

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY APRIL 13, 2024

MANILA BULLETIN:

Farmers and fisherfolk – our unsung heroes

BY DR. FLORANGEL ROSARIO BRAID

Apr 13, 2024 09:18 AM

PAGBABAGO



As we reflect on the lives of our national heroes who had fought against oppression and tyranny to enable us to enjoy our freedoms today, we had forgotten a large sector in our society which had toiled and struggled to enable us to enjoy freedom of food security – our farmers and fisherfolk.

But this sector had been neglected for some time now for several reasons. One is our pursuit of a capitalist future. Much of attention and energy during these past decades had been directed to the acquisition and use of big technology as well as urban and non-agrarian concerns.

Thus, many of our youth had left their rural communities in pursuit of the “good life” in the city. Even graduates of our agricultural schools had migrated to cities to take up non-agricultural jobs.

But what we are then witnessing today is still a great deal of inequality. It is estimated that some 800 million people have become victims of industrial civilization. And the Philippines is part of that statistic.

We join those voices who have expressed the need for another narrative that shows the rural area and its farms and fisheries resources as the setting of a sustainable future and to counteract emphasis on big technology and urban migration. But how do we reverse the flow? What measures can be taken to strengthen the current decentralization process?

Among others, we see the need to strengthen local government-civil society relationship, promote initiatives in making people aware that the sustainable future lays in making the farm and fisherfolk communities more productive and attractive. It is changing the present belief that the right path is one that encourages the youth to migrate to the city and other countries.

We need good storytellers that would capture the opportunities in local farm and fisherfolk communities. We rely on rice, corn, sugarcane, and fish. But to date, we have not been able to attain self-sufficiency in their production. If we all put our minds in the search for solutions to current constraints, we shall have taken the first step.

Of course the above is easier said than done. We are not debunking technology as the productivity of the farm and fisheries resources depend on use of appropriate technology.

What we are saying is not new. Several development agencies, both local and international, have addressed the concerns of both the agriculture and fisheries sectors. Innovations and strategies learned from countries which had achieved economic sustainability had been introduced.

Our failure to implement them are due to existing constraints that have plagued us over the years – the wide urban-rural divide which has likewise widened social and economic divides, peace and order, a lack of needed political will, and an attitude among many - the “lack of will to develop.”

Many had lost hope that we shall be able to rise above these inadequacies and see outward migration as the only alternative. This narrative of our present state must be reversed. This task is asked of every citizen. (*Florangel.braid@gmail.com*)

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/13/farmers-and-fisherfolk-our-unsung-heroes>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Ties that feed

Czech Republic's minister of agriculture, Marek Výborný, visits to forge agricultural ties with the Philippines

BY MB LIFESTYLE

Apr 13, 2024 12:34 PM



STRENGTHENING TIES. Minister of Agriculture Marek Výborný and Secretary Francisco Laurel, signed the Letter of Intent. From left: Undersecretary Jerome Oliveros, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture Francisco Tiu Laurel, Minister of Agriculture Marek Výborný and Ambassador Karel Hejc

The Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic Marek Výborný, accompanied by a business delegation composed of 40 representatives, visited the Philippines for a series of meetings with local officials to discuss agricultural cooperation with the Philippines.

On that occasion the Czech Embassy in Manila in partnership with the Czech Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic organized Czech-Philippine Agribusiness Forum 2024 in Makati and Davao on March 21 and 22 respectively. The Czech companies presented their solutions for the brewing industry, dairy production, meat processing as well as other related agriculture industries.

“I believe that the rich and diverse participation in today’s forum may result to enriching and strengthening the cooperation, especially in the sectors that we represent here today, and that's agriculture and food industry,” said the minister in his keynote address. “I would be very glad for our partners from the Philippines to perceive this as a clear signal how much we are interested in strengthening our contacts with partners in the Philippines.”



COURTESY VISIT. Czech delegation at the University of the Philippines

The Minister of Agriculture also paid a courtesy visit to the University of the Philippines (UP) and discussed with Angelo Jimenez, UP president, potential research and university collaborations in forestry, tropical and subtropical agriculture, as well as in water management.



FORGING PARTNERSHIPS. Czech-Philippine agribusiness forum in Davao

The visit to Manila culminated in a bilateral meeting with Secretary Francisco Laurel of the Department of Agriculture, during which a Letter of Intent on Cooperation in Agriculture and the Food Industry was signed by the two dignitaries. Both Minister Výborný and Secretary Laurel agreed to enhance the collaboration in various areas, including veterinary issues, livestock production, aquaculture, as well as dairy production. Additionally, discussions extended to food production and its accompanying technologies, water management for agriculture, and to fostering scientific research exchanges.

In overall, the visit of the Czech Minister of Agriculture Marek Výborný to the Philippines emphasized a commitment to enhance mutual trade and economic relations in the agriculture and food industry sectors as well as to foster stronger partnership between the universities and research institutions in the Czech Republic and the Philippines.



STRENGTHENING TIES. Minister of Agriculture Marek Výchová and Secretary Francisco Laurel, signed the Letter of Intent. From left: Undersecretary Jerome Oliveros, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture Francisco Tiu Laurel, Minister of Agriculture Marek Výchová and Ambassador Karel Hejz

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<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/13/ties-that-feed>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Fighting climate change: Philippine coconut industry to adapt heat, drought tolerant varieties

BY RHOWEN DEL ROSARIO

Apr 13, 2024 05:16 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Researchers are working to develop heat and drought-tolerant coconut varieties to adapt to changing climate conditions.

Philippine coconut production is currently threatened by the rising dry spells and droughts that are linked to climate change, said the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-PCAARRD).



(Photo from Pixabay)

To adapt, a project named "Evaluation of Coconut Accessions at Philippine Coconut Authority-Zamboanga Research Center (PCA-ZRC) for Heat and Drought Tolerance Towards Hybridization" is underway to identify heat and drought-tolerant coconut varieties.

"These resources are at high risk of disappearance due to climate change and pest infestations," DOST-PCAARRD said in a statement on Friday, April 12.

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Led by Joel Gerone Larupay, the department said the project involves assessing coconut palms' potential and varietal responses during heat and drought stresses.

Larupay said that his team was able to organize and validate the weather and yield data of 16 hybrids and traditional varieties (14 dwarf and 14 tall) as potential heat and drought-tolerant coconuts for its year-one implementation.

Meanwhile, DOST-PCAARRD also reported that forty percent of the country's total coconut area remains "unexplored" for its genetic resources.

To aid the ongoing efforts, DOST highlighted that researchers are currently securing and conserving coconut genetic resources from remote parts of the country.

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It was intended to improve farm productivity and benefit millions of coconut farmers, particularly those in areas heavily impacted by drought and extreme temperature levels, according to DOST.

To further improve the project's implementation, Science and Technology (S&T) Consultant Violeta Villegas recommended considering other indicative traits of other crops correlated to heat and drought stress as additional parameters.

This project, funded by DOST, is a five-year project through the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Plan's (CFIDP) Coconut Hybridization Program (CHP) Research.

Furthermore, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) encouraged the public to restrict time spent outside, particularly after 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/13/fighting-climate-change-philippine-coconut-industry-to-adapt-heat-drought-tolerant-varieties>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Solon tells DA to prepare quick response fund for drought-hit areas

BY DEXTER BARRO II

Apr 12, 2024 01:48 PM

AT A GLANCE

- AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert T. Lee said the Department of Agriculture (DA) should be ready to disburse its Quick Response Fund (QRF) provided under the national budget amid the severe drought affecting various parts of the country.



(Mark Balmores/MANILA BULLETIN)

AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert T. Lee said the Department of Agriculture (DA) should be ready to disburse its Quick Response Fund (QRF) provided under the national budget amid the severe drought affecting various parts of the country.

Lee issued this statement after the declaration of a state of calamity in San Enrique, Negros Occidental following weeks of high temperatures, dry weather conditions, and lack of rainfall.

About 90 percent of the town's rice fields have reportedly dried up already.

The lawmaker said farmers couldn't even start replanting due to the unfavorable weather conditions brought upon by El Niño.

At least 20 local government units (LGUs) had earlier declared a state of calamity due to the extreme heat.

“Kailangang i-expect natin na sa darating na mga linggo ay madadagdagan pa ang mga lugar na magdedeklara ng state of calamity dahil sa matinding init at tagtuyot,” said Lee.

(We have to expect that in the coming weeks, there will be more places that will declare a state of calamity due to extreme heat and drought.)

“Kaya dapat siguraduhin ng DA na ready for release at download sa kanilang regional offices ang QRF kapag nagdeklara na ng state of calamity ang mga LGU para naman mabigyan ng agarang ayuda ang mga apektadong magsasaka sa mga lugar na ‘yon,” he added.

(The DA should make sure that the QRF is ready for release and download in their regional offices when the LGUs declare a state of calamity so that immediate aid can be given to the affected farmers in those areas.)

San Enrique is one of the top rice-producing towns in Negros Occidental. A large chunk of the town’s 2,884.75-hectare land area are rice farms.

Meanwhile, Lee also called on the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) to coordinate possible cloud-seeding operations over major farm areas in the country.

“Patuloy na mahihirapan ang mga magsasaka sa kanilang produksyon hangga’t hindi sapat ang irigasyon,” he said.

(Farmers will continue to struggle with their production as long as irrigation is not sufficient.)

“Dapat proactive tayo at hindi reactive dahil buhay at hanapbuhay ang nakataya dito,” the solon stressed.

(We must be proactive and not reactive because lives and jobs are at stake here.)

The ongoing dry spell in the country is expected to persist until May.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/12/solon-tells-da-to-prepare-quick-response-fund-for-drought-hit-areas>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Indigenous peoples eat poisonous root crop amid dry spell

BY KEITH BACONGCO

Apr 12, 2024 03:17 PM

SOUTH UPI, Maguindanao del Sur – Teduray farmer Alan Olubalang could still remember how his grandparents scoured the forests of this mountainous town just to find the indigenous crop known as “kayos” at the height of the dry spell in 1998.



MANILYN Elon shows freshly picked 'kayos' in Barangay Kuya, South Upi, Maguindanao del Sur. (Keith Bacongco)

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As the dry spell left thousands of hectares of parched farmlands and mountains, many of the indigenous peoples back then were left with no choice but to look and eat kayos.

“It was so dry, very hot and many people had nothing to eat,” Olubalang recounted. “I could still remember my grandmother slicing kayos in our yard so that we will have something to eat.”

Little did they know that some of their fellow IPs had already died due to kayos poisoning.

Despite of the risk, kayos could m

According to the Tedurays, they are aware that kayos could kill them if it is not properly prepared.

“We were left with no choice because most of our crops were damaged by the extreme heat. It’s like a gamble but would die of starvation too if we will not eat,” recalled Olubalang, who was still 10-years-old when the El Niño phenomenon wreaked havoc in many parts of the country.

In a World Bank report published in 2019, the 1997 to 1998 dry spell was the most severe to have hit the country as rainfall fell to half of historical levels and caused drought in two-thirds of the country.

The report added that the dry spell led to forest fires that destroyed almost 10,000 hectares of natural forests.

Also known as kollot, korot, or nami, kayos (*Dioscorea hispida*) is a type of wild root crop that usually grows in the forests and could survive even in extreme heat conditions.

Olubalang said that kayos only flourish during dry season. “When it’s wet season, its fruit isn’t good for consumption since its fruit doesn’t grow well.”

Manilyn Elon, who hails from the mountainous village of Kuya, said that many of them are now consuming kayos as many of their crops had withered due to dry spell.

Despite of risk, Elon said that they are very careful in preparing kayos before eating.

She bared that one of the methods in preparing kayos is to sun dry it for three to four days to remove the poison. For those living near rivers, they wash sliced kayos in the water to remove the poison, she added.

“If it’s not processed properly, kayos can induce paralysis or sickness. You would feel like a drunk. Worse, it could also kill you,” Elon said.



TEDURAY farmers inspect their ‘sulagad’ farm damaged by the dry spell in Barangay Looy, North Upi, Maguindanao del Norte. (Keith Bacongco)

For the Teduray people, kayos is historically known as their famine food.

Olubalang said that consuming kayos during dry spell was passed on through generations of IPs.

“We are all aware the risk of consuming kayos but it has been a part also of our practices to be able to survive during prolonged dry spell,” he said.

He theorized that those who died in the past due to kayos poisoning may have not processed the root crop very well. “Maybe they were in a hurry and they have not processed the kayos properly because they had been starving already.”

Barangay Kuya Chairman Victor Lumao confirmed that some of his constituents are consuming kayos.

No kayos poisoning incident has been reported yet as of posting time.

Lumao said that some of his constituents were forced to eat kayos due to lack of alternative food sources during the dry season.

He said that many of his fellow IPs died due to kayos poisoning in the past. “Yan lang kasi ang nabubuhay na makain namin sa mga kagubatan tuwing tag-init (Kayos is the only crop we could eat during the dry season).”

But unlike in the past, Lumao said people have not yet learned to plant permanent crops like coconuts and other fruit trees.

“Plus the road conditions here in the 1990s were worst, sometimes it takes days to travel from Upi to Datu Odin Sinsuat. So the delivery of any food assistance was very difficult at that time. A lot of our people here were already starving so they resort into eating kayos,” Lumao said.

According to residents, it used to take up to three days to travel from Upi to Datu Odin Sinsuat, which was just at least 32 kilometers away, due to very bad road conditions.

Ongoing validation

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao chief Mohammad Yacob said that validation is still ongoing to determine the impact of the prolonged dry spell in the region.

But the BARMM Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council placed the region from white alert to blue alert status or bravo emergency on April 5 due to the impact of El Niño phenomenon.

Under this status, the Bangsamoro government activated its Bangsamoro Action Plan (BAP) on El Niño.

It also directed local disaster offices from the provincial to municipal levels to conduct Rapid Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (RDANA) to determine the extent of the damage due to dry spell.

The Bangsamoro government assured its constituents that there are enough funds and other forms of assistance for affected communities.

BARMM is composed of the provinces of Basilan, Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi.

According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) climate outlook, Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur are among provinces in country with below normal rainfall this April.

The State weather bureau noted that Maguindanao is one of the seven provinces in Mindanao with dry spell conditions.

Under dry spell condition, the agency said the area has experienced two consecutive months of below normal rainfall condition or 21 to 60 percent average rainfall reduction.



ALLAN Olubalang shows a withered ampalaya (bitter gourd) at their ‘sulagad’ farm damaged by the dry spell in Barangay Looy, North Upi, Maguindanao del Norte. (Keith Bacongco)

As a result, many farmers in Maguindanao opted not to plant crops in anticipation of the impact of the El Niño.

But for some Teduray farmers in this town, preparedness and resiliency could still help them overcome this crisis.

Olubalang and his fellow indigenous farmers encouraged their neighbors to practice their indigenous farming system known as “sulagad.”

Under this traditional farming, system, IPs integrate various tree species, vegetable crops, and animals into their farms and supplemented by hunting and gathering in the forests.

Olubalang said it is almost similar to the diversified farming system but with the integration of the forests as an extension of their farms.

“As IPs, our lives cannot be detached from nature. The forests have been a part of our daily life as sources of our food and medicine.”

He pointed out the importance of planting sulagad during the prolonged dry spell to enable them to have alternative food sources. “If our backyards farms could not survive the extreme heat, we can always go to forests to look for food. And that’s where most the kayos comes from.”

Lessons from kayos

But despite the risk, why many of the indigenous peoples still turn into kayos in times of hunger?

Olubalang theorized that it must be the nature’s way of teaching the people to share the prepared kayos to the starving community.

“You cannot hide from your neighbors when you are preparing it. Because your neighbors will see drying the sliced kayos under the Sun. Or they will see you processing or washing the kayos in the rivers.”

Kayos is unlike other root crops such as cassava or sweet potatoes that people can hoard and cook behind closed doors, Olubalang added. “Tinuturuan tayo ng kayos na bigyan rin ang iba na nagugutom lalo na ang mga marunong mag prosesong nito.”

SOUTH UPI, Maguindanao del Sur – Teduray farmer Alan Olubalang could still remember how his grandparents scoured the forests of this mountainous town just to find the indigenous crop known as “kayos” at the height of the dry spell in 1998.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/12/indigenous-peoples-eat-poisonous-root-crop-for-food-amid-dry-spell-1>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

NFA apologizes to Ombudsman Martires for failing to give warehouse list

By: [Zacarian Sarao](#) - Reporter / [@zacariansINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 10:54 PM April 12, 2024



FILE PHOTO: Ombudsman Samuel Martires. INQUIRER FILES

MANILA, Philippines — The National Food Authority (NFA) apologized to Ombudsman Samuel Martires for its failure to provide the warehouse list requested by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“The undersigned would also like to take this opportunity to convey his apologies on behalf of the agency in the course of submitting the warehouse library as requested by the DA,” NFA Officer-in-Charge and Administrator Larry Lacson said through a letter dated March 25.

“The inadvertence in providing the list was mainly due to the urgency of the request and not for anything else,” he added.

He then committed to Martires of the NFA’s full cooperation in the Ombudsman’s investigation, as well as the prompt submission of any required documents.

Meanwhile, along with the apology, the NFA had also furnished the office of the Ombudsman with a certification from its Administrative and General Services Department regarding the list of personnel who have been separated from service due to death, retirement, or are currently on leave for study or maternity purposes.

This is after alleged errors were discovered on the list of respondents it submitted to the DA, which was subsequently transmitted to the Office of the Ombudsman during its investigation into the controversial sale of buffer rice stocks.

The list allegedly included individuals who were no longer associated with the NFA.

Initially, 139 NFA employees and officials were placed under preventive suspension by the Ombudsman during the investigation into the food authority's questionable sale of rice stocks.

But Ombudsman Samuel Martires reversed the suspension order for 23 NFA employees based on the investigators' recommendation.

Martires, however, asserted that there were no errors in the list, but expressed optimism that more suspension will be recommended by investigators.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Ombudsman confirmed to INQUIRER.net that it has already received both the apology and the certification.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1929377/nfa-on-apologizing-to-ombudsman-martires>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Zamboanga del Sur mayor seeks aid for drought-hit town

By: [Leah D. Agonoy](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Inquirer Mindanao](#) / 05:04 AM April 13, 2024



NOT A DROP Boulders and rocks are now exposed where water used to flow in this creek at Barangay Upper Loding in Tambulig, Zamboanga del Sur. The creek has dried up due to the El Niño phenomenon, making it difficult for farmers to tend to their crops and livestock. —LEAH D. AGONROY

TAMBULIG, ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR — Farmer Teogery Colegado of Barangay Upper Loding here points to a nearby creek with sadness. Now just a collection of boulders and rocks, the creek used to provide them water to nurture their gardens and livestock.

Colegado recalled that the creek's water level began to drop in the middle of last year, and completely dried up last month, making it hard for farmers to maintain their crops and farm animals.

The drought had stricken 18 of 31 villages of Tambulig but Mayor Charlotte Dumanjug Panal had no resources to use to respond after the municipal council blocked the use of

local calamity funds. This is why the mayor is turning to the national government to provide assistance to the people.

“I appeal to President Marcos, please provide us with immediate relief. Many people are already suffering from the extreme heat,” Panal said.

Panal told the Inquirer that farmers had been telling her about farm and backyard animals being sold cheap as they could not anymore tend to them. “At least they get a little or else they might regret it later if the animals die,” she said.

Traditionally, farmers in the agriculture-dependent town plant from December to January, harvesting their produce from April to May. However, this normal cycle was disrupted by the El Niño weather phenomenon in the middle of last year, “leaving the farmers and their families hungry,” Panal said.

The situation is precarious among families “who live in hand-to-mouth conditions,” she said. “It is them who really need immediate assistance, and there are many of them,” Panal added.

Amid the worsening economic situation, the mayor said they recorded incidents of burglary and theft in upland villages, even victimizing poor households whose rice supply were stolen from their kitchens.

A rapid damage assessment and needs analysis (RDANA) prepared by the municipal disaster risk reduction and management council (MDRRMC) showed that some 849 hectares of farmlands tilled by 945 farmers were affected by the severe drought.

According to the MDRRMC, this means that 3,984 of the town’s more than 9,000 families are affected by the El Niño phenomenon, representing more than 40 percent of the local population.

MDRRMC Chief Nilo Muñoz said the assessment covered only the situation from January to March this year, and was confirmed by the leaders of the 18 affected villages.

Recommendation

On the basis of the RDANA report, the MDRRMC passed a resolution on March 27, recommending to the Sangguniang Bayan a declaration of a state of calamity throughout the town due to the impact of the dry spell.

The declaration would have freed up the local government's quick response fund to address the worsening condition of the people and their communities.

Panal said the proposed calamity declaration was not taken up during the April 1 regular session of the municipal council as they did not have a quorum. During the April 8 session, the matter was referred to a committee so it could conduct its own evaluation of the situation, Panal added.

The Office of the Vice Mayor has not responded to repeated requests by the Inquirer for an interview.

Panal also called for help from the Zamboanga del Sur provincial government.

Zamboanga del Sur Rep. Divina Grace Yu told the Inquirer that she was working for the provision of humanitarian relief to drought-affected families in her district, not just for Tambulig.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1929371/zambo-sur-mayor-seeksaid-for-drought-hit-town>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

PH may need not increase rice imports

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:18 AM April 13, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — Improving harvests despite dry conditions brought by El Niño might mean that the full-year inflow of imported milled rice will not increase in 2024, according to the latest estimates of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In a report, the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service cut its rice import forecast for the Philippines to 3.9 million metric tons (MT) from its previous projection of 4.1 million MT—made last March—due to a “larger crop.”

The lowered forecast settles at the same level as the Philippine rice imports in 2023. Over the past four years, Philippine rice imports have increased steadily from 2.45 million MT in 2020.

In its report released this month, the American agency raised its forecast for Philippine milled rice output for this year to 12.6 million MT from its March forecast of 12.3 million MT.

Meanwhile, the USDA's estimate of total global imports is nearly unchanged at 53.4 million MT from 53.3 million MT as estimated in March.

The estimate for global exports was similarly raised slightly to 53.4 million MT from last month's 53.3 million MT.

Imports hit 1.17 million MT as of April 4

So far, rice cargoes that entered the archipelago have surpassed the million-MT mark, with the latest data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showing that imports totaled 1.17 million MT as of April 4.

Vietnam remains the leading source of milled rice shipped to the Philippines with 62.4 percent or 734,583 MT of the total. Thailand came second with 251,738 MT while Pakistan placed third with 124,038 MT.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said earlier traders were anticipated to source more imported rice to meet the demand for the staple food ahead of lean months.

“Importers may be anticipating low supply in the coming months, particularly during the lean months of July to September, given the expected decline in production due to El Niño,” FFF national manager Raul Montemayor said in a message.

The FFF said rice import purchases so far this year were “quite surprising” as global prices from January to March were about 30 percent higher than in the same period last year.

Montemayor said some of the shipments of imported rice arrived in the early part of 2024, adding that orders were placed as free-on-board (FOB) prices of Thai and Pakistani rice declined to \$560 to \$570 per ton as opposed to Vietnam’s FOB price of more than \$600 per ton.

<https://business.inquirer.net/454543/ph-may-need-not-increase-rice-imports>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Negros Occidental town under calamity state due to drought

By: [Carla Gomez @carlagomezINQ](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Inquirer Visayas](#) / 01:18 PM April 12, 2024



Negros Occidental hit by dry spell. STOCK IMAGE/INQUIRER FILES

BACOLOD CITY — The municipality of San Enrique in Negros Occidental was placed under a state of calamity amid the devastation brought about by the El Niño phenomenon.

The town's council, in a special session on April 8, approved the recommendation of the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council as the damage to rice, sugarcane, and fisheries reached P9,951,589.70.

San Enrique Mayor Jilson Tubillara said the declaration would allow the local government to allocate its calamity funds to assist farmers affected by the drought.

The town council also passed a resolution, calling on the Department of Agriculture to conduct cloud seeding operations in Negros Occidental to induce rain.

In San Enrique alone, about 6,000 families in all 10 barangays were affected by the humid weather.

Tubillara said the drought had dried up crops, wells, and fishponds in the municipality and affected 90 percent of its agricultural lands.

He said some rice farmers have shifted to planting watermelon, while fishponds had been transformed into salt beds to make ends meet.

The town government, he added, has started delivering water to residents of Barangay Tibsoc where wells have dried up.

The local health office has reported that cough, hypertension, diarrhea, allergies, common cough, and colds are becoming prevalent in San Enrique due to the heat.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration has projected that El Niño would continue until May or June.

It was agreed during the town's school board meeting that in-person classes be held only from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., and that modular learning from home be adopted in the afternoons.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1929246/negros-occidental-town-under-calamity-state-due-to-drought>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Zambales gears up for mango fest to feature sweetest variety

By: [Joanna Rose Aglibot](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Inquirer Central Luzon](#) / 01:44 PM April 12, 2024

STREET DANCE/ APRIL 16,2015
street dancers from subic

SAN ANTONIO, Zambales — This province is gearing up for the 10-day celebration of mango festivity, also known as the “Dinamulag Festival,” from May 2 to May 11.

Among the highlights of the festival are the street dance, float parade competitions, agri-tourism trade fair, and mango-picking activities, according to the provincial government.

Other activities include a beauty pageant, a drum and lyre competition, sporting events, and motocross, and bicycle races, among others.

Zambales is known for its distinctively sweet carabao or *dinamulag* variety.

In 1995, the Guinness Book of World Records cited mangoes grown in Zambales as the world’s sweetest.

In 2013, the Department of Agriculture labeled Zambales mangoes as the country’s sweetest variety. INQ

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1929252/zambales-gears-up-for-mango-fest-to-feature-sweetest-variety>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

BFAR: 6 coastal areas in Visayas, Mindanao test positive for red tide

By: [Adrian Parungao](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:11 PM April 13, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — Six coastal areas in the country have tested positive for red tide, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said.

READ: BFAR: Red tide alert still up over 6 areas in Visayas, Mindanao

In its advisory on Friday, the BFAR said that areas in Visayas and Mindanao listed below had paralytic shellfish poison or toxic red tide above the regulatory limit:

- Coastal waters of Milagros in Masbate
- Coastal waters of Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol
- San Pedro Bay in Samar
- Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar
- Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur
- Coastal waters of San Benito in Surigao del Norte

BFAR said that shellfish and alamang from the areas above are not safe to eat, but fish, squids, shrimps, and crabs are safe for consumption as long as they have been prepared properly.

“All types of shellfish and *Acetes* sp. or alamang gathered from the areas shown above are not safe for human consumption.

“Fish, squids, shrimps, and crabs are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking,” the BFAR said.

According to the Department of Health, eating seafood contaminated with red tide may result in health complications, including dizziness, weakness, or diarrhea.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1929491/bfar-6-coastal-areas-in-visayas-mindanao-test-positive-for-red-tide>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Philippines to import less rice this year – USDA [Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

April 13, 2024 | 12:00am



Photos show workers unloading sacks of rice from a truck along Dagupan St. in Manila on February 7, 2024.

MANILA, Philippines — The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has lowered its rice import forecast for the Philippines to 3.9 million metric tons (MT) as it expects the country to have a better harvest than earlier projected.

In its monthly global grain report, the USDA slashed its 2024 rice import projection for the Philippines by 200,000 MT from its 4.1 million MT estimate in March.

The USDA attributed the lower rice import forecast to the expected “larger crop” to be harvested by the country this year.

The USDA now forecasts that the Philippines will produce 12.6 million MT of rice this year, 300,000 MT more than its earlier estimate of 12.3 million MT.

“Global rice production is forecast higher this month mainly on larger crops for Bangladesh and the Philippines,” the USDA said.

The USDA projected that global rice output would be higher at 53.448 million MT versus its earlier forecast of 53.338 million MT.

Based on USDA data, the Philippines’ palay or unmilled rice yield would rise to 4.17 MT per hectare from last year’s 4.13 MT per hectare.

The latest estimate is also higher than the 4.07 MT per hectare yield that the USDA projected last month.

Despite the lower rice import forecast for the year, the Philippines will remain the world's top importer of the grain, according to USDA data.

The USDA maintained its projection for the total rice requirement of the Philippines – which includes consumption and residual – at 16.5 million MT.

The Philippines is projected to end the year with 3.478 million MT of rice stocks, matching the same level it had last year, according to the USDA.

Furthermore, the USDA expects the Philippines to be a growing market for Pakistan rice exports after the former reduced its tariff rate on imports to 35 percent.

The lowering of the tariff, the USDA pointed out, “eliminated” the advantage of ASEAN member-countries and made Pakistani exports “more profitable” in the Philippines.

“Pakistan capitalized on this opportunity by shipping 150,000 (metric) tons (to the Philippines) since the tariff reduction,” the USDA said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. earlier said the USDA's previous rice import forecast of 4.1 million MT is a “worst-case scenario” for the Philippines.

Tiu Laurel said the country's rice imports would not hit 4.1 million MT since the DA is targeting another record-high palay harvest this year.

The USDA estimated that the Philippines imported 3.9 million MT of rice last year, 300,000 MT more than the figure released by the government through the Bureau of Plant Industry.

The BPI, which issues the necessary clearance for rice imports, said the country imported 3.6 million MT last year.

The country's rice imports in the first quarter expanded by 44 percent to 1.154 million MT from 801,732 MT a year ago, based on BPI data.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/04/13/2347224/philippines-import-less-rice-year-usda>

REMATE:

Bayan sa NegOcc isinailalim sa state of calamity

April 13, 2024 12:20



NEGROS OCCIDENTAL- Nasa state of calamity ang munisipalidad ng San Enrique sa Negros Occidental bunsod na matinding pinsala ng El Niño phenomenon.

Sa ginanap na special session ng Sangguniang Panlalawigan noong April 8, inaprubahan ng Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council ang rekomendasyon na isailalim sa state of calamity ang nasabing bayan.

Ito'y matapos masira ang pananim na palay, tubo, at fishpond na umabot sa pinsalang P9,951,589.70.

Sinabi ni San Enrique Mayor Jilson Tubillara na nagbibigay ito ng daan para maaprubahan ng lokal na pamahalaan ang calamity funds para mabigyan ng tulong ang mga magsasaka na apektado ng tagtuyot.

Ipinasa rin ng konseho ang isang resolusyon para tawagan ng pansin ang Department of Agriculture na magsagawa ng cloud seeding operations sa Negros Occidental para bumuhos ang ulan.

Sa bayan ng San Enrique, nasa 6,000 pamilya sa loob ng 10 barangas ang naapektuhan ng mainit na panahon.

Sinabi ni Tubillara na ang tagtuyot ay nagpatuyo ng mga pananim, balon, at palaisdaan sa munisipyo at naapektuhan ang 90 porsyento ng mga lupang pang-agrikultura nito.

Aniya, ilang magsasaka ng palay ang lumipat sa pagtanim ng pakwan, habang ang mga palaisdaan ay ginawang asinan para mabuhay.

Ang pamahalaang bayan, dagdag niya, ay nagsimula nang maghatid ng tubig sa mga residente ng Barangay Tibsoc kung saan natuyo ang mga balon.

Samantala, napagkasunduan naman sa school board meeting sa bayan na ang mga personal na klase ay gaganapin lamang mula alas-7:30 ng umaga hanggang alas-10:30 ng umaga, at ang modular learning sa bahay ay gagawin tuwing hapon. Mary Anne Sapico

<https://remate.ph/bayan-sa-negocc-isinailalim-sa-state-of-calamity/>

REMATE:

Fuel subsidy para sa mga magsasaka, mangingisda pinaplantsa ng DA

April 13, 2024 11:48



MANILA, Philippines- Sinabi ng Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Biyernes na nakatakda itong mamahagi ng fuel subsidies sa mga magsasaka at mangingisdang apektado ng pagsirit ng presyo ng langis.

Sa Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon briefing, inihayag ni DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa na sa ilalim ng programa, mamamahagi ng P3,000 tulong kada benepisyaryo.

“It is a one-time assistance para tumulong dito sa pagtaas ng presyo ng gasolina. Inaayos lang dito iyong guidelines. Sa mga susunod na araw, ilalabas na rin itong fuel assistance para sa ating mga mangingisda at magsasaka,” wika ng opisyal.

Naglaan ang DA ng halos P1 bilyong halaga ng pondo upang saklawin ang eligible beneficiaries sa buong bansa.

“May nakalaan na almost PHP500 million para sa ating mga magsasaka na may-ari ng makinarya. Gayundin PHP500 million para sa ating mga mangingisda,” aniya.

Kabilang sa mga kwalipikadong benepisyaryo ang mga magsasaka na may makinaryang nakarehistro sa ilalim ng Registry System for Basic Sectors In Agriculture, maging mga mangingisdang may boat tonnage na hindi lalampas sa 3 metric tons. RNT/SA

<https://remate.ph/fuel-subsidy-para-sa-mga-magsasaka-mangingisda-pinaplantsa-ng-da/>

MANILA STANDARD

NFA okays P10-b plan to address rice problems

By Othel V. Campos

April 12, 2024, 11:50 pm

THE National Food Authority (NFA) has approved a proposed P10-billion modernization plan, aimed at addressing critical challenges in rice procurement and storage capacities.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel clarified how the modernization plan will address the dearth in post-harvest infrastructures.

He said rice storage is one of the biggest problems of the rice industry. “We don’t have enough post-harvest facilities.”

The NFA admitted its own deficiency in creating more drying and storage facilities.

Drying capacity, crucial for preserving rice after harvest, has declined significantly, dropping from 80 percent in the mid-80s to a mere 5 percent at present. This modernization plan seeks to improve drying capacity to 180,000 metric tons (MT).

Previous estimates suggested that a total investment of P93 billion is needed to achieve a national post-harvest capacity of 90 percent.

NFA administrator Larry Lacson said the initial project represents a crucial step towards strengthening the NFA’s ability to manage a national rice buffer stock.

To ensure the project’s smooth execution, the NFA Council appointed Mario Andrada, a 41-year NFA veteran, as the new deputy administrator. Andrada will head the agency’s bids and awards committee.

In its accomplishment report, the NFA said it has failed to meet its palay procurement target for the month of February, after procuring about 12,378 bags of palay, or the equivalent to 618.9 MT of the grain.

The volume is only 2.28 percent of the NFA's target of 542,800 bags or 27,140 MT of palay for the month.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314435318/nfa-okays-p10-b-plan-to-address-rice-problems.html>

Imee eager to combat hunger, inflation head on

By Manila Standard

April 12, 2024, 11:20 pm

SENATOR Imee Marcos is ready and willing to go to war —against hunger and skyrocketing prices of basic commodities.

In a TV interview on Friday, Marcos stressed that every Filipino family’s priority now is fighting inflation and being able to put food on the table.

“Ang hirap hirap ng ating buhay ngayon, pati bigas problematic. Yun na ang tutukan natin. Ang laban sa gutom ang unahin, huwag yung laban sa mga kapitbahay (Life is so difficult these days. Even rice is problematic. That should be our priority, the fight against hunger, not the quarrel with neighbors,” Marcos said, responding to questions involving rising tensions between the Philippines and China on the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

The Philippines’ overall inflation increased to 3.7 percent in March 2024 from 3.4 percent in the previous month, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Food inflation at the national level increased to 5.7 percent from 4.8 percent during the same comparative period, mainly caused by a slower year-on-year reduction in vegetables, plantains, and bananas, among others.

Marcos, who chairperson of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations stressed however, that Filipinos were right to stand their ground against “bullying” in the disputed waters. She added that advocating for a peaceful solution to the crisis does not mean giving up on the country’s claims.

“Hindi ko sinasabi na kailanman i-a-atras natin ang ating karapatan at yung ating teritoryo... Ipagtanggol natin yang sinumpaang namin bilang opisyal, ipagtanggol ang buhay at kabuhayan ng bawat Pilipino (I never said to back out from our rights over our territory. Defend it since it is our duty as government officials, defend the life and livelihood of every Filipino),” the senator said.

“I really don’t want to put any Filipino in an awkward position,” she said.

Marcos reiterated calls for a multilateral approach with all claimant states namely, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China to maintain peace in the region. Aside from constant dialogue, she proposed joint patrols by these states may be conducted in the disputed waters.

“Anything is better than war. Kailangan gawin natin ang lahat upang maibsan ang init diyan at maiwasan ang giyera (We have to do everything to defuse the tension (at the WPS) and avoid armed confrontation,) she said.”

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314435306/imee-eager-to-combat-hunger-inflation-head-on.html>

Higher buying price of tobacco seen

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

April 13, 2024

THE National Tobacco Administration (NTA) said that the buying price of tobacco has increased to over P100 per kilo due to market demand.

Based on the NTA's latest price monitoring, the buying price per kilogram of prime class tobacco or Class AA of the flue-cured Virginia tobacco has reached as high as P113.00, higher than the approved floor price of P97.00.

Likewise, the prime class of both air-cured Burley-type tobacco and native-type tobacco is expected to reach up to P100.00 per kilo, which is also higher than the approved floor price of P81.00.

NTA Administrator Belinda Sanchez said that the increase in the buying price benefits tobacco farmers through higher income this season.

"The more income the farmers earn will boost their purchasing power to buy their foods and other basic needs in their household," said Sanchez.

She also said that the increase "reflects market demand and crop quality as well as the presence of good weather and the increase of floor prices."

According to Sanchez, production volume of all types of tobacco in the country is expected to surpass last year's output of 42 million kilograms.

The NTA noted there are currently about 2.2 million Filipinos who are financially dependent on tobacco farming, including more than 430,000 growers, farmworkers and their family members.

The trading for flue-cured Virginia tobacco started in February and will last until June this year. Tobacco traders such as Universal Leaf Philippines Inc., Trans Manila Inc. and ConLeaf have opened buying stations in the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union and Abra.

Trading operations for the air-cured Burley and native tobacco leaves, meanwhile, started on the latter part of March in the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Abra, Pangasinan, Isabela and Cagayan. This will run until July this year.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/13/business/top-business/higher-buying-price-of-tobacco-seen/1941169>

PH likely to import less rice

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

April 13, 2024

THE Philippines could import less rice this year due to larger production, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said in its latest report.

The agency's Foreign Agriculture Service said the Philippines' milled rice production this year could hit 12.6 million metric tons (MT), higher from their previous month's forecast of 12.3 million MT.

The USDA also estimated the global production of rice at 515.52 million MT, slightly higher from their previous forecast of 515.38 million MT.

"Global rice production is forecast higher this month mainly on larger crops for Bangladesh and the Philippines," it said.

Production estimates for both countries increased by 700,000 MT and 300,000 MT, respectively.

Import volume of the Philippines, meanwhile, is projected at 3.9 million MT, smaller from its previous projection of 4.1 million MT due to "larger crops."

Despite lower projections for imports, the country is still ranked as the world's top rice importer. Indonesia followed with an estimated 3.5 million MT of rice imports and the European Union with 2.3 million MT.

The USDA said that the Philippines "has historically relied on supplies from other nearby Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries that have a tariff advantage."

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has earlier said that the country's rice imports are unlikely to reach 4.1 million MT, noting that local production for the first quarter of 2024 was projected at 4.78 million MT, somewhat similar to last year's production.

Tiu Laurel said the previous estimate of the USDA might be a bit high and could be "the worst-case scenario."

Data from the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry showed that inbound shipments of rice exceeded the 1 million mark as it totaled 1.17 million MT as of April 4.

The figure was higher by 46.88 percent than 801,732 MT recorded in the first quarter a year earlier.

Vietnam remains as the country's top source of rice, having shipped in 734,583.07 MT or 62.37 percent of the total imports.

Thailand also delivered some 251,738.43 MT of rice, Pakistan followed with 124,038.50 MT and another 58,580 MT coming from Myanmar.

The remaining volume, meanwhile, was shared by China, Cambodia, Japan, India, Italy and Spain.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/13/business/top-business/ph-likely-to-import-less-rice/1941167>

BFAR science group enhances Batanes fisheries' management

[By Leander C. Domingo](#)

April 13, 2024

THE Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) of Fisheries Management Area 1 (FMA 1) is actively enhancing the management of key species in the Batanes waters sub-FMA.

This was highlighted in a workshop that took place on the island province of Batanes from March 18-20, 2024, focused on drafting Harvest Control Rules and Measures for Key Species in Batanes Waters.

Angel Encarnacion, regional director of the Department of Agriculture (DA)-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley), said the workshop promotes collaboration and highlights the commitment to sustainable fisheries management in the region.

Encarnacion is also the chairman of the FMA 1 Management Board, which had achieved a high score of 35/40 in implementing FMA activities, partly because of Scientific Advisory driving effective FMA implementation.

The workshop's drafted rules and measures will be presented to the FMA 1 Management Board for approval, forming part of the comprehensive FMA plan for sustainable resource management in the Batanes Waters sub-FMA.

During the workshop, SAG Chairman Melanie Villarao presented the current status of important species in the sub-FMA. Resource speakers assisted in prioritizing and classifying key species, and provided guidance on reference points, harvest control rules and harvest control measures. Among them were Jose Ingles, fisheries consultant at Regenerative Aquaculture and Policy Reform of Environmental Defense Fund, and Jimely Flores, seasoned fisheries and marine scientist, with 30 years' experience under her belt.

Workshop participants were composed of stakeholders from various sectors in Batanes, sectoral representatives from the SAG, DA-BFAR of Cagayan Valley, National Stock Assessment Program project leaders and focal analysts.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/13/business/green-industries/bfar-science-group-enhances-batanes-fisheries-management/1941088>