

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY APRIL 16, 2024

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA confident Philippine tobacco could make grade as smoke-free products

BY JEL SANTOS

Apr 15, 2024 06:44 PM



DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Philippine tobacco could make the grade for new smoke-free products to help reverse the decline in local leaf production and boost earnings for millions of Filipino farmers, Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said on Monday, April 15.

In the inauguration of the P2.2-billion manufacturing facility of an international tobacco company in Batangas, Laurel thanked the US firm for fulfilling its investment pledge to President Marcos and continuing support for tobacco farmers.

The new manufacturing factory, located on a 1.2-hectare land in Tanauan City, will produce specially designed tobacco sticks for PMI's smoke-free products.

“I understand that local leaf is being considered for inclusion in the production of smoke-free products, including heated tobacco sticks in the new manufacturing lines. I'm confident that our local tobacco leaf will be able to meet this new demand,” the DA chief said.

Laurel said he is optimistic that the local tobacco farmers will continue to benefit from this new facility to further strengthen domestic manufacturing, especially since it started producing finished and semi-finished goods in the state-of-the-art manufacturing plants in Marikina and Batangas.

“Our government has always recognized the company's substantial contributions to the Philippine economy and society – providing employment to around 4,500 Filipinos; ensuring the livelihood of our tobacco farmers with their tobacco leaf purchases averaging P1.8 billion annually; boosting tobacco exports of finished and semi-finished goods; contributing hundreds of billions to the

national and local treasury in excise, VAT, income, local business tax, duties, and other payments; and implementing various corporate social responsibility projects,” Laurel stressed.

Per the National Tobacco Administration (NTA), around 2.2 million Filipinos depend on the tobacco industry, including more than 430,000 farmers, farm workers and their families.

NTA noted that the total volume of locally produced tobacco only constitutes 35 percent of the leaf requirement of tobacco manufacturers.

“Considering the continuing demand for Philippine tobacco exports, the challenge is for us to work together – introduce technological advancements and internationally accepted best practices – to increase and sustain quality domestic production of tobacco leaf,” Laurel pointed out.

He added that he is aware of the growing illicit trade of tobacco that is threatening the tobacco industry value chain.

Laurel also vowed to help fight smugglers whose illegal activities adversely affect the livelihood of farmers, legitimate businesses and investments, and government revenues

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/15/da-confident-philippine-tobacco-could-make-grade-as-smoke-free-products>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA: Tobacco farmers to reap benefits from smoke-free products

BY GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG

Apr 15, 2024 05:31 PM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has emphasized that tobacco leaves can be utilized in smoke-free products, offering an additional avenue for tobacco farmers.

In a statement on Monday, Apr. 15, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said that the new smoke-free outputs could increase local leaf production and help farmers who are dependent on tobacco crops.

“I understand that local leaf is being considered for inclusion in the production of smoke-free products, including heated tobacco sticks in the new manufacturing lines,” he said during the inauguration of the P2.2 billion manufacturing facility of Philip Morris International (PMI).

“I’m confident that our local tobacco leaf will be able to meet this new demand.”

Tiu Laurel expressed his support for PMI and its local affiliate, PMFTC Inc. in providing benefits to local farmers.

The inaugurated manufacturing facility has 1.2 hectares in Tanauan City in Batangas. This infrastructure would house newly designed tobacco sticks that are smoke-free.

Subsequently, farmers were able to help in producing finished and semi-finished goods in other manufacturing plants in Marikina and Batangas, strengthening domestic production.

“Our government has always recognized PMFTC’s substantial contributions to the Philippine economy and society, providing employment to around 4,500 Filipinos; ensuring the livelihood of our tobacco farmers with their tobacco leaf purchases averaging Php1.8 billion annually,” the agri chief stated.

For Tiu Laurel, improving the export practices of finished and semi-finished tobacco goods would contribute greatly to the national and local treasury in terms of value-added tax, local business tax, duties, as well as creating social responsibility programs.

The DA secretary also hopes to open technological advancements and practices that are internationally competitive in order to keep up with the demand for Philippine tobacco, as well as upgrade its quality.

Furthermore, the Agriculture sector wants to crack down illegal smuggling of tobacco, stating that “[I am] aware of the growing illicit trade of tobacco that is threatening the entire tobacco industry value chain. I vow to help in the fight against smugglers whose illegal activities adversely affect the livelihood of farmers, legitimate businesses and investments, and government revenues.”

The National Tobacco Administration (NTA) noted 2.2 million Filipinos depending on tobacco for their livelihood. Within said number, 430,000 are farmers, farm workers, and their beneficiaries.

Additionally, the NTA reported that the tobacco’s domestic production makes up of only 35 percent of the leaf requirement of manufacturers.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/15/da-tobacco-farmers-to-reap-benefits-from-smoke-free-products>

MANILA BULLETIN:

PMFTC opens P8.8-B ‘smoke-free’ cigarette factory in Batangas

BY KHRISCIELLE YALAO

Apr 15, 2024 03:39 PM

Global cigarette producer Philip Morris International (PMI) and its Philippine subsidiary PMFTC Inc. opened a new manufacturing facility, valued at P8.8 billion or \$150 million, for its “smoke-free” tobacco product line in Tanauan City, Batangas.

Leading the inauguration of the new plant on Monday, April 15, were Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, with special guest First Lady Luisa Araneta Marcos.



Philip Morris International (PMI) CEO Jacek Olczak (Left) and PMFTC Manufacturing Director Elvio Rocco (right) show First Lady Louise “Liza” Araneta-Marcos the newly inaugurated P8.8 billion or USD 150 million Smoke-Free Products Manufacturing Facility in Tanauan City, Batangas. The manufacturing lines will produce the specially designed heated tobacco sticks called BLENDS for BONDS by IQOS. Olczak said the facility opening “signifies another significant milestone in our commitment to a smoke-free Philippines” and is “a testament to our confidence in the Philippine economy and the local tobacco farming industry.

In his speech, Philip Morris International Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Jacek Olczak said the opening of the facility “marks another significant milestone in our commitment to a smoke-free Philippines,” noting that the expansion of PMI in the country is “a testament to our confidence in the Philippine economy and the local tobacco farming industry.”

The new 12,360 square meter (sqm)-plant, located within the First Philippine Industrial Park in Tanauan City, will produce heated tobacco sticks called “BLENDS,” which are the sticks used with the devices for its product line BONDS by IQOS.

BONDS was launched in November 2022 as a more affordable variation of PMFTC’s flagship smoke-free product IQOS. The heated sticks for their IQOS product lines will remain to be imported.

BONDS heats rather than burns tobacco, emitting 95 percent lower levels of harmful chemicals compared to traditional cigarettes while mimicking the authentic tobacco experience.

“This factory will produce heated tobacco sticks for our smoke-free products - that is both a milestone in our journey and a pledge to prioritize the wellbeing of our local communities,” said PMFTC President Denis Gorkun.

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SMOKE-FREE PH — First Lady Louise ‘Liza’ Araneta Marcos (center) graces the inauguration of the first smoke-free product manufacturing facility of PMFTC Inc. in Tanauan City, Batangas, on Monday, April 15, 2024. Also in the photo are, from left, Philip Morris International (PMI) Region President Frederic De Wilde, PMFTC Manufacturing Director Elvio Rocco, PMI Senior Vice President Operations Scott Coutts, PMI Chief Executive Officer Jacek Olczak, PMFTC President Denis Gorkun, PMFTC Board Director Michael Tan, Lucio Tan Group President Lucio Tan III, and Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

In an interview with reporters at the event, Olczak noted that the PMFTC is purchasing Philippine tobacco worth more than \$120 million and is eyeing more, with portions used for its products in over 100 markets worldwide.

“The quality of tobacco in the Philippines is getting better and better. We're also thinking of starting to use Philippine tobacco in the smoke-free products. They require even better quality and consistency. I believe the tobacco growers in the Philippines can deliver on the quality,” he said. For the local production of BLENDS, he said that, currently, the tobaccos used are mixed from local and imported sources, but they are planning on using the Philippine tobaccos for the Batangas plant and for exports.

Olczak said they are still commissioning some of the equipment at present, but will start operations within the year. Once completely installed and prepped, the factory will be able to entirely supply BLENDS to the BONDS devices in the Philippine market.

The plant is capable of producing “billions of BLENDS.” With this, the plant can provide the needed heated sticks to be exported to the Asian market, he added.

Since 2008, PMI has invested \$12.5 billion in developing smoke-free products. Through strategic investments, smoke-free products make up 36.4 percent of the company's net revenues, with 33 million smoke-free product users in 2023.

“When we embrace smoke-free alternatives, we take a proactive step towards expanding the potential of the local tobacco crop, ensuring a sustainable future for generations of local farmers and individuals who rely on the tobacco industry,” Gorkun said.

Aside from BONDS and IQOS lines, PMFTC also developed ZYN nicotine pouches, introduced last year, in its smoke-free product roster.

In 2009, PMI and Fortune Tobacco Corporation (FTC) signed a business combination agreement to unite their business activities, forming PMFTC, Inc.

The partnership enabled PMI to enter and expand their operations in the Philippines.

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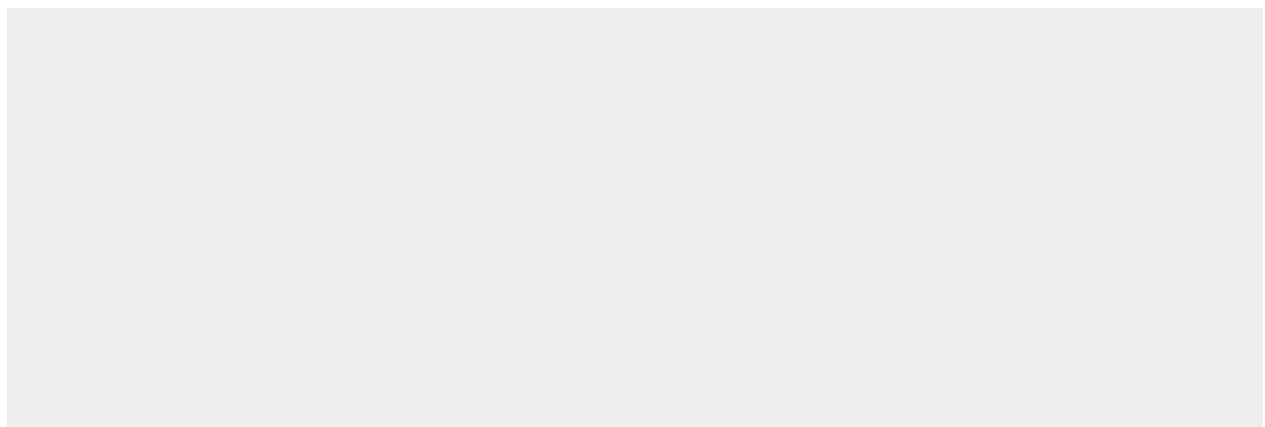
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<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/15/pmftc-opens-p8-8-b-smoke-free-cigarette-manufacturing-plant-in-batangas>



THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

The Philippines is open for business

[SHAREPHIL INVESTORS VIEWPOINT](#) - [Ma. Aurora Geotina-Garcia](#) - The

Philippine Star

April 16, 2024 | 12:00am

“The Philippines is open for business.”

These were the parting words of Secretary Frederick Go of the Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs (OSAPIEA) during the First General Membership Meeting of Share PHIL on January 26, 2024.

Following the “whole of government approach,” the OSAPIEA was created through Executive Order 49 to ensure effective integration, coordination and implementation of the various investment and economic policies and programs of the government. Speaking on the theme of “Driving Sustainable Economic Development,” Secretary Go shared the various initiatives and priorities of the government to make the Philippines a top investment destination.

Boosting the Philippine stock market

With respect to the development of the capital market which is aligned with SharePHIL’s advocacies, the key objectives are: to reduce friction costs, improve liquidity and enhance ease of doing business. In line with these objectives, major reforms have been instituted such as the shortening of the settlement cycle from T+3 to T+2, shortening of the IPO processing to strictly adhere to the 45-day timeline for processing registration statements, simplifying the IPO application documentary requirements and implementing short selling, 27 years after this was first proposed.

To further support the growth of the capital market, ongoing reforms include the reduction of sales tax from 0.6 percent to 0.1 percent, standardization of the withholding tax on dividends to 10 percent through proposed House Bill 9277, allowing the 15-minute after hours trading at VWAP through proposed amendments in the trading rules and guidelines and encouraging more IPOs and listings as the country has one of the fewest listings in the Asian market.

Unlocking growth and potential investment opportunities

The three key pillars of the drive to promote investments are: ease of doing business, simplifying processes and adopting a whole of nation approach. After 29 years, the BOT law was amended in December 2023 to revitalize PPPs and encourage unsolicited proposals while giving the original proponent the right to match comparative proposals and encouraging joint ventures as a PPP modality.

The ongoing review of the CREATE and TRAIN Laws aims to restore certainty, protect investments and simplify incentives. Changes include restoring the powers of Investment Promotions Agencies (IPAs) such as the BOI and PEZA, simplification of VAT rules and clarifying sunset provisions.

The Philippines has taken steps to improve its business environment by implementing several regulations and laws. EO 18 creates a “Green Lane for Strategic Investments” to streamline approval processes and enhance ease of doing business. EO 32 aims to expedite permitting for telecom infrastructure, expanding connectivity and creating jobs. The Ease of Paying Taxes Law simplifies tax administration, strengthens taxpayer rights and introduces reforms like taxpayer classification and enhanced refund processing. These measures aim to create a more conducive environment for businesses and boost economic growth.

Priority industries

Secretary Go identified five priority sectors: semiconductors and microelectronics, mining, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and steel. In the semiconductor industry, he aims to enhance assembly, testing and packaging while introducing higher value processes like design.

He also emphasized the significance of promoting nickel and copper mining to accelerate exploration and follow Indonesia’s example in downstream processing.

For agriculture, he highlighted the need to boost production and improve logistical chains for food security. He also stressed the need to lower healthcare costs through the pharmaceutical sector and the importance of the steel industry for growth.

Investment performance to date

Though some of the recent reforms are still in their nascent stage, these are good signals to the global investing community that the country is serious in its efforts to create a conducive investment climate for economic prosperity.

Signs of improving investor sentiment is the performance of the Philippine stock market, measured by the Philippine Stock Exchange Index (PSEi). The PSEi reached an intraday-high of 7,070.72 on April 2, 2024, the highest in 52-weeks, though it has pulled back to 6,745.46 on April 5, 2024.

In a report dated March 25, 2024, HSBC Global Research is optimistic about the Philippines' ability to attract foreign direct investments (FDIs) in the coming years. According to HSBC, the country has implemented reforms since 2018 that have improved the business climate, making it more attractive to investors. As a result, the government is optimistic that the Philippines can become a premier investment destination for foreign businesses in Asia and achieve its goal of becoming the second top destination for FDI in Southeast Asia by the end of 2028.

A recent US Investment Mission last March headed by Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, announced investment commitments of over US \$1 billion in high impact industries prioritized by the government such as renewable energy, electric vehicles, digitization and communication.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) reported that 46 projects valued at \$14.2 billion are in various stages of preparation and implementation, representing 20 percent of the pledges made by foreign investors. Additionally, the DTI approved P1.4 trillion worth of investments in the first quarter of 2024 through the Green Lane program, bringing the total number of projects under this program to 59 since 2023, with an aggregate value of P1.9 trillion. Most of these projects involve renewable energy.

There is no doubt that the country is moving in the right direction. The challenge is to keep the momentum and be resolute in increasing the Philippines' attractiveness as an investment destination. We must build on our strong growth outlook and tell the world that "the Philippines is open for business."

The author Ma. Aurora "Boots" Geotina-Garcia is the chairperson of SharePHIL and founding chairperson and president of the Philippine Women's Economic Network (Phil WEN). She is president of Mageo Consulting Inc., a company providing corporate finance advisory services. To learn more about SharePHIL,

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/04/16/2347915/philippines-open-business>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Regulation vs development

By: [Cielito F. Habito](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:15 AM April 16, 2024

Put regulatory and developmental functions together in the same government entity, and chances are it will focus on the former and neglect the latter. This has been our experience over decades with the Philippine government. The heavy hand of government has held back our economy and led it to fall further and further behind since the 1960s when we were the envy of our neighbors and second only to Japan in the level of economic development. Worse, government often directly competes with the private sector in things the latter can do much better.

Nowhere is this observation starker than in our perennially troubled agriculture sector. I wrote recently about how National Scientist Dr. Emil Q. Javier noted that our best performers in agriculture are those where government largely keeps its hands off (like export crops pineapple, bananas, and mangoes). But the most backward and problematic—and where the rural poor mostly are—are where government involvement is heaviest, namely rice, coconut, and sugar. It's hard not to conclude that government has been more a hindrance than a help to those who could otherwise drive economic activity as they produce goods and services and create jobs and livelihoods that uplift people's lives.

Agencies that combine developmental and regulatory functions are all over our government. The Department of Agriculture (DA) is full of them: the Bureau of Plant Industry, Bureau of Animal Industry, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, National Food Authority, Philippine Coconut Authority, Sugar Regulatory Administration, Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority, and more. Beyond DA, we have the Cooperatives Development Authority under the Department of Trade and Industry, the Laguna Lake Development Authority under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippine Ports Authority and Maritime Industry

Authority under the Department of Transportation, Local Water Utilities Administration, Commission on Higher Education, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, and many more.

It has been a recurring recommendation for many years to consolidate into one entity the regulatory functions for various commodities scattered across bureaus and agencies within the DA, so they could focus on their developmental functions. I had a direct role in providing that advice in 2010, as head of a team engaged by the World Bank to help the DA plan its future directions. There are two reasons for the recommendation, and they apply to all other entities outside of DA that have both developmental and regulatory roles. First, there's an inherent contradiction between the two, because regulation (which involves restraint) and development work (which entails promotion) run at odds with one another. Agencies that do both face an identity crisis, even conflict of interest, trying to reconcile and balance the two. To this date, the advice remains largely unheeded.

Second, and as a result of the first, there's a natural tendency for agencies and their personnel to gravitate toward regulatory functions, to the neglect of their developmental role that is key to fostering economic growth. The reasons may be either pecuniary at worst, or psychological at best. On one hand, bureaucrats may be attracted by the opportunities for corruption that come with any regulatory setup that endows them with authority and discretion. But even if honest, the bureaucrats may simply be "power tripping," or manifesting the seemingly all-too-common bureaucratic mindset that nothing should come easy (and the more requirements to comply with, the better they think they are doing their jobs).

The Anti-Red Tape Authority that Republic Act No. 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018 created must champion this aim of separating regulatory and developmental functions wherever they come together. As it does, it must reinvigorate the former National Competitiveness Council's "Project Repeal" that pursued the mission of reviewing and repealing outdated rules in laws and issuances that are irrelevant, burdensome, duplicating, or overlapping across agencies—and there remain many.

Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia are worthy models in the war against red tape. Canada legislated a cap on regulation in 2015 through a Red Tape Reduction Act, requiring the federal government to eliminate at least one regulation for every new one introduced. The UK more aggressively requires “one in, three out,” repealing three regulations for every new one introduced. Australia declares a “Repeal Day” twice a year when government announces dozens of repealed regulations across various ministries and offices, which are moved to outdo one another on how many they can scrap. There must be hundreds in our own government. In the end, the less government needlessly pokes its nose into everyone’s business, the stronger and better our economy will be.

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/172972/regulation-vs-development>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Masbate's milk farms also reel from intense heat

By: [Rev Anthony Ostria](#) - Correspondent / [@RAOstriaINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:40 AM April 16, 2024



PARCHED The vast compound of Fazenda da Esperança in Milagros, Masbate, shown here on Sunday, is haven for those recovering from drug, alcohol and gambling addiction that also doubles as a dairy farm. But milk production has significantly dropped because of the intense heat brought about by the El Niño phenomenon. **MARK ALVIC ESPLANA**

MILAGROS, MASBATE, Philippines — Celso Recto, 32, blamed the extreme heat for the low milk production they have been getting at Fazenda da Esperança (Farm of Hope) in this town.

In an interview on Sunday, Recto said they could hardly fill 100 liters of milk daily like they used to during the dry season in the previous years.

According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), the heat index in Masbate from April 10 to April 11 reached 42 degrees Celsius, which is already a level the agency categorizes as “dangerous.”

Pagasa’s five-day heat index forecast also showed that Masbate experienced 41°C on Monday.

17 cows

Recto and his fellow workers milk 17 cows daily at Fazenda’s rehabilitation center for people suffering from addiction to drugs, alcohol and gambling. Work would start at 8 a.m.

The cow milk they produce is sold as flavored milk or used as ingredient in banana bread, lemon bread and cookies that they sell in the Fazenda’s compound in Bangad village. They also supply the province’s makers of “carmelado,” a sweet delicacy generally associated with this town.

The local Fazenda here is just one of the 160 farms in 20 countries that were put up by the organization that bears the same name. The first farm was built in Brazil in 1983.

The farm has been operating for 21 years and has 17 hectares of rice fields that benefit all 20 “boys under program” (those who voluntary commit themselves to Fazenda) ages 26 to almost 60.

Effect on cows

Recto said that the extreme heat has also made it hard for them to source food and water for the cows.

Brian Albert Barba, a part-time instructor in the Animal Science Department at Bicol University's campus in Guinobatan town of Albay province, said that extreme heat causes stress to animals such as cows.

“The cows are resilient in the heat, but that has a direct effect on their feed intake. Their feed intake has a direct impact on their milk production and the milk's quality,” Barba said in a phone interview on Sunday.

Barba said that to ease the impact of extreme heat in cows' resting areas, they should have higher roofs, well-ventilated areas and an abundant source of fresh water.

Felipe Rampazzo, 35, a Brazilian missionary in Fazenda, told the Inquirer that nothing has been planted in the center yet due to the lack of water.

“It is very hot, and the grass and fields are very, very dry. We also have a lot of fire ... and it is usually in the areas where the cows eat the grass,” Rampazzo said in a separate interview, also on Sunday.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1930106/masbates-milk-farms-also-reel-from-intense-heat>

BUSINESS WORLD:

DA to appoint new usec to oversee attached agencies

April 15, 2024 | 8:52 pm

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is set to appoint a new undersecretary who will be tasked with overseeing the DA's attached agencies.

“With the size of the DA's coverage, someone needs to focus on each area. Because the DA covers (a wide range of industries from) vegetables to fish to meat... to irrigation,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters.

He said roles within the DA are varied enough to accommodate even people from the private sector.

“As I said before, there are lots of appointments within the DA. There are also industry players *na nakakasama ko dati* (who I worked with previously),” he said.

“Basically, it's a whole of nation approach... and we invited everybody to join in. *Para 'pag may direction tayo, lahat, isa-isa 'yung takbo* (If we set a direction, all of us present a unified front),” Mr. Laurel added.

“(The DA) has about 29 bureaus and government-owned and -controlled corporations. It's one of the most complicated departments, I think,” he said.

Last week, the department announced the appointment of Nora dela Cruz Oliveros as undersecretary in charge of finance, while Allan Q. Umali was appointed undersecretary for administration.

The DA's impending 14th undersecretary, who was not identified, is already at work while awaiting an official appointment, he said. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/15/588288/da-to-appoint-new-usec-to-oversee-attached-agencies/>

MANILA STANDARD

PCG intercepts illegal fishing boat

By Manila Standard

April 15, 2024, 11:35 pm

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)-manned DA-BFAR vessel, BRP Capones, and BFAR Fisheries Protection and Law Enforcement Group apprehended three motorbancas conducting illegal fishing activities in the vicinity waters off Eastern Visayas on April 12.

The apprehension occurred during a joint PCG-BFAR maritime patrol in the vicinity waters off Libucan Island, Tarangnan Samar, Maripipi Island, and Bool, Biliran.

Two of the three seized motor bancas were using the Danish Seine, locally known as “hulbot-hulbot.” The third motorbanca, apprehended near Tarangnan, Samar, had its fishing net confiscated following the issuance of the Certificate of Orderly Inspection

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314436125/pcg-intercepts-illegal-fishing-boat.html>

BUSINESS MIRROR

Wholesale rice prices soar 31.2% in March, PSA reports

- Cai U. Ordinario
- April 16, 2024



WHOLESALE rice prices jumped 31.2 percent in March 2024, according to the latest data released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Based on the data, the fastest increase in regular milled rice is in the National Capital Region (NCR) where the price of the staple surged 58.7 percent.

The PSA said this was followed by the Davao Region where regular milled rice prices soared 43.6 percent in March 2024.

“Wholesale price refers to the price of commodity transacted in bulk for further resale or processing. It is the actual ‘spot’ transaction price received usually by the

wholesalers, distributors or marketing agents for large lots but net of discounts, allowances, and rebates,” the PSA explained.

Based on the data, the average price of regular milled rice nationwide reached P47.44 per kilo in March 2024, higher than the P36.17 per kilo in March 2023.

However, this was a 0.5-percent contraction in regular milled rice prices in February 2024 when the price averaged P47.69 percent.

In NCR, the average price of regular milled rice was at P45.38 per kilo in March 2024, significantly higher than the P28.60 per kilo level recorded in March 2023.

However, this was 7.4 percent lower than the P49 per kilo average recorded in February 2024. The data showed the year-on-year increase of regular milled rice prices soared to 71.7 percent in February 2024 compared to the P28.53 per kilo posted in February 2023.

PSA data showed regular milled rice wholesale prices in Davao Region averaged P50.73 per kilo in March 2024, higher than the P35.33 per kilo posted in March 2023.

Similar to NCR, compared to February 2024, wholesale rice prices contracted 0.1 percent from the P50.77 per kilo average during the period.

The growth in wholesale regular milled rice prices in February 2024 posted a 51.3-percent year-on-year increase from the P33.55 per kilo level in February 2023.

PSA said the monthly data on the wholesale selling prices for agricultural commodities are obtained from the results of the Wholesale Selling Price Survey conducted every week of the reference month.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/16/wholesale-rice-prices-soar-31-2-in-march-psa-reports/>

3 motorbanca hinuli ng PCG, BFAR sa illegal fishing

Mer Layson April 16, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Tatlong motorbanca ang hinuli ng Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) at Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) sa katubigan ng Eastern Visayas dahil sa umano’y illegal fishing activities.

Ayon sa PCG kahapon, habang nagsasagawa ng joint maritime patrol ang PCG-manned DA-BFAR vessel, BRP Capones (MRRV-4404), at BFAR Fisheries Protection and Law Enforcement Group sa Libucan Island, Tarangnan Samar, Maripipi Island, at Bool, Biliran, nang mamataan nila ang mga motorbanca na nagsasagawa ng ilegal na pangingsida.

Dalawa sa nahuling bangka ay gumagamit ng Danish Seine o kilala sa tawag na “hulbot-hulbot.”

Ang ikatlong motor banca ay nasabat naman malapit sa Tarangnan, Samar, at kinumpiska ang ginagamit na fishing net kasunod nang pag-iisyu ng Certificate of Orderly Inspection.

Ang may-ari ng bangka at mga tripulante nito ay pinakawalan din matapos na makapagsumite ng legal na dokumento at inabisuhan na ayusin ang mga kulang nilang requirements.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/04/16/2347989/3-motorbanca-hinuli-ng-pcg-bfar-sa-illegal-fishing>

Import ban sa domestic, wild birds mula Belgium, France inalis na ng DA

Angie dela Cruz April 16, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Maaari na ulit makapag-import ang Pilipinas ng domestic at wild birds mula sa bansang Belgium at France.

Ito ay makaraang alisin na ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang temporary ban para sa importasyon ng naturang kalakal mula Belgium at France.

Ayon kay Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. bukod sa domestic at wild birds ay lifted na rin ang import prohibition ng ibang produkto tulad ng poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs at semen.

Ang desisyon ay ginawa ng DA nang makitang wala nang nadagdag na bird flu outbreaks sa Belgium mula Feb. 21 at sa France mula Feb. 24.

Noong nagdaang taon naiulat na ang Belgium at France ay infected ng highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 strain ang manukan.

Layon ng hakbang na maingatan ang poultry industry sa Pilipinas.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/04/16/2347994/import-ban-sa-domestic-wild-birds-mula-belgium-france-inalis-na-ng-da>

NFA palabigasan ng mga kawatan

SAPOL - Jarius Bondoc - April 15, 2024 | 12:00am

Malinaw na pandarambong ito. Habambuhay na preso ang dapat na parusa sa mga kawatan sa National Food Authority.

Paspasang nagbenta ang NFA ng 9.6 milyong sako ng bigas nu'ng 2021-2022. Emergency buffer stocks dapat ito. Pero pinalabas ng opisyal na mabubulok na ang bigas, kaya dapat nang ibenta.

Limampung kilo kada sako, o kabuoang 480 milyong kilo ang 9.6 milyong sako. Ibinenta sa dalawang wholesalers sa presyong P25 lang kada kilo. Walang public auction. Ipinasa ito ng dalawa sa magtitingi nang P32 kada kilo. Tubong lugaw! Tumiba sila ng P3.36 bilyon. Tiyak nagpartehan ang dalawang wholesalers at opisyal ng NFA.

Binunyag ito ni Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor. Binigay sa kanya ng NFA insiders ang dokumentos. Sangkot ang NFA top management at governing council directors, ani FFF chairman Leonardo Montemayor sa Sapol-DWIZ.

Tungkulin ng NFA bumili ng palay sa magbubukid bilang emergency buffer stocks. Tumatagal ang palay nang mahigit anim na buwan at ang bigas nang tatlong buwan sa bodega. Pero kabibili pa lang sa magpapalay, pinabayo agad ito ng NFA bilang bigas, anang magtiyuhing Montemayor. Tapos, dinoktor ang papeles para kunwari'y tatlong buwan nang nakaimbak ang bigas, kaya dapat nang ibenta.

Tatlo ang elemento ng plunder: mahigit P50 milyon ang sangkot, kombinasyon o serye ng krimen tulad ng falsification of public documents at kawalan ng public auction, at personal na pakinabang.

Nu'ng Pebrero 2024 sinuspindi ng Ombudsman ang bagong NFA administrator at 138 na deputies, regional directors, at bodegero. Nagbenta kasi sila ng 75,000 sako o 3.75 milyong kilo ng bagong bigas.

Mas malala ang binunyag nina Ka Leonie at Ka Raul. Tugisin sana ng Ombudsman ang mga dating opisyal ng NFA.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/opinyon/2024/04/15/2347757/nfa-palabigasan-ng-mga-kawatan>