

MANILA BULLETIN:

Villar joins BFAR in sendoff of Pinoy fishermen to WPS

BY [DHEL NAZARIO](#)

Apr 17, 2024 07:31 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Senator Cynthia Villar took part in the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources' (BFAR) sendoff of Filipino fishermen to the West Philippine Sea (WPS).



Ensuring the government's full support to boost fisheries catch, Senator Cynthia A. Villar joined in sending off a group of fishermen to the West Philippine Sea (WPS), during the launch of BFAR's 'Layag West Philippine Sea' project on Tuesday, April 16, in Subic Zambales. (Photo from the Office of Senator Cynthia Villar)

The activity was part of the launch of Livelihood Activities to Enhance Fisheries Yields and Economic Gains from the West Philippine Sea (LAYAG-WPS) held in Subic, Zambales on Tuesday, April 16.

The lady senator, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, was joined by BFAR National director, lawyer Demosthenes Escoto; Subic Zambales Mayor Jonathan John Khonghun; Castillejos, Zambales Mayor Jeffrey Khonghun; National Security Council Deputy Director General Nestor Herico, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Commandant CG ADM Ronnie Gavan; Presidential Assistant for Maritime Concerns, Secretary Andres Centino; Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)-WesCom Deputy Commander for External

Defense Operations BGen.Romulo Quemedo, and Department of Agriculture (DA)-BFAR key officials.

There, Villar cited the need to protect the WPS, since a huge percentage of the local fish supply comes from it.

LAYAG-WPS seeks to enhance the quality of life for Filipino fishing communities that front the WPS by utilizing the abundant resources of the fishing ground and promoting opportunities for fisheries as a means of subsistence in the regions of MIMAROPA (Mindoro Occidental, Mindoro Oriental, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan), Central Luzon, and Ilocos.

During the launching, BFAR turned over 62-footer Fiber Reinforced Plastic (RFP) vessels complete with modernized fishing equipment to select fisherfolk associations from Central Luzon and the Ilocos Region.

https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/17/villar-joins-bfar-in-sendoff-of-pinoy-fishermen-to-wps#google_vignette

MANILA BULLETIN:

DENR to evaluate abandoned fishponds for mangrove development

BY TRIXEE ROSEL

Apr 17, 2024 06:48 PM

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will evaluate abandoned, undeveloped, and underutilized (AUU) fishponds to identify potential sites for mangrove development.

This, after an environmental group and scientists urged the government to convert all abandoned fishponds into mangrove forests, saying this would play a vital role in combating climate change by acting as natural shields against storms and capturing carbon emissions that contribute to global warming.

On Wednesday, a directive issued by Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga on February 26 mandated the prompt evaluation of AUU areas in the Bicol region, Western Visayas, and Zamboanga Peninsula.

The order requests suggestions for two types of reversion: administrative reversion which entails transferring authority over AUU fishponds back to the DENR from the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR); and biophysical restoration which aims to rehabilitate the environmental condition of deserted fishponds by converting them into mangrove forests once again using techniques such as replanting, enrichment planting, and assisted regeneration.

Regional field assessment teams will collect information including topographic, fishpond, mangrove, and flooding maps, along with DA-BFAR data on regions with abandoned, unused, and underdeveloped fishpond lease agreements (FLAs).

Teams will carry out on-site verification to evaluate the characteristics and physical condition of designated regions and engage in discussions with non-governmental organizations, educational establishments, and local administrative bodies.

After the evaluation, a regional technical working group (TWG) will propose regions for administrative and biophysical reversion. Subsequently, these proposals will be submitted to the national TWG for examination and ultimate endorsement by the secretary.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/17/denr-to-evaluate-abandoned-fishponds-for-mangrove-development>

Ombudsman orders dismissal of BFAR National Director Escoto

BY CZARINA NICOLE ONG KI

Apr 17, 2024 04:13 PM

The Office of the Ombudsman has ordered the dismissal of National Director Demosthenes R. Escoto of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) for grave misconduct over the purchases of transmitters and transceivers in 2018.

The penalty of dismissal also carries with it the cancellation of eligibility, forfeiture of retirement benefits, and perpetual disqualification to hold public office.

The administrative charge against former Department of Agriculture (DA) assistant secretary Hansel O. Didulo has been dismissed for insufficiency of evidence. BFAR is under the DA.

The purchases of transmitters and transceivers, which were subject of Escoto's administrative charges, were intended for the BFAR's Integrated Marine Environment Monitoring System Project Phase II (PHILO Project), which was supposed to enhance the government's capability to safeguard and monitor the country's marine resources and to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities.

The French government granted a loan to the Philippine government amounting to €28,520,000 on Dec. 18, 2015 payable in 30 years with an interest rate of 0.115 percent per annum in order to finance the PHILO Project. The condition of the loan was that the source of the products to be purchased for the PHILO Project must originate from French suppliers. Two companies participated in the bidding for the transmitters and transceivers: CLS Collecte Localisation Satellites (CLS) and SRT-France, a subsidiary company of SRT-United Kingdom (SRT-UK) incorporated in France. After checking the bids, the former was disqualified and the latter was declared the winner of the contract.

However, when the French Embassy in the Philippines checked, it declared that SRT-France was unqualified under the terms of its loan since SRT-France has no manufacturing or engineering facilities in France. It also has no record of activities in France, and its parent company is incorporated and domiciled in the UK.

The BFAR then sought to increase the project cost from P1.675 billion to P2,097 billion and to close the French loan. It also sought to change the funding source from foreign assistance to local funding, which was later approved by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) - Investment Coordination Committee (ICC).

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) then allotted P2,097,819,000 for the PHILO project as requested, and the final procurement for the transceivers took place on Oct. 30, 2018. Around 5,000 transceivers were purchased for commercial catcher vessels above 30 gross tons and Satellite Services subscription during the entire duration of the project.

Since the contract was no longer limited to French suppliers, the participants to the bidding were Fleet Automation Services Pte. Ltd. JV Comfac Corporation and SRT-UK. Since Fleet Automation was found "wanting" in qualification, SRT-UK was awarded the contract.

However, the Commission on Audit (COA) issued a Notice of Suspension on Jan. 24, 2020 claiming that a portion of the money paid to SRT-UK worth P722.639 million was not supported with complete documents, and that there was failure to pay the appropriate withholding tax.

Escoto and Didulo were then slapped with administrative charges for accepting the bid of SRT-UK and causing the loss of the French loan. They were also accused of failing to account for the P722.639 million and for adopting a project that is not "sustainable."

For the Ombudsman, SRT-France was indeed not qualified to participate in the bidding. It added that an "anomalous scheme" was adopted by the respondent (Escoto) to cause the award of the contract to SRT-UK, even though it was disadvantageous to the government.

The Ombudsman said that their suspicions were raised at the outset that SRT-UK was really the bidder for the transceivers, and SRT-France was only used to satisfy the French-related conditions of the loan.

"Despite knowledge of the French-related conditions, the newly created French company, and with no proof of activities in France, [SRT-France] made use of the documents pertaining to its parent company (SRT-UK) to justify its eligibility to bid. These documents were found to be acceptable by Escoto," the Ombudsman said.

It found that SRT-France was created just a month before the bidding. With the sudden termination of the award to SRT-France for some "baseless reason," as well as the immediate cancellation of the French loan, the Ombudsman said that Escoto paved the way for SRT-UK to participate in the new bidding with expanded scope and increased coverage.

The Ombudsman added that Escoto gave unwarranted benefit to SRT-France by allowing the company to participate in the bid despite its ineligibility, and his actions constitutes a "willful violation of the law and established rule."

"His actions as Chairman of the bids and awards committee culminated in the award of a very favorable contract to SRT-UK. In this contract, the government was made to assume a contractual obligation way beyond what was asked for. As mentioned, instead of purchasing merely 3,736 units of VMS Transceivers, he agreed to compel the government to procure 5,000 units of these items. This is a contractual obligation that is grossly disadvantageous to the government and unreasonably beneficial to SRT-UK," it ruled.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/17/ombudsman-orders-dismissal-of-bfar-national-director-escoto>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Las Piñas, Parañaque LGUs hold ‘Kadiwa ng Pangulo,’ financial assistance payout

BY **JEAN FERNANDO**

Apr 17, 2024 02:52 PM



The cities of Las Piñas and Parañaque conducted the ‘Kadiwa ng Pangulo’ financial assistance payout to residents under the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS).

Las Piñas Vice-Mayor April Aguilar attended the “Kadiwa ng Pangulo” and personally supervised the smooth payout to 5,000 residents under the vulnerable sector held at the Verdant covered court in Pamplona Tres from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 15 and 16.

Aguilar said the “Kadiwa ng Pangulo” is a marketing initiative program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) that aims to provide consumers affordable farm products.

Parañaque City Mayor Eric Olivarez said the “Kadiwa ng Pangulo” financial assistance payout, was held at the Parañaque City Sports Complex in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development-National Capital Region (DSWD-NCR).

Olivarez said 4,552 residents, 2,089 from District 1 and 2,463 from District II, each received P2,000.

The mayor said the “Kadiwa ng Pangulo” sells cheaper products like vegetables and fruits from the Duran and Cada farms and Progressive Farmers of Zambales; dairy products from Rosario Livestock Agriculture Farming Cooperative, while fish products from ISDA on the GO ni Ani at Kita were also featured.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/17/las-pinas-paranaque-lg-us-hold-kadiwa-ng-pangulo-financial-assistance-payout>

Farmers struggle with succession plans as youth shun agriculture

BY GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG

Apr 17, 2024 02:30 PM

In spite of its critical importance to the nation's economy, the agriculture industry is confronting a pressing issue as a growing number of young people are shying away from pursuing careers in farming.

A few tobacco farmers in Lidlidda, Ilocos Sur shared how challenging it was to pass on their farm work to their children or younger relatives, as most of the youth prefer to work in other industries like healthcare, engineering, and other corporate jobs.

Farmer Rey Viernes, who has been working with tobacco for the past 20 years, said that succession may be challenging for his side.

“I only have one daughter, 14 years old. My relatives are mostly women too. One of them is in college, she’s in nursing.” he told *Manila Bulletin*.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported over 10.84 million employed persons in the agriculture and fishery sector last 2022. While this number increased by 1.7 percent from the previous year, many active farmers are having difficulties in passing down farm work to their families.

So far, the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) found 2.2 million Filipinos who depend their finances on tobacco, while nearly 430,000 of the number consist of farmers, farm workers, and their family beneficiaries.

Even then, children of some tobacco growers would rather work abroad or look for greener pastures and attempt to discourage their parents from their farm careers.

“We can’t really force them [to pursue farming],” Viernes added. “So they study hard to get [better] jobs.”

The approximate number of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in 2022 was estimated at 1.96 million, posting a 7.6 percent increase from the previous year, according to PSA.

One of the underlying causes as to why a lot of younger people are not interested in farming is due to the wages.

PSA’s 2022 data noted that the agricultural productivity at constant 2018 prices dropped by 1.2 percent to P164,650.5.

At the same time, the most recent average basic wage and salary paid to agricultural workers were raised by 5.3 percent to P301.14 per day.

Hoping to encourage more people to pursue farming, the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) recently reported an increase in tobacco buying prices.

According to NTA, the prime class of flue-cured Virginia tobacco can be sold at P113 per kilo, with an approved floor price of P97.

There’s still hope as Filipino farmers get younger

While there are still active government programs to encourage the new generation to pursue farming, the Department of Agriculture (DA) believes that new farmers are getting younger.

In a statement to the Presidential Communications Office in 2023, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel de Mesa said that the average age of farmers went down to 49 to 50 years old.

“[For reference,] The previous average age of farmers in the country was 57 years old [based on the registry,” he said.

De Mesa noticed that some of the new farmers were those who went on early retirement and wanted to begin their farm livelihood.

“There’s a lot of them— especially those in the government, or private [sector]... After their term they go back to their love for farming,” De Mesa added.

Until now, farm succession continues to be a problem. But as long as there are initiatives and other programs that could lessen the negative connotation of farming in the country, the youth might just be enticed to consider a career in farming.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2024/4/17/farmers-struggle-with-succession-plans-as-youth-shun-agriculture-1>

DA chief backs rice fund extension

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

April 17, 2024 | 12:00am



A vendor arranges rice for sale at a market in Paco, Manila on March 13, 2024.

STAR / Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is supporting the extension of the rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF), and proposes tweaks to the program such as making the allocation more flexible and hiking the budget of key components.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the RCEF, which lapses this year, should be extended, but emphasized that adjustments are necessary so that the fund would adapt to the needs of the times.

RCEF is a six-year earmarked fund created under Republic Act (RA) 11203 or the rice trade liberalization law that seeks to make local farmers competitive through the provision of seeds, machinery, credit and training.

Tiu Laurel said the department is preparing its position paper on the proposed extension of the RCEF.

The fund is set to expire this year but lawmakers, including Sen. Cynthia Villar, the principal author of RA 11203, have filed bills that seek to extend the RCEF.

Villar wants to extend the RCEF by six more years, with new proposed allocations for excess rice tariffs collected by the state.

Tiu Laurel proposed to increase the guaranteed P10 billion annual allocation of RCEF since total rice tariff collections have been above that amount in recent years.

According to Tiu Laurel, tariff collections reached at least P29 billion in 2023.

Under existing laws, rice tariffs collected by the state in excess of P10 billion would not go to the regular RCEF but would instead fund the financial assistance program for rice farmers.

Tiu Laurel said the share in the overall RCEF of mechanization and post-harvest facilities should be increased to reduce the country's rice wastage.

He added that a certain percentage of the tariffs collected should also be allocated for the purchase of fertilizer as well as irrigation facilities such as small water impounding projects and solar-powered irrigation systems.

“Right now about 12 percent to 15 percent of our rice produced is wasted because of the lack of post-harvest facilities. Some of the produce are being dried on the roads, so a lot are damaged and wasted,” he told reporters on the sidelines of the inauguration of the expansion of PMFTC Inc.'s factory in Batangas.

“Less wastage would mean more income to the farmers,” he added.

Tiu Laurel also floated the idea of making the RCEF components more flexible by having an annual review of the program and allowing the reallocation of funds to the pressing needs of rice farmers.

“The fund should go where we lack support. For example if we have already mechanized this year then let's not mechanize again next year. Let's bring the money where it is needed the most,” Tiu Laurel said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/04/17/2348179/da-chief-backs-rice-fund-extension>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

World Bank pushes new agri insurance products

[Louella Desiderio](#) - The Philippine Star

April 18, 2024 | 12:00am



World Bank financial sector specialists Tatiana Skalon, John Luke Plevin and Radu Tatucu pushed the recommended reforms in agricultural insurance in the multilateral lender's blog.

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines needs to come up with new and better agricultural insurance products to help farmers cope with natural disasters, according to the World Bank.

World Bank financial sector specialists Tatiana Skalon, John Luke Plevin and Radu Tatucu pushed the recommended reforms in agricultural insurance in the multilateral lender's blog.

“Better products will protect farmers and help them recover after climate disasters,” the specialists said.

The Philippines experiences an average of 20 typhoons per year, with eight to nine of these making landfall.

When disasters hit the country, the experts said the agriculture sector suffers the most significant losses.

While farmers would need finance to get back on their feet following disasters, the specialists said less than three out of 10 farmers in the country have access to savings accounts or formal credit.

Those without access to formal credit are then forced to borrow from loan sharks at very high interest rates, often having to give up their entire harvest to be able to pay up, perpetuating a cycle of poverty.

In terms of insurance payments, the World Bank specialists said these are insufficient and do not cover the cost of new seeds and fertilizers.

“Existing insurance products are not suitable for most farmers as they are expensive to administer and do not reflect losses suffered by farmers. New products are needed for the vulnerable smallholder farmers in the Philippines,” they said.

In coming up with new insurance products, the authors said the government should work with the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) to consider specific needs of different types of farmers, ranging from smallholders to commercial farming enterprises.

“Adoption of technology will be critical, for example using satellite data to assess losses or determine insurance payouts cheaply, transparently and quickly,” they added.

As PCIC faces critical operational challenges and lacks tools to effectively manage its risks, they said implementing reforms and mobilizing the private sector would help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the provision of agricultural insurance to farmers.

Aside from bringing its expertise, innovations and efficiency, the World Bank specialists said the private sector could collaborate with the PCIC.

In addition, the World Bank specialists said having adequate regulations would be needed in agricultural insurance. This would entail establishing a new legal framework and targeting of subsidies to ensure support is provided to those most in need.

“With these improvements, agricultural insurance can serve as an essential tool for Filipino farmers to effectively manage climate shocks. It can safeguard their livelihoods, protect them from falling into poverty traps, enhance their productivity and innovation, and contribute to the overall enhancement of food security in the Philippines,” they said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/04/18/2348407/world-bank-pushes-new-agri-insurance-products>

Ombudsman sacks BFAR chief for graft

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

April 18, 2024 | 12:00am



Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) director Demosthenes Escoto was dismissed after he was found guilty of grave misconduct in a graft case arising from BFAR procurement of communication equipment in 2018.

MANILA, Philippines — Ombudsman Samuel Martires has dismissed Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) director Demosthenes Escoto, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel Jr. confirmed yesterday.

Escoto was dismissed after he was found guilty of grave misconduct in a graft case arising from BFAR procurement of communication equipment in 2018.

Tiu-Laurel announced the appointment of Isidro Velayo Jr. as officer-in-charge of BFAR after receiving the ombudsman's order against Escoto.

“OIC Isidro Velayo, director IV and assistant director for technical services, is a career professional and respected official of BFAR. My marching order to him is to ensure that operations of the agency will not be affected by this legal development,” he said.

Tiu-Laurel added that the ombudsman directed him to implement the order.

He said Escoto could still seek reconsideration of the ombudsman's decision or directly appeal the decision to the Court of Appeals.

Velayo was a former national coordinator of BFAR's seaweed program and previously the regional director for the Zamboanga peninsula.

The dismissal order against Escoto stemmed from a complaint filed by lawyer James Mier Victoriano, in connection with the alleged irregularities in the awarding of a P2.097-billion contract to British company SRT Marine Systems Solutions Ltd. - United Kingdom in 2018.

The contract was for the supply of vessel monitoring system transmitters and transceivers, a vital component for the implementation of the BFAR's Integrated Marine Environment Monitoring System Project Phase II.

The project aimed to improve BFAR's ability to fulfill its mandate of safeguarding and monitoring the country's maritime resources by requiring all commercial fishing vessels to install a monitoring system that would show their location at sea.
– **Elizabeth Marcelo**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/18/2348549/ombudsman-sacks-bfar-chief-graft>

Chinese remove Pinoy fishers' payao in West Philippine Sea

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

April 18, 2024 | 12:00am



“It was in 2023, the BFAR awarded a payao. My fellow members of the association requested that the payao be placed at Scarborough Shoal, but before we harvested, it was already cut,” Alpay said

MANILA, Philippines — Chinese vessels removed the payao installed by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) for Filipino fishermen at Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, while Vietnamese allegedly stole the contents of the fishing device in the West Philippine Sea (WPS), a fisherfolk group leader in Zambales said yesterday.

In an interview onboard the M/V DA BFAR vessel, Subic Commercial Association Inc. chair Fausto Alpay said the incident happened in 2023.

“It was in 2023, the BFAR awarded a payao. My fellow members of the association requested that the payao be placed at Scarborough Shoal, but before we harvested, it was already cut,” Alpay said.

Alpay added that the incident took place right after BFAR removed the Chinese floating barrier at Panatag Shoal, also known as Bajo de Masinloc.

“Our fellow fishermen helped BFAR remove the Chinese floating barrier and it triggered the removal of the payao,” Alpay added. “Our fish catch could reach five tons and above if we have the payao.”

“There were times that our catch only reached half a ton, one ton but we had no choice but to stay longer to cover the expenses. We go as far as 15 to 20 miles away from Scarborough just to catch more fish,” Alpay explained.

Meanwhile, Alpay said that Vietnamese fishermen were also involved in stealing the contents of the payao of Filipino fishers.

“At least 50 Vietnamese vessels surround the Scarborough Shoal and use super lights,” Alpay noted.

“Vietnamese use high-tech gear to determine if the payao is full. If they see our payao, they steal the contents,” he said, adding that they already informed authorities about the incident.

Meanwhile, BFAR spokesman Nazario Briguera on Wednesday contradicted the claim of China that the payao is destructive, after BFAR recently distributed the fishing device to fisherfolk.

“China was saying payao are destructive; the payao are not destructive. What is destructive is the unabated reclamation which destroy coral reefs,” Briguera said.

“First, we are not happy (about the cutting of payao), especially it is done by foreigners and it’s within our waters,” Briguera said, adding that efforts are being made to support the fishermen despite the ongoing challenges.

Briguera said that BFAR is trying to scale up the national payao program.

“We are trying to install trackers on our payao to monitor the payao distributed to fisherfolk,” he said.

Balikatan in West Philippine Sea

Amid the challenges in the country’s fishing sector, the government should hold a balikatan in the West Philippine Sea to protect the source of fish production, Sen. Cynthia Villar said on Tuesday.

Villar, chair of the Senate committee on agriculture, assured Filipino fishermen of continuing efforts to prioritize them.

“Since a big percentage of our fish production comes from the WPS, thus the need for a ‘balikatan’ to protect it,” Villar said in her keynote address during the launch of the Layag-WPS Project at Subic Gymnasium in Zambales on April 16.

Villar said the Livelihood Activities to Enhance Fisheries Yields and Economic Gains from the WPS or LAYAG-WPS Project was the result of the dedication of

government, led by the Department of Agriculture-BFAR, to address some of the most important needs of Filipino fishermen particularly in the WPS.

The senator said the government started the project to provide fishermen with a source of livelihood and to guarantee the protection and welfare of every Filipino fisherman.

Villar hopes the livelihood inputs awarded to over a hundred fisherfolk become an instrument for an abundant and sustainable fish catch within territorial waters.

Concerns

There are legitimate concerns that prompted other countries to support the country's position against China, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)-West Philippine Sea spokesman Commodore Jay Tarriela said yesterday.

In his X account, Tarriela said the transparency strategy being implemented by the Marcos administration to expose the alleged aggression in the WPS has gained the support of other countries.

“President Marcos’ decision to enhance our security cooperation with the United States and other like-minded nations is driven by our national interest. The goal is to establish a robust alliance of countries that will collectively condemn and counter China’s actions that undermine the rules-based international order,” Tarriela said.

“Common sense dictates that if other like-minded nations also support us in opposing China’s ambitious, aggressive and illegitimate claims based on imaginary dash lines, there must be legitimate concerns at play,” he added.

“I often find myself wondering why the pro-China trolls consistently blame the US for the tension in the WPS, without acknowledging that it is the PRC (People’s Republic of China) that is using water cannons against our PCG vessels and supply boats, endangering the lives of our troops and harassing our Filipino fishermen,” the official said.

Re-pivot to China

Meanwhile, former House speaker Pantaleon Alvarez gave President Marcos unsolicited advice yesterday, saying that it would be in the best interest of the Philippines to re-pivot its foreign policy direction toward aggressor China than keep a “delicate” US as an ally.

“Let’s look at the long-term perspective. China enjoys continuity in terms of leadership, while the US doesn’t. By November, Americans will have to choose –

will they vote for the senile and forgetful or the crazy deranged guy?” Alvarez said.

“On top of these, the US is buried in debts, political polarization is at its peak and Americans are now shooting each other,” said Alvarez, an ally of former president Rodrigo Duterte.

“China is now far more superior than the US in terms of the economy, technology and even military might. They have nuclear weapons, they can fire at us at will and we can do nothing. We will only be helpless. Many Filipinos will die,” he cautioned.

“The US left Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine to fend for themselves even if they promised to defend them. Their hands are now also tied in the Middle East conflict because Israel, their ally, is being attacked. Now we’re going to ally with them? How about our safety?” Alvarez asked.

“The century of US global dominance is about to end, and yet we want to place our bets on them? We should think very hard on this,” he said, telling Marcos to continue the China pivot that Duterte did from 2016 to 2022. – **Evelyn Macairan, Delon Porcalla, Cecille Suerte Felipe**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/04/18/2348531/chinese-remove-pinoy-fishers-payao-west-philippine-sea>

DENR to assess abandoned fishponds for mangrove restoration

[Gaea Katreena Cabico](#) - Philstar.com

April 17, 2024 | 4:58pm



Located in Barangay Gua-an and Nabitasan, the Leganes Integrated Katunggan Ecopark (LIKE) in Iloilo is a showcase of the successful reversion of a 15-hectare abandoned fishpond into a vibrant mangrove forest.

Oceana/Daniel Ocampo

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will assess abandoned, undeveloped, and underutilized (AUU) fishponds to identify potential areas for mangrove restoration.

Environmental organizations and scientists have been calling on the government to revert all abandoned fishponds into mangrove forests, which are crucial in the fight against climate change because they serve as natural barriers to storms and absorb planet-heating carbon.

A document signed by Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga on February 26 but was only released to the media on Wednesday ordered the immediate assessment of AUU areas in Bicol region, Western Visayas, and Zamboanga Peninsula.

The order seeks recommendations for two types of reversion. The first objective is administrative reversion, which involves returning control of AUU fishponds to the DENR from the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR).

The second objective is biophysical reversion, which focuses on restoring the ecological state of abandoned fishponds by transforming them back into mangrove forests through replanting, enrichment planting, and assisted regeneration.

Regional field assessment teams will gather data such as topographic, fishpond, mangrove and flooding maps as well as DA-BFAR data on areas issued with fishpond lease agreements (FLAs) that are abandoned, unused and underdeveloped.

Teams will conduct ground validation to assess the profile and biophysical status of identified areas, and consult with civil society organizations, academic institutions and local government units.

Following the assessment, a regional technical working group (TWG) will recommend areas for administrative and biophysical reversion. These recommendations will then be forwarded to the national TWG for review and final approval by the secretary.

Annadel Cabanban, country manager of Wetlands International Philippines, called the DENR order a “huge milestone.”

“For years, we’ve been struggling to restore mangroves in AUU fishponds due to issues on the lack of data on the location, size, and pond tenure,” she said in a statement sent to **Philstar.com**.

“The recent order of the DENR, using modern technology, helps untangle some knots in the process of AUU pond reversion to mangrove forest,” added Cabanban, who also serves as the lead convenor of the Global Mangrove Alliance Philippines.

Conservationists earlier raised concern the Philippine Salt Industry Development Act—the new law to boost the country’s struggling salt industry—could result in the conversion of fishponds into salt farms.

Wetlands International Philippines said the law would increase salinity levels in disused fishponds, making it difficult to revert AUU fishponds into mangrove forests.

More than half of the Philippines’ extensive mangrove ecosystems, estimated at 450,000 hectares in 1918, have been lost primarily to fishpond conversion and other coastal development projects.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/climate-and-environment/2024/04/17/2348393/denr-assess-abandoned-fishponds-mangrove-restoration>

BIZ BUZZ: Retail ‘sukuk’ bond sale?

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:22 AM April 18, 2024



MANILA, Philippines — For Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Eli Remolona Jr., financial conditions are now ripe for a domestic “sukuk” bond sale.

At a press conference on Monday, Remolona said the government could make a killing with a local issuance of sukuk, a form of financing that is compliant with Islamic religious law that prohibits the earning of interest.

While he noted that it is the National Treasurer who is in charge of raising cash for the government, the BSP chief believes an onshore sukuk offering targeting small investors could attract strong demand, citing the results of the Philippines’ maiden sale of dollar-denominated Islamic bonds last year that was 4.9 times oversubscribed.

But more importantly, such a fundraising activity will also support the BSP’s goal to promote Islamic banking and finance in the country.

“So I think it has a good chance in the Philippines as a peso instrument instead of just a dollar instrument. Maybe it should be retail. Maybe small denominations,” Remolona said. —*Ian Nicolas P. Cigaral*
Secretary Kiko’s dream team

Agriculture Secretary Francisco “Kiko” Tiu Laurel Jr. is one step closer to building his dream team to lead the Department of Agriculture (DA), with the appointment of its 14th and last undersecretary.

On the sidelines of the inauguration of PMFTC Inc.’s facility in Tanauan City in Batangas province, Tiu Laurel said the DA leadership was now 90 percent complete.

The incoming agriculture undersecretary is already working while awaiting the appointment papers from Malacañang, according to Tiu Laurel, who assumed the top DA post in November last year.

He said the roster of agriculture officials is a combination of homegrown officials who rose from the ranks and industry players.

As to why he has so many executives, Tiu Laurel said, “Alam mo sa laki ng coverage ng DA, kailangan may tumutok o mag-focus sa bawat area ... from vegetables to fish to meat, ang laki, ang irrigation.”

(Given the extent of the DA’s coverage, we need to appoint people to focus on each area—from vegetables to fish to meat to irrigation. It’s huge).”

The DA, he added, is “one of the most complicated departments in the country.”

“Sa rami ng gagawin of course initially may overlapping but as we go along mag-aadjust yan at makaka-focus na lahat (With so many things to accomplish, of course, initially, there will be an overlap. But as we go along, we will be able to adjust and everyone will focus on their jobs),” the DA chief told reporters.

Tiu Laurel will soon name the last official to join the DA. As we always say here, *abangan!* —**Jordeene B. Lagare**

<https://business.inquirer.net/455069/biz-buzz-retail-sukuk-bond-sale>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Ombudsman sacks BFAR chief over P2-B transmitter deal

By: [Kathleen de Villa](#) - Reporter / [@kdevillaINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:36 AM April 18, 2024



Demosthenes Escoto **PHOTO FROM THE OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE OF BFAR**

MANILA, Philippines — The Office of the Ombudsman has dismissed the head of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) after finding him guilty of grave misconduct in connection with the 2018 purchase of a monitoring system for fishing vessels that proved to be disadvantageous to the government.

BFAR National Director Demosthenes Escoto was meted the penalty for his role in what state prosecutors described as an “anomalous scheme” in the procurement of transmitters and transceivers for catcher vessels aimed at protecting the country’s marine resources from unregulated fishing.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. named Isidro Velayo Jr. as officer in charge (OIC) of BFAR to ensure no disruption in the operations and implementation of the bureau's major projects.

“My marching order to him is to ensure that operations of the agency will not be affected by this legal development,” Laurel said in a statement on Wednesday.

In a 23-page decision dated Feb. 5 but made public only on Wednesday, the Ombudsman flagged Escoto's acceptance, as the chair of BFAR's bids and awards committee (BAC), of an “unqualified” company for the procurement, which was originally supposed to be funded by a French loan.

The Ombudsman, however, found “no substantial evidence” that former Agriculture Assistant Secretary Hansel Didulo, Escoto's fellow respondent, had an “active participation in the anomaly,” and cleared him of the same administrative charge.

Unregulated fishing

In the complaint filed by lawyer James Victoriano, Escoto and Didulo were accused of acting against the interest of the state in the awarding of the P2.1-billion contract to SRT-United Kingdom (UK) for the purchase of 5,000 units of transreceivers for catcher vessels.

The “Philo” project, short for the Integrated Marine Environment Monitoring System Project Phase II, was launched to institutionalize a tracking system, through transmitters, that will guard the country's marine resources against illegal and unregulated fishing.

In April 2016, the Department of Finance and the French government entered into a loan deal that would set the conditions of the grant, one of which required that the supplier should come from France.

However, only two companies joined the bidding, with one of them immediately disqualified.

SRT-France, a subsidiary of SRT-UK, won the contract, but upon scrutiny by the French Embassy, it turned out that the 1-month-old company was also not eligible, as it had no manufacturing facilities or any recorded activity in the European country.

Ballooning cost

This led to the revocation of the contract with SRT-France, and the reopening of public bidding.

The disqualified company's parent firm SRT-UK, which was incorporated in the United Kingdom, made a bid and was declared the winner.

Because SRT-UK was not French, the awarding of the contract resulted in the cancellation of the French loan, which meant the Philippine government needed to fully shoulder the cost of the project.

From the initial P1.7-billion budget, the cost ballooned to P2.1 billion.

“These series of events are circumstantial evidence proving that the contract for the Philo project was, at the very first instance, meant for Escoto to [award the contract] to SRT-UK,” the decision read in part.

It cited some suspicious developments, such as the “sudden creation” of SRT-France, the permission granted to it despite the BAC being aware that it would rely on its parent company, and the eventual nullification by BFAR of the French loan “in order to remove the French-related conditions.”

This, the decision added, “paved the way for SRT-UK to participate in the bidding... with expanded scope and increased cost.”

Therefore, according to the Ombudsman, Escoto committed grave misconduct and “conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service” as BAC chair, having given “unwarranted benefit” to SRT-UK and SRT-France despite their ineligibility.

Escoto's replacement Velayo was BFAR's director IV and assistant director for technical services, having served as national coordinator of the agency's seaweed program.

He was also the regional director for the BFAR office in Zamboanga Peninsula.

The Department of Agriculture said Escoto may still seek reconsideration of the Ombudsman's decision or appeal it in the Court of Appeals.

Before spearheading the agency, Escoto was the OIC of BFAR's legal division and later became assistant director for administrative services. — ***WITH A REPORT FROM JORDEENE LAGARE***

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1930911/ombudsman-sacks-bfar-chief-over-p2-b-transmitter-deal>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Villar umapila ng “Balikatan” para sa mga mangingisdang Filipino sa WPS

By Jan Escosio April 17, 2024 - 01:51 PM



Ilan sa mga benepisaryo ng livelihood program ng BFAR sa paglulunsad ng Layag-WPS project. (OSCAV PHOTO)

Naniniwala si Senator Cynthia Villar na kailangan ng “Balikatan” ng mga kinaauukulang ahensiya at grupo para sa pagbibigay proteksyon sa mga mangingisdang Filipino na naglalayag sa West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Katuwiran ni Villar malaking bahagi ng produksyon ng isda sa bansa ay nagmumula sa WPS.

“As chairperson of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, hold on to my goal of crafting laws to help in the fishing sector’s growth. Let us unite to alleviate the living conditions of our fishermen,” sabi ni Villar sa Layag-WPS Project sa Subic, Zambales.

Dagdag pa niya: “The Livelihood Activities to Enhance Fisheries Yields And Economic Gains from the WPS or LAYAG-WPS Project was the result of dedication of our government led by the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, to address some of the most important needs of our fishermen particularly in the WPS.”

Umaasa na lamang din ang senadora na ang naibigay na kabuhayan sa higit 100 mangingisda ay magiging daan para sa mas masaganang pangangisda sa teritoryo ng bansa.

Ang proyekto, sabi pa ni Villar, ay patunay ng pagsusumikap ng gobyerno na paunlarin ang sektor ng pangangisda sa Pilipinas sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng mga kagamitan at pagtuturo ng teknolohiya.

Naniniwala din aniya siya na iniintindi ng gobyerno ang kapakanan ng mga mangingisdang Filipino.

<https://radyo.inquirer.net/339350/villar-umapila-ng-balikatan-para-sa-mga-mangingisdang-filipino-sa-wps>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Ombudsman orders BFAR head's dismissal; Agri dep't names OIC

April 17, 2024 | 8:50 pm



PHILSTAR

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said that the director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Demosthenes R. Escoto, has been dismissed following an order from the Office of the Ombudsman.

“The Ombudsman’s order, forwarded to the office of the DA chief for implementation, found (Mr.) Escoto guilty of grave misconduct in a graft case arising from BFAR procurement of communications equipment in 2018,” the DA said in a statement.

The DA said that Mr. Escoto can seek reconsideration of the Ombudsman’s decision or may appeal the ruling to the Court of Appeals.

Mr. Escoto was appointed the bureau’s national director in 2023.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. named Isidro Velayo, Jr. as BFAR officer-in-charge (OIC) following the decision.

Mr. Laurel added that “my marching orders to (Mr. Velayo) are to ensure that operations of the agency are not affected by this legal development,” he said.

Mr. Velayo had served as the BFAR’s director and assistant director for technical services.

“(He) was a former national coordinator of BFAR’s seaweed program and previously regional director for the Zamboanga Peninsula,” the DA said.

Mr. Escoto did not immediately reply to a Viber message seeking comment. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/04/17/588891/ombudsman-orders-bfar-heads-dismissal-agri-dept-names-oic/>

REMATE:

State of calamity idineklara sa Surallah, South Cotabato sa El Niño

April 17, 2024 15:10

MANILA, Philippines – Nagdeklara ang lokal na pamahalaan ng Surallah, South Cotabato ng state of calamity dahil sa matinding epekto ng El Niño phenomenon.

Sinabi ng Office of the Municipal Agriculturist sa Surallah na hanggang noong Marso 31, halos 1,000 ektarya ng sakahan at fish pond ang natuyo na.

Umaabot naman sa P71 milyon ang pinsala sa agrikultura.

Dahil dito, plano ng Surallah LGU na gamitin na ang calamity funds para tulungan ang nasa 1,000 magsasaka na apatkado ng El Nino.

Ayon sa PAGASA, pumalo sa 34.7 degrees Celsius ang temperatura sa General Santos City, ika-siyam sa pinakamataas na temperatura na naitala sa bansa nitong Martes, Abril 16. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/state-of-calamity-idineklara-sa-surallah-south-cotabato-sa-el-nino/>

REMATE:

P39 kada kilong bigas mabibili sa NCR Kadiwa stores

April 17, 2024 10:46



MANILA – Maaaring bumili ang mga residente ng Metro Manila ng mas murang bigas na ibinebenta sa PHP39 kada kilo sa mga tindahan ng Kadiwa ng Pangulo (KNP) sa mga piling lungsod ng Metro Manila ngayong buwan, inihayag ng Malacañang nitong Martes.

“Ang Kadiwa ng Pangulo ay nagbebenta ng bigas sa PHP39 kada kilo sa Metro Manila, kasama ang iba pang mga kailanganin tulad ng sariwa at de-kalidad na prutas at gulay,” sabi ni Presidential Communications Office (PCO) Secretary Cheloy Garafil sa isang pahayag.

“Inimbitahan ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang mga residente ng Metro Manila na kunin ang pagkakataon at gamitin ang mga produktong ibinebenta sa KNP na tumatakbo ngayong buwan sa National Capital Region (NCR),” dagdag niya.

Sinabi ni Garafil na magbubukas ang mga stalls ng KNP sa Employees Park sa Taguig City Hall; People's Park sa kahabaan ng McArthur Highway sa Malinta, Valenzuela City; at inner court ng Manila City Hall hanggang Abril 17.

Aniya, magkakaroon din ng mga tindahan ng KNP sa Romvi Subdivision covered court sa Moonwalk Village, Parañaque City sa Abril 19.

Iba't ibang produkto din ang makukuha sa Camella Homeowners Association sa Merville Village, Parañaque sa Abril 20, ani Garafil.

Ang mas murang bigas ay ibinenta din sa KNP stalls sa Verdant covered court sa Pamplona, Las Piñas City noong Martes.

Pinayuhan ni Garafil ang mga residente ng Metro Manila na bisitahin ang opisyal na Facebook page ng DA at mga social media page ng iba pang ahensya ng gobyerno para sa buong iskedyul at venue para sa mga tindahan ng KNP.

Sa pagbanggit sa ulat ng buod ng benta noong Abril 15, sinabi ni Garafil, ang mga organizer ng Kadiwa ay nag-post ng kabuuang benta na PHPP2.9 milyon mula sa iba't ibang lokasyon sa Metro Manila.

Ang programa ng KNP, isang proyekto ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., ay naglalayong magbigay ng isang lifeline sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng rent-free selling areas sa mga magsasaka at micro, small at medium enterprise upang matiyak ang pantay na access sa sariwang ani.

Ang KNP ay inorganisa ng DA, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Labor and Employment, at Department of the Interior and Local Government.

Ang Presidential Management Service at ang PCO ay nagsisilbing gabay ng KNP. *RNT*

<https://remate.ph/p39-kada-kilong-bigas-mabibili-sa-ncr-kadiwa-stores/>

REMATE:

Layag West Philippine Sea

April 17, 2024 10:06



Matapos tiyakin ang buong suporta ng gobyerno para mapalakas ang pangangisda, nakiisa si Senador Cynthia A. Villar sa pagpapaalis ng grupo ng mga mangangisda papuntang West Philippine Sea (WPS), sa paglulunsad ng proyekto ng BFAR na ‘Layag West Philippine Sea’ nitong Miyerkules, Abril 16, sa Subic Zambales.



Kasama ng Senador, Chairperson ng Senate Committee on Agriculture, sina BFAR National director, Atty. Demosthenes Escoto, Subic Zambales Mayor Jonathan John F. Khonghun, Castillejos, Zambales Mayor Jeffrey Khonghun, National Security Council Deputy Director General Nestor Herico, PCG Commandant CG ADM Ronnie Gavan, Presidential Assistant for Maritime Concerns Sec. Andres Centino, AFP-WesCom Deputy Commander for External Defense Operations BGen. Romulo Quemado, at mga pangunahing opisyal ng DA-BFAR.



Iginiit ni Villar ang pangangailangang protektahan ang WPS dahil ang malaking porsyento ng ating mga isda ay nanggagaling dito. (Cesar Morales)

<https://remate.ph/layag-west-philippine-sea/>

REMATE:

Food security, matitiyak sa modernisasyon ng agrikultura – Gatchalian

April 17, 2024 09:33



MANILA, Philippines – Hinikayat ni Senador Win Gatchalian ang gobyerno na dagdagan ang pamuhunan sa modernisasyon ng agrikultura at irigasyon upang mapabuti ang seguridad sa pagkain ng bansa sa gitna ng patuloy na paglobo ng populasyon.

Sa pahayag, sinabi ni Gatchalian na matitiyak ang seguridad sa pagkain kapag itinaas ng pamahalaan ang pondo para sa modernisasyon ng agrikultura kabilang ang libre at sapat na irigasyon sa sakahan.

“Kung hindi sisimulan ng gobyerno ang isang komprehensibong programa sa modernisasyon ng sektor ng agrikultura, magiging mahirap para sa bansa na makamit ang seguridad sa pagkain, lalo na sa suplay ng bigas,” sabi ni Gatchalian. Binigyang-diin niya na dahil sa tuluy-tuloy na paglaki ng populasyon ng bansa, kinakailangan na maghangad ng pagtaas ng productivity sa pamamagitan ng modernisasyon ng sektor ng sakahan, kabilang ang paggamit ng modernong kagamitan sa pagsasaka.

Ipinunto ni Gatchalian na kailangang magkaroon ng whole-of-government approach, kung saan ang mga local government units ay gaganap ng malaking papel upang epektibong maisulong ang modernisasyon, partikular sa mga lugar kung saan nangangailangan ng suportang pinansyal at Kooperasyon.

“Sa kaso ng bigas, na pangunahing pagkain ng Pilipinas, kailangan ng bansa na makapag-ani ng hindi bababa sa 98% ng pangangailangan nito sa bigas,” sabi ni Gatchalian.

“Lalong lumalaki ang ating populasyon kumpara sa produksyon ng bigas. Habang lumalaki ang ating populasyon, lumalaki din ang ating pangangailangan sa bigas, at dapat nating tugunan ito. Gayunpaman, sa kasalukuyan, hindi natin mahabol ito dahil mas mabilis ang paglaki ng ating populasyon kaysa sa produksyon natin ng bigas,” dagdag niya. Ang populasyon ng bansa ay tinatayang umabot sa 112 milyon noong 2023, batay sa inaasahang rate ng paglaki ng populasyon gamit ang resulta ng 2020 census, ayon sa Commission on Population and Development. “Hindi natin matatakasan ang pangangailangan na gawing moderno ang pangkalahatang sektor ng agrikultura upang matugunan ang suplay ng pagkain kasunod ng lumolobo nating populasyon. Dahil dito, mapapaunlad din natin ang kabuhayan ng ating mga magsasaka,” pagtatapos niya. *Ernie Reyes*

<https://remate.ph/food-security-matitiyak-sa-modernisasyon-ng-agrikultura-gatchalian/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Nardti equips students for beekeeping



By [Leander C. Domingo](#)

April 18, 2024

THE Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU)-based National Apiculture Research Training and Development Institute (Nardti) trained 23 students from the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) and two students from the Institute of Agri-Business Management on beekeeping.

Maricon Viduya, DMMMSU strategic communications director, said the training titled "Bridging the Gap: Beekeeping Training for Future Veterinarians" was held at the Nardti Conference Hall in Barangay Sapilang in Bacnotan town, La Union, on April 11 and 12.



Apiculture experts from the National Apiculture Research Training and Development Institute train students on beekeeping. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Viduya said the event aimed to foster interdisciplinary skills and promote sustainable beekeeping practices among the university's CVM students.

Also during the event, Viduya said Joseph Panas, Nardti executive director, highlighted "the increasing opportunity for students in the field of beekeeping."

Panas also emphasized the significance of Department of Agriculture Administrative Order 14, Series of 2012, which directs the Bureau of Animal Industry to promote the development of the apiculture industry in collaboration with Nartdi and other beekeepers and industry stakeholders.

He said that the official control of bee diseases and other measures is under the Veterinary Authority.

In a brief message, Gregory Viste, a professor at the CVM, said that bees play a crucial role in pollination that is vital for maintaining biodiversity and supporting agricultural productivity.

"By familiarizing our students with beekeeping practices, we are preparing them to address emerging challenges in agriculture and environmental conservation," he added.

Viduya said the two-day training activity also featured a comprehensive curriculum designed to introduce the participants to the fundamentals of beekeeping.

Arvin Tuyan, DMMMSU-Nartdi Training and Technical Assistance Services coordinator, explained that beekeeping involves aspects of both animal husbandry and business management.

"By engaging in this beekeeping training, the veterinary students gained a deeper understanding of beekeeping, which will complement their veterinary education and prepare them to deal with issues related to bee health and management in their future careers," said Tuyan, who is also in charge of queen rearing.

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He added that agribusiness students learned about sustainable practices and the economics of beekeeping.

https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/18/business/agribusiness/nardti-equips-students-for-beekeeping/1942020#goog_rewarded

THE MANILA TIMES:

Tiu Laurel appoints as BFAR officer in charge

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

April 18, 2024

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. appointed on Wednesday Isidro Velayo Jr. as the new officer in charge (OIC) of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) following the dismissal of Director Demosthenes Escoto due to a graft case.

In a special order dated April 17, Tiu Laurel said that Velayo "shall perform the functions, duties and responsibilities inherent to the designation and such others as directed by the [Agriculture] secretary."

"My marching order to him is to ensure that operations of the agency will not be affected by this legal development," the agriculture chief said.

Tiu Laurel added that the immediate appointment of Velayo will ensure BFAR's continued operations and implementation of the agency's major projects.

Velayo previously served as assistant director for technical services and is also a career professional. He was also a former national coordinator of BFAR's seaweed program and regional director for the Zamboanga Peninsula.

An order from the Ombudsman, which was forwarded to the Department of Agriculture (DA), showed that Escoto was found guilty of grave misconduct in a graft case from 2018 in relation to BFAR's procurement of communications equipment.

"Escoto could still seek reconsideration of the Ombudsman's decision or directly appeal the decision to the Court of Appeals," the DA said.

In 2015, Escoto was appointed as the OIC of the Legal Division and assistant director for Administrative Services in 2017. In 2022, he was designated as the OIC of the bureau and was promoted as BFAR national director in 2023.

BFAR is the lead agency in ensuring the livelihood of Filipino fishers and has a significant role in the sustainable management of the country's marine and aquatic biodiversity.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/18/business/top-business/tiu-laurel-appoints-as-bfar-officer-in-charge/1942055>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DepEd most trusted govt agency – OCTA poll



[By Red Mendoza](#)

April 18, 2024

(UPDATE) THE Department of Education (DepED) emerged as the most trusted and the best-performing government agency in the first quarter Tugon ng Masa survey by independent pollster OCTA Research.

The survey, conducted from March 11-14, 2024, showed that DepEd obtained an 82 percent trust rating, followed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Health (DoH) with 79 percent, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) with 73 percent, and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) with 71 percent.

The Education Department's trust ratings were highest in Mindanao, 94 percent, and those under socioeconomic class D and E, 85 and 71 percent, respectively.

Meanwhile, agencies with less than 50 percent trust ratings were the Department of Energy (DoE) with 49 percent; Department of Transportation (DOTr), 45 percent; Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), 42 percent; Department of Budget and Management (DBM), 41 percent; Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), 40 percent; Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), 39 percent; and Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), 36 percent.

DepEd was also the top-performing government agency in the first quarter of 2024, with an 84 percent performance rating, followed by the DoH with 80 percent, DSWD with 77 percent, CHED with 73 percent, and DPWH with 72 percent,

The agency's performance ratings were also the highest in Mindanao at 95 percent, as well as among those under socioeconomic class E with 89 percent performance rating. Four government agencies, DTI, DICT, DBM and DHSUD, received less than 40 percent performance rating, with the DTI having the highest percentage of dissatisfied adult Filipinos based on their performance at 26 percent, followed by the Department of Agriculture (DA) at 17 percent and the DBM at 15 percent. In a statement, CHED Chairman J. Prospero de Vera III said the commission is "grateful" to the Filipino people for continuously trusting the commission as it performs its mandate of providing quality higher education and cultivating an equitable and sustainable higher education landscape.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/18/news/national/deped-most-trusted-govt-agency-octa-poll/1941978>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Cagayan TVL students complete DA-BFAR work immersion



[By Leander C. Domingo](#)

April 18, 2024

THIRTY-ONE students from Cataratan Integrated School (CTI) in Allacapan town in Cagayan province received their certificate of completion from the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Region 2 (DA-BFAR2) for their work immersion during the exit conference program.

According to CTI, the work immersion started on March 4, 2024 and concluded on April 5, 2024 at the Integrated Fish Processing Laboratory (IFPL) of the DA-BFAR Regional Office 2 in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan province.



Students from Cataratan Integrated School in Allacapan, Cagayan receive certificates of completion from the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Region 2 during their work immersion exit conference program at the Integrated Fish Processing Laboratory, DA-BFAR Regional Office 2 in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan on April 5, 2024. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

At IFPL, the students were grouped into two batches and were required to finish in 10 days and report to the agency in a maximum of eight hours a day or 80 hours, and were able to experience actual work exposure through hands-on activities/work simulation on fish processing.

At the sendoff, DA-BFAR2 Finance and Administrative Section head Emma Ballard underscored the importance of acquiring new knowledge and skills from the lectures and hands-on activities conducted by fisheries experts.

Witnessing the sendoff were Fisheries Postharvest and Marketing Section and Administration unit staff of the bureau, CTI principal Arlene Domingo, head teacher 1 Marites Mingi and CTI Work Immersion coordinator Analee Galura.

Ballard also emphasized the importance of values and positive attitude gained during their brief stay as student trainees.

One of the immersion students, John Prince Collado, said their work immersion provided them with a valuable and enriching experience.

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"We are so fortunate to work with a reputable organization or agency of DA-BFAR2 throughout our work immersion, which also provided us with a structured environment where we could learn and grow professionally," Collado said.

He noted that during their work immersion, they had various responsibilities and tasks that were designed to expose them to different aspects of the industry and to understand the day-to-day operations.

"We had the opportunity to gain practical experience in a field related to our career aspirations. With all these, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the agency of DA-BFAR2 headed

by regional director Angel Encarnacion and to all its staff for letting us immerse in their reputable agency," he added.

According to Encarnacion, the bureau has been collaborating with the academe to foster valuable learning opportunities for young students and also an avenue to promote its services and nurture partnerships with stakeholders.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/18/campus-press/cagayan-tvl-students-complete-da-bfar-work-immersion/1941991>

THE MANILA TIMES:

NFRDI pushes fish cage culture



[By Conrad M. Cariño](#)

April 18, 2024

A GROUP of fishers in Batangas has adopted cage culture technology developed by the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) to successfully grow maliputo (giant trevally).

NFRDI is an agency under the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The NFRDI, through its Freshwater Fisheries Research and Development Center (FFRDC), serves as a central breeding facility for freshwater ornamental fish and a prime research center for maliputo, a delectable and most popular Indigenous migratory fish and other nontraditional species. Maliputo thrives in Taal Lake.



Fishers under the Samahan ng Magmamaliputo ng Lemery now used cage culture developed by the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute. DA PHOTO

"As a prime research center, the NFRDI-Freshwater Fisheries Research and Development Center in Butong, Taal, Batangas,

pioneered the captive breeding [of] maliputo and has since then been conducting training activities to transfer the technology to interested fish farmers," it said.

From about 7,500 maliputo fingerlings distributed a year ago to 15 fishers from the Samahan ng Magmamaliputo ng Lemery, the fishers under the Samahan ng Magmamaliputo ng Lemery who used the cage culture developed by the NFRDI, partially harvested more than 900 kilos of the Indigenous fish in March. They were provided with around 7,500 maliputo fingerlings a year ago.

The maliputo harvest recorded an 83-percent survival rate and had an average body weight of 357 grams, according to the data gathered by the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist of Batangas during a harvest conducted in March.

In August and September 2023, the NFRDI said a total harvest of 1.33 metric tons of maliputo was made through an initiative that also involved the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the local government of Talisay and project cooperators. BFAR is an agency under the DA.

The harvested maliputo had an average body weight of 1.1 kilogram, and it achieved a survival rate of 52 percent during a 14-month culture period. The harvest was sold for P500 per kilo.

Rodrigo Bautista Jr., Batangas provincial agriculturist, assured assistance for the fishing sector of Batangas as part of the Health, Education, Livelihood and Protection of Life, Environment and Properties Program of the provincial government.

"We, in our office, are pleased with the initial success of this project. You can expect that we will further strengthen the agriculture sector in the province of Batangas, especially the fisheries sector. Assistance for our fisherfolk will not stop here and will further continue for the progress of each individual through collaborative efforts with other agencies," he said.

Brynne Mamauag, a fisherfolk and one of the program beneficiaries, was grateful for the assistance provided to them.

"We, in our organization, are grateful for the projects you have provided us, which have been helpful for us. Rest assured, we will continue to sustain and expand this project," he said.

For its part, the NFRDI said it will continue supporting the maliputo cage culture and expanding the application of the technology to more areas.

"We at the NFRDI are delighted because the technology on the 'grow out culture' of maliputo has advanced further. We initiated the study on maliputo breeding, and our goal is to further increase its population to supply cages and ponds. Since this can provide a good livelihood for our fisherfolk, NFRDI is here to serve as a venue for training and other livelihood projects," Maria Theresa Mutia of the NFRDI said.

https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/18/business/agribusiness/nfrdi-pushes-fish-cage-culture/1942023#goog_rewarded

THE MANILA TIMES:

Drone tech increases yield in demo farm

[By The Manila Times](#)

April 18, 2024

THE utilization of drone technology was a key factor in the dramatic yield increase of a demonstration farm in Rizal, Palawan.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said that around 8.25 tons of palay (unmilled rice) per hectare was harvested from a 10-hectare demo farm that benefited from the utilization of drones from New Hope Corp.

The average palay yield nationwide is around 4 tons per hectare.

"Through the help of agricultural drones, the planting of unhusked rice will be easier, and farmers can save on farm inputs," the DA said.

Through the use of a drone, about 30 to 40 kilos of rice seeds can be spread over a hectare within 10 to 15 minutes, while 15 liters of fertilizer and pesticide can be applied in six minutes.

The 10-hectare demo farm in Barangay Candawaga was backed by funds from the DA Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) Drone Team.

New Hope markets in the Philippines drones from DJI of China that designs and manufactures drones for use in agriculture and video production, among others.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/18/business/agribusiness/drone-tech-increases-yield-in-demo-farm/1942022>

PhilRice seeks biocontrol vs worms



[By Conrad M. Cariño](#)

April 18, 2024

THE Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) has partnered with the Center for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI) in identifying a potential biocontrol agent that may help stave off infestations of fall armyworm (FAW).

Evelyn Valdez, PhilRice senior science research specialist, said their team has been monitoring FAW infestations in Cagayan Valley (Region 2), Central Luzon (Region 3) and Cordillera Autonomous Region. Samples of fungus-infected FAW were collected during their site monitoring.

"With our current knowledge gap regarding its effects on rice and rice-based farming systems in our country, we recognize the significant threat it poses to our food security. Given that farmers primarily resort to expensive and potentially harmful synthetic pesticides for control, exploring biocontrol methods emerges as a more sustainable solution," Valdez said.

"We have requested the expertise of CABI to help identify a potential biocontrol agent. We will send them the samples for further analysis after we have isolated and assessed the specimens," she added.

Previously, FAW primarily targeted corn, but it has now found its way to rice, infesting 18- to 28-day-old seedlings with the larvae feeding on the leaves. The first infestation in Cagayan spread in 13 municipalities.

The name "armyworm" comes from how these insects gather in large groups during the larval stage and can destroy large areas of crops. The Food and Agriculture Organization reported that some countries reported a yield loss ranging from 3 to 5 percent in 2020 and 2021 due to FAW infestation.

Feng Zhang, CABI regional director for East and South-East Asia, emphasized the need for collaborative research initiatives to address pest and disease challenges in agriculture.

"Addressing the challenges posed by emerging pests and diseases in rice cultivation demands united efforts. Only through collective action can we effectively safeguard rice production and ensure food security for communities worldwide," he said.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/04/18/business/agribusiness/philrice-seeks-biocontrol-vs-worms/1942021>

MANILA STANDARD:

Velayo named OIC following dismissal of BFAR director

NewsNational



By Othel V. Campos

April 17, 2024, 10:25 pm

Following the dismissal of Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources director Demosthenes Escoto, the Department of Agriculture announced the appointment of Isidro Velayo Jr. as BFAR officer-in-charge (OIC) effective yesterday.

“OIC Isidro Velayo is a career professional and respected official of BFAR. My marching order to him is to ensure that operations of the agency will not be affected by this legal development,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

Velayo previously served as BFAR’s Assistant Director for Technical Services.

The Ombudsman dismissed Escoto on charges of grave misconduct after an investigation revealed alleged irregularities in BFAR’s procurement of communication equipment in 2018.

While Escoto was found guilty of graft, he can still appeal the decision through a motion for reconsideration or by taking the case directly to the Court of Appeals.

Velayo previously served as the national coordinator for BFAR’s seaweed program and held the position of regional director for the Zamboanga Peninsula.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314436984/velayo-named-oic-following-dismissal-of-bfar-director.html>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

CPM explores other measures to stop spread of plant diseases

- [BusinessMirror](#)
- [April 17, 2024](#)
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) met last Monday to discuss further measures to stop the spread of plant pests and diseases.

The CPM is the governing body of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), convening annually to assess the global state of plant health and review progress towards achieving the Convention's objectives. In 2023, IPPC welcomed the Federal Republic of Somalia as the 185th contracting party to the multilateral treaty.

“The consequences of unchecked pest and disease outbreaks are far-reaching and can inflict irreversible damage on ecosystems, trade, and the global food supply,” said Qu Dongyu, director-general of FAO, in his opening address to the 18th Session of the commission.

FAO noted that changing weather patterns and rising temperatures across the world have changed the geographic distribution and intensity of plant pests and diseases. This makes the work of the CPM in facilitating international cooperation and information exchange on early detection, rapid response, and coordinated control efforts indispensable, according to Qu.

One example of a destructive plant disease is caused by the fungus *Fusarium Tropical Race 4* (TR4). The extensive damage it inflicts on banana crops was highlighted at the World Banana Forum's 4th Global Conference, recently hosted by FAO. Exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, yield losses due to TR4 affect more than 400 million farmers, producers and rural households who depend on this staple crop.

The IPPC is working together with FAO to help banana-producing countries combat TR4. The IPPC Secretariat coordinates the global efforts to prevent the entry and spread of TR4. In addition to raising awareness on TR4 and conducting

simulation exercises in various countries, IPPC has produced a guide to effectively prevent, prepare for, and manage TR4.

At the COP28, FAO launched the “Global Roadmap for Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2) without Breaching the 1.5°C Threshold.” One of the domains of action identified in the roadmap is the protection of crops using integrated pest management to reduce reliance on chemical products.

Discussions focused on amendments to phytosanitary standards, including criteria to determine host status of fruit to fruit flies, the requirements for establishing pest free areas, and cold treatment for a pest called false codling moth.

FAO also noted that the IPPC ePhyto Solution has proven that safe trade can be expedited through digital phytosanitary certification. By December 2023, more than 5 million ePhyto certificates were successfully exchanged by 88 active user countries, while the total number of registered countries has increased to 128.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/17/cpm-explores-other-measures-to-stop-spread-of-plant-diseases/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Villar calls for ‘balikatan’ to protect marine resources in WPS

- [Butch Fernandez](#)
- [April 18, 2024](#)

Sen. Cynthia A. Villar vowed to stand by Filipino fishermen and pushed for “balikatan” to protect the West Philippine Sea (WPS) where the country sources “a big percentage” of its fish production.

Amid the challenges in the country’s fishing sector, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture made an assurance that government will continue to prioritize the affected fishermen.

She said she would “hold on to my goal of crafting laws to help in the fishing sector’s growth.”

“Let us unite to alleviate the living conditions of our fishermen,” she said in her keynote address during the launch of the Layag-WPS Project at Subic Gymnasium in Zambales last April 16.

“The Livelihood Activities to Enhance Fisheries Yields And Economic Gains from the WPS or LAYAG-WPS Project was the result of dedication of our government led by the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources [BFAR], to address some of the most important needs of our fishermen particularly in the WPS.”

Villar said she hopes that the livelihood inputs that were awarded to over a hundred fisherfolks would “become an instrument for an abundant and sustainable fish catch within our territorial waters.”

“DA-BFAR designed this livelihood involvement with the vision of uplifting the socioeconomic status of every Filipino fisherfolk and their communities.”

The launching, she said, shows the government’s commitment to equip Filipino fisherfolks with appropriate fishing gears and technology to boost their productivity in the resource-rich waters.

“It also intends to reduce post-harvest losses; bring the government support closer to the fishing communities; encourage sustainable fisheries management anchored on applicable laws, codes, authorizations, or rules and increase fisheries production to help in the administration’s goal of attaining food security.”

At the same time, she recalled the project was started by the government to provide fishermen with a good life.

She also said the government also wants to guarantee the protection and welfare of every Filipino fisherman.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/18/villar-calls-for-balikatan-to-protect-marine-resources-in-wps/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

DA begins effort to develop deep-water ports

- [BusinessMirror](#)
- [April 18, 2024](#)

The Department of Agriculture (DA) created a technical working group (TWG) that will develop policies pertaining to the development and operation of deep-water ports.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Special Order (SO) 550 which authorized the creation of the TWG.

“In the exigency of service and in line with the Three-Year Agenda of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture to provide efficient logistic systems for agricultural products, a Technical Working Group [TWG] and Secretariat is hereby created to develop a policy framework for the development and operation of deep-water ports to be managed and supervised by the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority [PFDA],” SO 550 read.

of officials and personnel from DA operating units, attached corporations and bureaus. It will be chaired by the general manager of the PFDA while the undersecretary for fisheries will serve as co-chairperson.

The TWG members will consist of the undersecretary for policy, planning and regulations; assistant secretary for operations; director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources; director of the Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering; and the director of the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization.

The project management office of the PFDA will serve as the secretariat.

Laurel said the TWG will prepare and facilitate the collection and analysis of pertinent data regarding the development and operation of deep-water ports.

“These include, but are not limited to, data on efficient cargo handling and distribution, reduction of transfer and handling cost, enhancement of existing fish

ports, and provision of efficient logistic systems for both input and output production,” the SO read.

In developing a policy framework for the development and operation of deep-water ports, Laurel said the TWG will be guided by the objective that the ports will lead to efficient cargo handling and distribution, reduced postharvest losses, enhanced fish ports, and provision of efficient logistic systems for both input and output production.

The TWG, which will report directly to the DA chief, may invite resource persons from other agencies, from other DA Operating units and private sector, such as shipping companies, during its meetings, as deemed necessary.

The DA has been pushing for the construction of deep piers designed for large ships to reduce the cost of transporting farm inputs like fertilizers.

The agency said this could lead to a reduction in rice production cost and help planters boost their output.

“Our primary focus remains on elevating production levels and lowering production costs in rice cultivation, primarily through mechanization and reducing postharvest losses, as emphasized by Secretary [Francisco] Tiu Laurel,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa said in a Palace statement following a recent news forum.

He said the establishment of deep piers capable of accommodating larger vessels could significantly reduce transportation costs by enabling direct shipment, potentially lowering input prices by P15 to P20 per unit. (***Read: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/08/da-deep-piers-for-large-ships-will-cut-cost-of-logistics-inputs/>***)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/18/da-begins-effort-to-develop-deep-water-ports/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Local tobacco fetches higher prices this season—NTA

- [BusinessMirror](#)
- [April 18, 2024](#)

Tobacco farmers are selling at high prices in buying stations their flue-cured Virginia tobacco leaves, and the air-cured burley and native tobacco leaves this season, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Based on the latest National Tobacco Administration (NTA) monitoring of tobacco trading operations, the buying price per kilogram of the prime class of tobacco or Class AA of the flue-cured Virginia tobacco has reached as high as P113.00, which is higher than the approved floor price of P97.00.

NTA, an attached agency of the DA, said the buying price for the prime class of both air-cured Burley-type tobacco and Native-type tobacco is expected to reach up to P100.00 per kg, which is higher than the approved floor price of P81.00.

Considering the increasing trend in the actual buying price of tobacco, NTA Administrator Belinda S. Sanchez said the tobacco farmers will earn “a lucrative income this season.

“The tobacco buying price increase reflects market demand and crop quality as well as the presence of good weather and the increase of floor prices,” Sanchez said in a statement.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the country’s tobacco production last year reached 50,911.75 metric tons (MT). The figure is 6.6 percent higher than the 47,730.39 MT.

Data from the PSA also showed that the Philippines’ native tobacco output last year went up by 15.3 percent to 9,484.81 MT, from the previous year’s 8,221.69 MT.

Virginia tobacco production was also higher in 2023 at 25,096.57 MT from the 23,442.94 MT recorded in 2022.

The NTA estimated that around 2.2 million Filipinos depend on the tobacco industry, including more than 430,000 farmers, farm workers and their families. NTA noted that total volume of locally produced tobacco only constitutes 35 percent of the leaf requirement of tobacco manufacturers.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said Tuesday that he is aware of the growing illicit trade of tobacco that is threatening the entire tobacco industry value chain. He vowed to help in the fight against smugglers whose illegal activities adversely affect the livelihood of farmers, legitimate businesses and investments, and government revenues.

Image credits: www.nta.da.gov.ph

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/18/local-tobacco-fetches-higher-prices-this-season-nta/>

Abandoned fishpond areas to be restored as mangroves

By

Jed Macapagal

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April 18, 2024

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has ordered the immediate assessment of abandoned, undeveloped and underutilized (AUU) areas for fishpond purposes, beginning in the regions of Bicol, Western Visayas and Zamboanga Peninsula.

DENR Memorandum Order 2024-01 signed by Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga calls for data-sharing between DENR offices and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) on restoring mangroves which are vital in the defense against flooding and extreme weather events and in improving climate actions.

The order covers fishpond areas released by the DENR to the BFAR in the 1970s.

The order is in accordance with Presidential Directive No. 2023-296 on the Review of Areas with Fishpond Lease Agreements (FLA) that are AUU.

The order also seeks recommendations to transfer the administrative control over AUU fishpond areas under FLA and biophysical reversion from BFAR to the DENR.

This involves the process of putting back damaged components of the mangrove forest from fishpond to mangrove state through methods such as replanting, enrichment planting and assisted regeneration.

The order said the recommendations will come from the National Technical Working Group (NTWG) to be submitted to the DENR Secretary.

DENR regional offices of the three selected regions will implement the order through the DENR regional field assessment teams which will gather relevant data such as topographic maps, fishpond maps and mangrove maps on issued FLAs that are active, cancelled, expired, terminated and AUU, among many others.

The team will also conduct validation to assess the identified areas' status and existing land use, including determining the area profile and biophysical status.

The regional technical working group will then recommend areas for administrative and biophysical reversion based on a pre-identified set of criteria and endorse them to the National TWG who will then review and submit to the DENR Secretary for final approval.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/abandoned-fishpond-areas-to-be-restored-as-mangroves/

Soybeans drop, wheat flat

By

Reuters

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April 18, 2024

CANBERRA- Chicago soybean futures on Wednesday hovered above four-year lows as a strengthening dollar made US exports less competitive in a market well-supplied with cheap beans from South America.

Wheat and corn were flat after major supplier Ukraine projected a drop in grain production this year, with both contracts near their lowest levels since 2020 due to ample supply.

The most-active soybean contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) was unchanged at \$11.45 a bushel, but prices have lost about 4 percent this month and are nearing February's four-year low of \$11.29.

CBOT wheat was also flat at \$5.65 a bushel, while corn fell 0.1 percent to \$4.30-3/4 a bushel.

Also weighing on soybeans is an improved weather outlook in the United States that heralds healthy yields, and a drop in the price of palm oil, a competitor for soyoil, Rabobank analyst Vitor Pistoia said.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/soybeans-drop-wheat-flat/