importers involved in illegal activities has been ordered, Laurel said earlier.

Sardines

Amid Laurel's decision to suspend the importation of round scad, bonito and mackerel, a trade official yesterday assured the public of a steady supply of canned sardines and mackerel.

The Department of Trade and Industry will meet with manufacturers next week to discuss Laurel's

MO 14 and stabilizing pricing, Trade Undersecretary Ed Sunico said on day two of the food summit at the Philippine Rice Research Institute in Nueva Ecija.

Trade Assistant Secretary Amanda Nograles will meet with manufacturers as part of the agency's regular updates on the status of supply and demand.

"We have yet to hear that there is a risk of supply issues related to sardines and mackerel, so we are monitoring very closely," Sunico added.

Sunico admitted they have yet to determine if consultations were made before the issuance of the memorandum order.

Sardine manufacturers are expected to raise their concerns about the importation suspension, Sunico noted.

At least 30,000 MT of imported round scad were sold to wet markets in just three months, Laurel said.

"The anomaly was technical. We need (the issuance of MO 14) to prevent this. That's why I came out with an order to investigate," he added.

Based on the Department of Agriculture's monitoring, the retail price of local round scad ranged between P160 and P300 per kilo and Indian mackerel, between P240 and P380 per kilo.



DA forms team to go after agri smugglers

By **BELLA CARIASO**

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has formed a team tasked to go after smuggled agriculture products with the appointment of a new officer-in-charge (OIC).

Tiu Laurel appointed Carlos Carag as OIC of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for DA Inspectorate and Enforcement.

"(Carag will) conduct intelligence operations on alleged/reported illegal activities and violations on regulatory policies and agricultural anti-smuggling law that negatively impact on the national economy," Tiu Laurel said in his

special order.

Tiu Laurel added that Carag will lead the coordination with the Bureau of Customs in curbing agricultural smuggling.

"(He will) represent the DA in the inter-agency committees, task force, and other groups, bodies related to agricultural smuggling and perform such other functions, duties and responsibilities as directed by the Secretary," Tiu Laurel added.

According to Tiu Laurel, Carag should lead the document tracking and monitoring of locally produced and imported commodities to deter profiteering and price manipulation.

Turn to B10

DA From B5

At the same time, Tiu Laurel also authorized Carag to initiate investigation on allegations of unethical or illicit activities of DA officials and employees, including possible graft, corruption, misuse of office's equipment and resources for personal use, private enterprise and the existence of ghost employees.

He also directed Carag to perform inventory of supplies in coordination with

the appropriate divisions of the DA.

At the same time, Tiu Laurel also tasked Carag to monitor the programs and projects of the DA.

"All officials and employees of the department, including its bureaus, attached agencies and corporations, and DA-regional field offices are hereby advised of this designation and directed to give their full support and cooperation to OIC Carag in the performance of his duties and responsibilities," he said.



Israel offers to help Phl boost farm productivity

By **JASPER EMMANUEL ARCALAS**

Israel has offered to help the Department of Agriculture (DA) improve local farmers' productivity through the adoption of modern technologies.

Israel Ambassador to the Philippines Ilan Fluss said Israel is open to partnering with the DA in various aspects of agriculture, from irrigation to the use of smart agriculture.

There are Filipino interns that will fly to Israel to learn various farming practices in Israeli farms, including smart agriculture that uses the latest technology in growing crops, Fluss said.

For example, data satellites can now be used to monitor the growth status of crops in farms to provide farmers proper guidance on what to do next to boost their productivity.

"The idea is changing the mindset in order to help the agriculture sector (address) the challenges of productivity," Fluss said in a recent roundtable discussion with reporters.

Solar-powered irrigation systems remain one of the key sectors that Israel is interested in, Fluss said.

Israeli-based firm LR Group

is one of the first partners of the DA in constructing a solar-powered irrigation system in the country.

"This is on the table and we are here to assist. And today, it depends on the department (of agriculture) to decide what is the best proposal for them," he said.

In February, the DA said it aims to spend at least P5 billion annually to construct solar-powered irrigation systems (SPIS) nationwide to boost rice productivity and mitigate the adverse impacts of El Niño.

President Marcos said the national government plans to irrigate 180,000 hectares of rice land through SPIS, which would translate to an additional production of 1.2 million metric tons of palay.

Last month, Fluss together with **Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.** visited a cacao farm in Laguna which is benefitting from technical assistance provided by the Embassy of Israel in the Philippines.

The 13-hectare farm called Filipinas Cacao Heritage Reserve tapped Israeli experts to mentor its hired agriculturists, foresters, engineers and technicians, to boost cacao

production.

During the visit, both Filipino and Israeli teams demonstrated various farming activities employed in the cacao farm, from integrated pest management techniques, drip irrigation methods to weather monitoring systems and composting

practices.

"I believe that through this partnership between Israel and the Philippines, we are now able to see some changes in Philippine farming not just in cacao but also in other crops," said farm owner Jacqueline Sy Go, as quoted by the DA.

Date: APR 05 2024 Page: A7



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DESPITE EL NIÑO

DA EYES FEWER RICE IMPORTS THIS YEAR

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

The Philippines is expected to import less rice this year due to a projected increase in domestic production, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Thursday.

During the government's televised "Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon" program, Agriculture Secretary **Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.** contradicted the latest projection of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) that the country could purchase 4 million metric tons of imported rice for 2024.

"I feel that maybe we do not need to bring in 4 million MT of imported rice for this year," Tiu Laurel said. "The USDA estimate might be, in my opinion, a bit too high. I think that's the worst-case scenario. I think we will not reach that point."

Revised forecast

Last month, the USDA downgraded its forecast on Philippine rice imports to 4 million MT from its previous projection of 4.1 million MT, noting that domestic production would cover the slight increase in demand.

It said in a report that the weakened El Niño forecast would support improved growing conditions for the wet season rice crop, resulting in stable import demand.

Tiu Laurel cited government estimates in saying there was an expected "incremental increase" in local output pegged at 4.78 million MT in the first quarter of this year, up by 1.11 percent from the previous year. He added that production "seems to be okay even with [the] El Niño phenomenon."

"Of course, the production in the second quarter might be affected because this is the height of [the] El Niño [phenomenon] but after El Niño, we expect our harvest to be okay," he said. "Hopefully, with the incoming La Niña phenomenon, the effect [on rice production] won't be that much." INQ



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Laurel: Rice prices may not go down due to El Niño

By JEL SANTOS

Despite the harvest season and price downswing in the global market, prices of rice in the country may not go down due to the agricultural damage caused by the El Niño phenomenon which has now soared to ₱2.76 billion, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

“Hopefully, ay bababa ‘yan (rice prices) sa second half of this year. But as of the moment nandyan ang lingering effects ng El Niño. I don’t think bababa pa nga as of the moment (Hopefully, rice prices would go down in the second half of this year. But as of the moment, the lingering effects of El Niño is still felt. I don’t think the prices will decrease ▶ 8

Laurel: Rice prices may not go down due to El Niño 1◀

as of the moment),” the DA chief said in a press briefing on Wednesday, April 3.

With the Philippines experiencing the peak of the El Niño phenomenon, we could expect to monitor more agricultural damage, said Laurel.

“To be honest, it is still increasing, we are at the height of the El Niño now. Hopefully, by end of May, it will end or will taper off,” he said.

Laurel said rice prices currently range from ₱47 to ₱57 per kilo. It varies depending on the quality and location.

According to the DA chief, the agency is providing planting

materials and fertilizers to aid El Niño-affected farmers.

El Niño affecting 10 regions

Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa, DA spokesperson, said 54,203 farmers from 10 regions in the country have been affected by the dry spell.

“Our latest validated El Niño damage stands at ₱2.76 billion, from the previous ₱1.75 billion. So, almost ₱1 billion has been added,” he said.

“Ten out of the 16 regions are affected. So far, these are CAR, Region 1, Region 2, Region 3, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon), Mimaropa, Region 5, Region 6, Region 9, Region 12.”



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

PH rice imports unlikely to hit 4 MMT

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said the country's rice imports for this year were unlikely to reach the 4 million metric tons (MMT) forecast of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said during a public briefing on Thursday that local production for the first quarter of 2024 was projected at 4.78 MMT, somewhat similar to last

year's production.

"The estimate of the USDA might be a bit high and I think that's the worst-case scenario ... I think we won't reach that point," said Tiu Laurel.

The Agriculture chief said that estimates of the Philippine Statistics Authority and Philippine Rice Research Institute both showed that the country's rice production was set to increase by 1.1 percent.

"Our production [this quarter] is almost similar from last year, that is a little higher in the first quarter, [production] for the second quarter might be affected by El Niño," Tiu Laurel added.

Data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed that the country's volume of imported rice rose to 995,841.6 MT for the January to March 2024 period.

The latest figure was 24.2 percent higher in comparison

to last year's 801,732 MT import volume.

In 2023, inbound shipments of the staple totaled 3.6 million MT, down 5.9 percent from the record-high 3.82 MMT logged in 2022.

The USDA said that the Philippines' local rice production could hit 12.125 MMT this year due to increased funding from the government and farmers' increased use of fertilizer and hybrid seeds.

In terms of rice prices, Tiu

Laurel said that these remained stable at \$700 per ton. And with the current El Niño weather pattern, he said that prices were not seen to decline "as of the moment."

Price monitoring report of the department as of April 3, 2024, showed that prices of imported well-milled rice ranged from P51 to P54 per kilo, while local milled rice is sold from P48 to P59 per kilo.



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DTI to address fish import suspension

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it would look into possible interventions needed by manufacturers following the suspension of fish imports intended for canning and manufacturing.

"There are regular meetings planned with the manufacturers of DTI, which is on a regular basis. So, there will be a special focus probably on this one," Trade Undersecretary Jose Edgardo Sunico said in an interview with reporters on Thursday.

On Monday, the Department

of Agriculture (DA) issued a memorandum ordering the suspension of importation of mackerel, round scad (galunggong), and bonito intended for canning and processing following reports these are being diverted to wet markets.

Sunico said they had not yet received any complaints from manufacturers regarding the DA order.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said he did not see any reason for manufacturers to fear shortage of fisheries supply in

line with the order.

"Basically, what the order says is that they won't run out of canned mackerel. It states that for the canners, they can still import the same amount of mackerel, but will be based on their VAT sales," he added.

"If they import and divert it, they will indeed come up short. However, if their VAT sales reflect the mackerel they sold and it has equivalent tonnage, they can still import."

The Agriculture chief has said

that every quarter, roughly 30,000 metric tons of fish imports intended for canning purposes are diverted to wet markets. This is equivalent to at least 90,000 to 100,000 metric tons diverted annually.

In addition, the DA said that all imported fish should be labeled accordingly as "Imported Under FAO (Fisheries Administrative Order) 195 for canning purposes only and not for sale or distribution to wet markets."

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



No price cut on rice till June; fish supply sufficient: DA

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) does not expect prices to drop despite the good harvest in the first quarter.

"The buying price of rice traders is still high. I don't expect prices to immediately drop until maybe June or July this year," said Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. at the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon public forum yesterday.

In the same forum, Tiu Laurel assured fish cannery will have enough supply despite the suspension of the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance for the importation of round scad, mackerel and bonito.

According to Tiu Laurel, paddy production in the first quarter of the year is expected to reach 4.78 million metric tons (MT) despite the effects of El Niño.

Tiu Laurel said total rice imports this year will not reach 4 million MT as projected by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Actual imports reached 3.5 mil-

lion MT in 2023 and 3.8 million MT in 2022.

Tiu Laurel said the first quarter paddy estimate of the Philippine Statistics Authority matches those of Philippine Rice Research Institute and the Philippine Rice Information System.

Tiu Laurel expressed hope harvest will remain steady despite the El Niño as well as the projected La Niña thereafter.

Based on DA's monitoring of public markets in the National Capital Region (NCR), the price as of yesterday of local well-milled rice is between P48 and P58 per kg and regular milled, P48 and P53 per kg.

The price of imported well-milled rice is at P51 to P54 per kg, while the price range of imported regular milled rice is at P48 to P51 per kg.

Imported rice ranges from P57 to P65 for the special variety and P52 to P63 for premium.

For local rice, the special variety costs P56 to P66 per kg and pre-



TIU LAUREL

mium, P50 to P61 per kg.

Also at the forum, Tiu Laurel said fish cannery can still import the same amount of canned mackerel based on the volume covered by value-added sales.

Tiu Laurel said the suspension as contained in Memorandum Order (MO) 14 series of 2024 was

.....
See NO > Page A2

NO

meant to address the diversion to wet markets of imported fish.

Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) 195 series of 1999 prohibits the entry of imported fish into domestic wet markets if not covered by a certificate of necessity to import.

"If they imported (a certain amount and they diverted (some of) it, they will really have a shortage... I even added 10 percent, meaning technically, they they should be able to import 10 percent more of what they are getting now. I don't see any reason why they (should fear

there will be) a shortage," Tiu Laurel added.

Based on DA's monitoring of public markets in the NCR per kg prices of monitored fish products as of yesterday P140 to P300 for local round scad.

Prices of imported round scad were not available.



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Rice imports seen dropping below 4M MT on stronger-than-expected domestic output

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Thursday that rice imports are expected to come in below 4 million metric tons (MT) as domestic producers are picking up the slack despite El Niño.

"We may not reach 4 million MT this year since production seems to be (on track) even with El Niño," Agriculture Secretary **Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr.** said on government network PTV.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) had estimated Philippine rice imports at 4 million MT, which Mr. Laurel called a "worst-case scenario" should domestic production falter.

"The estimate (from) the USDA might be too high," he added.

The 4 million MT USDA estimate itself is a downgrade from an earlier projection of 4.1 million.

Citing the Philippine Statistics Authority, Mr. Laurel said that harvest of palay, or unmilled rice, may hit 4.78 million MT in the first quarter, which if borne out would represent a 1.1% increase from a year earlier.



REUTERS

He said that the estimates are also in line with the projections of the Philippine Rice Research Institute and PRISM (Philippine Rice Information System).

"Total production (for the first quarter) should reach about 4.78 million MT. Also...there seems to be an incremental increase in production," he added.

Mr. Laurel said that harvest for the second quarter could still be affected by El Niño.

The government weather service known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), has said that El Niño is starting to weaken, though its effects may run until August.

"But after El Niño, we expect that the harvest will be okay," he said, adding that the effect of La Niña, which will bring about higher-than-

usual rainfall, may not be significant.

The likelihood of La Niña occurring is at 62% by June, the Department of Science and Technology said.

"We're hoping there is a slight increase in production of rice for this year," he added.

The DA is projecting palay product to top 20 million MT this year. Production in 2023 had been 20.06 million MT. — **Adrian H. Halili**



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

DTI to consult with canners after fish import freeze

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it is set to meet with canners to discuss concerns about access to supply after the suspension of import permits for types of fish they use as raw material.

Undersecretary for Communications Jose Edgardo G. Sunico told reporters on Thursday that the meetings are routine consultations with the industry, though the potential for disrupted supply will be top of the next session's agenda.

On Monday, the Department of Agriculture (DA) halted the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances for fish intended for institutional buyers.

The DA reported that imported round scad (*galunggong*), mackerel, and bonito, meant for the use of canners and processors, are being diverted to public markets.

Mackerel intended for canning was exempted from the import permit freeze.

"There will be a special focus (at the next meeting) to see about needed interventions from the DTI," Mr. Sunico said.

Other topics will include possible price increases, he said.

The Canned Sardines Association of the Philippines has warned earlier that the supply of canned mackerel may be disrupted due to the import freeze and raised the possibility of higher prices.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said about 90,000 to 100,000 metric tons of imported fish were being diverted each year.

Separately, Mr. Laurel said he does not expect any supply concerns for canned mackerel as imports of the fish were exempt from the freeze.

Volumes of imported mackerel are to be based on the VATable sales of the canned product during the prior year, plus an additional 10%.

"Technically, they should be able to import 10% more of what they are using now. So I don't see any reason (to fear for supply)," he said in an interview with government network PTV. — **Adrian H. Halili**



PH wants to emulate Czech Republic's dairy industry success

PARTICULARLY interested in the Czech Republic's success in the dairy industry and water/irrigation management, the Philippines through the Department of Agriculture (DA) is eyeing to also become a major dairy-producing country.

According Agriculture Secretary **Francisco Laurel Jr.**, the DA hopes to learn from the Czech Republic's experiences which made them a major producer of dairy products in Europe and one of the big-time suppliers of beef.

Just recently, Laurel and other agriculture officials met with a delegation from the said country led by Agriculture Minister Marek Vyborný in Manila where the two countries have reached a mutual understanding on several agricultural issues to improve bilateral trade and widen technology transfers between them particularly in

livestock, dairy production and water management.

The meeting according to the DA, was a follow up one during the visit of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in the European Union-member country.

Philippines imports almost all its dairy requirements and sources from overseas parent stocks for cattle and other livestock.

Aside from assistance from the Czech Republic in updating local farming technology, the agri chief is also looking to expand the market of Philippine agricultural products within the European Union.

"We have some products ready for export so market access is also very important to us, especially the European Union which is one of the best markets in the world for our products," the DA chief stressed.

For his part, Minister Vyborný took note of the needs of Philippine agriculture and expressed readiness to provide assistance, including trade negotiations.

"We're definitely ready to offer cooperation. Your aims and ambitions are very similar to what we have in the Czech Republic, where our agricultural sector is also undergoing dynamic changes towards modern technologies, innovations, science and research and the application of their outcomes," said Minister Vyborný.

The Czech minister has also offered training for Filipinos on farming, livestock production and irrigation and water management.

Related to this, he said the Czech Republic needs more Filipino workers to further develop the country's agricultural sector and increase food output. *Joel dela Torre*

Abante TONITE

MABILIS SA BALITA

Date: MPR OS, 2024 Page: 3



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Agri chief: Taas-presyo ng bigas 'di maawat

Walang aasahang bawas presyo ng bigas sa bansa hanggang sa buwan ng Hunyo o Hulyo sa kabila ng panahon na ngayon ng anihan.

Ayon kay Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., dahil ito sa El Niño phenomenon na kasalukuyang humahagupit sa buong bansa.

Sa kanyang press briefing, sinabi ni Laurel na pababa na ang presyo ng bigas sa pandaigdigang merkado subalit apektado ang bansa ng El Niño, lalo na ang sektor ng agrikultura kung saan umakyat na sa mahigit P2.7 bilyon ang pinsala sa mga pananim.

"Hopefully, ay bababa 'yan sa second half of this year but as of the moment nandyan

ang lingering effects ng El Niño. I don't think bababa pa nga as of the moment," ani Laurel.

Sa ngayon aniya nasa P47 hanggang P57 kada kilo ang presyo ng bigas sa bansa subalit depende ito sa kalidad at sa lugar kung saan galing ang palay.

Samantala, batay sa datos ng DA, nasa 10 rehiyon ang apektado ng tagtuyot.

Ayon kay DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa, kabilang sa mga rehiyon na sinalanta ng El Niño ay ang Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Region 4A o Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, at Soccsksargen.



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



Retired police officer Ritchie Tenegra secures loan from the Land Bank of the Philippines for his poultry farm in Iloilo province.

LandBank loan enables retired cop to expand poultry business

FROM his sworn oath to “serve and protect” the community for 25 years as a dedicated police officer, Ritchie Tenegra shifted his focus towards an equally meaningful purpose: food security.

He has since embraced retirement by pursuing his other passion of poultry farming, and is now one of the reliable food suppliers in this town.

While still in the police force, he had limited capital to start his piggery operations in Leon, Iloilo. He applied to be a beneficiary of the Swine Dispersal Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA), and was provided his very first piglet that he grew and multiplied.

Encouraged by a fellow cop to diversify his farm with a chicken coop, Tenegra delved into poultry farming in 2013, starting with heads.

Upon retiring from the service in 2020, he went to full-time farming, and applied for a loan from the Land Bank of the Philippines to expand his piggery. A week after his loan was approved, the African Swine Flu outbreak hit the country, which devastated the local pig industry.

Eager to push through with his new purpose, Ritchie shifted his focus towards expanding his chicken coop through LandBank’s Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund

(ACEF) Lending Program, where he secured a P1-million loan to fund the improvement of his poultry farm in 2022.

“LandBank has really been a huge help in growing my chicken coop. Where can you find a bank loan of one million, then the interest is only P20,000 every year? So I am really grateful to LandBank,” said Tenegra.

From the 20 chickens in a 4-by-6-meter coop in his backyard, the loan supported the scaling up of his poultry operations to an increase in his flock size to 2,000 breeders, and the expansion of his coop to cover an area of 2,000 square meters.



USTR flags stringent agri import rules in Phl

By **JASPER EMMANUEL ARCALAS**

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) flagged the Philippines' stringent rules on the issuance of import permits for agricultural products, saying that these regulations jack up the prices of goods and "complicate" the export process for US exporters.

In its latest annual National Trade Estimate Report, the USTR identified the **Department of Agriculture (DA)** rules on the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) as a trade barrier.

SPSIC is a document that certifies that imported agricultural materials are safe for human, plant and animal health, which importers must secure first before being allowed to import anything.

The USTR explained that under the DA rules, every SPSIC issue is valid only for one shipment and has a limited validity period ranging between 15 and 90 days depending on the commodity.

The USTR also argued that requiring one SPSIC per shipment with limited validity period "adds costs" and "complicates" the timing of exports.

Such a system also "prevents" the re-routing to the Philippines of agricultural goods "intended for other markets but not sold for commercial reasons," the USTR said.

"It also prevents an exporter from reselling an imported product if the importer refuses to accept delivery or abandons the shipment," it said.

The USTR also noted that the expiry of the SPSIC was based on the "political sensitivity" of the concerned agricultural products instead of sanitary and phytosanitary risks.

It said that the Philippines stopped issuing SPSIC for certain agricultural products, including US table grapes, chipping potatoes and whole birds, back in 2019 and 2020.

"The DA continues not to issue SPSIC for whole birds," the USTR said.

It also raised concerns regarding the utilization report requirement of the DA on certain imported products like animal feed raw materials and fishery products.

Citing the Bureau of Animal Industry rules, the USTR explained that importers are required to submit a utilization report

Turn to B4

USTR From B1

that their imported raw materials were indeed use for animal feeds and were not diverted for human consumption or for other

purposes.

Since 2022, the utilization report requirement has been applied also to imported fishery products, according to the USTR.

"Stakeholders have expressed concern regarding the burdensome nature of this requirement. The measure has not been notified to the WTO (World Trade Organization)," it said.



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

What does rice farming have to do with drag?

Last week marked the last episode of Ru Paul's Drag Race (RPDR) UK vs. The World Season Two, with Filipina queen Marina Summers making it to the final four. Runner up and fan favorite from Drag Race Philippines Season One, Marina served many iconic looks that represented the Philippines. In episode one, Marina donned a Roman Sebastian number made with indigenous textiles from the Cordilleras, sashaying down the runway with a basket of green rice stalks on her back. Even her palayok-inspired wig, coiffed by Margaux Bertrand, was an ode to Filipino food culture.

In episode three, she once again showed off the Philippines in a group challenge where the queens had to create immersive experiences that best highlighted the theme Drag Race World. Marina and her

group mates Keta Minaj and Tia Kofi created a tourism commercial with Marina, a Nueva Vizcaya native, once again highlighting the Philippines' rice industry by using a palayan as a setup for a gag about doing drag in the rice fields. This is reminiscent of the wonderful videos of usually young Pinoy or Thai drag queens making frocks out of agriculture material and parading down the dirt roads beside their family's fields.

Both times, Marina used rice fields to effectively anchor her brand as a Filipina, which shows that to this day, rice is still associated with the Philippines in popular media. Despite ranking eighth in the world as of 2022 according to the Department of



AVANT
GARDENER
YVETTE TAN

Agriculture (DA) website and despite having a huge chunk of the DA's budget allotted to its cultivation, the Philippines, whose rice is largely, if not wholly rain fed, still managed to garner top spot as highest rice importer in the world, according to the International Trade Council. It's sad that rice is so attached to the Philippines since the country has trouble producing enough of the grain just to feed itself.

Marina isn't the only Drag Race queen to come from a farming background.

Miss Fame from Season 7 was raised on a chicken farm. They showcased their ability as a chicken whisperer on the show, being able to mimic the sound of a chicken. They now live in the Swiss countryside with their husband where they, of course, raise chickens.

Utica Queen, or simply Utica, from Season 13 takes her drag name from the small farm town she grew up in. The quirky queen peppered her performances on the show with farm references in honor of her farming background (milking cows was one of her chores growing up), including a challenge where she drinks straight from a fake cow's udders.

But back to the Philippines. There's a school of

thought growing within the agricultural committee that given this, the DA should increase funding and support for other high value crops, as well as crops and agriculture industries with more profit potential, including ornamental plants. According to the paper "Ornamental plants in Thailand" published in the International Society for Horticultural Science, Thailand may rank number 22 in ornamental plant exportation worldwide, but it's "the leader in ASEAN countries." This isn't counting the amount of flowers and ornamental plants that Thailand itself needs on a daily basis for offerings, decor, and so on. The Philippines is rich in flora. It's well known in the ornamental plant community that a lot of mother plants cultivated in other countries come from the Philippines.

The Philippines of Marina's drag, one that's a rich agricultural nation, is an area where I hope reality mimics fantasy. I, too, would like to live in a Philippines that is food secure, that can produce, at the very least, enough rice for itself. This, I think, to misquote another RPDR queen Valentina, would make sense with my fantasy.

Congratulations on representing the Philippines, Marina! No matter what they say, you truly are a Filipina winnah!



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

The imperative of agricultural development

The following is an excerpt of my speech delivered at the graduation of trainees in the Agribusiness Executives Program of the Center for Food and Agriculture (CFA), University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P).



FINER
POINTS

**FERMIN
ADRIANO**

THE crucial role played by the agricultural sector in the national development effort is well documented. But I would suggest reading one of the classics, the World Development Report 2008, the World Bank's flagship publication, which discussed in over 400 pages the key role of the agriculture sector in the development process.

In the case of the Philippines,

agriculture plays the important role of providing: food on the table of consumers, the raw materials of our processing industry, foreign exchange revenues needed to import capital goods and services, and employment to around a quarter of our workers.

Agriculture's development will also significantly alleviate poverty incidence in

the country as two out of three poor Filipinos are in the countryside.

The main challenge faced by our agricultural sector is its low productivity. It has been around 1 percent per year for more than two decades now. The implications of low farm productivity are many and far-reaching.

We cannot produce enough

► **Finer B2**



■ FINER FROM B1

The imperative

food for our people and thus, we need to import almost all our major food items. Due to low productivity, income received by our farmers is very low, resulting in widespread and deep poverty in the rural sector.

We have limited agricultural exports (mainly three — coconut oil, banana and pineapple) earning more than a hundred million dollars a year, while neighboring countries have seven or more. Thailand's agricultural exports are more than \$30 billion annually (and increasing), which is approximately the value of foreign remittances sent by our overseas Filipino workers.

We suffer from higher inflation because food prices here are very high, contributing more than 40 percent annually to overall inflation for the last two decades. As a result, incidences of malnutrition and stunting among our people, particularly among children, are scandalously high. They are the highest in the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region, putting at great risk the country's future as indicated by the serious learning poverty of our kids, which undeniably is a by-product of malnutrition.

Wages must be raised for workers to afford the soaring prices of basic food commodities. But there will be no pressure to legislate higher wages if our agricultural sector is productive enough to produce our food requirements. It can offer lower prices of rice, vegetables, pork, poultry, sugar, etc. A quick glance at food prices in neighboring countries will reveal the imperative of seriously addressing inefficiencies in our agricultural sector.

The price of sugar in Thailand is around P25 to P30 per kilo.

The price of well-milled rice (even the fancy variety) in Thailand and Vietnam is around P35 per kilo. The price of pork and poultry in Thailand and Vietnam is almost only half of the price in the Philippines. Corn prices here are almost double than in Thailand. Vietnam has lowered the corn tariff to 2 percent, mindful that it is a critical animal feed ingredient in bringing down the cost of pork and poultry.

But some will object that the reason why neighboring countries can lower food prices is because their local producers are heavily subsidized. This is not true.

A recent study by the World Bank showed, citing data from the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund, that countries like Thailand and Vietnam have the lowest subsidy and protection to their farmers while the Philippines, having the highest protection and subsidy, has the least competitive agriculture.

The main reason for this is that exposing the agricultural sector to competition will induce it to become more efficient and competitive, as we have seen in the case of Thailand, Vietnam and even Indonesia.

There is already a proliferation of studies identifying the reasons for the low productivity and lag-gard nature of our agricultural sector.

These include the fragmentation of our farmlands into minuscule sizes preventing attainment of economies of scale, the low budgetary resources devoted to agriculture, which averaged only 2 to 4 percent of the national budget though the sector contributes almost 10 percent to our total gross domestic product, and an obsessive focus on production to the neglect of addressing bottlenecks

along the entire value chain.

Also worth noting are the low investment in R&D (research and development), which yields the highest return in agricultural investment, overemphasis on extending production support subsidies (e.g., fertilizer, seeds, fuel, etc.), which only last during one cropping season compared to the provision of goods of public nature (e.g., irrigation, farm-to-market roads, postharvest facilities, etc.) which collectively benefit the community and last longer, and the weak institutional capability of the **Department of Agriculture**, particularly its extension support services to local government units.

I believe that no single individual in this room will be able to address all these perennial problems hounding the sector. But I appreciate, as the late professor Rolando Dy (founder of the CFA and who started this annual training program) did, that the human resource component of agricultural development is a key factor in untying the so-called Gordian knot besetting the sector.

Professor Dy and his team are of the conviction that they can contribute their share in agricultural development by launching this Agribusiness Executives Program to produce managers that can catalyze much-needed reforms in the agricultural sector. It is meant to address the weakest link, which are the senior and particularly middle-level managers, in institutions involved in delivering services to improve the performance of the agricultural sector.

M. S. Swaminathan, the father of the green revolution in India and a collaborator of Norman Borlau, who became a Nobel Prize winner as he was the foremost figure behind the green revolution, once remarked: "If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a chance to go in the country."

fdadriano88@gmail.com



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

More rice deals needed — senator

THE PHILIPPINES must seek more rice deals with countries like India and Vietnam since the country's grain production still needs improvement, Senator Sherwin T. Gatchalian told a forum at the Senate on Thursday.

"It is important to strive for 98 or even 100% rice sufficiency, but in the meantime, it is important that we have concrete agreements with countries that export rice," the senator, speaking in mixed English and Filipino, said.

He said that the Philippines still has ways to go in being self-sufficient in its rice production since it imports about 3 million metric tons (MT) a year.

Last Wednesday, the Department of Agriculture said rice prices are expected to stay high until midyear as the agriculture sector reels from the shocks of the El Niño weather phenomenon. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

54K magsasaka dumapa sa El Niño

LUMOBO na sa kabuuang 54,203 ang mga magsasaka na apektado ng El Niño Phenomenon sa bansa.

Ayon sa Department of Agriculture (DA), ito ay dahil mas lalo pang lumawak ang mga bukirin na natuyo dahil sa epekto ng matinding init ng panahon.

Kabilang sa mga pinadadapa ng grabeng tagtuyot ang Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, MIMAROPA, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula at Soccsksargen.

Samantala, sumam-

pa na sa kabuuang 2.63-bilyon ang halaga ng pagkalugi sa produksyon sa mahigit 53,000 na ektarya ng lupa na apektado ng tagtuyot.

Nakatikim ng pinakagrabeng hampas ang ang produksyon ng palay kung saan aabot sa 34,264 ektaryang sakahan ang napinsala o katumbas na 3.57% ng total area.

Umaabot naman sa 16,956 ektarya ng sakahan ng mais ang nawalan ng silbi dahil sa tag-init.

Samantala, tiniyak ng DA na patuloy nilang aasistihan ng tulong-pinansyal ang mga magsasaka sa mga apektadong lugar sa bansa.



W. Visayas El Niño agri damage now P770.5 M

BACOLOD CITY – Damage to agriculture in Western Visayas due to El Niño has increased to P770.5 million as of April 1, according to the Office of Civil Defense.

The OCD said more than 20,000 farmers have been affected by drought.

Despite the losses, OCD-Western Visayas regional office head Raul Fernandez said the criteria to declare a state of calamity due to El Niño in affected areas have not been met.

Fernandez said Iloilo province has been most affected, with losses amounting to P519 million, followed by Antique, P130 million; Negros Occidental, P78 million; Aklan, P30 million, and Capiz,

P12 million.

There was no reported damage to agriculture in Guimaras.

Fernandez said water supply in Western Visayas remains stable, except in Himamaylan City, where water rationing has started in some barangays.

Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has released more than P11 million in assistance to families affected by El Niño in the region.

DSWD-Western Visayas regional director Carmelo Nochete said the assistance was released through the implementation of food-for-work and food-for-training programs from January to

March.

Up to 5,460 food packs worth more than P3.1 million were distributed to beneficiaries of the food-for-training program.

Nochete said the training gave basic knowledge in handling evacuation centers during emergencies and calamities as well as the importance of disaster response operations monitoring and information center in reporting disaster-related incidents.

At least 1,893 food-for-work beneficiaries received more than P7.9 million for the work they rendered, which included clearing and rehabilitation of roads and canals.

– Gilbert Bayoran, Delon Porcalla

Date: APR. 05, 2024 Page: 5



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Fish kill hits Pangasinan

DAGUPAN, Pangasinan – A fish kill has been monitored in parts of western Pangasinan.

Ronald Eugenio, an aquaculture industry operator, said extreme heat due to El Niño and sudden rainfall caused the fish kill.

“Mild warm water is needed in fishponds. If it is disturbed by sudden rainfall, it will result in fish mortality,” Eugenio said.

He said the warm weather is causing fear among fishpond operators because it is not yet harvest season.

The amount of losses due to the fish kill, which affected milkfish growers, has yet to be determined. – Jun Elias

MANILA BULLETIN

Date: APR. 05, 2024 Page: 9



LIBRARY
DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



WORK GOES ON — A group of farmers struggles to harvest corn in a 500-square meter land damaged by the dry spell caused by the El Niño phenomenon in Upi, Maguindanao del Norte on Wednesday, April 3, 2024. (Keith Bacongco)



Corn extends gains

SINGAPORE- Chicago corn gained more ground on Thursday as strong investor buying supported prices, which hit a one-month low earlier this week, while the market is likely to focus on US planting for direction in the weeks ahead.

Wheat and soybeans edged higher, although gains in the wheat market were limited by plentiful Russian supplies.

"Funds are covering short positions which is bit supportive for prices," said one Singapore-based trader. "US corn planting season is starting and any risk to planting due to adverse weather is likely to support prices."

The most-active corn contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was up 0.2 percent at \$4.32-1/2 a bushel, having gained more than 1 percent in the previous session.

Wheat rose 0.1 percent to \$5.56-1/2 a bushel and soybeans also climbed 0.1 percent to \$11.83 a bushel.

Commodity funds were net buyers of CBOT corn, wheat, soybean, soyoil and soymeal futures contracts on Wednesday, traders said.

Traders are monitoring Midwestern weather ahead of corn planting that is due to ramp up

over the coming weeks. While rain and snow in the central corn belt are expected to boost soil moisture reserves, there are forecasts of higher temperatures later this month.

The US Department of Agriculture on Monday rated the US winter wheat crop at its highest early spring level in five years, and crop-boosting rains are forecast for the southern US Plains wheat belt.

Hefty wheat exports from Russia, which consultancy SovEcon estimates set a March record, are weighing on global prices.

However, Russian authorities have halted grain exports on some ships belonging to Aston, one of the biggest local grain trading houses, two industry sources said, widening a quality probe which has already curbed the exports of another major trader.

A major disruption to Russian shipments can drive up global prices.

In news, the severe drought which has forced the Panama Canal, one of the world's busiest trade passages, to limit daily crossings could impact global supply chains during a period of high demand, S&P Global said on Wednesday. - Reuters