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MANILA BULLETIN:

‘No reason to take their sweet time’: Villafuerte urges FDA to speed up registration of ASF vaccines

BY DEXTER BARRO II

May 19, 2024 05:28 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Camarines Sur 2nd district Rep. LRay Villafuerte is calling on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to fast-track its registration process for the chosen vaccine against the African Swine Fever (ASF) in preparation for the upcoming nationwide inoculation drive.



Camarines Sur 2nd district Rep. LRay Villafuerte (PPAB)

Camarines Sur 2nd district Rep. LRay Villafuerte is calling on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to fast-track its registration process for the chosen vaccine against the African Swine Fever (ASF) in preparation for the upcoming nationwide inoculation drive.

This, after President Marcos announced that the government was eyeing either a June or July rollout of the immunization campaign.

“It would be a serious setback for the government-hoped recovery of the ASF-plagued hog industry if the mass vaccination program is not able to proceed as set by the President just because FDA officials had opted to sit on their hands instead of giving a timely go-ahead to the registration of the needed vaccine for the rollout,” Villafuerte said in a statement on Sunday, May 19.

The lawmaker said there is no reason for FDA officials to “take their own sweet time” in accrediting the Avac vaccine from Vietnam earlier endorsed by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and allowing its commercial use in the country.

He explained that during the Covid-19 pandemic, the FDA was able to speed up its registration and authorization process for the vaccines against Covid-19. This, after delays in the documentary requirements postponed the vaccine rollout.

Villafuerte, president of the National Unity Party (NUP), stressed that an immunization program alone can “put an end to wholesale deaths and selective slaughter of hogs, allow swine raisers to recover and repopulate their farms or backyards, and eventually stabilize the supply and cost of pork products in the local market for the benefit of our consumers”.

“As pointed out by industry players, an immunization drive alone can prevent more ASF-related animal deaths, reverse the low hog supply in the country, reduce imports and prevent a repeat of the escalation in market prices of pork products in 2021 that was one reason for the undue spike in the country’s inflation rate,” he added.

According to Villafuerte, this would be especially vital for backyard hog raisers or the so-called small industry players to help them recover from the latest surge of ASF, which first resurfaced in the country in 2019.

In 2023, hog production in the Philippines increased slightly from 1.737 million metric tons (MT) from the previous year to 1.793 million MT. However, this figure is still below the average production of 2.25 million MT over the 2016 to 2019 period.

The BAI reported that ASF has reached 5,324 barangays in 73 provinces in 17 regions over the last five years.

As of mid-May, there are active cases of this lethal virus in 78 barangays, in 18 municipalities, in 11 provinces, in seven regions in the country.

Villafuerte noted that because of the weak biosecurity measures in local farms, alongside the absence of an anti-ASF inoculation program, the government has struggled with its hog repopulation program.

With a proper vaccine rollout still yet to hit the ground, the congressman proposed that the Department of Agriculture (DA) “declare a state of in ASF-struck areas, so calamity or quick response funds can be accessed at once for the planned immunization drive”.

In addition, to “subsidize 100 percent of the cost of the shots for backyard raisers, who make up the bulk of local hog growers and who are still reeling from the adverse impact on their small enterprises of this deadly animal disease,” he said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/19/no-reason-to-take-their-sweet-time-villafuerte-urges-fda-to-speed-up-registration-of-asf-vaccines-1>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Gibo warns crackdown vs price manipulators as La Niña looms

BY MARTIN SADONGDONG

May 19, 2024 12:17 PM



(File photo)

Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. said Sunday, May 19, that authorities will go after hoarders and manipulators of goods and its prices who prey on consumers as the country transitions from El Niño or dry season to La Niña or wet season.

The defense chief issued the warning following the fifth meeting of the Presidential Task Force on El Niño response, which has been mobilized to mitigate the effects of La Niña as well. Teodoro concurrently serves as the chairperson of the task force.

According to Teodoro, the DND stands ready to provide support to agencies involved in the price monitoring of basic necessities and prime commodities once La Niña begins.

La Niña, a weather phenomenon associated with above normal rainfall, could affect food production which sends prices of goods higher.

Teodoro said curbing price manipulation and holding hoarders accountable will be among the priorities of the government once La Niña begins.

“Access to affordable basic commodities such as rice is exceptionally crucial to millions of Filipino consumers. Any sudden fluctuation in the price of rice resonates on the daily lives of Filipinos,” Teodoro said.

“Whatever support is needed by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Agriculture, rest assured we are here ready to assist them,” he added.

Teodoro said there is a need to intensify price and supply monitoring efforts in markets to protect consumers from profiteering amid the weather phenomenon.

Last week, the national government ordered Task Force El Niño to begin preparations for the rainy season as the worst stage of the dry season was deemed over.

La Niña is expected to develop from June to August, according to a weather bulletin from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Further, the state weather bureau added that the transition to southwest monsoon season may also happen in May, which may bring rains over the western portion of the country from the warm moist winds coming from the southwest.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/19/gibo-warns-crackdown-vs-price-manipulators-as-la-nina-looms>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos orders single electronic invoicing system for all imported goods to improve inspection

BY BETHEENA UNITE

May 19, 2024 11:24 AM

President Marcos has ordered the implementation of a single electronic invoicing system for all imported commodities to improve the inspection of all goods coming into the country.



Marcos made the directive through Administrative Order No. 23, which also creates the Committee for Pre-border Technical Verification and Cross-border Electronic Invoicing.

It aims to expedite the inspection of all imported goods entering the country and further strengthen national security, safeguard consumers' rights, and protect the environment against sub-standard and dangerous imported goods, Marcos said.

“A single electronic invoicing system controlled by the Philippine Government is necessary to effectively monitor international trade transactions of all imported goods,” the AO, which was signed on May 13 by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, stated.

According to the AO, the committee shall be composed of the secretary of Finance as the chairperson, with the secretaries of Agriculture, Trade, Energy, Health, Environment, and Information Communications Technology serving as members.

Other members include the Bureau of Customs (BOC) commissioner, director general of Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), and two non-voting representatives from duly recognized industry associations to be appointed by the chairperson upon recommendation of the committee.

The BOC, as the primary government entity responsible for implementing customs procedures, is implementing the electronic invoicing system in accordance with the government's strategic direction and policy guidance, international trade standards, and existing laws and regulations.

The provisions of the order shall be applied to all imported commodities in three phases: Phase one for agricultural goods; phase two, non-agricultural goods with health and safety issues; and phase three, other goods with misdeclaration to avoid duties and taxes.

Republic Act No. 10863 or the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act directs the state to develop and implement programs for the continuous enhancement of customs systems and processes.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/19/marcos-orders-single-electronic-invoicing-system-for-all-imported-goods-to-improve-inspection>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Qatar investors eye Philippines dairy, cooling sectors

[Louella Desiderio](#) - The Philippine Star

May 19, 2024 | 12:00am



DTI Secretary Alfredo Pascual met with officials of Qatari food firm Baladna to discuss the planned establishment of a large-scale, fully integrated dairy facility in the Philippines.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Companies engaged in dairy production and providing district cooling systems in Qatar are interested in making investments in the Philippines, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

DTI Secretary Alfredo Pascual met with officials of Qatari food firm Baladna to discuss the planned establishment of a large-scale, fully integrated dairy facility in the Philippines.

Baladna is a trusted milk, dairy, juice and food brand in Qatar.

During the meeting, Pascual emphasized the huge demand for dairy products in the Philippines, with imports reaching close to P3 billion.

According to Pascual, the government is addressing the huge demand and supporting local production.

“The Philippine government stands ready to support Baladna to realize its planned investments in the country. Through a whole of government approach, the DTI and the Board of Investments (BOI) are ready to facilitate business-to-business meetings and introductions to potential joint venture partners for Baladna,” Pascual said.

He said the Department of Agriculture (DA) is also identifying locations for the proposed dairy facilities.

With concerns on mislabeling raised in the Philippine National Dairy Roadmap 2020 to 2025, the National Dairy Authority and the Food and Drug Administration are committed to the continued conduct of discussions and review of the Philippine National Standard to ensure fair competition and consumer protection through clear and accurate labeling standards within the dairy industry.

Pascual said the DTI would also work with the DA in coming up with policies to create a level playing field for all milk and dairy producers in the country.

In a separate statement, the DTI said Pascual also met with Qatar Cool (QC) CEO Yasser Al Jaidah as well as commercial and finance director Mohannad Khader to discuss the firm’s interest in setting up district cooling systems in the Philippines.

QC, which is the largest district cooling systems provider in Qatar, is looking to partner with major developers focusing on district-wide or township developments in the Philippines.

The company was also invited to consider locations outside Metro Manila, which offer high-density developments.

Last March, QC visited potential sites in the Philippines and follow-up discussions are being conducted with prospective partners to ensure successful district cooling systems adoption.

QC’s district cooling systems technology offers a cost- and energy-efficient solution compared to individual building heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

The DTI sees the firm’s technology as a good fit with the current administration’s goal of a 20 percent reduction in energy consumption by 2030, with the energy sector as a key focus area.

“The DTI, together with relevant stakeholders, is committed to supporting QC’s exploration of the Philippine market. The Department of Energy will further assess QC’s business model for potential BOI endorsement. Additionally, exploring opportunities in other locations and projects presents exciting possibilities for collaboration,” Pascual said.

Beyond district cooling, the DTI said there are other opportunities in the Philippines for QC including participation in large-scale infrastructure projects like the New Manila International Airport and Ninoy Aquino International Airport, which consume vast amounts of energy for cooling purposes.

With the New Manila International Airport in Bulacan estimated to have an annual passenger capacity of 100 million, there is potential demand for efficient cooling solutions.

“The DTI looks forward to further discussions with QC and facilitating their successful investment journey in the Philippines, which can contribute significantly to the country’s energy efficiency goals,” Pascual said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/19/2356116/qatar-investors-eye-philippines-dairy-cooling-sectors>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DBM releases P88 million for tobacco industry

[Louise Maureen Simeon](#) - The Philippine Star

May 19, 2024 | 12:00am



Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman has approved the release of the notice of cash allocation (NCA) worth P87.63 million to the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) of the Department of Agriculture.

Businessworld / File

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has released P88 million to help boost the local tobacco industry.

Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman has approved the release of the notice of cash allocation (NCA) worth P87.63 million to the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) of the Department of Agriculture.

The funding will finance NTA's second quarter requirements. It also aims to improve the tobacco sector following the call of President Marcos and the Private Sector Advisory Council-Agriculture Sector Group (PSAC-ASG).

Last week, Marcos met with the PSAC-ASG where he ordered the strengthening of efforts against tobacco and vape smuggling.

The private sector also called for the release of government funds as prescribed under the Sustainable Tobacco Enhancement Program to aid in rising smuggling cases.

This year, NTA has an authorized appropriation of P550.5 million.

Of this, P175.28 million has already been issued NCAs to fulfill the requirements for the first semester.

The budget will be used by NTA for its operational needs, sourced from 40 percent of the balance of collections from specific taxes on locally made Virginia-type cigarettes and tariff duties on imported leaf tobacco.

Funds for the NTA shall be charged against the 2024 General Appropriations Act.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/19/2356118/dbm-releases-p88-million-tobacco-industry>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

SC clears ex-Agri chief Arthur Yap in pork barrel case

By: [Jane Bautista](#) - Reporter / [@janebautistaINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:46 AM May 19, 2024



Former Agriculture Sec. Arthur Yap —Leo Udtohan/Inquirer Visayas

MANILA, Philippines — The Supreme Court has cleared former Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap of graft and malversation charges stemming from the alleged misuse of congressional pork barrel funds from 2007 to 2009.

In a 29-page decision promulgated on April 15 but made public on May 16, the Supreme Court's Third Division granted Yap's petition for certiorari—or a petition to correct a lower court's decision—as it dismissed four criminal cases filed against him before Sandiganbayan's Third Division.

In 2017, Yap, who headed the Department of Agriculture (DA) during the Arroyo administration, was then charged with graft on two counts, malversation of public funds and malversation through falsification.

This was for signing a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the DA and National Agribusiness Corp. (Nabcor), as well as an addendum releasing P8 million from the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) of then Misamis Occidental Rep. Marina Clarete to Kabuhayan at Kalusugang Alay sa Masa Foundation (KKAMFI).

KKAMFI, a nongovernmental organization, allegedly failed to implement the project funded by Clarete's PDAF. It was also said to be unaccredited and unqualified for the project despite being endorsed by the lawmaker.

The high court ruled that the Sandiganbayan committed grave abuse of discretion when it ruled that the information filed against Yap had enough basis to indict him.

“The absence of crucial averments in the information relating to Yap's purported malversation of public funds is perceivable even by the naked eye; it was not even established how he could be considered an accountable officer who exercised effective control over the public funds or property suspected to have been appropriated or misappropriated,” the Supreme Court said in a decision penned by Associate Justice Japar Dimaampao.

The tribunal upheld Yap's argument that his act of signing the MOA between the DA and Nabcor did not indicate partiality, evident bad faith or gross inexcusable negligence, or that it caused undue injury to the government or gave unwarranted benefits and advantage to his coaccused, namely Clarete and some Nabcor officers.

Valid issuance

The Supreme Court also gave weight to the position taken by the Office of the Solicitor General that the MOA was executed based on a valid issuance by then Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr.

The high tribunal said Yap had “no discretion to deny” Clarete's request to transfer the PDAF allocation as it was covered by the General Appropriations Act that set the national budget.

The Supreme Court said that the Sandiganbayan acted with grave abuse of discretion when it ruled that there was no inordinate delay in the Ombudsman's termination of its preliminary investigation of Yap's case, which took three years and five days.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1942087/sc-clears-ex-agri-chief-arthur-yap-in-pork-barrel-case>

Are we ready for La Niña?

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:10 AM May 19, 2024

Last week's rain showers in some areas brought much-needed relief to a country experiencing a harsh dry season. The weather bureau has warned that La Niña, which often follows an El Niño weather event, will bring more rain than usual—making it both a blessing and a curse. A blessing for those whose livelihood depends on the bounty of the land, a curse for those who suffer from the impact of increased rainfall.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, we ask: How ready is the country for La Niña?

Although the government does not have control over extreme weather events that are occurring more frequently due to global heating, it must still ensure that measures are in place to reduce the risks and mitigate their impact, especially on vulnerable communities. El Niño has already brought much devastation to the agriculture sector—as of May 2, per the Department of Agriculture, damage to agriculture has reached P5.90 billion, affecting 113,585 farmers and fisherfolk, with the government extending P2.18 billion worth of interventions to them.

Greater damage

The country has barely escaped the impact of the drought and here comes another extreme weather event expected to cause even greater damage to agriculture and property. Science and Technology Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. said there is a 62 percent chance of the La Niña phenomenon developing from June to August. “Ibig sabihin niyan, mas maikli ’yung lead time ... mas konti lang ’yung panahon natin maghanda, so dapat handang-handa tayo parati sa mga bagyo (This means a shorter lead time ... not enough time to prepare so we should always be ready for typhoons),” said Solidum.

As a disaster-prone country hit by an average of 20 typhoons a year, both the government and the public need not be reminded of this. Tropical Storm “Ondoy,” which dumped more than a month's worth of rain in Metro Manila in 2009 and

paralyzed national and local government operations, serves as a good reminder. Ondoy spurred new laws such as Republic Act No. 9729 (Climate Change Act of 2009), which mainstreamed climate issues into government policies, and RA 10121 (Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act), which institutionalized disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM).

Massive flooding

Still, the government's DRRM services need more work and innovation to keep up with increasingly extreme weather events. Despite measures outlined in those laws, Bulacan and Pampanga were still caught unprepared last year by the southwest monsoon enhanced by Typhoons "Egay" and "Falcon" which brought massive flooding and damage. Both provinces were placed under a state of calamity with President Marcos issuing a directive to prioritize flood control projects. This year, the government allotted P35.5 billion for the construction of 430 projects, including raising by 0.7 meters the Tulaoc bridge in San Simon, Pampanga portion of the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX). This part of NLEX was among those that experienced massive flooding after the river overflowed due to torrential rains.

Work has been completed on NLEX, per Speaker Martin Romualdez who met last Tuesday with Cabinet officials for La Niña preparations. "Yung nangyari sa Pampanga, sa NLEX, siguro hindi na naman 'yun mauulit kasi 'yung mga kalsada, 'yung construction na ginawa last year tapos na (What happened in Pampanga, in NLEX, will probably not happen again because construction work last year has already been completed)," Romualdez said.

Water management

But it is not enough to build flood control infrastructure—government must ensure they are made with quality materials to withstand strong typhoons. The same goes for permanent shelters where affected communities could be relocated; unfortunately, local governments still resort to using classrooms or basketball courts that offer little safety from the elements. The construction of these permanent shelters should already be integral to the government's DRRM program.

The coming La Niña is also a perfect opportunity for government to execute the integration of flood control and water management programs. Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Secretary Manuel Bonoan said the President has already instructed concerned agencies to “integrate our flood control management programs with the other sectors so that the water ... [does] not go to the sea indirectly and ... we [can] conserve and utilize for the other purposes like for irrigation, water supply, and power if necessary.” Bonoan said DPWH was allocated P300 billion this year for foreign-assisted and locally-funded flood control projects, which could also be funneled into this planned integration.

These plans all look good on paper and whether they have been put into action—and implemented properly—will be tested when La Niña comes. There is little time left. If these plans do not materialize, the public, as usual, is the one that will suffer the fury of these extreme weather events.

<https://opinion.inquirer.net/173807/are-we-readyfor-la-nina>

MANILA STANDARD

Teodoro warns crackdown vs price manipulators as the Philippines braces for La Niña

By Vince Lopez May 19, 2024, 11:40 am

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, Jr. has warned that authorities will go after hoarders and manipulators preying on consumers as the country transitions to the La Niña weather phenomenon.

The defense chief issued this warning during the fifth meeting of the presidential task force on El Niño response as the government gears up for La Niña.

During the task force meeting held at Camp Aguinaldo earlier this month, Teodoro said the Department of National Defense (DND) is ready to provide support to agencies involved in the price monitoring of basic necessities and prime commodities.

Teodoro, chairperson of the task force, said curbing price manipulation and holding hoarders accountable will be among the priorities of the government in its response.

“Access to affordable basic commodities such as rice is exceptionally crucial to millions of Filipino consumers. Any sudden fluctuation in the price of rice resonates in the daily lives of Filipinos,” Teodoro said.

“Whatever support is needed by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Agriculture, rest assured we are here ready to assist them,” the DND chief added.

Teodoro said there is a need to intensify price and supply monitoring efforts in markets to protect consumers from profiteering amid the weather phenomenon.

The Task Force El Niño already began last week its preparations for the possible onset of La Niña, which the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) forecasts by June until August this year.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314448569/teodoro-warns-crackdown-vs-price-manipulators-as-the-philippines-braces-for-la-nina.html>

MANILA STANDARD

La Niña's rain dance: More storms arriving

By Rio N. Araja & Othel V. Campos

May 19, 2024, 12:10 am

The La Niña phenomenon is expected to arrive in July, and could continue until August or September amid the lingering effect of the weak El Niño episode, the state weather bureau PAGASA said.

“While we experienced much higher temperatures in the past two weeks of April and first week of May, at least there will be a lowering of temperatures in the coming days,” Analiza Solis, PAGASA Climate Monitoring and Prediction Section chief told Manila Standard.

There is a 69 percent probability of La Niña occurrence in the third quarter of this year, with the onset of the rainy season between the last week of May and June.

Solis said the government is now crafting a national action plan to ensure proper interventions are in place as the country transitions from El Niño to La Niña.

She said 16 storms may likely enter the Philippine area of responsibility by the latter half of the year, higher than last year's 11 tropical cyclones due to the El Niño phenomenon.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, for its part, called for proactive adaptation of flood prevention measures.

Environment Usec. Carlos Primo David highlighted an immediate challenge – a 40 percent decrease in rain projected for May and June, followed by an average July and above-average rainfall expected in August and September.

“July will be the transition month and August and September will be when we will experience higher than average rain,” he said.

“While the DENR Water Resources Management Office coordinates all water projects, the DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highways) remains the lead for flood

mitigation. The national government has provided sufficient funds and 66 flood prone rivers have masterplans,” he added.

The national government set to release approximately P349 billion for flood control projects in 2024 to not only manage flood risks but also conserve and utilize water beneficially.

On the other hand, the Department of Agriculture acknowledged the potential for greater damage due to the La Niña phenomenon compared to the P6.3 billion agricultural damage due to El Nino.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/314448524/la-ninas-rain-dance-more-storms-arriving.html>

State of calamity declared in Cebu

By Philippine News Agency

May 19, 2024

CEBU CITY – Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia on Friday declared a state of calamity for the entire Cebu province as 32 of its 50 local governments reported P176.8 million in damage to crops and livestock amid the onslaught of the El Niño phenomenon.

Garcia said the provincial government will focus on assisting the agricultural sector.

She, however, clarified that the declaration does not intend to give "dole outs" to residents but is a recognition of the damage being beyond normal.

"The culture we wish to nurture in the entire province of Cebu [is] not a culture of mendicancy," she said.

Records show that as of May 16, the dry spell has affected 12,312 farmers tilling a total area of 3,179.32 hectares.

Garcia said she would issue an executive order to lay down the parameters for providing assistance to farmers.

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Meanwhile, the Provincial Board is set to pass a resolution on May 20 to support the governor's declaration.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/19/regions/state-of-calamity-declared-in-cebu/1947354>

Ban on GMOs a discouraging move, BCP head warns

Sebastian Montemayor

May 19, 2024



The head of Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines (BCP) warned that the Philippines may lose its biotechnology scientists following the Court of Appeals's (CA) commercial ban on Golden Rice and *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) eggplant, along with the importation of genetically modified (GM) crops.

The Philippines' CA issued a writ of Kalikasan last April 17, putting a stop to the commercial propagation of GM crops Golden Rice and Bt talong.

The main opponents of the GM crops cited health and environmental impacts, and corporate control of the produced crops.

But BCP Chairman and President Dr. Saturnina Halos said that there are many other GMO crops commercially produced in the Philippines with little to no negative impact on environment or health, such as corn and cotton.

She noted “how such regulations [CA ruling] discourage them [scientists] from doing their work with already so few research programs in effect.”

A Berkley-trained biotechnology scientist, Halos said the court ruling is “already discouraging students from going into the field, after seeing more than 20 years of

research and development will just be stopped because of a decision made with no scientific basis.”



Brain drain

“Of course [I feel sorry] for the scientists working on GMOs [GM organisms]. Actually, right now, I don’t know any scientists working on it,” Halos said in an interview partly in Filipino.

“It is because of the products that are cut off from production, just like Bt talong and Golden Rice,” she added.

This, she warned, could lead to another brain drain in the Philippines.

Since the early 1970s, highly skilled practitioners in specialized fields, such as in medicine, education, maritime, and engineering have been migrating to other countries offering better opportunities and support for their vocation.

Many food in US with GMOs

If GMO crops were truly dangerous to health, Halos noted that “everyone in the US would have cancer with the large quantities of GMOs in their food supply because nearly all of their food there is made with GMOs.”

Food safety regulators in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States have declared Golden Rice safe for consumption.

Regarding corporate control of the crops, Halos belied this, saying both Bt eggplant and Golden Rice were developed for the Philippine situation by national government programs at the University of the Philippine Los Baños and the Philippine Rice Research Institute, respectively.



Lack of understanding, education

Halos said that one of the biggest issues in the Philippines regarding GMOs is a lack of understanding and education.

She cited how relevant technologies, such as cellphones and computers, were easily accepted by the public, without fully appreciating the research and development that went into them, while GMO crops, despite going through more than 20 years of development and being potentially beneficial to society, were not easily accepted.

Halos pointed out that perhaps “education in the Philippines regarding science is largely based on memorization, which leads to a lack of understanding of modern and developing technologies.”

“If it were made to be more practical, people would more easily see the benefits of biotechnology and be more accepting of GMO crops,” she explained.

“We have many products of science that we easily accept, [including vaccines and medicines], but the food that brings massive benefits to farmers and protects our health are hindered,” she said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/19/ban-on-gmos-a-discouraging-move-bcp-head-warns/>