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MANILA BULLETIN:

Farmers, fishermen from 3 provinces hit by El Niño receive gov't aid

BY IVY TEJANO

May 23, 2024 07:15 PM

DAVAO CITY – Thousands of farmers, fishermen, and families affected by the El Niño phenomenon received cash assistance from President R. Marcos Jr. during a ceremony at the Datu Abdullah Sangki (DAS) Sports Complex in Maguindanao del Sur on Thursday, May 23.



MARCOS

The Office of the President (OP) provided P10,000 each to beneficiaries from three provinces within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), allocating P30 million to the governments of Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, and Lanao del Sur.

Marcos arrived in Maguindanao del Sur following his visit to Tawi-Tawi.

The Chief Executive vowed a comprehensive government strategy to provide assistance to underprivileged Filipinos in remote regions of Mindanao.

During the allocation of financial assistance to farmers and fishermen impacted by El Niño in Tawi-Tawi, Marcos said in his speech that the entire government is utilizing all available resources to alleviate the effects of the climate phenomenon in the region.

“We will ensure that all assistance, government programs, and opportunities reach our citizens, especially in the remotest areas,” Marcos said.

Marcos granted P10 million each to the provincial government of Maguindanao del Sur represented by Gov. Bai Mariam Sangki-Mangudadatu, Maguindanao del Norte represented by Gov. Abdulraof Macacua, and Lanao del Sur represented by Gov. Mamintal Alonto Adiong Jr. to fuel their recovery from the calamity.

In her message, Mangudadatu lauded Marcos' intervention to alleviate the situation of the distressed farmers and fisherfolk. She told the public that every zone, barangay, and municipality in Maguindanao del Sur has nothing to worry as the President is always there willing to help and support them in the name of the Bagong Pilipinas (New Philippines).

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) distributed P10,000 to each 10,000 beneficiaries while the Office of House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez gave five kilos of rice to each attendee.

In a report obtained from the DSWD, the Marcos administration has distributed P478,850,000 to 47,885 beneficiaries from Zamboanga, Sultan Kudarat, General Santos City, Iligan City, and Cagayan de Oro City as of May 22.

Meanwhile, as part of the efforts to provide aid to beneficiaries, the Department of Agriculture-National Irrigation Administration (DA-NIA) consistently oversees the progress of the Malitubog-Maridagao Irrigation Project II (MMIP-II) which aims to enhance agricultural output and livelihoods while also promoting peace and order in the region.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Health (DOH), and other concerned government agencies are cooperating to tackle the difficulties presented by the El Niño and La Niña in the BARMM.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/23/farmers-fishermen-from-3-provinces-hit-by-el-nino-receive-gov-t-aid>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos turns over P20-M aid to farmers, fishermen in Tawi-Tawi, Basilan

BY IVY TEJANO

May 23, 2024 07:06 PM

DAVAO CITY – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. distributed more than P20 million in financial aid to farmers and fishermen affected by the El Niño phenomenon in the provinces of Tawi-Tawi and Basilan on Thursday, May 23.



MARCOS (center)

Marcos provided P10 million each in financial aid to Tawi-Tawi Gov. Yshmael Sali and Basilan Gov. Hadkiman Salliman-Hataman.

Farmers and fishermen received P10,000 each.

Marcos said in his speech that the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) had been declared under calamity because of El Niño and the government strives to mitigate the impact of the weather phenomenon.

“I witnessed your hard work and excellence. Rest assured that we will continue to strive to provide you with the service and care you deserve so that you can achieve your dreams in life,” Marcos told the crowd at the Department of Education (DepEd) compound in Tawi-Tawi.

At least 80 members of the House of Representatives, headed by House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, participated alongside the Chief Executive in the event that coincided with the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair, which aims to deliver frontline services and assistance to underserved communities nationwide.

Marcos thanked farmers and fishermen, including their families, for their sacrifices to ensure food security in the country. He assured everyone would receive proper assistance in these challenging times.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) also distributed additional P10,000 each to 10,000 beneficiaries composed of farmers, fishermen, and their families. Romualdez's office gave five kilos of rice each to the attendees.

Other agencies in attendance were the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and Department of Agriculture (DA).

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/23/marcos-turns-over-p20-m-aid-to-farmers-fishermen-in-tawi-tawi-basilan>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos affirms security is top priority concern

BY ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

May 23, 2024 02:52 PM

AT A GLANCE

- The Office of the President (OP) has provided P10,000 each to select farmers and fisherfolk from three provinces in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), as well as P30 million to the Provincial Governments of Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, and Lanao del Sur.

President Marcos assured Filipinos that ensuring the country's security remains his administration's top priority despite its current focus on addressing the effects of extreme heat brought about by the El Niño phenomenon.



President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. (RTVM Screenshot)

Marcos said this as he led the distribution of government assistance to farmers, fisherfolk, and their families affected by El Niño, in Maguindanao del Sur on Thursday, May 23.

In his speech, the President said the government has not forgotten about the security challenges in Maguindanao del Sur, whose history of disorder has left a stain on its land and the daily lives of people.

"Ngunit alam kong malalagpasan natin ito. Tinitiyak ko sa inyo na ang kaligtasan ng ating mga mamamayan ay nananatiling prayoridad ng aking administrasyon (I know we can get

through this. I assure you that the safety of our people remains my administration's priority)," he said.

"Sa patuloy nating pagtugon sa mga ugat ng hidwaan, makakamit natin ang tunay na kapayapaan at pagkakaunawaan sa ating mga komunidad (In our continued quest to address the roots of conflict, we are achieving peace and understanding in our community)," he added.

With this, President Marcos urged the people to unite and work with the government. He likewise ordered government agencies, including local government units (LGUs), to ensure that the assistance and services intended for the people would reach their rightful recipients.

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The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) also distributed P10,000 each to 10,000 beneficiaries, while the Office of House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez handed out five kilos of rice to each attendee.

In line with the provision of assistance, the Department of Agriculture (DA) - National Irrigation Administration (NIA) is continuously monitoring the Malitubog-Maridagao Irrigation Project II (MMIP-II) which aims to increase agricultural productivity and livelihood and improve peace and order in the Region.

Meanwhile, Malacañang said the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Health (DOH), and other concerned agencies are collaborating to address the challenges posed by both El Niño and La Niña in the BARMM.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/23/marcos-security-remains-admin-s-top-priority>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Cagayan Valley sustains P2-B El Niño damage

BY FREDDIE LAZARO

May 23, 2024 01:53 PM

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan – The Department of Agriculture has recorded more than P2 billion in damage to agriculture in Region 2 or the Cagayan Valley from the El Niño phenomenon.



Kay S. Olivas, regional technical director for Research and Regulation of DA-Region 2, said corn sustained the most damage with 117,052 metric tons.

Rice and high-value crops grown in 45,745 hectares and 43,942 farmers were also affected.

The DA-Region 2 continues to give interventions to affected farmers such as financial and production support assistance, provision of water pumps, and cloud-seeding operations.

Olivas said they are preparing for the possible onslaught of the La Niña phenomenon in the country.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/23/cagayan-valley-sustains-p2-b-el-nino-damage>

MANILA BULLETIN:

‘Project Atlantis’: DOST develops AI-powered aquaponics greenhouse technology for sustainable farming

BY RHOWEN DEL ROSARIO

May 23, 2024 05:28 PM

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) on Thursday, May 23, highlighted "Project Atlantis," an initiative that utilizes aquaponics technology integrated with the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) for sustainable farming.



(Project Leader Anton Louise De Ocampo briefs DOST and DOST-PCAARRD monitoring and evaluation team on the project ATLANTIS' status and updates / Photo credit to ARMRD, DOST-PCAARRD)

In a Bagong Pilipinas Interview, Undersecretary Leah Buendia shared the DOST-funded innovation that aims to address the challenge of time-consuming monitoring and adjustments needed for optimal plant nutrient levels, water quality, and other factors affecting the growth of tilapia and vegetables like lettuce.

Buendia explained that Project Atlantis leverages aquaponics, a technology combining aquaculture or fish farming and hydroponics or plant cultivation without soil.

“Aquaponics has a long history of technology but what is new here is the application of AI or Internet of Things. This means gathering data, equipped with sensors, in different parts of that closed system to measure and obtain pH data or the balance of acidity and base,” she said.

Project Atlantis, Buendia said, presents a novel and sustainable farming method. It fosters a symbiotic environment within a greenhouse where tilapia waste serves as a natural fertilizer for the lettuce plants.

"This closed-loop system eliminates waste," Buendia explained. "Fish waste is converted into nutrients absorbed by the lettuces, creating a self-sustaining cycle," she added.

"Since it's a closed system, fish feeding remains consistent compared to traditional methods. The key difference lies in waste management. Here, fish waste is repurposed as fertilizer, significantly reducing water consumption. For instance, only 20 liters of water are needed to produce one kilogram of lettuce throughout the year," Buendia elaborated on the project's benefits.

Project Atlantis is a collaborative effort between Batangas State University (BatStateU) and Turbulent Drip Sales Incorporated (TDSI), a prominent Tagaytay-based company known for its high-value vegetable greenhouses.

This innovation, the official said, streamlines operations for TDSI, offering a more efficient and less labor-intensive approach compared to traditional fish and lettuce farming methods.

By utilizing AI and IoT models, she mentioned that the project developed an electronic controller for the sensor system, this automates specific greenhouse operations, allowing for both on-site and off-site monitoring through a mobile application.

However, currently, because this is a collaboration with Turbulent Drip Sales which is a private sector in Tagaytay, she noted that they will be the first to get this technology because they have input in terms of budget and also because they have 30 percent ownership in the technology.

Buendia also highlighted that the department provided five million to support Project Atlantis the Collaborative Research and Development to Leverage Philippine Economy (DOST-CRADLE) Program monitored by the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD) through its Agricultural Resources Management Research Division (ARMRD).

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/23/project-atlantis-dost-develops-ai-powered-aquaponics-greenhouse-technology-for-sustainable-farming>

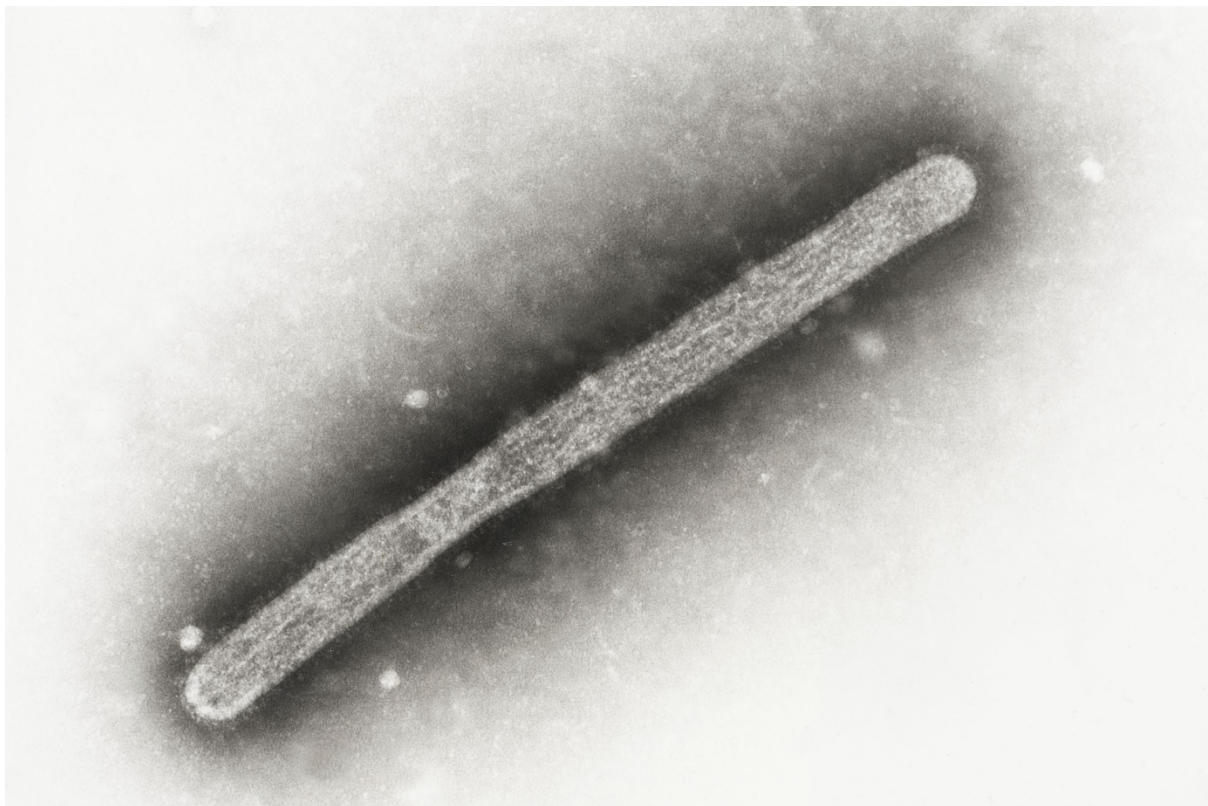
MANILA BULLETIN:

Michigan farmworker diagnosed with bird flu, becoming 2nd US case tied to dairy COWS

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

May 23, 2024 04:04 PM

A Michigan dairy worker has been diagnosed with bird flu — the second human case associated with an outbreak in U.S. dairy cows.



This 2005 electron microscope image shows an avian influenza A H5N1 virion. On Wednesday, May 22, 2024, Michigan health officials said a farmworker has been diagnosed with bird flu, the second human case connected to an outbreak in U.S. dairy cows. (Cynthia Goldsmith, Jackie Katz/CDC via AP)

The male worker had been in contact with cows at a farm with infected animals. He experienced mild eye symptoms and has recovered, U.S. and Michigan health officials said in announcing the case Wednesday.

A nasal swab from the person tested negative for the virus, but an eye swab tested Tuesday was positive for bird flu, “indicating an eye infection,” U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials said.

The worker developed a “gritty feeling” in his eye earlier this month but it was a “very mild case,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, Michigan’s chief medical executive. He was not treated with oseltamivir, a medication advised for treating bird flu, she said.

The risk to the public remains low, but farmworkers exposed to infected animals are at higher risk, health officials said. They said those workers should be offered protective equipment, especially for their eyes.

Health officials say they do not know if the Michigan farmworker was wearing protective eyewear, but an investigation is continuing.

In late March, a farmworker in Texas was diagnosed in what officials called the first known instance globally of a person catching this version of bird flu from a mammal. That patient reported only eye inflammation and recovered.

Since 2020, a bird flu virus has been spreading among more animal species — including dogs, cats, skunks, bears and even seals and porpoises — in scores of countries.

The detection in U.S. livestock earlier this year was an unexpected twist that sparked questions about food safety and whether it would start spreading among humans.

That hasn't happened, although there's been a steady increase of reported infections in cows. As of Wednesday, the virus had been confirmed in 51 dairy herds in nine states, according to the U.S. Agriculture Department. Fifteen of the herds were in Michigan.

The CDC’s Dr. Nirav Shah said the case was “not unexpected” and it's possible more infections could be diagnosed in people who work around infected cows.

U.S. officials said they had tested 40 people since the first cow cases were discovered in late March. Michigan has tested 35 of them, Bagdasarian told The Associated Press in an interview.

Shah praised Michigan officials for actively monitoring farmworkers. He said health officials there have been sending daily text messages to workers exposed to infected cows asking about possible symptoms, and that the effort helped officials catch this infection. He said no other workers had reported symptoms.

That's encouraging news, said Michael Osterholm, a University of Minnesota epidemiologist who has studied bird flu for decades. There's no sign to date that the virus is causing flu-like illness or that it is spreading among people.

“If we had four or five people seriously ill with respiratory illness, we would be picking that up,” he said.

The virus has been found in high levels in the raw milk of infected cows, but government officials say pasteurized products sold in grocery stores are safe because heat treatment has been confirmed to kill the virus.

The new case marks the third time a person in the United States has been diagnosed with what’s known as Type A H5N1 virus. In 2022, a prison inmate in a work program picked it up while killing infected birds at a poultry farm in Montrose County, Colorado. His only symptom was fatigue, and he recovered. That predated the virus’s appearance in cows.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/23/michigan-farmworker-diagnosed-with-bird-flu-becoming-2nd-us-case-tied-to-dairy-cows>

MANILA BULLETIN:

JV confident Filipino farmers' rights are protected as Senate ratifies anti-agri economic sabotage bill

BY HANNAH TORREGOZA

May 23, 2024 01:33 PM

Senator Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito on Thursday, lauded the Senate's ratification of the bicameral conference committee report on the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Bill.

The Senate ratified the bicam report on the measure on Wednesday, May 22, 2024.

“Ang panukalang ito ay binhi ng pag-asa para sa ating mga magsasaka. Ito ay itinanim ng Senado para sa kanilang kinabukasan (This measure is a seed of hope for our farmers. The Senate planted this for their future),” said Ejercito, principal author of the bill.

The bill aims to repeal Republic Act No. 10845 or the “Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act” and introduce stringent penalties for smuggling, hoarding, profiteering and forming cartels of agricultural and fishery products.

This way, the senator said, the measure will safeguard the state from economic saboteurs and protect the livelihood of Filipino farmers.

Ejercito pointed out that the measure will also level the playing field for local farmers as it “will purge our land of profiteers, hoarders, and cartels.”

“They are the pests who are choking our agricultural sector. This bill will uproot them and put them in jail, where they belong,” he emphasized.

At the same time, Ejercito commended Senator Cynthia Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform, for shepherding the passage of the measure in the Senate.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/23/jv-confident-filipino-farmers-rights-are-protected-as-senate-ratifies-anti-agri-economic-sabotage-bill>

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May 23, 2024 02:52 PM

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President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. (RTVM Screenshot)

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In his speech, the President said the government has not forgotten about the security challenges in Maguindanao del Sur, whose history of disorder has left a stain on its land and the daily lives of people.

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through this. I assure you that the safety of our people remains my administration's priority)," he said.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/23/marcos-security-remains-admin-s-top-priority>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Reviving a lost textile may be key to reviving a lost crop (Part III)

BY YVETTE TAN

May 24, 2024 00:06 AM

AVANT GARDENER



This column concludes the three-part series on textile conservationist and cultural advocate Raffy Tesoro's bid to revive Philippine muslin, commonly known as kulambo.

Last week, I wrote about the economic potential of Philippine muslin, some of the challenges Tesoro and his team of 17 weavers have encountered, and the need to cultivate Philippine cotton if we want to be competitive in the premium products market.

Now, let's talk about Tesoro's plans with kulambo beyond mosquito netting, as well as the agricultural aspect of growing Philippine cotton.

At the time of the interview, the new wave of Philippine muslin has not yet been made available to the Philippine market.

"I'm still about 70 percent to getting them to the required thinness. Let's say around mid or late this year, hopefully."

In an era of air conditioning, electric fans, and heck, plastic kulambos, is there even still a need for a fabric that's famously challenging to produce?

Yes.

"Other than mosquito netting, fashion. I'm going to make them into thin Cubanos or gangster shirts. I can embroider it and it's nice and loose and we have a guy wear... a sando underneath [with] jeans and boots and it's so cool."

Tesoro added that he chose to situate his project in Ibaan, Batangas, because that's where most of the country's kulambo used to come from.

"[I'm reviving it] at the source. It's not like I'm going to bring Inabel to them. That's weird and disrespectful."

As mentioned in my previous column, this project isn't about weaving alone. Folks tend to forget that once upon a time, all our clothes came from agricultural crops, the most popular one being cotton.

And as Tesoro mentioned in the previous installments, the Philippines used to grow its own cotton. Before the influx of polyester and other synthetic threads now used in a lot of traditionally designed textiles, weavers grew their own cotton. Some farms grew them too, but they were edged out by more profitable crops like tobacco and sugar.

Now, he's hoping to encourage farmers to grow Philippine cotton once again as part of a plan to put premium Philippine textiles on the international map.

"To make it make sense economically, we're trying to mix it in with food crops on a crop rotation basis. We're doing contract farming for corn and sugar.... What works with that? Cotton. [During] on the dead cycle for those crops, we plant the cotton."

The plan, if it succeeds, is pretty intensive. "If we can make it, there would be four harvest cycles, depending on the type of crops you plant.

"For business reasons, you need to have a corn crop twice a year. Then I can put cotton and say, a legume, and of course we have a waste management system with organic fertilizers....

"Also investment in irrigation systems and water entrapment. [A] water catcher is essential because most of our farmland is rain-fed, I'd say 95 percent. That makes your harvest very iffy, especially with cotton, because cotton is a very water-hungry plant and if you starve the cotton of water, the fibers grow out to be very brittle, so it makes it useless.

"We're still working on that, but hopefully, by next year or two years; we already have test fields, also in Batangas," he said. "No more than five years."

In a country where most people cannot think beyond the short term, a timeline of two to five years seems like forever, and many entrepreneurs would have deemed the project unworthy of attention.

But Tesoro, who is no stranger to the international fashion, advertising, and business community, understands that doing something right is better than doing something fast, especially for something he hopes will positively add to the Philippines' stature in fashion, and by extension, agriculture.

"The goal of this project is part of a much larger vision... to provide a suite of products and techniques that we can showcase to ourselves and to the world that this is what we can do, that this is what we can offer, that this is what we are worth," he said.

"We are a sophisticated civilization that's lost its way."

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/24/reviving-a-lost-textile-may-be-key-to-reviving-a-lost-crop-part-iii>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Marcos distributes aid to El Niño-hit farmers in southc

[Alexis Romero](#) - The Philippine Star

May 24, 2024 | 12:00am



Speaker Martin Romualdez, assisted by Tawi-Tawi Rep. Dimszar Sali, leads the distribution of assistance under the Cash and Rice Distribution or CARD program to 5,000 beneficiaries in Tawi-Tawi yesterday.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos was in Tawi-Tawi and Maguindanao del Sur yesterday to distribute aid to farmers and fisherfolk as part of his visits to provinces hardest hit by the El Niño phenomenon, which has so far left 374 areas in the country under a state of calamity.

In Bongao, Marcos provided more than P20 million in financial aid to sectors affected by El Niño in the provinces of Tawi-Tawi and Basilan. He turned over P10 million in check to Tawi-Tawi Gov. Yshmael Sali and Basilan Gov. Hadjiman Salliman-Hataman while farmers and fishermen were given P10,000 each.

More than P30 million in cash assistance was given to farmers and fishermen from Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur during the President's visit to Datu Abdullah Sangki.

Marcos handed over P10 million in financial aid each to Maguindanao del Sur Gov. Bai Mariam Mangudadatu, Maguindanao del Norte Gov. Abdulraof Macacua and Lanao del Sur Gov. Mamintal Alonto Adiong Jr.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development also gave P10,000 each to affected farmers and fisherfolk from the three provinces.

Task Force El Niño spokesman and Presidential Communications Assistant Secretary Joey Villarama said the 374 cities and municipalities under state of calamity, include the entire Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

He said the amount of damage to agriculture has increased to P9.5 billion while the affected farmlands have reached 163,000 hectares or equivalent to 25 percent of the worst El Niño experienced in 1997.

"Because we are now in the tail-end of El Niño, we, especially the Department of Agriculture, expect that the subsequent increases in the data will not be that much," Villarama told state-run People's Television.

"Hopefully, because there were rains in the past week, the heat will subside, we can start the rehabilitation of agricultural lands and prepare for the coming rainy season and La Niña," he added.

During his visit to Tawi-Tawi and Maguindanao del Sur, Marcos assured local residents of continuous assistance and vowed to carry out more projects that would preserve peace and stability.

"I am happy with the peace you are enjoying right now. To strengthen it, I am happy to report that the government is undertaking projects for your development, such as the Improving Growth Corridors in Mindanao Road Sector Project that we launched last year," the President said in Tawi-Tawi.

In his speech in Maguindanao del Sur, Marcos asked state agencies to ensure that the government's assistance and services would reach the people.

"The history of conflict has left a mark in this beautiful land that continues to affect your daily life. But I know we will overcome it. I assure you that the safety of our people will remain a priority of my administration," the Chief Executive said.

“As we continue to address the roots of the conflict, we will achieve true peace and understanding in our community. So I urge everyone to unite and to take this opportunity to work with the government,” he added.

The Presidential Communications Office said the government has also provided a total of P478.85 million to other Mindanao provinces that felt the impact of El Niño, namely Zamboanga, Sultan Kudarat, General Santos, Iligan City and Cagayan de Oro.

While the country is still grappling with the effects of El Niño, Marcos directed national government agencies to work closely with local governments to prepare for La Niña.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/24/2357529/marcos-distributes-aid-el-nio-hit-farmers-southc>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Senate ratifies bill making agricultural smuggling non-bailable

[Marc Jayson Cayabyab](#), [Elijah Felice Rosales](#) - The Philippine Star

May 24, 2024 | 12:00am



The Senate ratified the bicameral conference committee report on the measure Wednesday night before the sine die adjournment.

Miguel De Guzman

MANILA, Philippines — The Senate has ratified the bicameral conference version of the bill that seeks to make agricultural smuggling a non-bailable offense, according to the principal author Sen. JV Ejercito.

This means the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Bill now needs only the signature of President Marcos to become a law, Ejercito said. The bill is a priority measure.

The Senate ratified the bicameral conference committee report on the measure Wednesday night before the sine die adjournment.

The bill aims to repeal Republic Act 10845, or the “Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act,” and introduce harsher penalties for smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and forming cartels for agricultural and fishery products.

Ejercito said the measure would level the playing field for local farmers as it “will purge our land of profiteers, hoarders, and cartels.”

“They are the pests who are choking our agricultural sector. This bill will uproot them and put them in jail, where they belong,” he said.

Ejercito lauded Sen. Cynthia Villar for her efforts in helping pass the bill in the Senate.

Meanwhile, in another development seen to lower the prices of agriculture produce, trucks carrying farm goods will be exempted from toll hikes beginning June 1. The arrangement is part of toll operators’ contribution to government’s push to bring down logistics costs and reduce consumer prices.

Toll road operators will provide cost relief to trucks carrying farm goods through the Agri-Trucks Toll Rebate Program, wherein truckers will receive rebates for toll increases dating back to June 2023.

The rebate will cover all truckers registered with the Food Lane Accreditation Project, managed by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Aside from being included in the DA list, truckers must register RFID accounts with Autosweep and Easytrip to enjoy the rebate. Autosweep serves as the RFID for expressways operated by San Miguel Corp. (SMC), while Easytrip is for tollways handled by the Metro Pacific Tollways Corp. (MPTC).

SMC and MPTC will generate weekly report of toll passages of agricultural trucks. The concessionaires will later return the toll increases collected from truckers during the week.

Toll Regulatory Board executive director Alvin Carullo said the program will run for at least 90 days, but the rebate may be extended depending on its impact on commodity prices.

Citing records from the DA, Carullo said around 900 truckers are registered with the Food Lane Accreditation Project, but only 200 to 300 use the expressways regularly.

Carullo expects agricultural trucks to frequent the tollways now that they are exempted from toll hikes, speeding up the flow of farm goods around Luzon.

Initial estimates from the MPTC showed that an agricultural truck traveling between Balintawak and Tarlac can save up to P156 from the program. MPTC operates the North Luzon Expressway and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway, linked to the farming region of Central Luzon.

MPTC will also distribute rebates in the Manila-Cavite Expressway of P4 in Parañaque City and P25 in Kawit, Cavite. Meanwhile, SMC will give out rebates of as much as P30 to trucks passing through the Alabang-Calamba section of the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX).

Toll road operators will conduct spot checks in their respective expressways to ensure that trucks provided with rebates are really transporting agricultural goods.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/24/2357541/senate-ratifies-bill-making-agricultural-smuggling-non-bailable>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Trade fair generates \$165 million export sales

[Louella Desiderio](#) - The Philippine Star

May 24, 2024 | 12:00am



This photo shows crates carried by a forklift in the port of Manila.

[Philstar.com / File](#)

MANILA, Philippines — Over \$165 million worth of export sales were generated at the country's international food trade exhibition held earlier this month, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said.

The DTI's export promotions arm, the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), said that the initial and unofficial total export sales generated from the IFEX Philippines held on May 10 to 12, at the World Trade Center in Pasay City crossed the \$165 million mark.

The export sales are higher compared to the \$163.29 million raked in from the previous year's edition.

The CITEM said this year's event had an estimated crowd of nearly 10,000.

With more than 500 exhibitors and event partners from across the country, the IFEX welcomed visitors composed of the diplomatic corps, government agencies, international and local trade buyers and partners, retail customers and media outlets.

The IFEX is a platform to showcase the country's food offerings, innovative craft and export capabilities.

"Our country has a rich tapestry of flavors that remain unknown to certain parts of the world," CITEM officer-in-charge and deputy executive director Ma. Lourdes Mediran said.

Trade Undersecretary Ana Carolina Sanchez, who spoke on behalf of Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual, underscored the importance of having mechanisms like the IFEX to promote inclusive growth opportunities and sustainable development.

For food in particular, she said the DTI has a partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Clark International Airport Corp. for the Three-Year Food Logistic Action Agenda, which focuses on establishing secure food distribution routes and access points.

This is expected to result in affordable and reliable food sources across the country.

Meanwhile, DA Agribusiness and Marketing Service OIC and director Junibert de Sagun, commended IFEX for continuing to be a world-class showcase for Philippine food.

The IFEX included over 42 regional exhibitors.

Beyond serving as a business-to-business platform, de Sagun said IFEX provides an opportunity to promote more trade relations and economic opportunities.

"As we continue to share our language of food to the world, we look forward to more fruitful partnerships for a masaganang Philippines," he said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/24/2357390/trade-fair-generates-165-million-export-sales>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

'Paella a la Cordillera' feast to conclude CAR Farmers and Fisherfolks' month celebration

[Artemio Dumlao](#) - Philstar.com

May 23, 2024 | 7:49pm



Paella

Pixabay

BAGUIO CITY — To end the Farmers and Fisherfolks' month with a bang, a massive “Paella a la Cordillera” will be served to revelers on May 30, 2024 at the Melvin Jones Grounds at Burnham Park in Baguio City.

The “Paella a la Cordillera” will be a mixture of ingredients from the produce of farmers and fisherfolks of the highlands.

At least 100 kilograms of Chong-ak rice from Kalinga, 10 kilos of “Pinunnog” or the Kiangan, Ifugao version of smoked blood sausage, “Kiniing” or smoked meat, longganisa and native chicken meat will be carefully blended with 15 liters of olive oil and different spices.

Vegetables from highland farms will also add up to the flavor of the paella.

Marlyn Tejero, Chief of the Field Operations Division of the Department of Agriculture (DA) Cordillera, said that the ingredients especially the vegetables are mostly from Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)-certified farmers of Benguet.

The native chicken are from Mountain Province farmers. On the other hand, the longganisa will come from Abra.

According to Tejero, most of the ingredients are coming from young Cordillera farmers.

Tejero explained that the "paella" is preferred as it will consist and feature the use of the different products of farmers in the entire region.

She bared that chefs from Baguio and Manila will join hands in cooking the Cordillera-inspired recipe.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/05/23/2357385/paella-la-cordillera-feast-conclude-car-farmers-and-fisherfolks-month-celebration>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Heat causing stroke, weight loss in pigs

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

May 24, 2024 | 12:00am



From an average of 115 to 120 kilos, pigs' weight went down to 90 to 100 kilos, the group's vice chair Alfred Ng said in an interview.

Cesar Ramirez

MANILA, Philippines — Pigs are suffering from heat stroke and weight reduction amid the high heat index nationwide caused by El Niño, according to the National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc.

From an average of 115 to 120 kilos, pigs' weight went down to 90 to 100 kilos, the group's vice chair Alfred Ng said in an interview.

“The El Niño has created excessive heat. This is the first time that we experienced this kind of heat index. The performance of the pigs dropped,” Ng said.

Hog farmers are forced to sell pigs despite their lower weight due to high feed costs, he added.

“Even when you feed them, the pigs don't eat much because of the high heat index and they do not grow,” he explained.

Pigs have also died due to heat stroke, he noted.

“Mainly because if they do not eat, their immune system is compromised. They suffered secondary infections, bacterial infections,” he said.

Ng did not disclose the percentage of pigs affected by extreme heat but said it can be managed.

The retail price of pork should not exceed P360 per kilo as the Department of Agriculture reported that pork belly was sold for as high as P420 per kilo, Ng maintained.

“The farmgate price is around P200 to P205 per kilo and normally traders will add P120 (per kilo) for the additional cost so it (retail price of pork belly) should only be between P320 and P340 per kilo. We do not know why it increased that much in the market. The problem is in the middle,” he said.

Ng gave assurance that there is enough local supply of pork, with hog production expected to increase between 10 and 15 percent this year.

As for African swine fever cases in Luzon, no increase has been recorded, Ng said.

Hog farmers are involved in repopulation efforts, he noted.

“They are trying to increase the repopulation. It is only being hampered by the high heat index,” he added.

In a speech delivered by Agriculture Undersecretary for livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. acknowledged the vital role of the livestock sector in driving economic growth, ensuring food security and supporting the livelihoods of millions of farmers.

“However, the traditional methods of livestock farming are being challenged by various factors such as climate change, resource scarcity and growing global demand,” Laurel said during the three-day Livestock Philippines and Aquaculture Philippines 2024 at the World Trade Center in Pasay City.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/24/2357525/heat-causing-stroke-weight-loss-pigs>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

US reports 2nd human case of bird flu tied to dairy cow outbreak

[Lucie Aubourg](#) - Agence France-Presse

May 23, 2024 | 2:06pm



A dairy cow

Pixabay / Jaclou-DL

WASHINGTON, United States — A second case of bird flu has been found in a human, US health authorities announced Wednesday, less than two months after the first one as an outbreak of the disease circulates widely among dairy cows.

Both individuals infected with the virus called H5N1 -- the first in Texas, the second in Michigan -- were dairy farm workers who suffered only minor symptoms and have recovered, according to authorities.

Despite the second infection, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said its risk assessment for the general public remained "low," but it did suggest it expects more cases.

Given the high levels of the virus "in raw milk from infected cows, and the extent of the spread of this virus in dairy cows, similar additional human cases could be identified," the CDC said.

However, "sporadic human infections with no ongoing spread will not change the CDC risk assessment for the US general public, which CDC considers to be low."

The latest case in Michigan was detected in "a worker on a dairy farm where H5N1 virus has been identified in cows," the agency said.

According to Michigan Health and Human Services, the worker had only mild symptoms and has recovered.

Two specimens were collected from the worker -- one from the nose and the other from the eye -- with only the eye specimen testing positive.

Additionally, "similar to the Texas case, the patient only reported eye symptoms," the CDC said.

Chickens, cows, humans

As of Wednesday a total of 52 US herds were infected with bird flu across nine of the 50 states.

The US Department of Agriculture said it has identified spread between cows within the same herd and between dairies associated with cattle movements.

When treated, sick cows can recover "with little to no associated mortality," the department said in a statement in late April.

It added: "It is important to remember that thus far, we have not found changes to the virus that would make it more transmissible to humans and between people."

The USDA has made financial aid available to help affected farms, for example by providing protective equipment for their employees.

According to the CDC, "people with close or prolonged, unprotected exposures to infected birds or other animals (including livestock)... are at greater risk of infection."

Though the current H5N1 strain has killed millions of poultry during the present wave, affected cows have not fallen severely sick.

Cows and goats joined the list of victims in March, surprising experts because the animals were not thought to be susceptible to this type of influenza.

Virus fragments meanwhile have been found in pasteurized milk, but health authorities say milk sold in US stores is safe because pasteurization effectively kills the disease.

There is no evidence of human-to-human transmission at present but health officials fear that if the virus were to eventually spread widely it could mutate into a form that could pass between humans.

Avian influenza A(H5N1) first emerged in 1996 but since 2020, the number of outbreaks in birds has grown exponentially, alongside an increase in the number of infected mammals.

la-bfm/dw/mlm

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<https://www.philstar.com/world/2024/05/23/2357326/us-reports-2nd-human-case-bird-flu-tied-dairy-cow-outbreak>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Trucks hauling farm products exempt from toll hikes for 3 months

By: [Tyrone Jasper C. Piad](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:36 AM May 24, 2024



FILE PHOTO: NLEX toll gates. INQUIRER FILES

By June 1, trucks delivering agriculture goods will be exempted from toll hikes on the country's expressways for three months under a rebate program, as the government aims to bring down logistics costs and stabilize food prices.

The [Toll Regulatory Board \(TRB\)](#), Department of Finance, Department of Transportation and the Department of Agriculture (DA) are working with expressway operators for this project.

Under the Agri-Trucks Toll Rebate Program, the truckers will receive the rebates through their radio frequency identification (RFID) accounts on a weekly basis.

A rebate—equivalent to the implemented toll increase—is to be credited because truckers will still have to pay the full toll when they pass through the interchanges.

This will be computed based on weekly toll transaction reports generated by the tollway operators.

“This program aims to protect the welfare of the general public by minimizing the impact of toll rate increase on the overall inflationary situation to ensure the stability of food prices,” TRB Executive Director Alvin Carullo said.

“The TRB, together with the different government agencies, acknowledges the toll expressway concessionaires and operators for their full support and cooperation as this will not be possible if they did not agree to implement this exemption,” he added.

900 truckers

About 900 truckers are expected to benefit from the rebate program, Carullo said. He encouraged more of them to register to avail themselves of the cashback benefit.

Carullo explained the three-month implementation period could be extended depending on the results of the pilot testing. “We will make the proper recommendation to the board after three months,” he said.

The rebate program covers the North Luzon Expressway, Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway, R-1 Expressway and R-1 Expressway Extension of the Manila-Cavite Toll Expressway. The rebates for these tollways will range from P4 to P156 per transaction.

For Muntinlupa-Cavite Expressway and South Luzon Expressway, rebates will amount to P2 to P30 per transaction.

To be entitled to the rebate, the truckers must first enroll their RFID accounts under the Food Lane Accreditation Project.

Requirements include original DA accreditation certificate, a copy of the vehicle's official receipt/certificate of registration, a valid identification card and the RFID accounts. The documents will be subject to a verification process within seven working days.

Under the guidelines, the tollway concessionaires shall provide specific lanes for the DA-accredited trucks for ease of accounting for the transaction. The lanes should be nonexclusive "to make sure that the toll plazas' capacity is not affected for such designation."

Improved performance

Until recently, the country had lagged behind its neighbors in bringing down logistics costs.

In 2018, the Philippines had some of the highest logistics costs among the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), according to a Philippine Institute for Development Studies study.

In the same year, the Philippines ranked 60th out of 160 countries in the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) of World Bank.

But in the latest LPI, it jumped several spots to reach the 43rd place, ranking within the top third of 139 economies. From sixth among Asean countries in 2018, the Philippines now ranks fourth ahead of Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos, the 2023 report showed.

According to the World Bank report, "improving logistics performance requires countries to consider it as a cross-cutting policy area, as the work crosses the administrative boundaries of transportation, commerce infrastructure, industry, finance, social issues and the environment."

A separate Department of Trade and Industry report showed that the country's logistical costs accounted for 24 percent to 53 percent of wholesale prices. On the other hand, shipping and port handling costs covered 8 percent to 30 percent, depending on the route, and roughly 5 percent of the retail price of goods.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1944271/trucks-hauling-farm-products-exempt-from-toll-hikes-for-3-months>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Farmers' group notes discrepancy in PSA latest rice stock records

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:14 PM May 23, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — A farmers' group on Thursday noted 800,000 metric tons worth of discrepancies in the April 1 rice stock levels and output released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) cited the [PSA's latest inventory report](#), which showed that the country's rice stocks totaled 1.64 million tons as of April 1, 2024 — only sufficient for 44 days of national consumption on daily usage of 37,500 metric tons.

However, the FFF noted that stock levels from January 1 — starting inventories, actual rice output, and documented import arrivals during the first quarter of the year — indicated that the stocks should have been around 2.46 million tons or good for about 66 days of consumption.

“The discrepancy of about 800,000 metric tons, equivalent to about 22 days supply, is very significant. If the PSA data are correct, it means that our palay output has been overstated all along,” FFF national manager Raul Montemayor said in a statement.

“They also imply that our rice supply will tighten in the coming months, especially since El Niño's impact on the second quarter harvest is expected to be more serious,” he added.

PSA data also showed that rice output during the first quarter of 2024 declined by about 2 percent, with yields dropping by 1.8 percent on average and harvested area decreased by only 0.13 percent.

Due to this, the FFF urged the PSA to review its data-gathering methodologies and synchronize them with the information systems of the Department of Agriculture to

avoid confusion and miscalculations in determining actual rice stock levels and outputs.

It noted that it flagged even larger discrepancies in past years, with palay output figures in 2022 possibly being overestimated by nearly 25 percent or 5 million tons.

INQUIRER.net has reached out to the PSA for comment but has yet to receive a response as of writing.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1944082/farmers-group-notes-discrepancy-on-psa-latest-rice-stock-records>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

US reports 2nd human case of bird flu tied to dairy cow outbreak

Agence France-Presse / 01:53 PM May 23, 2024

A bottle of raw milk is displayed for sale at a store in Temecula, Calif., on Wednesday, May 8, 2024. Sales of raw milk appear to be on the rise, despite an outbreak of bird flu in U.S. dairy cows. Federal officials warn about the health risks of drinking raw milk at any time, but especially during this novel outbreak. Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A second case of bird flu has been found in a human, US health authorities announced Wednesday, less than two months after the first one as an outbreak of the disease circulates widely among dairy cows.

Both individuals infected with the virus called H5N1 — the first in Texas, the second in Michigan — were dairy farm workers who suffered only minor symptoms and have recovered, according to authorities.

Despite the second infection, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said its risk assessment for the general public remained “low,” but it did suggest it expects more cases.

Given the high levels of the virus “in raw milk from infected cows, and the extent of the spread of this virus in dairy cows, similar additional human cases could be identified,” the CDC said.

However, “sporadic human infections with no ongoing spread will not change the CDC risk assessment for the US general public, which CDC considers to be low.”

The latest case in Michigan was detected in “a worker on a dairy farm where H5N1 virus has been identified in cows,” the agency said.

[This Texas veterinarian helped crack the mystery of bird flu in cows](#)

According to Michigan Health and Human Services, the worker had only mild symptoms and has recovered.

Two specimens were collected from the worker — one from the nose and the other from the eye — with only the eye specimen testing positive.

Additionally, “similar to the Texas case, the patient only reported eye symptoms,” the CDC said.

Chickens, cows, humans

As of Wednesday a total of 52 US herds were infected with bird flu across nine of the 50 states.

The US Department of Agriculture said it has identified spread between cows within the same herd and between dairies associated with cattle movements.

This handout electron micrograph, taken at 150,000 magnification, courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows an avian influenza A (H5N1) virion—a type of bird flu virus which is a subtype of avian influenza A. Agence France-Presse

When treated, sick cows can recover “with little to no associated mortality,” the department said in a statement in late April.

It added: “It is important to remember that thus far, we have not found changes to the virus that would make it more transmissible to humans and between people.”

The USDA has made financial aid available to help affected farms, for example by providing protective equipment for their employees.

According to the CDC, “people with close or prolonged, unprotected exposures to infected birds or other animals (including livestock)... are at greater risk of infection.”

Though the current H5N1 strain has killed millions of poultry during the present wave, affected cows have not fallen severely sick.

Cows and goats joined the list of victims in March, surprising experts because the animals were not thought to be susceptible to this type of influenza.

Virus fragments meanwhile have been found in pasteurized milk, but health authorities say milk sold in US stores is safe because pasteurization effectively kills the disease.

There is no evidence of human-to-human transmission at present but health officials fear that if the virus were to eventually spread widely it could mutate into a form that could pass between humans.

Avian influenza A(H5N1) first emerged in 1996 but since 2020, the number of outbreaks in birds has grown exponentially, alongside an increase in the number of infected mammals.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/237279/us-reports-2nd-human-case-of-bird-flu-tied-to-dairy-cow-outbreak>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

In Bohol, state of calamity up as agri losses hit P420 million

By: [Leo Udtohan](#) - Correspondent / [@leoudtohanINO](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:04 AM May 24, 2024



WHERE'S THE FISH? This fishpond in the town of Carmen has been reduced to wasteland as the long dry spell and drought hit Bohol. The province has been placed under a state of calamity due to the impact of El Niño. —LEO UDTOHAN

TAGBILARAN CITY—Bohol has been placed under a state of calamity after [damage to agriculture](#) and fisheries caused by the prolonged dry spell and drought brought about by the [El Niño weather phenomenon](#) reached at least P420 million.

The declaration made by the provincial board was in response to the recommendation of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

Council (PDRRMC) on May 21 to allow the provincial government to tap the calamity funds to help the farmers affected by El Niño.

Acting provincial agriculturist Larry Pamugas said damage to agriculture and fisheries already reached P420,842,864, affecting at least 100,000 farmers.

Of this amount, damage to crops like rice, corn and cassava was pegged at P419,653,670.52 in 36 of 48 towns. The drought destroyed more than 11,000 hectares of rice farms and more than 90 ha of corn fields in Bohol.

Damage to fisheries and livestock was estimated at P756,900 and P433,294 respectively, according to the report from the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist.

With the declaration of a state of calamity, Gov. Aris Aumentado said the province could tap 30 percent of the province's quick response funds to help the affected farmers.

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood in Bohol which is acknowledged as the "rice bowl" of Central Visayas region.

at least 47,000 ha of rice fields in Bohol, 24,000 ha are irrigated through dams, small water catchments and diversionary canals. The remaining 23,000 ha rely on rains.

Water supply

The province's water reservoirs—Malinao Dam in Pilar town, Bayongan Dam in San Miguel town, Capayas Dam in Ubay town and Zamora Dam in Talibon town—have almost dried up due to lack of rain.

The National Irrigation Administration reported that water levels in dams were way below the target for serviceable areas. Malinao Dam, for instance, could only supply for 350 ha out of the target 4,150 ha.

Pamugas encouraged farmers to plant high-value crops, like vegetables that require less water, amid the shortage of rainfall in the province.

“In terms of our interventions, we are prepared to give free seeds, fertilizers and fingerlings for the affected fishpond operators like tilapia growers,” Pamugas said.

The province has been experiencing drought since March with rainfall still below normal this month.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1944220/in-bohol-state-of-calamity-up-as-agri-losses-hit-p420-million>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Hog weights falling due to hot weather

May 23, 2024 | 9:22 pm



REUTERS

HOG WEIGHTS have declined due to the intense heat brought by El Niño, farmers said.

“The performance of our pigs, of course, is also falling. So, instead of being able to grow them to 120 to 150 kilograms live weight, now, maybe, it’s like 90 to 100 (kilos) now,” National Federation of Hog Farmers, Inc. Vice-Chairman Alfred Ng told reporters.

He added that the heat brought about by El Niño has hampered feeding, resulting in lower live weights.

“This is the first time that we experienced this kind of heat, The heat index is through the roof,” Mr. Ng said.

He added that farmgate price for hogs was between 200 to 205 per kilo liveweight.

The government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), said El Niño-related heat and dry conditions are expected to continue despite the ongoing transition to La Niña.

Mr. Ng said farmers have no choice but to release hogs to the market when they are old enough.

“Even if you feed them, (they) don’t eat much, and they don’t grow. That’s a waste of performance,” he said.

The heat is also affecting the hogs’ resistance to disease, according to Mr. Ng.

“If they don’t eat, the pig’s immune system is also compromised. So, *pag merong...mga* bacterial infections *na pumapasok, natamaan din sila* (they are more vulnerable to bacterial infections),” he said.

Hog production declined 4.3% during the first quarter, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. Output was around 419.94 thousand metric tons.

He added that hog farmers are continuing their repopulation efforts through the aid of the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion program, following major culls to contain African Swine Fever.

The hog numbers “are just holding steady now because the weather is hot,” he said.

“It doesn’t make sense to bring animals into a farm that is too hot because the animals will only suffer,” he added. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/23/597195/hog-weights-falling-due-to-hot-weather/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Discrepancy in PSA rice tally points to ‘overstated’ domestic output — farmers

May 23, 2024 | 9:22 pm



BW FILE PHOTO

A DISCREPANCY between rice import and inventory data leaves some 800,000 metric tons of the staple grain unaccounted for, suggesting that domestic rice production may have been overstated, a farmers’ group said.

“The discrepancy of about 800,000 metric tons (MT), equivalent to about 22 days’ supply, is very significant,” Raul Q. Montemayor, national manager of the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said in a statement on Thursday.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported a national rice inventory of 1.64 million MT in early April, sufficient for 44 days of consumption.

The FFF said that the actual stock levels, when factoring in the Jan. 1 starting inventory, domestic rice output, and import arrivals in the first quarter should be about 2.46 million MT.

“If the PSA data are correct, it means that our palay output has been overstated all along,” Mr. Montemayor added.

“They also imply that our rice supply will tighten in the coming months, especially since El Niño’s impact on the second quarter harvest is expected to be more serious,” he said.

According to a PSA report, palay or unmilled rice production dropped 2% to 4.69 million MT during the first quarter due to El Niño.

“Inexplicably however, rainfed areas appear to have been less affected than irrigated farms despite the lack of rain. The percentage reduction in output and yield in irrigated areas was about double that in areas dependent on rainfall,” he added.

On average yields dropped 1.8%, while harvested area decreased by only 0.13% during the period.

The FFF further called on the PSA to review its data gathering methods and harmonize them with the practices of the Department of Agriculture. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/23/597196/discrepancy-in-psa-rice-tally-points-to-overstated-domestic-output-farmers/>

MANILA STANDARD

P8-M mussel production facility unveiled in UP Tacloban for 51st anniversary



Courtesy: University of the Philippines Tacloban/Facebook

By Ronald Reyes

May 23, 2024, 11:54 pm

Tacloban City—University of the Philippines President Angelo Jimenez on Thursday led the groundbreaking ceremony of the P8-million Mussel Glycogen Production Plant at the UP Tacloban Campus (UPTC).

“We know that the economy of Eastern Visayas is largely affected by green mussel or tahong production. We know that the red tide affects the conditions of our fishermen and, therefore, the economy of the region. This plant finds solutions to the problem in the community,” Jimenez said.

The university official was in the city as guest speaker for the 51st anniversary of UPTC. The plant, set to be the first in the Philippines, “will develop methods for producing glycogen on a scale that can be commercialized and used by large industries.”

“This provides the tahong with a crucial added value as a non-food product. It will address the economic losses of mussel farmers whose harvest has been regularly

devastated by the poisonous plankton species that cause red tide,” Jimenez said during the ceremony.

The Mussel Glycogen Production Plant is mainly financed by the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic, and Natural Resources Research and Development (DOST-PCAARRD).

During his visit, Jimenez also presented UP’s Strategic Plan for 2023-2029 and the plan for the elevation of UPTC from a college to a constituent university of the UP System “to better serve the needs of the people of Eastern Visayas.”

“We are here to underscore the national university’s commitment for further growth and development in UP Tacloban,” Jimenez said during a press conference at the Leyte Samar Heritage Center in UPTC.

Speaking alongside UPTC Dean, Dr. Patricia Arinto, Jimenez also unveiled to the public the campus vision and accomplishments after it became an autonomous unit on May 23, 2023.

In a separate press statement, UPTC disclosed the roadmap of the college toward becoming the ninth constituent university of the UP System, which include the “expansion of academic, research, and public service programs; and empowerment of local communities through partnerships with Eastern Visayas cities and municipalities.”

According to UPTC, the college is also keen to launch its “intensified efforts to further contribute to cultural preservation and enrichment, and sustainable development in the region.”

“In harmony with the UP System’s thrust to make University admissions more inclusive, UPTC aims to increase its student population by reaching out to potential applicants from underrepresented sectors, and geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas,” UPTC said in a news release.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314450441/p8-m-mussel-production-facility-unveiled-in-up-tacloban-for-51st-anniversary.html>

PBBM brings aid to El Niño-hit folk in Sulu



TAWI-TAWI SORTIE. President Marcos Jr. led yesterday the distribution of presidential assistance to farmers, fisherfolk and families at the DEPED Gymnasium in the municipality of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi province. He was joined by House Speaker Martin Romualdez and the largest ever contingent of solons to join the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair. KJ Rosales/PPA POOL

By Charles Dantes

May 24, 2024, 12:30 am

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday led the distribution of more than P20 million in aid to farmers and fisherfolk affected by El Niño in Basilan and Tawi-Tawi.

Each province received P10 million, with farmers and fisherfolk receiving P10,000 each.

In his speech during the aid distribution, the President said the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was placed under a state of calamity due to El Niño.

“I want to let you know that your government is working hard to reduce its impact on our daily lives,” Mr. Marcos said.

“I am a witness to your hard work and excellence. So, expect that we will continue to strive hard to provide you with the right service and care so that you can achieve your dreams in life,” he added.

Expressing gratitude for their sacrifices, Marcos assured ongoing support for food security. The event, attended by House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez and 80 representatives, coincided with the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) distributed P10,000 each to 10,000 beneficiaries, while the Office of the House Speaker provided five kilos of rice per attendee. Several government agencies participated in hopes of alleviating the effects of El Niño in BARMM.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314450480/pbbm-brings-aid-to-el-nino-hit-folk-in-sulu.html>

Govt gears up for La Niña

By Kristina Maralit and Franco Jose C. Baroña

May 24, 2024

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday called for closer coordination between national agencies and local government units (LGUs) as the government prepares for La Niña.

Marcos made the call during his visit to Maguindanao del Sur, where he led the distribution of financial assistance to farmers and fisherfolk affected by El Niño.

"As June approaches, the extreme heat would be replaced by heavy rains. This is why I'm ordering all government agencies to continue coordinating with LGUs as preparation for La Niña," he said.



Over PhP30 million in cash assistance were personally extended by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to the fishermen and farmers affected by the El Niño phenomenon in Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur on Thursday. Photo from PCO

"This is to mitigate the effects of heavy floods we experience every year, like here in Maguindanao del Sur," Marcos said.

He directed the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to work closely with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other government agencies in carrying out the "Flood Risk Management Project sa Allah River Basin."

The project includes the rehabilitation of the provincial access road in Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Datu Hoffer Ampatuan, and the Rajah Buayan to ensure the seamless transport system and the local industry in Maguindanao del Sur.

The President distributed more than P30 million in cash assistance to the fishermen and farmers affected by El Niño in Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur.

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) Administrator Ariel Nepomuceno said on Thursday that the agency is working toward "zero casualties" and mitigating other possible impacts of La Niña, such as flooding.

"That is the first thing, no deaths and the safety of everyone," Nepomuceno said.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said the rainy season could start in June but will be slightly delayed because of a pre-developing La Niña and the ongoing El Niño.

La Niña will bring above-normal rainfall and more storms in the last quarter of the year and during the northeast monsoon or "amihan," Pagasa said.

A pre-developing La Niña is characterized by below-normal rainfall, it said.

"Strengthening disaster preparedness is always a shared responsibility. Everyone should cooperate and carry out necessary measures," Nepomuceno said.

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rexlon "Rex" Gatchalian accompanied the President on a visit to Tawi-Tawi.

Under its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation program, the DSWD distributed P10,000 in cash assistance to approximately 10,000 beneficiaries who were affected by a dry spell.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/24/news/national/govt-gears-up-for-la-nia/1948131>

Marcos vows to sustain Mindanao devt

By Catherine S. Valente

May 24, 2024

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday vowed to advance the development of Mindanao, calling it a crucial element in maintaining peace in the region.

"Because of your cooperation and unity, the peace will continue to grow, and our country will continue to progress. I am truly happy of the peace that you are experiencing now," Marcos said in his speech during the distribution of aid to farmers and fisherfolk affected by El Niño in Tawi-Tawi.

During the occasion, Marcos gave the provincial governments of Tawi-Tawi and Basilan P10 million each in assistance to alleviate the effects of El Niño.



President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. leads the distribution of presidential assistance to farmers, fisherfolk and families at the DEPED Gymnasium, Brgy. Tubig-Mampallam, Municipality of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi province on Thursday, May 23, 2024. (KJ ROSALES/PPA POOL)

"My goal for going around the country is to personally see if the residents are receiving the assistance from the government and if this addresses the effects of El Niño," he said.

The President added that connectivity will further bolster progress in the region.

"To strengthen this, I am happy to tell you that we will continue these development projects like the improving growth corridors in Mindanao Road Sector Project that we started last year. This will address the need for transportation and the improvement of your livelihood, as well as in maintaining peace and order in your place," Marcos said.

Eighty members of the House of Representatives joined the President in the aid distribution, as well as representatives from government agencies that include the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Labor and Employment, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, and Department of Agriculture.

"With all the government agencies here, from local leaders to every government employee, we will make sure that help, programs of the government, and opportunities will reach our countrymen, especially those in far-flung places like Basilan, like Tawi-Tawi," Marcos said.

The President led a similar event in Maguindanao on the same day.



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. leads the distribution of assistance to farmers, fisherfolk and their families at the Department of Education (DepEd) Gym in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi on May 23, 2024. PHOTO BY KJ ROSALES/PPA POOL

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/24/news/national/marcos-vows-to-sustain-mindanao-devt/1948120>

DA-6 seeks P6M for cloud seeding

By Eugene Y. Adiong

May 24, 2024

BACOLOD CITY – The Department of Agriculture in Region 6 (DA-6) has allotted P6 million for possible cloud seeding operations in Western Visayas, engineer Jose Albert Barrogo, DA assistant regional director, said Wednesday.

Barrogo said DA-6 regional director Dennis Arpia is now in their central office in Manila to "lobby for funds for the cloud seeding."

He said that while there have been rains in various parts of Negros Occidental "it is still below normal," based on the forecast of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

"The rain may still not be enough for the parched agricultural lands affected by the ongoing drought in the province," Barrogo said.

Barrogo added that they have monitored seedable clouds in the province.

"We met with Governor Eugenio Jose Lacson last week to discuss the possibility of cloud seeding operations in the province," he added.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of National Irrigation Administration, Negros Occidental Irrigation Management Office, Sugar Regulatory Administration, Bureau of Soils and Water Management, and Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPA).

Farmers in the province have asked for government intervention to help them with their farm lands that had been affected by the drought.

A report from the OPA shows that the damage to rice, corn, high-value commercial crops (HVCC) and fisheries had reached P318,958,988 on May 15.

Damage to rice was estimated at P298,474,128.14, affecting 8,431 farmers tilling 6,015 hectares of land in 28 local government units, the OPA reported.

Corn damage was P8,346,482.26 affecting 280 farmers tilling 189.29 hectares of land in 12 local government units (LGUs).

HVCC damage was P8,582,356, affecting 9,218 farmers tilling 6,287.94 hectares of land in four LGUs.

The OPA added that damage to fisheries was P3,556,022 affecting 34 fisherfolk in six LGUs.

The Negros Occidental Association of Chief Executives also passed Resolution 5 on May 10 "urgently requesting" the DA to conduct cloud seeding in Negros Occidental "to promptly and adequately address the massive and extensive drought caused by the El Niño phenomenon."

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/24/regions/da-6-seeks-p6m-for-cloud-seeding/1948087>

San Roque Dam nears critical level

By Gabriel L. Cardinoza

May 24, 2024

SAN MANUEL, Pangasinan – If strong rains do not fall soon in the Cordillera Mountains, the water level at the San Roque Dam here will continue to drop and may reach its critical level of 225 meters above sea level (masl), the weather bureau said.

As of 8 a.m. on Thursday, the dam's water level was 226.86 masl, according to the update posted by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) in its website.

The dam's water level was 0.11 meter lower than its reservoir level of 226.97 masl recorded at 8 a.m. on Wednesday.



The water elevation of the San Roque Dam in San Manuel, Pangasinan was recorded at 226 meters above sea level on May 23, 2024, one meter higher than its critical level of 225 masl.
FILE PHOTO BY GABRIEL CARDINOZA

Tom Valdez, vice president for corporate social responsibility of the San Roque Power Corp. (SRPC), allayed fears that the dam's water level will reach critical level, saying it has been raining in the mountains every afternoon.

SRPC operates the hydroelectric component of the dam.

"Slowly, the water level will rise," Valdez said in a telephone interview.

He also said that for 10 days — from June 1 to June 10 — the dam will go through its regular maintenance. This means that the dam will not produce electricity on those days, enabling it to save water.

The water used to turn the giant turbines to produce electricity flows to a reregulating pond below the dam.

The water collected in the pond is later released by the National Irrigation Administration to irrigate at least 21,000 hectares of rice fields in eastern and central Pangasinan.

"We operate the power plant to provide the needed amount of water for irrigation in a day," Valdez said.

As a peaking power plant, SRPC delivers electricity to the Luzon power grid during peak hours from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

San Roque Dam has a maximum water elevation of 280 masl.

"With the water level that we have now, we are only generating 45 megawatts of electricity every day," Valdez said.

At a water level of 225 masl, Valdez said the dam would no longer be able to produce electricity. But he added that a water tunnel could be opened for the irrigation needs of farmers.

The low water level situation at the dam was no longer new, Valdez said.

The dam's lowest water level was recorded in 2007, a dry year, when its reservoir elevation went down to 225.42 masl.

San Roque Dam is one of the three dams built in the Agno River. The other two are the Ambuklao Dam in Bokod, Benguet and the Binga Dam in Itogon, Benguet.

As cascading dams, the water released by the Ambuklao flows to Binga, while the water spilled from Binga is caught by the San Roque Dam downstream of the Agno River.

According to the dam water level update of Pagasa on Thursday, the water level at Ambuklao Dam was 742.75 masl. This was 0.36 meter higher than its water level of 742.39 masl on May 22. Ambuklao has a normal high water level of 752 masl.

For Binga, the recorded water level was 566.24 masl, which was 0.14 meter higher than its level of 566.40 masl on May 22. The dam has a maximum water level of 575 masl.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/24/regions/san-roque-dam-nears-critical-level/1948089>

Trucks carrying agri goods to get toll rebate

By Myla Iglesias

May 24, 2024



Relief. Vegetables are loaded on a 20-ton truck at the La Trinidad vegetable trading post ready for transport. The rebate aims to minimize the impact of toll rate increases on food inflation.

Several government agencies in collaboration with two major toll expressway operators are set to implement a toll rebate for agricultural trucks starting on June 1 to help reduce the impact of recent increases on the prices of food.

This is part of the toll rebate program launched yesterday by the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) together with the Department of Finance, Department of Transportation and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Initially, the scheme will last 90 days or until August but is subject to evaluation for possible extension.

The program allows DA-accredited truckers transporting agricultural goods/products to receive toll rebates equivalent to the recent enumerated toll increases.

For North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) and Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX), the toll rebate includes P16 for open system, P81 from Balintawak to Sta. Ines, P211 from Balintawak to Subic and P156 from Balintawak to Tarlac.

The toll rebate for the Manila-Cavite Expressway (Cavitex) is P4 for Parañaque City and P25 for Kawit, Cavite.

Meanwhile, the toll rebate at the South Luzon Expressway, Skyway and Muntinlupa-Cavite Expressway ranges from P2 to P30 per truck, according to San Miguel Corp.

“This program aims to protect the welfare of the general public by minimizing the impact of toll rate increase on the overall inflationary situation to ensure the stability of food prices. The TRB, together with the different government agencies, acknowledges the toll expressway concessionaires and operators for their full support and cooperation as this will not be possible if they did not agree to implement this exemption,” said Alvin Carullo, TRB executive director, in a press conference yesterday.

Carullo said an estimated 900 trucks passing through the expressways are expected to benefit from the program.

To qualify for the toll fee increase exemption, agri-trucks should be accredited by the DA and should have a valid Autosweep and/or Easytrip RFID. Submitted documents will undergo a verification process within seven working days.

Enrollees will be notified of their enrollment status via their registered email addresses.

Once approved, agri-truckers will enjoy a toll rebate that will be credited to their RFID accounts every Wednesday of the following week. As part of monitoring and to prevent abuse, spot checks will be conducted to ensure that enrolled trucks are transporting agricultural goods/products.

Non-compliance may result in disqualification from the program.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/trucks-carrying-agri-goods-to-get-toll-rebate/

1M families affected by El Niño: NDRRMC

By Victor Reyes

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May 24, 2024

Areas under state of calamity now 324

THE National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) yesterday said 324 cities and municipalities across the country have been placed under a state of calamity due to the continuing effects of the El Niño.

El Niño is a weather phenomenon that increases below-normal rainfall conditions that leads to dry spells and droughts.

In its Thursday situation report, the NDRRMC said the El Niño has affected the livelihood and living conditions of 1,075,690 families or 4,307,644 individuals in 5,174 barangays in 13 of the country's 17 regions.

The agency said 119 of the cities and municipalities under state of calamity are in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARRM), while 71 are in Western Visayas.

It added that 40 cities and municipalities in Cagayan Valley are also under a state of calamity, 32 in Soccsksargen, 28 in Central Visayas, 17 in Mimaropa, eight in Northern Mindanao, three each in Ilocos region and Zamboanga Peninsula, two in Eastern Visayas, and one in Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

The three regions with the highest number of affected population are Western Visayas (437,176 families or 1,635,869 individuals), Soccsksargen (148,123 families or 726,935 individuals), and BARMM (126,368 families or 623,231 individuals).

The other regions with affected population are Ilocos region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Mimaropa, Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao region, and CAR.

There were no reported affected population in the National Capital Region, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, and Bicol region.

The NDRRMC said it has provided P1.09 billion worth of assistance in Ilocos region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, Central Visayas,

Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao region, and Soccsksargen.

It said P906.19 million of the total assistance provided was in the form of cash aid.

Last March, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) reported that while El Niño is already weakening, its effect will persist until this month before the La Niña phenomenon sets in, possibly in the June-July-August season.

La Niña is a climate pattern that characterizes above average rains.

AYUDA

In BARMM, which is one of the regions hardest hit by the El Niño. President Marcos Jr. Yesterday distributed more than P50 million worth of financial and other forms of assistance.

The President, during his separate visits to Tawi-Tawi and Maguindanao Del Sur, handed checks of P10 million each to Tawi-Tawi Gov. Yshmael Sali, Basilan Gov. Hadjiman Salliman-Hataman, Maguindanao del Sur Gov. Bai Mariam Mangudadatu, Maguindanao del Norte Gov. Abdulraof Macacua, and Lanao del Sur Gov. Mamintal Alonto Adiong Jr. to help stave off the impact of the El Niño.

A check of P10,000 each was also handed to 10 farmers and fishermen beneficiaries from Tawi-Tawi and Basilan, and 10 beneficiaries from Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur.

The checks were on top of the P10,000 cash assistance distributed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to 10,000 beneficiaries composed of farmers, fisherfolk, and their families.

The President, in both events, said he personally visited the two provinces to see for himself the actual conditions on the ground and determine if the assistance that the national government is providing is sufficient to address the needs of affected families.

“Nais kong ipaalam sa inyo na nagsisikap ang inyong pamahalaan upang mabawasan ang tindi ng epekto nito sa ating pang araw-araw na buhay (I would like you to know that your government is working hard to lessen its effect in our daily lives),” Marcos said in his speech during his visit to Bongao in Tawi-Tawi.

He affirmed his administration’s commitment to continue assisting those affected and who are in need.

Some 80 members of the House of Representatives led by Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez joined the President in his visit to Tawi-Tawi and distributed five kilos of rice to each attendee.

The national government also launched the Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair – a program that brings frontline services and aid to marginalized communities all over the country – which is participated in by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and Department of Agriculture (DA).

The President assured the people of Tawi-Tawi that there would be more government projects in their province soon as it is part of his commitment to preserve peace in the locality and the Mindanao region. He said he would also be visiting the province a lot to see through the different projects and check with local communities.

Last year Marcos inaugurated the Improving Growth Corridors in the Mindanao Road Sector Project in Tawi-Tawi.

The government is also implementing several programs in Tawi-Tawi, among them the DSWD's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), Quick Response Fund and KALAHI- CIDSS Kapangyarihan at Kaunlaran sa Barangay which aim to provide assistance and jobs to individuals affected by calamities, the Bangsamoro Umpungan sa Nutrisyon or BANGUN to address malnutrition among children and pregnant women, and the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/ Displaced Workers (TUPAD) of the DOLE.

In Maguindanao del Sur, the President echoed his message that he chose to personally extend the financial assistance and witness the condition of those affected as well as to hear their sentiments and even ideas on how to mitigate the effects of the El Niño.

Marcos also assured the residents that his administration will continue to monitor the situation in the Mindanao region and the condition of its people to ensure more effective measures are implemented to respond to their needs.

He also assured the residents that the government is preparing ahead of the onset of the La Niña, with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) now closely working with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other government agencies to implement the "Flood Risk Management Project sa Allah River Basin."

The President said other government projects are already in the pipeline, including the rehabilitation of the Provincial Access Road in Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Datu Hoffer Ampatuan, and the Rajah Buayan aimed at ensuring seamless transport system and the local industry in Maguindanao del Sur.

Marcos also inaugurated, during his visit, the Malitubog-Maridagao Irrigation Project (MMIP) Stage II project that aims to provide sustainable irrigation system to thousands of farmlands in Cotabato and Maguindanao.

As this developed the DSWD said more than P439.95 million worth of family food packs have already been distributed to more than 1.24 million families or 4.78 persons who were affected by El Niño nationwide. – ***With Jocelyn Montemayor***

https://malaya.com.ph/news_news/1m-families-affected-by-el-nino-ndrrmc/

Heat stress threatens hog output

Ada Pelonia

May 24, 2024



El Niño stunted the growth of pigs, affecting the performance of the country's hog sector, according to the National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. (NatFed).

“This is the first time that we experienced this kind of heat, and this had an impact on the performance of the hog sector,” Alfred Ng, vice-chairman of NatFed, said on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the Livestock and Aquaculture Philippines 2024 in Pasay City.

“Instead of the usual liveweight of 120 to 150 kilos, hog raisers are considered lucky if their animals reach 90 to 100 kilos,” he said in a mix of English and Filipino.

Ng also said the stunted pigs were sold even before they reach the ideal liveweight as the animals refused to eat.

“Because animal feeds are expensive, chances are the raisers would sell the hogs once it reaches the right age even if their weights have declined,” he said. “Even if you try to feed them, they won’t eat and won’t grow.”

He said the raisers are restocking their farms to expand annual output by 10 percent to 15 percent.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the seasonally adjusted value of livestock production recorded a 1.8 percent decrease.

“Hog was the top contributor to the contraction in the value of production during the first three months of 2024,” the PSA said.

Ng also expressed concern over the increase in pork imports, saying this also poses a threat to the domestic hog industry.

The National Meat Inspection Service’s data showed that the bulk of the country’s pork inventory as of May 13 consisted of imports at 49,899 metric tons (MT).

Meanwhile, the pork from local raisers plummeted to 758 MT, from 3,145 MT recorded last year as African swine fever (ASF) continued to affect the country’s hog output.

Image credits: [Department of Agriculture Region 12](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/24/heat-stress-threatens-hog-output/>

High commodity prices make it hard for Pinoys to save—Queen Maxima

Reine Juvierre S. Alberto

May 24, 2024



Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, 4th from left, speaks with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during a courtesy call at Malacañang Palace on May 22, 2024, in Manila. Queen Máxima, in her capacity as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA), has vowed to support inclusive finance and financial health efforts in the Philippines, Malacañang said Thursday. During her three-day visit, she is focusing on connectivity, cybersecurity, digitization, and interoperable payments, crucial for underserved groups like farmers and MSMEs. She first visited the Philippines in 2015 for the launch of the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI).

HIGH commodity prices are making it difficult for Filipinos to save, according to the Queen of the Netherlands.

Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands said at a press briefing on Thursday that a stable macroeconomic environment is needed in order for financial inclusion and financial health to thrive in the Philippines.

The Queen defined financial health as the state of one's ability to manage day-to-day expenses, to have a long-term financial vision, to cope with financial shocks, and to balance all these in the short term.

“You have very high inflation. Saving in your own currency would not be very sustainable,” said the Queen, who is also the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA).

The Queen underscored that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and the Monetary Board have to stabilize the macroeconomic situation, such as global inflation, higher monetary policy, and higher borrowing costs, for more Filipinos to have access to financial services.

Headline inflation accelerated to 3.8 percent in April for the third consecutive month due to a “surge” in food inflation, which rose to 6.3 percent from the previous month's 5.7 percent. (*See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/08/inflation-quickens-to-3-8-on-costly-food/>*).

Meanwhile, the Monetary Board maintained the BSP's Target Reverse Repurchase (RRP) rate at 6.5 percent. This is the fifth consecutive meeting that the Monetary Board decided to maintain the RRP. (*See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/17/bsp-keeps-rates-but-eyes-2-cuts-in-2nd-half/>*).

“Definitely, there [are] incentives and business incentives to save, to borrow, but I would say that in general, we still need a stable economic environment,” Queen Máxima said.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona said that the concept of open finance will provide various financial solutions to foster financial inclusion.

“What we're trying to do now is encourage open finance by designing our own platforms, our own APIs (artificial programming interface), and they will all be about financial health. So we're starting with Pera for example,” Remolona said.

Pera, or the Personal Equity and Retirement Account, is a voluntary retirement saving program that supplements the existing retirement benefits from the Social Security System (SSS), Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and employers.

Remolona said that the BSP tapped the banks in the country to connect their pension schemes to Pera through the creation of an API.

“They will connect to Pera so that account holders in the bank can get their pensions through Pera,” Remolona added.

Remolona underscored the importance of pensions as Filipinos don’t save enough. “Our pensions are our children. We expect them to take care of us in our old age,” he added.

The BSP is also looking into APIs for insurance, such as life insurance, property insurance, and accident insurance.

“I think when we have the open finance for insurance, that will bring prices down. We have work to do, so it’s not easy to do it. We got a lot of advice and access to expertise all over the world, and so I think we can do it,” he said.

The Queen conducted field visits in Manila and surrounding provinces and engaged in high-level meetings with the President, Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto and BSP Governor Remolona during her visit to the Philippines from May 21 to 23, 2024.

Image credits: [Ezra Acayan/Pool Photo via AP](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/24/high-commodity-prices-make-it-hard-for-pinoys-to-save-queen-maxima/>

Davao del Sur cacao, coffee growers get scientific, technology resource backup

Manuel Cayon

May 24, 2024

DAVAO CITY—The Department of Science and Technology is putting up scientific and technology resource backup to the farmers in the towns of Bansalan, Davao del Sur, notably for cacao and coffee, to improve their produce for better income level.

The DOST XI-Provincial Science and Technology Office in Davao del Sur has provided funding support for cacao and coffee growers in barangay Managa amounting to P459,000.

Leslie Pearl Cancho, director of the PSTO Davao del Sur said the purpose of this funding is to support scientific and technological interventions “guided by project strategies based on five entry points of the Community Empowerment through Science and Technology [CEST] program of the DOST.”

“The CEST program aims to empower communities by providing them with knowledge and resources to address local issues through science and technology,” she said.

The backup technology and other scientific resources would revolve around technology promotion, technology transfer, entrepreneurship and commercialization.

She said that by integrating these entry points, the program aims to enhance the abilities of communities to use science and technology to improve their living conditions.

Cancho said the funding can effectively leverage science and technology to drive sustainable development and facilitate the procurement of additional equipment needed to strengthen the cacao and coffee industry in Bansalan.

Cancho said the Bansalan local government and the DOST XI would like to unlock the town's "true potential ushering in positive change to the community of coffee and cacao processors in barangay Managa."

A total of 63 cacao and 367 coffee farmers in barangay Managa are the target beneficiaries of the plan set by the PSTO in Davao del Sur as part of the Smart Cities and Communities Project.

"This initiative aims to improve the economic and social conditions in Bansalan by using science and technology. The goal is to create a better future for the town and its residents by working together towards building a smart, sustainable, resilient, inclusive, and technology-driven community," she said.

She said the program support underwent assessments of the community's needs, visits to the project site, presentations, and evaluations. Finally, a memorandum of agreement was signed.

The DOST said Christian Roy Moreno, who was then the acting Municipal Administrator of Bansalan, formally received the funds.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/24/davao-del-sur-cacao-coffee-growers-get-scientific-technology-resource-backup/>

ABANTE TONITE

Pork sumipa presyo sa P420 per kilo

May 23, 2024

Sinisilip ngayon ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang biglang pagtaas sa presyo ng karneng baboy kahit mayroong sapat na suplay nito sa bansa.

Lumabas kasi sa monitoring ng DA na pumalo sa presyong P380 hanggang P420 ang presyo ng karneng baboy sa ilang palengke sa National Capital Region.

Batay sa Bantay Presyo ng kagawaran, ang presyo ng baboy noong mga nakaraang buwan ay nasa P360 hanggang P400 lang.

Ipinagtataka ni DA Undersecretary Deogracias Savellano ang pagsirit sa presyo ng karneng baboy ngunit naniniwala ang opisyal na kagagawan ito ng mga negosyante.

“Meron kasing traders na nagte-take advantage,” wika ng opisyal.

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/05/23/pork-sumipa-presyo-sa-p420-per-kilo/>

Marcos: P20 milyong ayuda sa magsasaka, mangingingisda na apektado ng El Niño

[Gemma Garcia](#)

May 24, 2024 | 12:00am



President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. leads the distribution of presidential assistance to farmers, fisherfolk, and families at Barangay Tubig-Mampallam in Municipality of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi on May 23, 2024.

MANILA, Philippines — Personal na ipinamahagi ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ang mahigit P20 milyon na tulong pinansyal sa mga magsasaka at mangingingisda na apektado ng El Niño sa mga lalawigan ng Tawi-Tawi at Basilan, nitong Huwebes.

Iniabot ni Pangulong Marcos ang tseke na tig-P10 milyon na tulong kina Tawi-Tawi Governor Yshmael Sali at Basilan Governor Hadjiman Salliman-Hataman habang ang mga magsasaka at mangingingisda ay tumanggap ng tig-P10,000.

Sa kanyang talumpati sa pamamahagi ng tulong, sinabi ni Pangulong Marcos na isinailalim sa state of calamity ang Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) dahil sa El Niño.

“Nais kong ipaalam sa inyo na nagsisikap ang inyong pamahalaan upang mabawasan ang epekto nito sa ating pang araw-araw na buhay,” ayon kay Pangulong Marcos. “Saksi ako sa sipag at galing ninyo. Kaya asahan ninyo patuloy kaming magsisikap upang maibigay sa inyo ang nararapat na serbisyo at alaga upang makamit ninyo ang inyong mga pangarap sa buhay,” aniya sa harap ng mga tao sa DepEd compound sa Bongao, Tawi-tawi.

Humigit-kumulang 80 miyembro ng House of Representatives sa pangunguna ni Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez ang nakiisa rin sa Pangulo na kasabay din ng Bagong Pilipinas Serbisyo Fair, isang programa na nagdadala ng mga serbisyo at tulong sa mga marginalized na komunidad sa buong bansa.

Nagpahayag ng pasasalamat si Pangulong Marcos sa mga magsasaka, mangingisda at kanilang mga pamilya sa kanilang sakripisyo para matiyak ang food security sa bansa.

Namahagi rin ang Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) ng P10,000 bawat isa sa 10,000 benepisyaryo na binubuo ng mga magsasaka, mangingisda, at kanilang mga pamilya.

Ang Office of the House Speaker naman ay namahagi ng limang kilo ng bigas sa bawat dumalo. Kabilang sa iba pang mga kalahok na ahensya ang Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), at Department of Agriculture (DA).

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/05/24/2357477/marcos-p20-milyong-ayuda-sa-magsasaka-mangingisda-na-apektado-ng-el-nio>

REMATE:

Mga magsasaka, mangingisda na sapul ng El Niño sa Tawi-Tawi inasistihan

May 23, 2024 13:26



MANILA, Philippines- Pinangunahan ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. nitong Huwebes ang pamamahagi ng tulong sa mga magsasaka, mangingisda, at mga pamilyang apektado ng El Niño phenomenon sa lalawigan ng Tawi-Tawi.

"Ang pakay ko po sa pag-iikot ko sa iba't ibang bayan at lalawigan sa bansa ay: Una, upang personal kong makita kung ang tulong ng gobyerno ay natatanggap ng mga tao at kung ito ba ay nakatutulong sa mga pangangailangan ng mga nahihirapan dahil sa tagtuyot," pahayag ni Marcos sa pamamahagi ng tulong sa Bongao.

"Pangalawa, andito rin po ako upang makausap kayo, nang maunawaan natin ang inyong sitwasyon, at makahanap tayo nang nararapat na solusyon sa inyong mga hinaharap na suliranin," dagdag niya.

Nangako si Marcos na sinisikap ng administrasyong maibsan ang epekto ng El Niño phenomenon sa mga magsasaka at mangingisda.

Namahagi ang Pangulo ng cash assistance sa 10 piling benepisyaryo sa lalawigan, maging tig-P10 milyon sa provincial governments ng Tawi-Tawi at Basilan.

Samantala, nagpaabot ang Department of Social Welfare and Development ng tig-P10,000 sa 10,000 benepisyaryong binubuo ng mga magsasaka at mangingisda, at mga pamilya, habang nagbigay ang opisina ni Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez ng tig-limang kilo ng bigas sa mga dumalo. **RNT/SA**

[https://remate.ph/mga-magsasaka-mangingisda-na-sapul-ng-el-nino-sa-tawi-tawi-
inasistihan/](https://remate.ph/mga-magsasaka-mangingisda-na-sapul-ng-el-nino-sa-tawi-tawi-inasistihan/)