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MANILA BULLETIN:

P2.5-billion extra funding sought to improve dairy sector

BY GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG

May 31, 2024 03:56 PM

With recent adverse effects brought by the El Niño phenomenon, the National Dairy Authority (NDA) is seeking an additional P2.5 billion budget to develop the dairy industry further.

During the opening of the Dairy Fair on Friday, May 31, Dairy Confederation of the Philippines President Danilo Fausto explained how enhanced funding could help increase dairy production.

“El Niño affected productivity, [the animals] were more prone to diseases, therefore less output. We’re appealing to the DBM [Department of Budget and Management] to provide us with the budget to build laboratory facilities so that cows and cattle can be tested and assessed there,” Fausto told reporters.

Aside from importing cows into the Philippines, Fausto said that they are hoping to increase the carabao population as well.

“Aside from this, we have to give more funding to the genetics improvement. Because dairy animals have a multi-function– they can be used for their meat, their milk, and even transport system,” he emphasized.

Last March, the NDA announced that they plan to achieve 80 million liters worth of production or five percent milk self-sufficiency in the country by 2028. However, without sufficient budget allocation, Fausto stressed that this goal would be impossible.

“Right now our budget in the NDA is P522 million, and next year’s proposal has gone down to P410 million. We need the P2.5 billion to start our projects, and we’re only asking for a few,” he said.

Aside from cattle raising and laboratory facilities, NDA Officer-In-Charge (OIC) Administrator Gavino Alfredo Benitez also mentioned that there will be countermeasures to reach the 80 million liter production target.

“[Based on the approved budget], we could create feed centers at a regional level, as well as water pumping, storage... These are only temporary measures, but the goal is to provide enough feeds and water to increase productivity,” he explained.

Furthermore, Benitez hoped to have an additional 5,000 cattle imported to the Philippines which could come from the United States, New Zealand, and/or Australia.

Recently, the Department of Agriculture proposed its overall expenditure plan for 2025 to be raised from P208.58 billion to P513.81 billion, which would be divided into various agricultural investments.

A proposal of P287.98 billion for next year will then be earmarked to 8 DA-attached corporations, including the NDA.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/31/p2-5-billion-extra-funding-sought-to-improve-dairy-sector>

MANILA BULLETIN:

FFCCCII backs rice tariff cut proposal, farmers vehemently object

BY BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT

May 31, 2024 02:44 PM

Filipino-Chinese traders have rallied behind the proposal to further reduce tariffs on rice below the current 35 percent to alleviate the inflationary pressures caused by high rice prices, but farmers vehemently opposed to such measure stating it could cause billions of losses to farmers.

In a statement, the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc. (FFCCCII) led by President Dr. Cecilio K. Pedro, called Finance Secretary Ralph Recto's proposal "pro-active". The DoF recently proposed halving rice tariffs from 35 percent to 17.5 percent, which it said could reduce rice retail prices by P5 per kilo.

"Lowering rice tariffs holds the potential to address inflation worries for Filipino consumers and promotes economic stability," said Pedro, who also emphasized FFCCCII's commitment to supporting Filipino farmers and fishermen. The traders' group also advocates for a dialogue with the Department of Agriculture to strike a balance between supporting local rice producers and the need to strengthen the nation's economic resilience.

Moreover, FFCCCII reaffirms its advocacy for modernizing agricultural technologies and providing essential support to boost rural incomes and ensure food security across the Philippines.

The group said that the reduction in rice tariffs is aligned with the Finance Department's goal to reduce rice prices by 20 percent in September. "This measure aims to make rice more affordable, considering that rice imports contribute substantially to the nation's staple supply," FFCCCII said.

"FFCCCII remains committed to fostering socioeconomic prosperity and advocating for the welfare of all stakeholders in the Philippines," the group said.

In a separate statement, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) vehemently opposed the plan to cut rice tariffs stressing that such move could only cause P43 billion losses to farmers.

The group presented its own computation of losses as a result of the planned rice tariff reduction. It said that a P5 per kilo reduction in tariff payment, while not guaranteed to reduce retail prices, could depress palay prices by P3 per kilo if cheap imported rice is dumped into wholesale markets, where domestic rice is also sold by millers and traders.

"This could result in a loss of P33 billion to rice farmers, who normally harvest 11 million tons of palay in the second half of the year," the farmers' group said.

Moreover, assuming an additional 2 million tons of rice imports during the second semester, the DoF tariff proposal would mean foregone customs revenues of P10 billion that are legally earmarked for rice farmers' productivity programs. "Together with the losses from lowered palay prices, farmers stand to lose a total of P43 billion from the proposed tariff cut for 2024 alone," the FFF said.

FFF National Manager Raul Montemayor noted that "When government reduced tariffs on non-ASEAN rice imports from 50% to 35% starting in May 2021, rice retail prices actually

rose, instead of going down. Savings from lower tariffs were simply pocketed by importers and middlemen and were not passed on to consumers.”

The FFF further claimed that exporting countries took advantage of earlier tariff cuts by raising their prices. Rice exports from Pakistan were about eight percent cheaper than Vietnam rice before the tariff cuts in 2021. They have now equaled - if not surpassed - Vietnam prices, Montemayor added.

“Any new tariff reduction will be useless if our foreign suppliers jack up their prices, especially since they know that we have no choice but to buy their rice,” added Montemayor.

The group further said that the tariff cut in 2021 also failed in significantly expanding the country’s rice sources beyond Vietnam and Thailand, with non-ASEAN countries accounting for less than four percent of total imports in 2023.

More than two-thirds of rice imports were for premium grades, which give better profit margins to importers.

“The main beneficiaries of decreased tariffs will be the relatively well-off, who can better afford to buy good quality rice,” said Montemayor.

The FFF urged government to look for alternative ways to bring down rice prices for the poor without hurting local farmers.

“Government can just buy rice locally or even import - if absolutely necessary - and distribute these to poor consumers through its KADIWA and other outlets. The private sector can take care of supplying unsubsidized rice to consumers who can afford to buy them. Tariff cuts are not needed since import prices are expected to go down soon anyway, as stated by Secretary Recto himself,” added Montemayor.

The FFF reminded the government of previous adjustments in tariffs on rice, corn and pork, but which did not bring about cheaper prices for consumers.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/31/ffccii-backs-rice-tariff-cut-proposal-farmers-vehemently-object>

MANILA BULLETIN:

2 DA execs test positive for Covid-19 amid increase in cases

BY JEL SANTOS

May 31, 2024 02:01 PM



DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa (left), and Assistant Secretary for Operations U-Nichols Manalo (right)

Amid an increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in the country, two high-ranking officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA) have tested positive for the dreaded disease.

The officials who tested positive for Covid-19 were Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, the spokesperson of the DA, and Assistant Secretary for Operations U-Nichols Manalo.

According to a source, who asked for anonymity, De Mesa was experiencing all the symptoms of Covid-19.

De Mesa and Manalo are now undergoing quarantine for five days.

De Mesa tested positive for the virus last Wednesday afternoon, May 29, while Manalo was confirmed afflicted by the disease the next day, May 30.

The agriculture department is now conducting contact tracing.

On May 22, the Department of Health (DOH) said it had observed a “small increase” in the number of Covid-19 cases in the country.

The health department noted that the Philippines remains at low risk for the disease.

From May 14 to 20, the Philippines recorded an average of just 202 COVID-19 cases per day.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said it is currently monitoring three new variants: JN.1.18 and the “Flirt” variants, KP.2 and KP.3. All three are descendants of JN.1, a sublineage of the Omicron variant.

The “FLiRT” COVID-19 variants, comprising KP.2 and KP.3, are reportedly linked to a rising wave of cases around the world.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/31/2-da-execs-test-positive-for-covid-19-amid-increase-in-cases>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Legarda lauds signing into law of data-driven PENCAS Act

BY HANNAH TORREGOZA

May 31, 2024 01:03 PM

Senator Loren Legarda on Friday, May 31 welcomed the signing into law of the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS) Act or Republic Act No. 11995, which will revolutionize the way the government integrates environmental sustainability into the country's economic framework.

“It has been a long and pioneering journey since we first filed what we then called the Philippine Economic Environmental and Natural Resources Accounting (PEENRA) in 2001,” Legarda said in a statement.

“This signing also ties into our efforts from 1998 for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, as economic indicators, especially in damage estimation, will no longer be nature-blind,” she said.

Passage of the PENCAS Act, she said is a transformative development for the Philippines.

“As we embrace PENCAS, we affirm our commitment to valuing our natural resources alongside our economic metrics,” Legarda stated.

The PENCAS Act mandates the inclusion of the country's natural resources as a vital component of the national economy, supplementing traditional metrics such as gross domestic product (GDP) and human capital.

This approach will help the government with essential data, aligning national planning, policymaking, and budgeting with the United Nations' System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) standards.

“It is a data-driven approach that will inform policy making, allocate resources efficiently, raise public awareness, and align with global sustainability goals, solidifying the importance of preserving these invaluable natural assets for economic and environmental well-being,” she explained.

Legarda thanked the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and Department of Agriculture (DA), along with various experts who dedicated their time and effort since the pandemic to forming and enhancing the measure.

“The tireless support from these parties emphasizes the urgent need to measure what we treasure and shows the consensus on the importance of this law,” she remarked.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/31/legarda-lauds-signing-into-law-of-data-driven-pencas-act>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Researchers find tiny organism has power to reduce persistent greenhouse gas in farm fields

May 31, 2024 06:25 PM



In the world of greenhouse gas emissions, carbon dioxide gets most of the blame. But tiny organisms that flourish in the world's farm fields emit a far more potent gas, nitrous oxide, and scientists have long sought a way to address it.

Now some researchers think they've found a bacteria that can help. Writing in this week's *Nature*, they say extensive lab and field trials showed the naturally derived bacteria reduced the nitrous oxide without disrupting other microbes in the soil. It also survived well in soil and would be relatively cheap to produce.

"I think that the avenue that we have opened here, it opens up for a number of new possibilities in bioengineering of the farmed soil," said Lars Bakken, a professor at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences and one of the authors of the study.

A pound of nitrous oxide — better known as laughing gas, the stuff that relaxes people in the dentist's chair — can warm the atmosphere 265 times more than a pound of carbon dioxide, and it can persist in the atmosphere for more than a century. Farmers' heavy use of nitrogen fertilizer drives up the amount produced in soil, and in 2022 it accounted for six percent of all

US greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Reducing fertilizer use can help, but crop yields would eventually fall.

That's a big problem in agriculture, "so the fact that they have developed a unique strategy to reduce it pretty dramatically was really interesting," said Lori Hoagland, a professor of soil microbial ecology at Purdue University who was not involved in the study.

Bakken and his colleagues used organic waste to grow their bacteria, reasoning that many farmers already apply processed manure-based fertilizers so it could be easily integrated into their routines. Building on past work, they searched for a microorganism that would last long enough to make a real dent in nitrous oxide emissions without staying in the soil so long that it disrupted other tiny life forms that are often vital for crop health.

In field trials, they used roving robots to measure nitrous oxide emissions day and night, comparing conditions in soil with and without the bacteria. They found the bacteria reduced the nitrous oxide emissions of an initial fertilizer application by 94 percent, and a couple weeks later, dropped the emissions of a subsequent fertilizer application by about half. After about three months, there was no difference in the makeup of microbial life forms, suggesting their bacteria wouldn't disrupt the soil.

The bacteria they settled on — *Cloacibacterium* sp. CB-01 — is found naturally in anaerobic digesters, machines that are already being used to transform organic waste products like cow manure into biofuels. The fact that the bacteria is not genetically modified might ease its acceptance and adoption, said Paul Carini, a soil microbiologist at the University of Arizona who was also not involved in the research.

Bakken said the bacteria could be included in certain fertilizers on farms as soon as three to four years from now if the economics make sense. Carini thinks they do.

"Any time you're using a waste product from one industry to benefit another industry, that's pretty cost effective," he said.

However, Bakken pointed out that farmers aren't paid for reducing nitrous oxide emissions, and he thinks there have to be more incentives to do so. "The task for the authorities is to install policy instruments that makes it profitable in one way or another," he said.

Hoagland, the Purdue professor, said more research in field conditions would likely be needed before the bacteria could be deployed worldwide, as there are many different types of farm soils.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/31/researchers-find-tiny-organism-has-power-to-reduce-persistent-greenhouse-gas-in-farm-fields>

NFA on track to exceed first-half palay procurement goal

BY GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG

May 31, 2024 04:09 PM

As the first half of 2024 draws to a close, the National Food Authority (NFA) is poised to surpass its procurement target, driven by the increased purchasing price of rice.

NFA Acting Administrator Larry Lacson said that they are expecting to reach a palay procurement level of 3.08 million or 50-kilo bags after adjusting their buying price last April. Since then, palay procurement has cost them P23 to P30 per kilo for clean and dry, while P17 to P23 for fresh and wet rice.

“At 2.93 million bags, we’re now at 97 percent of our buying target for the first half with the whole month of June left. Farmers in several provinces in northern Luzon have yet to complete their harvest and they’ve appeal to the NFA to continue with our procurement,” he said.

Prior to the competitive prices, the food authority only attained 142,244 bags of palay since private traders bumped up their purchasing to secure supply during the El Niño season.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. lauded the NFA’s decision to boost the rice buffer stock just in time for the onset of La Niña.

“We are also happy that our rice farmers, as envisaged by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., are getting a financial windfall from the higher procurement price of the NFA,” he said.

“The NFA has also started implementing a so-called fastlane to quickly service farmers selling no more than 50 bags of palay,” the DA chief added.

Subsequently, Lacson shared that they have only spent half of the P9 billion procurement budget over the past six weeks since they have bumped up the price. Under the spent funding were able to secure an additional 2.8 million bags of rice.

“[We] have about P8 billion left over from last year’s procurement outlay to buy more rice stocks,” he said. “Our problem now—and it is a pleasant one—is that we are running out of space in our warehouses, especially in Region II,” said Lacson.

To address this dilemma, Lacson ordered the NFA personnel to begin stock milling to supply the 500,000 bags required by the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD).

Aside from the higher buying price, the DA along with other government agencies are striving for ways to minimize the cost of the national food staple to lessen the burden for consumers.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/31/nfa-on-track-to-exceed-first-half-palay-procurement-goal>

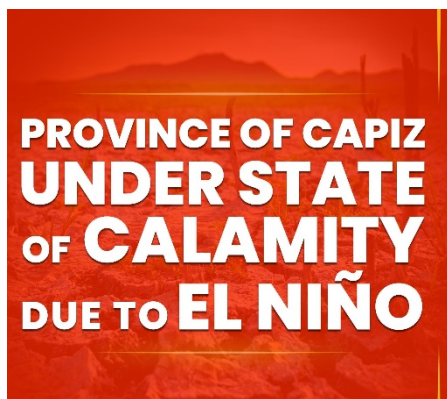
MANILA BULLETIN:

Capiz under state of calamity due to El Niño

BY TARA YAP

May 31, 2024 02:27 PM

ILOILO CITY — The province of Capiz is under a state of calamity due to the El Niño climate phenomenon.



Capiz was the third provincial government in Western Visayas to make the declaration.

The Capiz Provincial Board approved the recommendation of the Capiz Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) to declare a state of calamity.

Five local government units in the province, Dumarao, Maayon, Panay, Pontevedra, and Tapaz, had earlier declared a state of calamity.

With the declaration, the administration of Gov. Fredenil “Oto” Castro will be able to utilize the Quick Response Fund (QRF) for those affected by the El Niño.

The Capiz Provincial Agriculture Office said El Niño has caused P379-million worth of damage to the agriculture sector. It affected 6,403 hectares and 7,930 farmers.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)-Capiz said damage to aqua-fisheries sector reached approximately P22.7 million -- 600 hectares of fishponds, 579 hectares of fresh water, and 52 hectares of brackish water production.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/31/capiz-under-state-of-calamity-due-to-el-nino>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA execs test positive for COVID-19

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

June 1, 2024 | 12:00am



Individuals walk along the LRT Monumento Station during rush hour in Caloocan on May 16, 2024.

STAR / Ryan Baldemor

MANILA, Philippines — At least two ranking officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA) have tested positive for COVID-19, amid a surge in cases and the threat of new FLiRT variants.

Sources from the DA said that Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa manifested symptoms of COVID-19, including headache, loss of taste and fever after one of his staff tested positive for the virus.

De Mesa tested positive on Wednesday after undergoing an antigen test. He was advised to undergo a 10-day home quarantine.

Prior to this, one of De Mesa's staff reported that she tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday. The staff reportedly traveled to Cebu and manifested symptoms of the virus.

The DA management has ordered contact tracing to identify the employees and other individuals who came into contact with De Mesa and his staff.

The DA has also ordered a disinfection of De Mesa's office where the press office is also located.

The other DA official who tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday was Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Operations U-Nichols Manalo.

The Department of Health said cases of COVID-19 in the Philippines remain mild and manageable amid the likely emergence in the country of Omicron subvariants like KP.2 and KP.3.

Omicron subvariants KP.2 and KP.3 are part of the FLiRT variant, a novel virus that is spreading globally.

They came from the JN.1 subvariant that was reported in late 2023 and responsible for this year's earlier increase in infections.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/06/01/2359566/da-execs-test-positive-covid-19>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Aghon agriculture damage reaches P81.8 million

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

June 1, 2024 | 12:00am



In this handout photo taken on May 26, 2024 and released on May 27, 2024 by the Philippine Coast Guard, children are evacuated from a flooded area by coast guard personnel in Lucena, Quezon Province, amid heavy rain brought by Typhoon Aghon.

Handout / Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) / AFP

MANILA, Philippines — Damage to the agriculture sector due to Typhoon Aghon has increased to P81.84 million, according to the Department of Agriculture.

The DA said production loss reached 2,586 metric tons, covering 948 hectares of rice, corn, cassava and high-value crops in Calabarzon and Mimaropa.

High-value crops incurred the highest amount of losses at P47.39 million followed by palay at P25.09 million and livestock and poultry, P4.54 million.

Damage to corn was estimated at P2.5 million and cassava, P1.21 million.

In Calabarzon, damage to agricultural infrastructure was estimated at P965,000 and machineries and equipment, P135,000.

The DA assured the public that its regional offices are validating and assessing the impact of Aghon on agriculture and fisheries.

“The best possible efforts are being undertaken to carry out assistance and appropriate interventions for affected farmers,” the DA said.

It said agricultural inputs and other assistance would be provided to 1,482 farmers in Calabarzon and Mimaropa.

Aside from P23.06 million worth of seeds, planting materials and bio-control measures, farmers can avail themselves of a loan worth P25,000 under the Survival and Recovery Loan Program from the Agricultural Credit Policy Council.

DA Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said P1 billion in Quick Response Fund can be tapped for the rehabilitation of affected areas.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/06/01/2359446/aghon-agriculture-damage-reaches-p818-million>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER (CDN):

NFA buys 2.93 million bags of palay from local farmers

By: Jordeene B. Lagare - @inquirerdotnet|INQUIRER.net|June 01,2024 - 10:44 AM



Workers unload sacks of imported rice from Vietnam to the warehouse of the National Food Authority (NFA). CDN file photo

The National Food Authority (NFA) is on track to exceed its goal for buying locally grown palay (unhusked rice) for the first half of this year after increasing purchase prices.

On Friday, the NFA announced it had procured 2.93 million bags of palay, achieving 97 percent of its target of 3.08 million bags for the first semester.

The food agency attributed the substantial increase in palay procurement to the higher buying price approved by the NFA Council in April.

The NFA Council previously raised the procurement prices, which range from P23 per kilogram to P30 per kg for clean and dry palay. In September last year, the range was from P19 to P23 per kg.

The buying prices for fresh and wet also climbed to P17 per kg to P23 per kg from the previous P16 per kg to P19 per kg.

“Farmers in several provinces in northern Luzon have yet to complete their harvest and they’ve appealed to the NFA to continue with our procurement,” NFA acting administrator Larry Lacson said.

Before implementing the new price scheme, the NFA said it had bought only 142,244 bags of palay as private traders jacked up their offer-price to secure rice supply amid the El Niño phenomenon.

“We are pleased that the NFA Council’s decision has resulted in a significant increase in our rice buffer stock, especially with the onset of the typhoon season,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

Tiu Laurel said the NFA has put up a “fast lane” to accommodate farmers who sell no more than 50 bags of palay.

The NFA also ordered its personnel to start milling stocks to meet the Department of Social Welfare and Development’s target of 500,000 bags of rice as the agency’s existing warehouses can no longer store new batches of palay.

Exceeding targets

“Our problem now, and it is a pleasant one, is that we are running out of space in our warehouses, especially in [Cagayan Valley],” Lacson said.

Despite exceeding targets, Lacson said the NFA has only spent half of the P9-billion procurement budget for this year in purchasing the additional 2.8-million bags of rice in the last six weeks.

The NFA has P8-billion surplus from last year's procurement spending to buy more rice stocks.

Under the Rice Tariffication Law, the NFA should maintain a national rice buffer stock equivalent to at least nine days of consumption. It is pegged at 330,000 MT and should be sourced solely from local palay producers.

Buffer stocks kept in NFA warehouses are meant to aid the government's efforts in case of disasters and other calamities.

The DA has been pushing for the law's extension to beef up the rice fund for farmers currently set at P10 billion and reclaim the NFA's capacity to influence retail prices of rice.

Wanting to build up the national rice buffer stock and upgrade storage capacity, the NFA had sought a budget of P16.3 billion in 2025.

<https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/576324/nfa-buys-2-93-million-bags-of-palay-from-local-farmers>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

NDRRMC: Infrastructure damage due to Typhoon Aghon tops P365 million

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 11:48 AM May 31, 2024



FILE PHOTO: A more than 100-year-old Acacia tree in front of the Minor Basilica and Parish of St. John the Baptist in Taytay, Rizal, fell on a car on May 26, 2024, while Sunday Mass was being held inside the church. According to a statement from the parish, the tree gave way due to a combination of old age and inclement weather caused by then-Tropical Storm Aghon. The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) said infrastructure damage due to Aghon (international name: Ewiniar), which later intensified to a typhoon category, surpassed P365 million as of Friday, May 31, 2024. INQUIRER PHOTO/LYN RILLON

MANILA, Philippines — Infrastructure damage due to Typhoon Aghon (international name: Ewiniar) surpassed P365 million as of Friday, May 31,

according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC).

In a situation report released on May 31, the NDRRMC indicated that Aghon caused P367,470,000 in damage to 44 infrastructures in the Calabarzon region. Calabarzon stands for Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon.

It also said the typhoon partially damaged and destroyed 18 and four houses, respectively, in Eastern Visayas.

Meanwhile, agricultural losses due to Aghon stood at P21,651,458, according to the NDRRMC.

It added that the count of people affected by the typhoon remained at 51,858, while injuries and [reported deaths](#) stayed at eight and six, respectively.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1946952/ndrrmc-infrastructure-damage-due-to-typhoon-aghon-tops-p365-million>

Cebu to revive rice subsidy 'for poorest of the poor'

[By Kaiser Jan Fuentes](#)

June 1, 2024

CEBU CITY — The Cebu provincial government's subsidized rice program for the "poorest of the poor" is set to make a comeback, aiming to make rice both affordable and accessible.

This revival comes after officials from the National Food Authority in Central Visayas (NFA 7) committed to providing an initial delivery of 5,000 bags of rice for the program.

With this, the suspended Sugbo Merkadong Barato (SMB) program, which used to sell P20 per kilo rice, will resume to operate in towns and cities under the provincial government.

NFA 7's Officer In Charge Director Ovelito Baritua said this commitment during a meeting with Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia and town and city mayors on May 23 at the Capitol Social Hall.

Baritua said that the agency is prepared to provide additional rice supplies as necessary.

The Provincial Capitol said that the relaunch is seen as a measure to address food security and stabilize rice prices in the province.

It can be remembered that following Garcia's announcement in October last year that they will sell rice at P20 per kilo, she then launched it the following month.

During the implementation of the program, eligible households with a QR-coded ID card can purchase rice up to a maximum of five kilos per week, at the SMB venue in their respective towns and cities.

However, shortly after the program started, it was temporarily suspended due to a limited supply of NFA rice, as well as to correct and revalidate the available list of eligible buyers at that time.

This time, the Capitol said that buyers will be thoroughly screened and approved by the Department of Social Welfare and Development to ensure that only deserving individuals can buy the rice.

Under the revamped SMB program, NFA rice will now be sold at a higher P29 per kilo rice to beneficiaries.

The new price is P9 higher than the initial price but aligns with the price of rice sold under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s Kadiwa program.

The Capitol added that the new set price is still lower than the current market price, which ranges between P50 to P60 per kilo.

However, the target date for the relaunch of the program is yet to be announced.

Meanwhile, NFA acting administrator Larry del Rosario Lacson had earlier pledged the agency's continuous support for other programs, including the Bugasan sa Kababayen-an sa Barangay (Rice for Women in Barangay) and the provincewide daily Sugbo School Feeding Program.

Garcia expressed her gratitude for NFA's support, underscoring the vital role these programs play in alleviating hunger and aiding local communities.

She highlighted the importance of the Capitol's collaboration with the NFA in ensuring the success of initiatives aimed at providing food security and affordable rice to Cebuanos.

Garcia added that the partnership between the Provincial Government and the NFA reflects a broader commitment to

tackling food security issues and supporting the welfare of Cebu's residents.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/01/regions/cebu-to-revive-rice-subsidy-for-poorest-of-the-poor/1949409>

Additional budget sought to boost dairy production

By Janine Alexis Miguel

June 1, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is seeking an additional budget for next year to support and boost local dairy production, particularly milk.

Agriculture Undersecretary for Livestocks Deogracias Victor Savellano said the government first needed to increase the population of dairy animals in the country, which will require sufficient feeds and a good environment to maximize production.

He said that the DA could still manage to develop the local dairy industry with P10 billion to P20 billion. "However, we have to adjust to what is given to us," Savellano said in an interview with reporters on Friday.

"If we have the funds, we should import more [herd animals] because our population is only around 2 million while in other countries they have 70 million. So, it's very low for us," he added.

Savellano also said that there was a need to improve the genetics of dairy animals in the Philippines to increase herd and dairy output. However, this remains a challenge for the DA and the National Dairy Administration, which is attached to the department.

"To increase [the population of herd animals], we need to import good genetics. So from there, that's where we'll develop our dairy industry," he said.

Nonetheless, the official assured that the DA was committed to increasing local milk production.

Most of the country's milk and dairy products is imported, reaching 595.64 million kilograms (kg) in 2022, or a 13.6-percent growth from 2021's 523.95 million kg. Meanwhile, the value of milk and dairy imports surged by 37 percent from \$1.2 billion to \$1.64 billion.

Last year, at least 22.87 million liters of milk were produced, slightly higher than 21.93 million liters in 2022.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), meanwhile, said that the Philippines was likely to produce more dairy milk this year as local consumption was increasing.

In its Global Agriculture Information Network report, the USDA forecast Philippine dairy milk production to reach 29 million metric tons (MT) in 2024.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/01/business/top-business/additional-budget-sought-to-boost-dairy-production/1949370>

DA, Argentina explore partnership to boost farm production

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

June 1, 2024

THE Philippines and Argentina are eyeing partnerships to enhance agricultural cooperation, including applying mechanization and digitalization on local farm production.

During a courtesy call at the Department of Agriculture (DA) central office in Quezon City on May 21, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. and Argentina's Ambassador to Manila Ricardo Luis Bocalandro led discussions to strengthen agricultural cooperation and adapt Argentine technology and machinery to improve local farm production.

"The Argentine envoy assured the agriculture chief that Argentina is ready to help the Philippines improve local agriculture and welcomes more shipments of agricultural commodities from the Philippines, including mangoes," the DA said in a statement on Friday.

Other areas for cooperation that were discussed include trade and market access, technical cooperation projects focused on agricultural biotechnology, crop pest management, sugar, farm mechanization and digitalization, foot-and-mouth disease vaccines, and sustainable and value-added rice and fisheries programs.

Tiu Laurel thanked the Argentine diplomat for his country's interest in Philippine agricultural products and its willingness to assist in the modernization of local farm and fisheries sectors.

Bocalandro was accompanied during the courtesy call by Deputy Chief of Mission Leandro Waisman and the head of the embassy's Economic and Commercial Section Ana Clara Pianezza.

Tiu Laurel Jr. was joined by Miguel Hornilla, director for South America of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Janet Garcia, chief of the International Affairs Division of the Department of Agriculture.

Meanwhile, in another effort to boost the domestic agriculture sector, Tiu Laurel joined President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during the Philippine Business Forum in Brunei and invited Bruneian companies and business organizations to invest in the Philippines.

New and emerging Philippine export products were also highlighted by the agriculture chief, such as abaca, coffee and seaweed, among others, which are gaining international acceptance and popularity.

Tiu Laurel also said that the Philippines has an expanding domestic market and export potential, abundant natural and human resources, and a favorable policy environment.

"The Philippines still has an export potential of approximately \$2.7 billion for tropical fruits and vegetables, \$452 million for fish and shellfish, and \$2.2 billion for processed foods and beverages," Tiu Laurel said during the forum, adding that the Philippines is stimulating this potential through preferential trade agreements with other countries.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/01/business/top-business/da-argentina-explore-partnership-to-boost-farm-production/1949369>

REMATE:

Agri damage sa bagyong Aghon, pumalo sa P21M

May 31, 2024 10:41



MANILA, Philippines – Nagdulot ng pinsala sa agrikultura na aabot sa P21 milyon ang bagyong Aghon, iniulat ng National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) nitong Huwebes, Mayo 30.

Sa ulat, aabot sa P448,300 ang halaga ng pinsala sa livestock, poultry at fisheries, dagdag sa 292.9 ektaryang sakahan na apektado ng bagyo.

Pitong katao naman ang nasawi ngunit isa pa lamang ang kumpirmado ng NDRRMC sa ngayon.

Walo katao ang nasaktan, at 51,858 katao o 16,404 pamilya ang apektado ng bagyong Aghon, karamihan sa mga ito ay mula sa CALABARZON at Bicol region. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/agri-damage-sa-bagyong-aghon-pumalo-sa-p21m/>

REMATE:

Capiz nagdeklara ng state of calamity sa El Niño

June 1, 2024 16:00



CAPIZ- Pinairal ang state of calamity ang probinsya ng Capiz dahil sa El Niño at labis na epekto sa kabuhayan ng mga residente.

Inaprubahan ng Capiz Provincial Board ang rekomendasyon ng Capiz Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) na magdeklara ng state of calamity.

Unang nagdeklara ng state of calamity ang mga bayan ng Dumarao, Maayon, Panay, Pontevedra, at Tapaz.

Sa datos ng Capiz Provincial Agriculture Office, umabot sa P379 milyon ang nasira sa sektor ng agrikultura at naapektuhan dito ang 6,403 ektarya ng taniman at 7,930 magsasaka.

Gayundin, sinabi ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)-Capiz, sa sektor ng aqua-fisheries, umabot sa P22.7 milyon o 600 ektaryang palaisdaan, 579 ektarya ng fresh water, at 52 ektarya ng brackish water na produksyon ang apektado.

Agad namang nagpalabas ang administrasyon ni Gov. Fredenil “Oto” Castro ng Quick Response Fund (QRF) para sa mga apektado ng El Niño.

Ang probinsya ng Capiz ay itinuturing na seafood capital. **Mary Anne Sapico**

<https://remate.ph/capiz-nagdeklara-ng-state-of-calamity-sa-el-nino/>

REMATE:

Nabiling palay ng NFA sumampa sa 97% target para sa H1 2024

June 1, 2024 11:48



MANILA, Philippines- Iniulat ng National Food Authority (NFA) nitong Biyernes na naabot na nito ang 97 porsyentong target na palay procurement para sa unang kalahati ng taon sa bagong pricing scheme.

Katumbas ito ng 2.93 milyong sako ng palay, na malapit na sa 3.08 milyong sakong target.

“We’re now at 97 percent of our buying target for the first half with the whole month of June left. Farmers in several provinces in northern Luzon have yet to complete their harvest and they’ve appealed to the NFA to continue with our procurement,” pahayag ni NFA acting administrator Larry Lacson.

Sa pamamagitan ng mas mataas na buying price range, nakabili ang NFA ng dry at clean palay sa halagang P23 hanggang P30 kada kilo; at P17/kg hanggang PHP23/kg para sa fresh at wet

palay. Nagtalaga rin ang NFA ng fast lane para sa mga magsasakang nagbebenta ng palay na hindi lalampas sa 50 sako.

Sinabi pa ni Lacson na sisimulan na rin ng NFA ang paggiling sa stock nito upang paluwagin ang NFA warehouses, at maisakatuparan ang 500,000 rice bags na rekisitos ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). “Our problem now, and it is a pleasant one, is that we are running out of space in our warehouses, especially in Region II,” anang opisyal.

Samantala, ikinagalak ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ang pagtaas ng rice procurement.

“We are pleased that the NFA Council’s decision has resulted in a significant increase in our rice buffer stock, especially with the onset of the typhoon season,” aniya.

Target ng NFA targets na maabot ang kabuuang 300,000 metric tons ng bigas para sa national buffer stock ng bansa.

Tiniyak ni Laurel na patuloy na magsasaliksik ng mga paraan upang ibaba ang presyo ng bigas, alinsunod sa food security targets ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/nabiling-palay-ng-nfa-sumampa-sa-97-target-para-sa-h1-2024/>

REMATE:

PH milk production target palakasin sa dairy herd importation

June 1, 2024 11:34



MANILA, Philippines- Inilatag ng Department of Agriculture (DA) at ng National Dairy Authority (NDA) nitong Biyernes ang plano nitong mag-angkat ng dairy herds upang palakasin ang produksyon ng gatas sa Pilipinas.

Sa pagdiriwang ng World Milk Day, sinabi ni DA Undersecretary for Livestock Deogracias Victor Savellano na nangangailangan ang industriya ng “good genetics” upang maabot ang 5-posyentong dagdag sa milk sufficiency, katumbas ng 40 milyong litro sa 2025.

“We are importing 99 percent [of milk], pero ang gusto sana namin ay mag-import din kami ng mga baka, kalabaw, para maparami natin,” anang opisyal sa isang ambush interview.

Sa kasalukuyan, nagpo-prodyus lamang ang bansa ng 30,000 metric tons (MT) ng gatas, malayo sa milk demand sa bansa na 3.3 million MT.

Inihayag ni NDA officer-in-charge Administrator Gavino Alfredo Benitez na upang maabot ang 5 percent target production hike, halos 5,000 hanggang 8,000 dairy herds ang dapat iangat mula 2025 hanggang 2026.

“It should come from FMD (foot-and-mouth disease)-free [countries]. For that napakaliit lang ng list. Pwede tayo US, patay tayo sa shipping cost. Ang pinakamalapit sa atin ay New Zealand and Australia,” aniya.

Sumang-ayon din ang Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) sa planong importasyon.

“To expedite the herd buildup, obligado talaga na mag-import tayo. But we have to give more budget also to genetic improvement,” giit ni PCAFI president Danilo Fausto sa isang panayam.

Subalit, sinabi ni Fausto na posible lamang ang mga adhikaing ito sa pagpasa ng tier 2 budget ng NDA.

“30,000 MT ang total production natin, gagawin mong 80 million (liters), paano mo gagawin iyon kung wala kang gagatasan?” ayon sa opisyal.

Kapwa suportado ng NDA at DA ang mas mataas na budget allocation para sa sektor upang maisakatuparan hindi lamang ang importasyon kundi ang iba pang mga programa sa gitna ng negatibong epekto ng El Niño phenomenon.

“We were granted by the DBM [Department of Budget and Management] now, I think PHP500 million. And we’re still backing for the so-called tier 2 budget which is about PHP2.5 billion. That would make it about PHP3 billion for next year,” ani Benitez.

“Sa pondo, kulang na kulang. Kami naman gumagawa kami ng paraan,” sabi naman ni Savellano. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/ph-milk-production-target-palakasin-sa-dairy-herd-importation/>

REMATE:

Aghon nagdulot ng P365M infra damage

June 1, 2024 08:45



MANILA, Phiippines- Nag-iwan si Bagyong Aghon ng pinsala sa imprastraktura na pumalo sa P365,470,000, ayon sa National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) nitong Biyernes.

Sa pinakabagong situational report, hindi bababa sa 47 imprastraktura ang napinsala sa Calabarzon, partikular sa Batangas at Quezon Province. Kabilang sa mga napinsalang imprastraktura ang mga kalsada at tulay.

Sinabi ng NDRRMC na mayroong 22 bahay sa Eastern Visayas na nawasak ng bagyo.

Samantala, nananatili ang halaga ng agricultural damage sa P21,651,548.

Gayundin, sinabi ng NDRRMC na ang bilang ng mga apektadong indibidwal ay 51,858, o 16,404 pamilya.

Anim naman ang nasawi habang walo ang sugatan.

Lumabas si Aghon ng Philippine Area of Responsibility noong Miyerkules. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/aghon-nagdulot-ng-p365m-infra-damage/>