

CLIPPINGS FOR TODAY JUNE 12, 2024

A. MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos eyes geopolitical dialogue, expanded ties with New Zealand
Hungarian foreign minister to visit Manila

B. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Farm losses from El Niño climb to P9.89B
Why the rice tariff cut is dangerous

C. THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Agriculture losses due to El Niño reach P9.89 billion
Small is not beautiful
Government budget release for 2024 hits P5.1 trillion
Marikina City to host first farm-to-consumer food hub

D. BUSINESS WORLD:

Farmers ask Agri dep't to reveal funding plans for rice programs
Poultry shipments from Michigan barred
FTI-managed food hub planned for BFCT Marikina

E. MANILA STANDARD:

Gov't bans poultry products from Michigan

F. THE MANILA TIMES:

Tiu Laurel forms group to facilitate agri imports

G. BUSINESS MIRROR:

Government sets sights on expanding ginger production areas
PhilMech: Cooperatives undergo scrutiny prior to receiving aid
Philippines struggles to secure food supply amidst global turmoil

H. PILIPINO STAR NGAYON:

Ugat sa pagtaas ng presyo ng luya, hukayin

I. REMATE:

Tolentino: Ugat sa pagtaas ng presyo ng luya, hukayin

Toxic red tide ibinabala sa 3 lugar sa VisMin

MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos eyes geopolitical dialogue, expanded ties with New Zealand

BY BETHEENA UNITE

Jun 11, 2024 05:59 PM

President Marcos expressed hope that the Philippines and New Zealand could further discuss geopolitical issues and boost cooperation in agriculture, trade, and investment.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Winston Peters pays a courtesy call on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. at Malacañang Palace on June 11, 2024. (Photo courtesy of PPA/Ryan Baldemor)

Marcos told New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Winston Peters, who paid a courtesy call in Malacañan on Tuesday, June 11, that he hopes both sides could further capitalize on what was initially discussed during Prime Minister Christopher Luxon's official visit to the Philippines in April.

"Mr. Prime Minister, I'm, of course, very pleased to be able to welcome you to Manila after the very good visit that your new Prime Minister had here with us just a few weeks ago," Marcos told Peters.

"And at which time they — we agreed on many things and one of which was that the situation in our part of the world requires that — shall we say the smaller countries get together and have a response or a joint positioning when it comes to these geopolitical issues that we are — this complicated geopolitical issues that we are facing," he added.

Marcos also said he and Luxon tackled other areas such as agriculture, trade, and possible investments, as well as the ongoing current expansions and operations in New Zealand.

He further hoped that Peters would keep in touch with some of Filipino government officials and the private sector “to develop some of these ideas that we spoke about with your Prime Minister.”

For his part, Peters thanked the President for the warm welcome, telling him that after Prime Minister Luxon’s visit to Manila, “they had some very productive talks.”

During Luxon’s official visit to the Philippines, both leaders agreed to strengthen bilateral ties, elevating the relationship to a Comprehensive Partnership by 2026 and emphasized cooperation in defense, security, and maritime affairs, signing agreements and committing to combat common threats.

Trade and economic relations were bolstered with goals of increasing two-way trade by 50 percent by 2030 and enhancing collaboration in various sectors.

They also highlighted people-to-people connections, renewable energy, and climate change initiatives, and discussed regional and global developments, including concerns over the South China Sea, the Middle East humanitarian crisis, Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, and the situation in Myanmar.

The Philippines and New Zealand established formal diplomatic relations on July 6, 1966.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/6/11/marcos-hopes-philippines-new-zealand-could-further-tackle-geopolitical-issues-boost-agri-trade-ties>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Hungarian foreign minister to visit Manila

BY JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

Jun 11, 2024 04:10 PM

Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto is flying to the Philippines for the third time amid efforts between Budapest and Manila to strengthen existing ties on education, water technology, agriculture, culture and sports sectors.

Szijarto will be in Manila on June 13 for an official visit, which includes meeting with Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual and Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac.



Photo courtesy of Peter

Szijarto's Facebook page

The Hungarian diplomat will sit down with Manalo for the 8th iteration of Philippines-Hungary Political Consultations following the previous talks that were held in Budapest in 2022.

"The visit is part of Foreign Minister Szijarto's official tour of Southeast Asia, and marks his third trip to the Philippines in his current role," the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said.

Szijarto previously visited the Philippines in 2017 to meet Manalo, who was then an acting Foreign Affairs secretary, and in 2020 to engage with former Foreign Affairs chief Teodoro Locsin Jr.

"The visit highlights the ongoing celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Hungary," DFA said.

"The two countries' relations are marked by a shared commitment to democracy, rule of law, and compliance with international law," it added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/6/11/hungarian-diplomat-to-visit-manila>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Agriculture losses due to El Niño reach P9.89 billion

[Gabriell Christel Galang](#) - Philstar.com

June 11, 2024 | 10:02am



Locals walk over the dry part of Intang Lake in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija on April 22, 2024.

STAR / Walter Bollozos

MANILA, Philippines — Despite El Niño's gradual weakening in June, the Department of Agriculture, through the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center (DA-DRRM), recorded the remaining impacts of the hot and dry conditions on food commodities such as rice, corn, and other high-value crops.

As of June 6, the DA-DRRM reported over P9.89 billion in agricultural losses due to the dry spell, affecting 170,469 hectares.

Rice suffered the most, with 48% of the losses valued at P4.75 billion, followed by corn at 34% (P3.37 billion) and high-value crops at 17% (P1.7 billion).

On the other hand, the fisheries sector obtained over P57.7 million worth of damage, which includes the production of tilapia, carp, bangus, catfish, shrimp, seaweeds and sea urchins.

Livestock and poultry faced P10.47 million in losses.

Overall, nearly 200,000 farmers and fisherfolk were hit by the adverse effects of El Niño, with a total agri volume loss estimated at 441,801 MT.

Actions taken

The agriculture sector saw a 71% percent opportunity to recover 121,367 hectares of land that suffered during the hot weather.

Through the Rice Farmer Financial Assistance (RFFA), around P8.59 billion worth of financial aid will be provided to farmers and fisherfolk nationwide.

Agri growers will then receive a value of P659.17 million for agri-inputs such as fertilizers and planting materials, among others.

The Department of Finance (DOF), through the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC), will allot P177.12 million for the 20,372 farmers who suffered the El Niño damage.

Rice machinery and equipment worth P8 million will be given by the DA-Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (DA-PhilMech).

P99.38 million has been set aside for the Survival and Recovery (SURE) aid Loan from the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC), and around P5.19 million worth of coconut seeds have been distributed by the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA).

The DA-Bureau of Soils and Water Management (DA-BSWM) and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) have weighed in with their composting facilities and irrigation projects that incurred P65 million and P294 million, respectively.

To assist the fishermen and animal farmers, around P8.99 million will be allocated for machinery and equipment; while 66,039 native animals will be dispersed through the Philippine Native Animal Development Program (PNAD).

Furthermore, to solve the water crisis, the Magat Dam will undergo a cloudseeding operation through a collaborative effort with the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (DOST-PAGASA) and the Department of National Defense–Philippine Air Force (DND-PAF).

Aside from the monetary assistance, 616 water pumps have been installed to supply enough water to farmlands, while irrigation canals were concreted to boost water delivery and improve the water flow to agricultural areas nationwide.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/11/2362041/agriculture-losses-due-el-nio-reach-p989-billion>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Small is not beautiful



DEMAND AND SUPPLY - Boo Chanco - The Philippine Star

June 12, 2024 | 12:00am

Our politicians have a penchant for smallness. Because of it, we are what we are today, the laggard among the ASEAN originals. Smallness is not a virtue. Our politicians use it to preserve their power and enhance their ability to benefit from corruption. Our politicians thrive on the miseries of our people arising from smallness.

Take agriculture. We are unable to grow enough rice because we have a revered but stupid agrarian reform law that celebrates smallness. Our rice farms are just about a hectare, so farmers can hardly grow enough rice for their families. A farmer with just a single hectare to till can't make a living. He ends up driving a tricycle so his family can eat.

The story of successful rice-growing countries is all about taking advantage of farm mechanization and economies of scale. Farming is more than planting rice seedlings in the muddy ground. Seed selection and getting the right fertilizers are cheaper with scale. Scale will also make post-harvest and marketing logistics more efficiently available.

Surely BBM and his Agriculture Secretary must know that things won't start to get better until they address the smallness issue of rice farms. Because the basic smallness problem is being ignored, they are merely pretending they are doing something useful. BBM must be brave enough to say we need to start consolidating farms, not necessarily farm ownership.

Our politicians have also been breaking up provinces. According to Google, we have 81 provinces now, but I am not sure how current that number is. That also does not include the chartered cities and the NCR with its 16 cities and one municipality. It is a good thing the people in Palawan rejected the congressional attempt to divide it into three provinces.

Of course, politicians love to chop-chop provinces to increase the number of congressional seats their family members can get elected to and increase their potential pork barrel funds. But continually dividing provinces does not result in better governance. On the contrary, more officials get more opportunities to waste more public funds.

Actually, NCR should be made one super province with one governor responsible for everything. Metro Manila is 636 sq km compared to Singapore, which is 699 sq km. It is obvious having one government in charge of city planning and providing essential services in the two geographical areas that are almost of the same size has resulted in better efficiency and outcomes for Singapore. Much will be gained by some consolidation in terms of more efficient garbage collection, better flood control, and traffic management.

Now there is a congressman who wants to chop-chop the Meralco franchise area into three. The first rule of management is to leave alone things that are already working well. Some refinements may be introduced now and then, but a major change that will upset the system is too risky. There will be a public outcry if we end up getting a diminished quality of service after the franchise is chopped into three.

Meralco is a well-functioning natural monopoly. Google defines a natural monopoly as a business that can provide a product or service cheaper than two or more business units can. The purpose of natural monopolies is to ensure efficiency and reliability through economies of scale. A power distribution utility is a good example of a natural monopoly in a given geographic area.

Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan have one distribution utility each. Thailand has three and Malaysia has two. The Philippines has around 140 distribution utilities/electric cooperatives plus the NPC, which runs island grids. This is an unreasonably fragmented electricity distribution system that explains why the cost of electricity is so high outside the Meralco area. Additionally, Filipinos also suffer the consequences of smallness and the cost of local corruption that electric cooperatives are known for.

Will three DUs in the current Meralco franchise area be better than having just the current one? I doubt it. Breaking it up will unsettle what is already a finely tuned working system with serious economic consequences.

Because of Meralco's current size, it is able to get power supply contracts that enable Meralco subscribers to enjoy among the lowest rates in the country. If Meralco is broken into three smaller Meralcos, not one of them will have the same leverage to get the same lower PSA rates.

Each of the three will also have fewer resources to invest in continually upgrading the system to meet increased power demand from customers. For instance, massive investments are needed to meet the demands of data centers, and only Meralco, because it can leverage its size with suppliers and banks, can more easily meet those demands.

Three smaller Meralcos will make it more difficult to attract foreign investors who will see them as less able to provide the quality of service the current Meralco already gives. There is no economic justification to break up our most efficient distribution utility.

After natural calamities, Meralco has the resources to provide the relief backbone in helping smaller DUs and electric cooperatives get their lines back to serve their customers. But each of the three mini Meralcos will be less able to respond to national emergencies the way the current one does.

If some legislators want to tinker with power distribution, they should consolidate smaller utilities and electric cooperatives so their constituents can also enjoy the benefits of size. Consolidation will boost the economy. Our long-suffering provincial citizens will finally get some relief if a bigger DU, able to provide better governance, consolidates those cooperatives. That's a definite positive.

But breaking up Meralco, which is already performing well, opens us up to economic and political risks we can't afford. For sure, the smaller Meralcos will be less efficient than the original. That's not progress.

Boo Chanco's email address is bchanco@gmail.com. Follow him on X [@boochanco](https://twitter.com/boochanco)

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/12/2362103/small-not-beautiful>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Government budget release for 2024 hits P5.1 trillion

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

June 12, 2024 | 12:00am



Latest data from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) showed it has issued a total of P5.11 trillion of the 2024 budget as of end-May.

Businessworld / File

MANILA, Philippines — The government has released P5.1 trillion or about 89 percent of the record P5.768 trillion allocation this year as agencies ramp up their various programs.

Latest data from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) showed it has issued a total of P5.11 trillion of the 2024 budget as of end-May.

This represents 88.7 percent of the national budget allocated for the year, just slightly below the 88.9 percent in May 2023.

The DBM released P3.68 trillion under the 2024 General Appropriations Act (GAA). This is 91.7 percent of the total P4.01 trillion financing.

Under the 2024 GAA, the DBM said it has distributed 97.6 percent or P3.42 trillion of the P3.5 trillion for departments.

In terms of special purpose funds, releases inched up to 50.9 percent which means that P258.43 billion has been handed out from the P507.48 billion allocation.

On the other hand, automatic appropriations are already at 75.4 percent or about P1.33 trillion of the P1.76 trillion aggregate funding.

As of the end-May, the DBM has fully released allocation for the national tax allotment (P871.36 billion), block grants (P70.51 billion) and pensions of former presidents or their widows (P480,000).

During the month, the government also fully freed up allocation for the tax expenditure fund at P14.5 billion.

Similarly, the government released more funds for interest payments, which is now at P260.49 billion or 38.9 percent of the P670.47 billion total funding for 2024.

For May, the DBM did not disburse extra funds for net lending as it remained at P7.18 billion, which is 25 percent of the P28.7 billion earmarked for the year.

The DBM also freed up the entire P65.79 billion in retirement and life insurance premiums (RLIP) of state workers as early as January and added some P581.42 million in extra funds as of end-May.

Last month, the DBM likewise issued additional releases to the special account in the general fund which is now at 97.9 percent or P35.72 billion of the P36.48 billion allocation.

Meanwhile, the DBM recorded P112.78 billion in other releases as of May, 76 percent of which at P85.37 billion went to unprogrammed appropriations.

Unprogrammed appropriations provide standby authority to incur additional agency obligations for priority programs or projects when revenue collection exceeds targets or when additional grants or foreign funds are generated.

Of the unprogrammed funds, P66.38 billion was earmarked to support the foreign-assisted projects of the Departments of Agriculture, Finance, Health, Public Works and Highways, Social Welfare and Development, Labor and Employment and Transportation.

There was also a P10.16 billion that served as budgetary support to state-run firms particularly the National Food Authority and the Light Rail Transit Authority.

Another P6 billion was released to DPWH for the maintenance, repair and rehabilitation of infrastructure facilities of national roads. The remaining P2.84 billion was for the Panay-Guimaras-Negros Island Bridges project of the DPWH.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/12/2362092/government-budget-release-2024-hits-p51-trillion>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Marikina City to host first farm-to-consumer food hub

[Gabriell Christel Galang](#) - Philstar.com

June 11, 2024 | 4:40pm



In this photo posted on Facebook on June 4 2024 shows staff collecting samples from the BPI Kadiwa Center on May 31, 2024.

Facebook / Bureau of Plant Industry

MANILA, Philippines — Marikina City is set to host the Department of Agriculture's (DA) first food hub, allowing farmers and cooperatives to deliver their produce directly and conduct transactions with wholesale buyers and individual consumers.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said that the agency is building the hub close to the existing food distribution center to facilitate a more seamless access for suppliers and buyers.

The DA has also planned on blending traditional food terminals with KADIWA centers to ensure affordability and accessibility to Filipinos.

The KADIWA stores were established by the DA as a farm-to-consumer market chain, which allow the low-income buyers to purchase commodities without the need for middlemen.

“These hubs will serve as vital platforms where farmers and cooperatives can directly bring their produce, facilitating transactions with wholesale buyers and individual consumers alike, all while offering agricultural products at competitive prices,” the agri chief said.

Laurel emphasized the need to address the lack of food terminals in the country. According to him, the food hub plan will then be part of the DA’s logistics roadmap.

“[Our] broader logistics roadmap is aimed at enhancing the efficiency of agricultural supply chains, ensuring sufficient supply of vital agricultural products at affordable prices, especially in areas where demand is high,” the DA said.

The agri chief said that the agency has already negotiated for either a joint venture or a long-term lease on a one-hectare property in BFCT Bagsakan Center near Marikina river.

"While the management of these food hubs will fall under the purview of Food Terminals Inc. (FTI), a KADIWA component will be integrated into their operations," he said.

This development project will take around 12 months to complete the necessary facilities like cold storage and dry warehouses, which are vital for preserving the agricultural commodities.

“The overarching goal of the initiative is to help farmers and cooperatives increase their income while concurrently providing consumers, especially those in urban centers, with access to affordable agricultural products,” Laurel said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/11/2362082/marikina-city-host-first-farm-consumer-food-hub>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Farm losses from El Niño climb to P9.89B

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:20 AM June 11, 2024



SOLAR POWER FOR FARMS President Marcos, accompanied by top officials of the National Irrigation Administration and other agencies, leads the inauguration of the Solar-Powered Pump Irrigation Project in Quirino, Isabela, on Monday. The project aims to end farmers' dependence on gasoline or diesel engine water pumps and cut production costs. —photos by Marianne Bermudez

MANILA, Philippines — The agriculture sector continued to reel from the extreme heat and lack of rain caused by the El Niño weather phenomenon, with losses rising to P9.89 billion as of June 6 from the P9.5 billion in damage reported on May 16, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Monday.

The DA said the dry spell, which was officially declared over last Friday, affected the livelihood of 183,455 farmers and fisherfolk in 13 regions—Cordillera, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon), Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan), Bicol, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Central Mindanao, Davao and Soccsksargen (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, General Santos) in central Mindanao.

Rice accounted for P4.75 billion, or 48.03 percent, of the agricultural losses, followed by corn, with P3.37 billion, or 34.04 percent, of the total damage.

The DA said it provided P9.91 billion worth of interventions to affected farmers and fishers.

These included P8.59 billion worth of cash aid through the DA's Rice Farmers Financial Assistance and production support amounting to P659.17 million.

The Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. also indemnified 20,372 farmers in affected regions, amounting to P177.12 million.

Despite the rising losses, the DA said the effects of the latest El Niño were not as severe as those in the late 1990s to early 2010s.

Based on DA records, the agriculture sector suffered P17.44 billion worth of damage from the 2009 El Niño.

The worst in terms of the area was the drought in 1997, which affected 677,441 hectares, although losses that year amounted to only P3.07 billion.

Sun-powered irrigation

Meanwhile, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. inaugurated on Monday the Cabaruan Solar-Powered Pump Irrigation Project (SPIP) in Quirino town in Isabela, which is expected to supply water to 350 ha of ricefields and benefit 237 palay farmers.

The President recalled that 33 towns in Isabela declared a state of calamity due to drought caused by El Niño, affecting close to 48,000 families in the entire Cagayan Valley region.

The Cabaruan SPIP was built by the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) under its Magat River Integrated Irrigation System at a total project cost of P65.8 million.



GREEN PANELS More than 230 farmers will benefit from the government’s Solar-Powered Pump Irrigation Project in Quirino, Isabela, that President Marcos opened on Monday. The project provides irrigation water service to 350 hectares of agricultural land.

It is the first SPIP in the country to be constructed over an irrigation canal and the biggest SPIP nationwide, with a total of 1,056 solar panels that can generate 739,200 watts of power. Each of its two submersible pumps can discharge 12,800 gallons of water a minute, according to the NIA.

“If in the past we used machinery that ran on gasoline to let irrigation flow into our farms, we would now make this task easier by using electricity from the sun—this would mean free electricity which, in turn, would result in free irrigation,” the President said.

According to Marcos, 152 solar-powered pump irrigation projects are being built across the country, with 118 projects to be put up by the government.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1950257/farm-losses-from-el-nino-climb-to-p9-89b>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Why the rice tariff cut is dangerous

By: [Ernesto M. Ordoñez](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:01 AM June 11, 2024

In-depth study, consultation, and hearings are urgently needed to discuss the new agriculture tariffs announced on June 3.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) Board had just approved the Comprehensive Tariff Program, which, among others, maintained the reduced tariff rates for corn, pork, and mechanically deboned meat.

For rice, however, the duty was reduced to 15 percent from 35 percent.

Their main rationale for this was stated in the headline of the Philippine Information Agency: “Neda Board approves Comprehensive Tariff Program calibrating current tariff rates until 2028 to lower prices of goods.”

These tariff announcements have a profound effect on agriculture and its future. The problem deserves immediate attention.

On June 4, in a special meeting of the committee on international trade of the public-private Philippine Council of Agriculture and Food (PCAF), chief tariff specialist Linly de la Cuesta of the Tariff Commission explained the five-step process of modifying tariffs. They are: a notice of initiation, a notice of the conduct of the investigation, the conduct of ocular inspection and data verification, conduct of public hearings and consultations, and the submission of the final report of findings and recommendations.

Since the new tariffs will be implemented for quite so long until 2028, farmer leaders of several organizations now want this process, especially the hearings, done with thoroughness. This thoroughness, however, was not done.

Negligence

Here is an example of how negligence happened in the past. For pork, the NEDA Board had recommended that tariff for the minimum access volume (MAV) be reduced from 35 percent to 5 percent.

Leaders of the Alyansa Agrikultura (AA) showed actual import and profit numbers before Senate Agriculture Committee chair Cynthia Villar to appeal this decision. Supposedly, the rationale behind the 5-percent level was: that the lower the tariff, the lesser the cost; in effect, more supplies would automatically mean lower retail prices, thus leading to slower inflation.

This logic is advocated by economists pursuing the neoclassical approach of an economic theory of the firm. However, the book “A Behavioral Theory of the Firm” by R.M. Cyert and J.G. March, showed that behavior and intentions determine reality.

With numbers from experience, AA showed how reducing the tariff to 15 percent, instead of 5 percent, would result in the same purchasing behavior by importers. The profit made by these importers at 15 percent would be enough to motivate them to purchase the additional pork supply desired.

Consider this, too: If an additional incentive of 30 percent is enough to make a salesman work as hard as he can, why give 100 percent? In the same way, if reducing the tariff to 15 percent is already enough, why give 5 percent?

An unnecessary 10-percent tariff decrease would mean P3 billion going to traders at the expense of producers. The actual result of this 15-percent decision was an oversupply and decreased farm gate prices. Retail prices hardly decreased.

Damaging impact

There are other ways to curb inflation aside from reducing tariffs.

In an article by Robert Scott and Adam Hesch published by the Economic Policy Institute, they state: “Claims that tariff rollbacks are an answer to inflation are

dangerous. Until a coherent overall strategy is in place, tariffs can give key industries breathing room.”

They go on to argue that unwise tariff decisions would result in “job losses, plant closures, cancellation of planned investments, and further destabilization of the domestic manufacturing base, which would increase domestic dependence on unstable import supply claims.” Sound familiar?

We must now act with urgency, perhaps with Senate support as in the past, on the damaging impact of the new tariffs. If we are serious about food security and the welfare of our farmers and fisherfolk, extensive research and more consultations are needed. **INQ**

The author is Agriwatch chair, former secretary of presidential flagship programs and projects, and former undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry. Contact is agriwatch_phil@yahoo.com.

<https://business.inquirer.net/463264/why-the-rice-tariff-cut-is-dangerous>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Farmers ask Agri dep't to reveal funding plans for rice programs

June 11, 2024 | 8:29 pm



BW FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Agriculture needs to reveal its capacity to fund its rice self-sufficiency goals and support farmers as the government strives to bring down the price of the staple grain, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) said on Tuesday.

At a Senate hearing, Leonardo Q. Montemayor, chairman of the FFF, said: “The message that our government agencies should (be) the whole truth and nothing but the truth, for the sake of the credibility of these agencies,” he said.

“If there are limitations or shortcomings in the government’s programs, our countrymen deserve to know so that they won’t be frustrated.”

Mr. Montemayor added that the government should consult more with farmers on measures like slashing tariffs on rice imports.

Earlier this month, the board of the National Economic and Development Authority approved a medium-term plan to lower tariffs on agricultural and industrial products, to help contain rising prices and declining factory performance.

Under the tariff program, reduced tariffs for corn, pork, and mechanically deboned meat first imposed in 2019 are to be maintained until 2028. Rice tariffs will fall to 15% from 35% until 2028.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. said last month that the government will work towards achieving 97.5% rice self-sufficiency by 2028, a level which he described as suitable for the country’s needs.

“Before the government makes a decision on an executive order, you should give us a chance to effectively be heard (as guaranteed by) the Constitution. This (right) cannot be abridged,” FFF’s Mr. Montemayor said. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/06/11/601158/farmers-ask-agri-dept-to-reveal-funding-plans-for-rice-programs/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Poultry shipments from Michigan barred

June 11, 2024 | 8:28 pm



US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE/CC BY 2.0/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Tuesday that it imposed a temporary ban on imports of poultry and its by products from the US state of Michigan.

In Memorandum Order No. 24, it said that an outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) or bird flu was detected in the state.

The US Veterinary Services notified the World Organisation for Animal Health on March 29 of the bird flu cases.

The DA added that imports from Michigan of domestic and wild birds, poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs, and semen were suspended following the detection of HPAI in three or more counties in the state.

“The rapid spread of HPAI in the US in a short period of time since its first laboratory detection necessitates a wider coverage of trade restriction to prevent the entry of HPAI virus and protect the health of the local poultry population,” the DA said.

The Philippines and US veterinary authorities have agreed that a statewide ban can be imposed if three or more counties are affected by the virus.

The DA said it has suspended applications for and issuance of Sanitary and Phytosanitary import clearances for Michigan poultry.

The DA added that such shipments from the state may still be accepted provided that the items were produced or slaughtered 14 days before the first outbreak.

“All shipments coming from the mentioned areas of the US that are in transit/loaded/accepted unto port before the official communication of this Order to the American authorities shall be allowed provided that the products were slaughtered/produced 14 days before the first outbreak in the particular county,” it said.

The DA had earlier lifted the ban on imports of poultry and by-products from Ohio following clearance issued by US authorities. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/06/11/601154/poultry-shipments-from-michigan-barred/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

FTI-managed food hub planned for BFCT

Marikina

June 11, 2024 | 8:29 pm



BFCT BAGSAKAN FACEBOOK PAGE

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is looking to put up a food hub in Marikina City within the BFCT Bagsakan Center, which will be managed by Food Terminal, Inc. (FTI).

In a statement, the DA said that negotiations are underway for either a joint venture or long-term lease on a one-hectare property at the Bagsakan Center site.

“We lack food terminals — places where buyers and sellers can transact at a wholesale level. This food hub will be part of the DA’s logistics roadmap,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

The DA said the Marikina food hub will feature cold storage and dry warehouses.

“While the management of these food hubs will fall under the purview of Food Terminal, Inc., a KADIWA component will be integrated into their operations,” Mr. Laurel said.

The Kadiwa program enables farmers and small businesses to sell their produce direct to consumers through designated Kadiwa sites, pop-up stores, mobile stores, or online.

“These hubs will serve as vital platforms where farmers and cooperatives can directly bring their produce, facilitating transactions with wholesale buyers and individual consumers alike, all while offering agricultural products at competitive prices,” he added.

The DA said a network of food hubs will enhance the efficiency of agricultural supply chains, ensuring sufficient supply of affordable produce, especially in areas where demand is high. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/06/11/601159/fti-managed-food-hub-planned-for-bfct-marikina/>

MANILA STANDARD

Gov't bans poultry products from Michigan

By Othel V. Campos

June 12, 2024, 8:15 pm

The Department of Agriculture (DA) restricted the entry of wild and domesticated birds, along with poultry products from Michigan in the United States, shortly after recalling the ban on similar products from Ohio.

The ban follows the emergence of the H5N1 subtype of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in the State of Ohio.

Under Memorandum Order 24 signed on June 7, 2024, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. suspended the importation of domestic and wild birds and associated products, including poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs and semen from Michigan.

The DA also suspended the issuance of new sanitary and phytosanitary permits by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) for animal and product imports from Ohio.

Shipments from Michigan currently in transit, loaded or accepted at ports prior to the official communication of the order to US authorities will be permitted if the products were processed or produced 14 days before the initial outbreak was reported.

Non-compliant shipments may face confiscation and destruction, return to the country of origin, or redirection to a third country, according to the department.

According to the official report from the US Chief Veterinary Officer to the World Organization for Animal Health, an outbreak of the H5N1 subtype of avian influenza occurred in Michigan, as confirmed by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, on March 29, 2024.

US authorities observed the virus's rapid spread, prompting the broadening of trade restrictions to safeguard the local poultry population.

Under a bilateral agreement between the Philippines and the US in 2016, a state-wide ban is imposed if three or more counties are affected by avian flu, underscoring the collaborative efforts to mitigate the spread of the disease and protect poultry populations.

The DA maintains restrictions on poultry imports from the US State of California as well as the State of Victoria in Australia, Belgium and France.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314458691/govt-bans-poultry-products-from-michigan.html>

Tiu Laurel forms group to facilitate agri imports

By Janine Alexis Miguel

June 13, 2024

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has created a technical working group (TWG) to revamp administrative processes and policies concerning agricultural imports.

Under Special Order (SO) 768, Tiu Laurel directed Undersecretary Asis Perez to lead the TWG, which will collaborate with the National Economic and Development Authority's Committee on Tariff and Related Matters to potentially expand import quotas for agricultural goods beyond the minimum access volume (MAV) and consider lowering or eliminating administrative fees for these imports.

According to the Department of Agriculture (DA), the working group will "make it easier for importers to secure licenses or exempt licensed importers from submission of registration requirements."

The TWG also aims to streamline the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary permits essential for importing agricultural products. Additionally, it is tasked to come up with plans to enhance logistics, transportation, distribution and storage of imported goods.

SO 768 also mandates the publication of streamlined guidelines by relevant agencies in the Official Gazette or a national newspaper to ensure transparency and accessibility.

Furthermore, the agriculture chief directed the creation of a secretariat led by lawyer Jomila May Fugaban to oversee the TWG's operations and provide regular updates to his office.

The creation of the TWG aligns with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to simplify administrative procedures for importing agricultural products and remove non-tariff barriers to lower prices of farm goods in the country.

Administrative Order 20, signed by Marcos, states that administrative constraints and non-tariff barriers persist, leading to increased domestic prices of imported agricultural commodities.

In line with this, the DA, Department of Trade and Industry, and Department of Finance were tasked to streamline procedures and requirements in the licensing of importers, minimize the processing time of applications for importation, and exempt licensed traders from submission of registration requirements.

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<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/13/business/top-business/tiu-laurel-forms-group-to-facilitate-agri-imports/1951238>

Government sets sights on expanding ginger production areas

Ada Pelonia

June 12, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is pushing for the expansion of areas planted with ginger to meet the rising demand of food manufacturers for the crop.

Citing official government data, Agriculture Undersecretary Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero noted the fluctuation in production and harvest area since 2010.

Caballero said, however, that there were “significant increases” in areas planted with ginger in 2023, when it jumped to 4,816.26 hectares (ha), from 4,057.30 hectares ha in 2022.

“Our ginger production areas are increasing, and we want to maintain it. We will also source out quality planting materials for distribution and production expansion to encourage local production and make farmers more competitive,” she told the BusinessMirror via SMS.

The DA official said ginger yield declined to 6.1 metric tons (MT) per ha in 2023, from 7.1 MT/ha in 2022.

Despite this, the expansion in hectarage allowed the Philippines to post a slight increase in output last year. In 2023, estimated ginger production was pegged at nearly 29,380 MT, nearly 2 percent higher than the 28,806.83 MT recorded in 2022.

The increasing demand of food and beverage manufacturers for ginger, a popular ingredient used in making Filipino dishes, is putting pressure on the price of the crop, according to the Caballero. (<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/06/ginger-supply-tightening-on-rising-demand-from-food-processors/>)

She said that aside from ginger's traditional use, it is being positioned as a specialty product (colorant or supplement) in markets that support natural and homeopathy remedies.

The DA's latest price watch report as of June 10 showed that the price of ginger in the National Capital Region (NCR) jumped to as high as P300 per kilogram.

When asked about the ideal ginger yield that would meet domestic requirements, Caballero said, "the higher, the better."

"It will now be determined by the farmers' willingness to invest in the right production technology. The High Value Crops Development Program can only espouse for better access to production financing and loans, over and above our limited budget space and meager allocation for HVC."

During a recent radio interview Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, who is also the spokesperson of the agency, said the Philippines imports ginger to beef up domestic supply. He said the Bureau of Plant Industry is currently investigating the apparent decline in imports.

The DA said ginger is a traditional crop that is easy to cultivate and can easily adapt to a broad range of agro-ecological conditions. It thrives in all parts of the country and is found cultivated in small patches for local demand. It is a perennial plant but is usually grown as an annual crop.

Ginger is used in the Philippines to add flavor to some common Filipino dishes like tinola, goto, arozz caldo, paksiw, batchoy, and pinakbet.

It also used as an ingredient in the manufacture of perfumes and soft drinks and in the preparation of preserves, candies and pickles.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/12/government-sets-sights-on-expanding-ginger-production-areas/>

PhilMech: Cooperatives undergo scrutiny prior to receiving aid

Ada Pelonia

June 12, 2024

The Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) assured lawmakers that the agency has safeguards in place to weed out fly-by-night cooperatives.

During the hearing of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform on Tuesday, PhilMech Director Dionisio Alwindia acknowledged claims that some cooperatives are taking advantage of the benefits provided by the government.

“(That’s why) we assess the cooperatives first before providing them with farm equipment,” he said in Filipino.

He said only cooperatives that have a 3-year track record and are registered with the Department of Agriculture may be eligible for the assistance from the government.

“Para maka-avail sila ng programa, kailangan meron silang sama-samang 50 hectares (ha) pataas [The cooperatives should have a combined 50 ha of farmland or more to avail of the program].”

He said the agency has distributed equipment, such as tractors to 7,052 farmers’ cooperatives nationwide, or 1.05 million of its members. This accounts for about one-third of the 2.7 million rice farmers registered under the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA).

To ensure that planters maintain the farm equipment provided by the agency, Alwindia said a deed of donation is signed by the cooperatives and the government.

“Meron po silang pinirmahan na deed of donation sa amin na kapag hindi nila na-maintain yung kanilang machine, kukunin po natin at ililipat po natin sa ibang magsasaka na may kakayahan [The deed of donation states that if they can’t maintain the machine, we’ll give it to other farmers who would be capable of taking care of it].”

In 2021, the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) and PhilMech signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the “Entrepreneurial Capability Enhancement of the Farmers’ Cooperative and Association (FCA) Beneficiaries of the RCEF-Mechanization Program” project.

The project ensures sustainable operation and utilization of distributed farm machinery under the program.

Last March, the attached agency of the DA vowed to distribute P30 billion worth of farm equipment under a program funded by tariffs collected from rice imports.

PhilMech said it has distributed 26,412 farm equipment over the last four years through the mechanization program bankrolled by the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), or Rice Fund.

The farm machineries, distributed between mid-2020 and March 3 this year, were delivered to 368 local government units and 6,385 farmers’ cooperatives and associations. PHilMech said it has obligated a total P24.9 billion of Rice Fund for the procurement of 28,817 agricultural equipment made up of 14,713 units of land preparation machines; 4,284 units of crop establishment technologies; 8,210 harvesting and threshing equipment; 768 drying technologies; and 842 milling equipment.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/12/philmech-cooperatives-undergo-scrutiny-prior-to-receiving-aid/>

Philippines struggles to secure food supply amidst global turmoil

BusinessMirror Editorial

June 12, 2024

Shipowners from Greece to Singapore expect business to flourish, at least in the next few years, despite disruptions that could pose threats to their operations. Bloomberg reported that shipowners are bracing for prolonged earnings amid geopolitical conflicts and doubts about the supply of new ships. (*See, "Golden era for shipping seen ahead as geopolitics boosts pricing," in the BusinessMirror, June 9, 2024.*)

Clarkson Research Services Ltd. noted that the cost of hiring ships has been about a third higher than the average for the last 10 years so far in 2024. The company said this was driven in part by ships sailing thousands of miles extra to avoid attacks in the Red Sea. Also, Russia's invasion of Ukraine resulted in trade dislocations that forced oil tankers to go on longer voyages.

The earnings boom may be good news for shipowners and allied industries, but it could be a source of frustration for countries that have been trying to tame inflation like the Philippines. More expensive logistics could mean costlier food items that the Philippines has been importing for years. And even if the food items being imported by the Philippines are not directly affected by higher shipping costs, the country will not be spared from the impact of pricier fuel.

Unfortunately for the Philippines, conflicts in other parts of the world are beyond its control. The most Manila can do is to make appeals and join calls for those involved to come to the negotiating table and resolve their conflict in a peaceful manner. While they wait for these squabbles among certain nations to end, food-importing countries like the Philippines would have to cough up more funds to pay extra for the commodities they need.

Securing the food supply of the Philippines in the face of all these disruptions is becoming more challenging, but there is something the government can do to somehow cushion the impact of these developments. For one, it should now fast track the implementation of initiatives aimed at increasing the productivity of local

farms. Increments in output must be substantial, particularly for staples like rice, which the Philippines will continue to import in huge quantities sans the needed investments in irrigation. (*See, "40 years of poor rice yield make imports crucial," in the BusinessMirror, June 11, 2024*).

The reduction in rice tariffs will ease the pressure for now and may eventually result in the decline in retail prices, but policymakers must remember that international quotations will remain elevated and may rise in the coming years as resources continue to shrink and climate change makes it more challenging to grow crops. The country's top economist himself has acknowledged that the retail prices of rice would not revert to levels seen in 2023 just because the government decided to slash tariffs. What this means is that it is time for the Philippines to find the solutions to its food conundrum within its own borders and to stop relying on foreign producers to feed its own **citizens**.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/12/philippines-struggles-to-secure-food-supply-amidst-global-turmoil/>

Ugat sa pagtaas ng presyo ng luya, hukayin

[Malou Escudero](#)

June 12, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Nagpahayag ng pagkabahala si Senate Majority Leader Francis 'Tol' Tolentino sa patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng mga gulay, partikular na ang luya.

Sa public market price watch segment ng kanyang radio program na "Usapang Tol," pinuna ng senador ang presyo ng luya (luya) na tumaas nang husto hanggang sa P320 kada kilo noong Lunes.

Ang pinakahuling pagtaas ay umabot sa average na P100 kada kilo dahil nabanggit niya na ang luya ay ibinebenta sa humigit-kumulang P220 noong nakaraang linggo.

"P320? It was just P220 last week. That's incredibly expensive," bulalas ng senador.

Dahil dito, nais ni Tolentino na halukayin ng Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang ugat ng mataas na halaga ng luya, isang mahalagang sangkap para sa karaniwang sambahayan ng mga Pilipino.

"Kapag bumili ka ng isda, natural na bumili ng luya. Kahit na bumaba ang presyo ng isda, ang mataas na halaga ng luya ay na-offset ito," paliwanag niya.

Samantala, ikinatuwa naman ng senador ang pagpapatupad ng price freeze para protektahan ang mga mamimili sa mga lugar na apektado ng pagputok ng Mount Kanlaon sa Negros Island.

Matatandaang unang hinimok ni Tolentino ang Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) na magpatupad ng price freeze sa mga pangunahing bilingin sa kasagsagan ng epekto ng El Niño phenomenon.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/06/12/2362139/ugat-sa-pagtaas-ng-presyo-ng-luya-hukayin>

REMATE:

Tolentino: Ugat sa pagtaas ng presyo ng luya, hukayin

June 11, 2024 14:31



Sinabi ni Majority Leader Francis 'Tol' Tolentino na dapat suriin ng Bureau of Plant Industry ang ugat ng mataas na halaga ng luya, isang mahalagang sangkap para sa karaniwang sambahayan ng mga Pilipino.

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<https://remate.ph/tolentino-ugat-sa-pagtaas-ng-presyo-ng-luya-hukayin/>

REMATE:

Toxic red tide ibinabala sa 3 lugar sa VisMin

June 11, 2024 13:26



MANILA, Philippines – Tinukoy ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) nitong Martes, Hunyo 11, na tatlong lugar sa Visayas at Mindanao ang apektado ng toxic red tide na higit sa regulatory limit.

Ito ay ang mga coastal water ng Dauis at Tagbilaran City sa Bohol; Dumanquillas Bay sa Zamboanga del Sur; at coastal waters ng San Benito sa Surigao del Norte.

Sa Shellfish Bulletin na may petsang Hunyo 10 at inilabas ngayong araw, positibo pa rin sa paralytic shellfish poison ang mga lamang dagat na nakuha sa mga nabanggit na lugar.

“All types of shellfish and Acetes sp. or alamang gathered from the areas shown above are NOT SAFE for human consumption,” ayon sa BFAR.

Sa kabila nito, ligtas namang kainin ang mga isda, pusit, hipon, at alimango basta't ito ay huhugasan at lulutuing mabuti, kasabay ng pag-aalis ng maayos sa mga lamang loob nito. ***RNT/JGC***

<https://remate.ph/toxic-red-tide-ibinabala-sa-3-lugar-sa-vismin/>