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MANILA BULLETIN:

PBBM's Brunei, Singapore visits deepen ties with ASEAN neighbors

BY MANILA BULLETIN

Jun 3, 2024 06:02 AM



President Ferdinand R. Marcos' Jr.'s back-to-back visits to Brunei Darussalam and Singapore have produced beneficial outcomes.

As it is the 40th year of Philippines-Brunei diplomatic relations, it was an opportune time for the President to engage His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassan al-Bolkiah in a comprehensive dialogue covering defense and security, maritime cooperation, economic cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges.

Signed during the visit were three Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) on Tourism Cooperation; on the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW); and on Maritime Cooperation.

Given the two countries' proximity, ensuring a continuous stream of tourists should be promoted more vigorously. The agreement on STCW ensures that Filipino Seafarers who

were issued Philippine national certificates are now recognized in Brunei. The joint undertaking of maritime activities bodes well for enhancing tourism and commerce, while securing the sea lanes. The signing of a Letter of Intent on Agricultural Cooperation will serve as a precursor for further cooperation in ensuring food security.

On regional affairs, President Marcos also affirmed support for Brunei to establish the ASEAN Center for Climate Change. Senior Filipino government officials and private sector leaders engaged in productive dialogue with some 200 Bruneian counterparts in the Philippine Business Forum in which they beamed the spotlight on agribusiness, renewable energy, halal development, and opportunities in the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asian Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), as well as in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

President Marcos highlighted the special attention devoted to cooperation with Brunei's increasing tempo of renewable energy exploration and utilization. He pointed out that the Philippines is seeking to increasing use of renewable energy on top of the current oil and gas energy mix.

In his meeting with the Filipino community, President Marcos assured them that "we will continue to work to realize our dream of being a high-income economy by 2040." He assured them "of my administration's tireless endeavors and projects in ensuring their safety and well-being."

There are more than 20,000 Filipinos living and working in Brunei Darussalam, mostly employed in schools, hospitals, hotels and restaurants. According to a recently published book, "the significant presence of the Filipino community has resulted in the introduction of the Tagalog language program at Brunei's flagship university—Universiti Brunei Darussalam."

In Singapore, he met with President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and newly appointed Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, and invited both of them to visit the Philippines, as 2024 marks 55 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The main purpose of his Singapore visit was to deliver the keynote address at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri-La Dialogue participated in by delegates from 48 countries. He emphasized to them: "The lines (we) draw on our waters are derived not from imagination, but from international law. Unlike others, we submitted our assertions to rigorous legal scrutiny by the world's leading jurists."

President Marcos also took the opportunity to meet with representatives from Lithuania and some US Congress members, taking "every opportunity and continue to build bridges that will ensure a long lasting peace and stability in our region."

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/6/3/pbbm-s-brunei-singapore-visits-deepen-ties-with-asean-neighbors>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

TWG formed for eased agricultural import barriers

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

June 3, 2024 | 12:00am



A farmer prepares the field for rice planting in Sitio Sinarol, Siniloan, Laguna on January 4, 2024.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — A technical working group (TWG) has been formed following President Marcos' April 18 order to remove non-tariff barriers on agricultural imports.

Non-tariff barriers are policy measures, other than customs tariffs, that restrict trade, including quotas, import licensing systems, regulations and red tape, Marcos said.

He cited constraints that increase importation costs and limit the supply of farm goods in removing non-tariff barriers.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has created the TWG in compliance with Administrative Order 20.

The group is tasked with streamlining administrative procedures and policies that would make it easier for importers to secure licenses or exempt licensed importers from submission of registration requirements.

The TWG is mandated to consult with the National Economic and Development Authority's Committee on Tariff and Related Matters to allow the importation of certain agricultural products beyond the quantity allowed under the minimum access volume and reduce, if not remove, administrative fees pertaining to such importation.

The group is also authorized to streamline the process for the issuance of import permits for agricultural products and improve logistics, transport, distribution and storage.

Marcos appointed Agriculture Undersecretary for policy, planning and regulations Asis Perez as head of the TWG.

Tiu Laurel appointed lawyer Jomila May Fugaban as head of the TWG secretariat.

Meanwhile, the National Food Authority (NFA)'s mandate should be expanded to include other agricultural commodities, such as pork, amid the spike in the retail prices of farm products, the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) said yesterday.

In an interview with The STAR, PCAFI president Danilo Fausto said the NFA should include in its buffer stock other basic goods that can be tapped if prices increase.

“The local buffer stocks (on agricultural products) should be strengthened. It is only the government that can intervene in any price increase. The only way in lieu of price control is to release cheap products as a solution to high retail prices,” Fausto explained.

“The meaning of NFA is National Food Authority and not solely as a rice authority. Its mandate of food authority should be returned,” he added.

The farmgate price of pork has increased to P190-P200 per kilo due to higher feed costs but selling it at P420 per kilo is too much, he said.

“There is no reason for the retail price of pork to increase as based on the report of the Philippine Statistics Authority for the first quarter (of 2024), hog production has increased by 2.5 percent,” he added.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/06/03/2359948/twg-formed-eased-agricultural-import-barriers>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Agri dep't moves to lessen red tape on food imports

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:08 AM June 03, 2024



INQUIRER FILE PHOTO / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

The Department of Agriculture (DA) formed a technical working group (TWG) tasked to come up with measures that would help ease the entry of imported agricultural products, shore up food supply and tame inflation.

In a statement over the weekend, the DA said the latest initiative “would make it easier for importers to secure licenses or exempt licensed importers from submission of registration requirements.”

Under Special Order No. 768, the TWG shall streamline procedures and requirements for securing licenses among importers.

The TWG will facilitate the entry of certain food products not covered by the minimum access volume (MAV) or the quota system.

MAV refers to the volume of a particular agricultural product that can be sourced from abroad with a lower tariff rate. This is the minimum volume that the Philippine government committed to accept into the country through the World Trade Organization.

Also, the committee will explore ways to reduce or remove administrative fees related to the procurement of imported agricultural goods.

Such undertakings, according to the DA, should be conducted in consultation with the National Economic and Development Authority's committee on tariff and related matters.

Specifically, such policies should reduce the period for processing applications as well as exempt licensed traders from submitting requirements, subject to existing law, rules and regulations.

The panel will simplify procedures and requirements for traders to obtain sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance and adopt "concrete steps" to enhance logistics, transport, distribution and storage of imported commodities.

Barriers

The DA convened the group following President Marcos' order to streamline administrative procedures and policies and remove nontariff barriers in bringing in imported goods.

The President made this order to the departments of Agriculture, Finance and Trade through Administrative Order No. 20. This was issued in April this year following observations that administrative constraints and nontariff barriers "unduly add" to the importation cost, resulting in higher prices of agricultural products.

“It is imperative to further streamline administrative policies to foster transparency and predictability of policies on the importation of agricultural products in order to help ensure food security, maintain sufficient supply of agricultural goods in the domestic markets and improve local production,” the order read.

Executive Order No. 50, signed in December last year, extended the validity of reduced import tariffs on rice, corn and meat until the end of 2024.

All meat imports—whether they be fresh, chilled or frozen—are subject to a tariff rate of 15 percent if under the quota system and 25 percent if in excess of quota, while rice imports are levied with a tariff of 35 percent. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/461991/agri-dept-moves-to-lessen-red-tape-on-food-imports>

BUSINESS WORLD:

May inflation likely hit 4% — poll

June 3, 2024 | 12:34 am



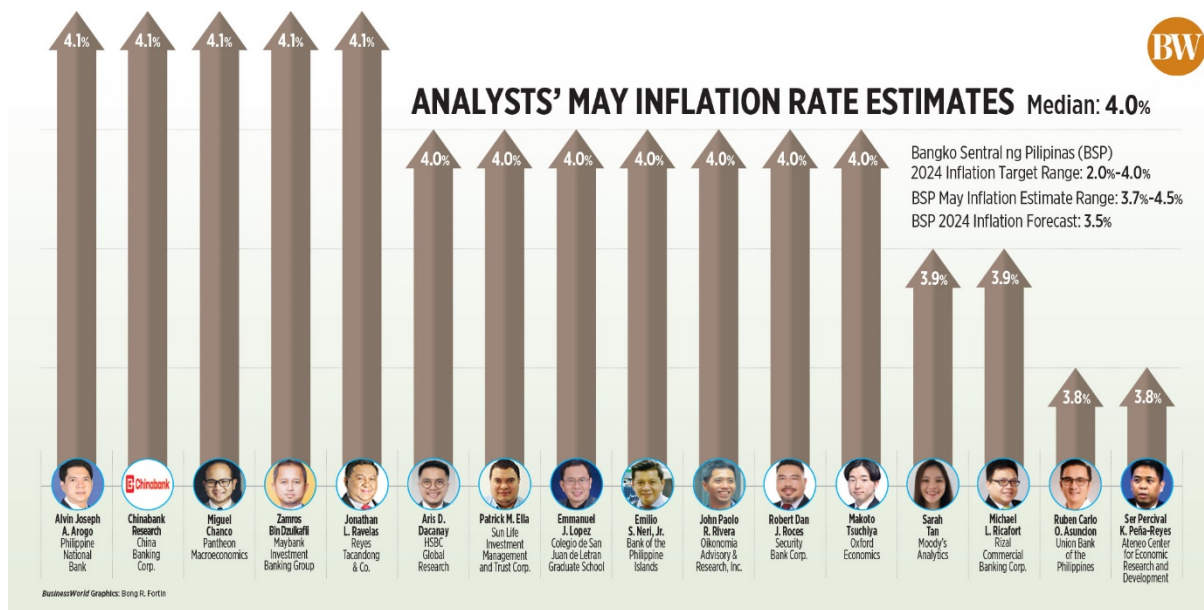
PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

By **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**, *Reporter*

HEADLINE INFLATION likely quickened for a fourth straight month in May, mainly due to a spike in electricity costs, analysts said.

A *BusinessWorld* poll of 16 analysts yielded a median estimate of 4% for the consumer price index (CPI) in May. This is within the 3.7-4.5% forecast of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) for the month.

If realized, May inflation would be faster than 3.8% in April but slower than the 6.1% print a year earlier.



It would also mark the sixth straight month that inflation settled within the central bank’s 2-4% target range.

The Philippine Statistics Authority is set to release May inflation data on Wednesday (June 5).

“We expect CPI inflation to rise to 4% in May. The rise largely comes on the back of unfavorable base effects, and the sequential momentum likely remained contained,” Makoto Tsuchiya, an economist from Oxford Economics, said in an e-mail.

“Even with a modest month-on-month pickup, base effects remain unfavorable, and we expect inflation to still accelerate to 4% year on year — touching the BSP’s upper bound target,” HSBC economist for ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Aris D. Dacanay said in an e-mail.

Analysts said the faster inflation print in May is primarily due to higher electricity rates.

“Upward price pressures will come from higher electricity rates as retailers pass on higher costs from the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market amid a jump in electricity demand when temperatures spiked across the country in May,” Moody’s Analytics economist Sarah Tan said in an e-mail.

“That also resulted in power shortages, which led authorities to issue the red and yellow alerts,” she added.

The National Grid Corp. of the Philippines had placed the Luzon and Visayas power grids on red alert for 12 and eight days, respectively, in May.

Yellow alerts have been raised over Luzon and Visayas for a total of 27 and 26 days, respectively. Mindanao was placed under yellow alert for two days.

“The heatwave increased demand and prices for electricity, with the latest increase in Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) electricity rates,” Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said in an e-mail.

Customers in areas served by Meralco saw their overall rate climb by P0.4621 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to P11.4139 per kWh in May due to the increase in the generation charge.

“However, these upward pressures were tempered by lower costs of key food items such as rice, fish, and fruits, and rollbacks in LPG and domestic pump prices,” Chinabank Research said.

Security Bank Corp. Chief Economist Robert Dan J. Roces said food price growth likely slowed in May, although rice will still remain a “major culprit.”

In April, rice inflation was recorded at 23.9%, easing from 24.4% in March. Rice inflation in March was its fastest print since February 2009.

Agriculture department data showed that the average price of a kilogram of local well-milled rice ranged from P48-55 as of end-May while regular milled averaged P45-52 per kilogram.

UPTREND

Chinabank Research said it expects inflation to “sustain its recent uptrend and remain above the BSP’s target until July, unless significant price reversals materialize.”

Zamros Bin Dzulkafli, economist at Maybank Investment Banking Group, said that inflation would likely overshoot the 2-4% target band from May to July, in line with the central bank’s expectations.

The BSP is anticipating faster inflation from May to July but expects inflation to ease to the target after July.

“We expect the headline inflation to hover around 4% in the coming few months, but this is unlikely to make the BSP more hawkish, as such an overshoot is already priced in by the central bank,” Mr. Tsuchiya said.

Ms. Tan said if inflation settles below the upper end of the target, this would add to the case for a rate cut in August.

“This is contingent on subsequent readings before the August policy meeting staying below, or at, the upper bound, which is what we are expecting. Otherwise, the first cut may only come in the fourth quarter,” she added.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. earlier said the central bank can cut rates as early as August, possibly by 25 basis points (bps).

Bank of the Philippine Islands Lead Economist Emilio S. Neri, Jr. said he expects the Monetary Board to “keep policy settings neutral” at the June 27 meeting.

“Rhetoric could become even less hawkish, especially if headline prints fall below expectations,” he added.

“I doubt that the May print will significantly affect the BSP’s thinking in June, assuming the breach of the 4% mark is only small and if core inflation remains subdued and stable,” Pantheon Chief Emerging Asia Economist Miguel Chanco said.

The Monetary Board kept its key policy rate steady at a 17-year high of 6.5% for a fifth straight meeting in May.

From May 2022 to October 2023, the central bank has raised borrowing costs by 450 bps to tame inflation.

NO **RATE** **HIKE**
Ms. Tan noted that the BSP is unlikely to deliver a rate hike this year.

“It is unlikely that inflation will sharply exceed the BSP’s upper target of 4%, so we don’t expect any more hikes. A cooling core inflation reading will also give BSP confidence to keep the policy rate steady,” she said.

Philippine National Bank (PNB) economist Alvin Joseph A. Arogo said that the BSP should not reduce rates until inflation can settle “sustainably” within target.

“Moreover, our monetary authorities should not cut ahead of the Fed or else risk further exchange rate weakness. If the Fed eases by 25 bps each in September and December, this opens the room for the BSP to follow in October and December,” Mr. Arogo added.

On May 21, the peso closed at P58.27 against the greenback, its first time closing at the P58-per-dollar level since Nov. 10, 2022.

Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion, chief economist at Union Bank of the Philippines, Inc., said a rate cut would likely be delivered later this year, but not before the US Federal Reserve.

“With inflation plateauing in the near-term despite the drought effects alongside a benign core, we believe the risks to the outlook has moderated that support a BSP rate cut later in the year,” he said in an e-mail.

“We do not believe the BSP will cut its policy rate before the Fed because the Monetary Board will wait until El Niño effects have receded, local food supply has normalized, and rice inflation has materially narrowed,” he added.

The Federal Reserve is more likely to deliver a long-awaited rate cut in September after a US Commerce department report showed inflation made a bit of progress toward the Fed’s 2% goal last month and spending softened, traders expect, Reuters reported.

After the data release, traders priced in about a 53% chance of a rate cut in September, versus about 49% before the report.

Mr. Dacanay likewise said that rate cuts are off the table until the Fed turns more dovish.

“The timing will be important to provide some support to the peso throughout the BSP’s easing cycle,” he added.

https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/06/03/599041/may-inflation-likely-hit-4-poll/#google_vignette

BUSINESS WORLD:

DA bans cattle, beef imports from UK

June 2, 2024 | 6:50 pm



REUTERS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Sunday that it ordered a temporary ban on live cattle and beef imports from the UK due to a case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) or Mad Cow Disease detected in the British herd.

In a statement, the DA said that shipments of live cattle, meat, meat products, bovine processed animal proteins, and cattle semen originating from the UK will not be allowed entry.

“The temporary import ban was issued due to an occurrence of classical strain, C-type BSE which was detected in South Ayrshire, Scotland on May 10,” the DA said.

It added that the UK government reported the case to the World Organization for Animal Health and an official letter was sent to the DA.

Mad Cow disease can cause fatal nerve damage in cattle and its entry or possible spread in the country could undermine the livestock industry and compromise food safety.

BSE is also zoonotic and may pass from animal to humans causing Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans, which causes brain shrinkage and deterioration.

“In order to facilitate continuous trade while mitigating the possible risk of spread of BSE infection, all shipments coming from the United Kingdom that are already in transit, loaded or accepted unto port shall be allowed provided that the products were slaughtered or produced on or before April 10,” the DA added.

The DA added that it would implement more stringent inspections of all arrivals of meat and meat by-products derived from cattle, including live animals and bovine processed animal proteins at the ports of entry. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/06/02/599000/da-bans-cattle-beef-imports-from-uk/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

DA: PHL halal producers will need to ramp up to serve Middle East

June 3, 2024 | 12:04 am



REUTERS

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said that it is gearing up to expand exports of farm goods to the Middle East, which would require the halal industry to raise capacity.

“The Middle East is a sleeper... I think we really have to work on our halal capability... that’s an area that I think we’re yet to improve,” Asis Perez, agriculture undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Regulations told *BusinessWorld*.

In 2018, the DA launched the Halal Food Industry Development Program, seeking to boost the global competitiveness of current and potential exporters of Halal products, processes, and services.

The Department of Trade and Industry’s Halal Industry Development Strategic Plan 2024-2028 hopes to double the country’s 3,000 halal-certified products and services to 6,000.

Mr. Perez added the DA is looking at expanding exports of pineapples to the US market.

“For the US. We can still expand our market for pineapple in the mainland US, because now it’s a bit restricted where we bring our pineapples,” he said.

Pineapple exports are estimated to have increased 5.04% last year to 611,873 metric tons amid higher demand for the crop, the Food and Agriculture Organization said in a report.

The Philippines is the second-largest exporter of pineapple after Costa Rica.

“If only we can have that access to the US market for our pineapple and also our mangoes,” he said.

He said that “Manila mango” brand has a large market in the US, but it is not being fully tapped by Philippine mango growers.

“But that Manila mango is from Mexico. If we can only access that market. It is a big market, but we are not developing it,” he added.

Agricultural exports increased 10.7% to \$1.72 billion during the first quarter from the \$1.56 billion the same period last year, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Mr. Perez added he will lead a technical working group to draft guidelines to streamline the application licenses or exempt licensed importers from repeated submissions of registration requirements to comply with Administrative Order No. 20 (AO 20).

AO 20 instructed the Departments of Agriculture, Finance, and Trade and Industry to simplify the administrative procedures for agricultural imports, while removing non-tariff barriers.

Special Order No. 768 requires DA agencies to publish in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of national circulation their respective guidelines on the streamlined procedures, requirements, and policies.
— **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/06/03/598958/da-phl-halal-producers-will-need-to-ramp-up-to-serve-middle-east/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

China food security law comes into force as Beijing targets absolute self-sufficiency

June 3, 2024 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

BEIJING — China's first food security law aimed at achieving "absolute self-sufficiency" in staple grains came into effect on Saturday, reinforcing efforts by the world's biggest agriculture importer to lower its reliance on overseas purchases.

The law provides a legal framework for existing guidance by the Communist Party for local governments and the agricultural industry to raise food production, although it did not give details on how the law will be implemented.

It includes protection of farmland from being converted to other uses, protecting germplasm resources and preventing wastage.

Passed just six months after its first reading, the rush to adopt the food security law reflects China's intent to resolve issues that have curbed production, such as a lack of arable land and water resources, labor shortages and a lack of agriculture technology.

The law holds central and provincial governments accountable for incorporating food security into their economic and development plans, ensuring that food supply remains a top priority in the country that has a painful history of famine.

The party will lead the implementation of a national food security strategy “that puts China first” by importing moderately and using advances in science and technology to boost production, according to a provision in the law.

“It shall adhere to the principle of storing grain in the ground and using technology to improve grain production,” it said, to ensure “basic self-sufficiency in cereal grains and absolute self-sufficiency in staple grains for food use.”

It also stipulates the formation of a national grain emergency plan and a food security monitoring system. China expanded the definition of “coarse grains” to include millet and oats, in addition to sorghum, barley, buckwheat, mung beans and potatoes.

Grains refer to wheat, rice, corn, soybeans and coarse grains. Entities who violate the law may face a fine ranging from 20,000 yuan to 2 million yuan, while individual offenders may be slapped with fines between 20,000 yuan and 200,000 yuan.

The law also said China will “strengthen international food security cooperation and allow international grain trade to play its role.” It did not give details.

Analysts said the law is worded vaguely and may not have a significant impact on how China boosts food production.

“It doesn’t change the realities on the ground for local officials who were already under significant pressure to deliver on food security,” Even Pay, agriculture analyst at Beijing-based consultancy Trivium China, said.

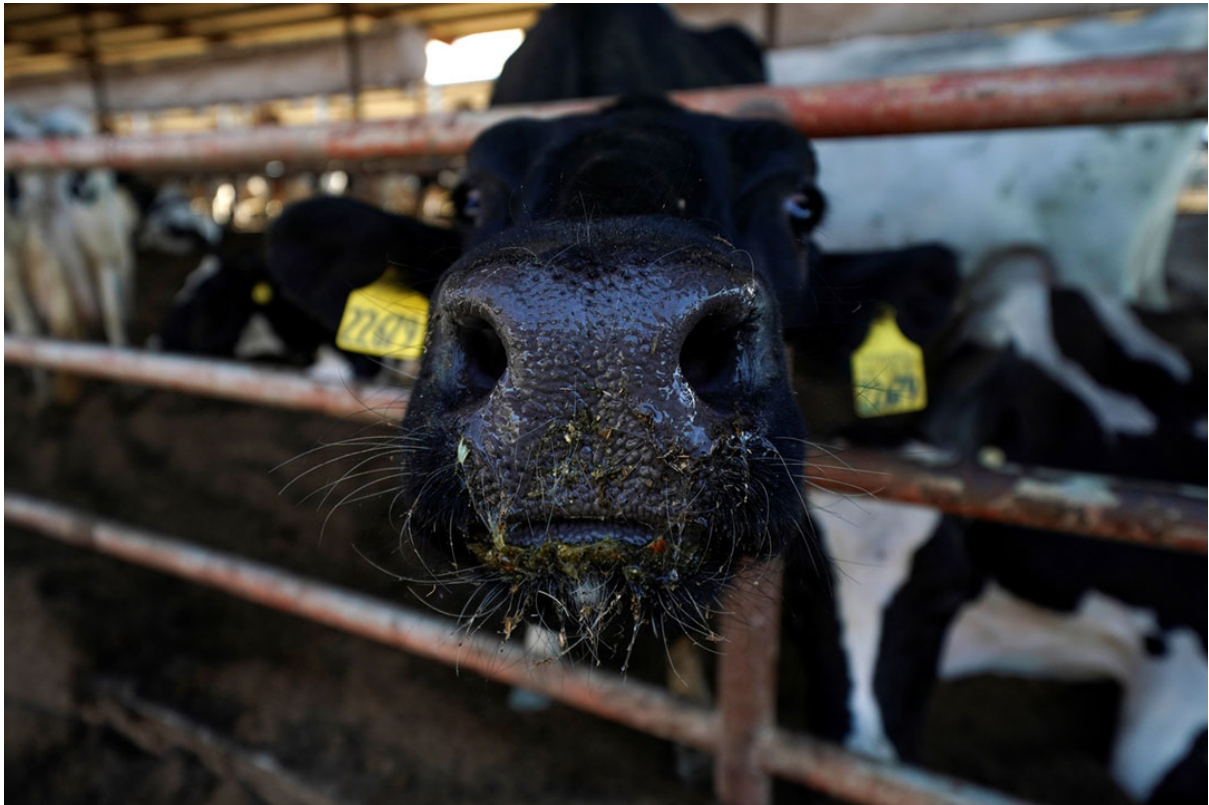
“The food security law enshrines existing practices in law, but isn’t set to change anything. Food security was already among the top national priorities, and can’t go any higher,” she added. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/06/03/598957/china-food-security-law-comes-into-force-as-beijing-targets-absolute-self-sufficiency/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Michigan to start testing dairy workers for prior bird flu infections

June 3, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

MICHIGAN will soon begin testing dairy farm workers for signs of prior infection with avian flu, a county health official told Reuters.

An ongoing outbreak of avian flu in dairy cattle has affected 67 herds in 9 states since March, according to US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data.

Two dairy workers — one in Texas and another in Michigan — have tested positive for the virus. They both had conjunctivitis, or pink eye, and recovered.

CDC officials have been eager to test blood samples of farm workers for signs of prior infection to help understand the scope of the outbreak.

Michigan county and state officials will collaborate with the CDC on the testing effort, said Chad Shaw, health officer and environmental health director with the Ionia County Health Department.

The details of the plan for testing have not been previously reported. Ionia County has reported avian flu infections in four dairy cattle herds and four poultry flocks, according to state data.

The goal of the testing is to discern how the virus is spreading from farm to farm, including whether humans have carried the virus asymptotically, Mr. Shaw said.

A CDC spokesman said the agency will be providing technical assistance to the state, which is coordinating the testing. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/06/03/598956/michigan-to-start-testing-dairy-workers-for-prior-bird-flu-infections/>

DA-led technical working group vows to simplify food importation



By Othel V. Campos

June 2, 2024, 7:45 pm

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is taking steps to simplify the import process for agricultural products and reduce food prices by establishing a technical working group (TWG).

The TWG, headed by Undersecretary for policy, planning and regulations Asis Perez, will focus on streamlining procedures and eliminating unnecessary hurdles such as non-tariff barriers for importers.

It aims to make it easier for qualified importers to obtain licenses and exempt them from submitting redundant registration documents.

The group will collaborate with the National Economic and Development Authority's (NEDA) Committee on Tariff and Related Matters (TRM) to allow the import of specific agricultural products exceeding the current Minimum Access Volume quotas.

It also seeks to eliminate administrative fees associated with agricultural product imports while the processing and requirements for obtaining sanitary and phytosanitary permits, crucial for agricultural imports, will be simplified.

The group will address inefficiencies in logistics, transportation, distribution and storage of imported agricultural products.

Special Order No. 768 also mandates all concerned DA agencies to publish the streamlined procedures, requirements and policies in the Official Gazette or a national newspaper to ensure transparency and wider communication.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel also established a TWG secretariat which will be responsible for monitoring the TWG's progress, ensuring efficient operation and submitting regular reports to the DA.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/business/314454481/da-led-technical-working-group-vows-to-simplify-food-importation.html>

MANILA STANDARD

Lawmaker defends Filipinos' right to fish in WPS

By Manila Standard

June 2, 2024, 11:00 pm

AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert T. Lee is urging the government to assist fisherfolk who will be affected by a unilateral four-month fishing ban imposed by China in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Lee also said that Filipino fisherfolk have the right and freedom to fish in the area, adding that he expects China to be more aggressive in driving away those attempting to fish in disputed waters that have since been ruled by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that China had no legal basis to claim historic rights to.

The lawmaker said it is the right of Filipinos to fish in the country's exclusive economic zones (EEZs). He also slammed the "pattern of bullying and harassment" coming from China against Filipino fishermen in the WPS.

The fishing moratorium imposed by China started in May and will end on Sept. 16.

The Bicolano lawmaker said that while he commends the government for promptly filing a formal protest over China's fishing ban, it must make more tangible actions to protect the livelihood of fisherfolk.

On the June 2 episode of GMA 7's "Si Manoy ang Ninong Ko" where Lee is one of the hosts, the plight of fishermen in Escoda Shoal, Palawan was tackled, as the tension in the area brought about by the territorial dispute also affected their livelihood.

Aside from assistance to the fishermen beneficiaries of the program who were given Fishing Aggregating Devices (FADs) or payao, the GMA TV host reiterated his call for the government to exhaust all means to provide long-term solutions to their perennial problems.

Lee then renewed his call for the urgent passage of his proposed House Bill No. 9011 or the "Fishing Shelters and Ports Act" where the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), in coordination with the Department of National Defense (DND)

and other relevant government agencies, shall establish fishing shelters and ports in nine occupied maritime features in the WPS and Philippine Rise.

The fishing shelters and ports to be established in the islands of Lawak, Kota, Likas, Pag-asa, Parola, Panata, Patag, Rizal Reef, and Ayungin Shoal will serve as safe spots for fishermen to take refuge from foreign militia or unforeseen circumstances, a place where they can rest, store gears and supplies, as well as access communication devices.

“Our fishermen deserve better services so we should demand better for them. Karapatan nila ang ligtas at mas masaganang kabuhayan, ang dagdag na kita, sapat at murang pagkain, at mabawasan ang pangamba na wala silang perang pantustos sa mga pangangailangan, lalo na sa panahon ng pagkakasakit, sa takot na lalong malubog sa utang at kahirapan,” the solon said.

“Winner Tayo Lahat sa pagprotekta sa buhay at kabuhayan ng ating mga mangingisda at sa pagtatanggol sa ating teritoryo. Pakikinabangan ito hindi lang ng sektor ng pangangisda, hindi lang ng henerasyon ngayon, kundi maging ng buong bansa at ng susunod pang henerasyon ng mga Pilipino,” he added.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/national/314454513/lawmaker-defends-filipinos-right-to-fish-in-wps.html>

Aging fisherfolk population worries lawmaker

By Ma. Reina Leanne Tolentino

June 3, 2024

BICOL Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan has expressed deep concern over the impact of the aging population of fisherfolk on the country's food security.

Yamsuan said in a statement that the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) reported that about 24 percent or 600,000 of the 2.5 million Filipinos who depend on the ocean and inland waters for livelihood were over 60 years old, while 21 percent or about 525,000 were 51 to 60 years old.

Yamsuan, the chairman of the House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources, said this meant that nearly half or about 1.1 million were aging fisherfolk.

"This is alarming. The fisheries and aquaculture industry, a major source of protein for our people, is vital to our food security," he said.

"While we salute the courage, dedication and diligence of our fisherfolk, we are concerned that there may come a time when their numbers would decline, unless we act fast to strengthen this sector and encourage the youth to embark on careers in aquaculture and fisheries," he said.

He said there are not enough youths who are interested in pursuing a job in the fishery sector, despite the BFAR's scholarship program.

BFAR Assistant Director Zaldy Perez reported that 1,384 students so far had been granted scholarships.

In 2019, 388 of the 2,354 applicants passed the scholarship criteria.

Yamsuan suggested that the bureau seek help from congressional districts covering coastal communities and "launch an information campaign on social media to target more students interested in the scholarship program."

He said the government should step up the implementation of post-harvest and marketing programs to make fishing and related work more appealing and profitable for the youth.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/03/news/national/aging-fisherfolk-population-worries-lawmaker/1949696>

Modern way of planting used in Cagayan

By [Leander C. Domingo](#)

June 3, 2024

TUGUEGARAO CITY — Farmers at the Cagayan Farm School and Agri-Eco Tourism Park in Barangay Anquiray, Amulung in Cagayan are now using modern methods and machinery to grow rice.

Among the machines being used is the "walk-behind rice transplanter."

Through this machine, farmers in the farm school can plant rice seeds evenly with ease and less pressure just by pushing or driving the machine.



WALK-BEHIND RICE TRANSPLANTER Farmers at the Cagayan Farm School and Agri-Eco Tourism Park in Anquiray, Amulung, Cagayan province now use innovative methods of planting rice using the 'walk-behind rice transplanter,' which enables farmers to plant rice evenly with ease and less pressure. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Cagayan provincial agriculturist Pearlita Mabasa said farmers need to keep up with modern planting methods.

"Although modern methods are being promoted in the province, there are still many farmers who use traditional rice farming," she said.

Meanwhile, at least 25 farmers at the farm school who are members of the Santo Domingo Multi-Purpose Cooperative of Baggao are also currently undergoing their study at the Farmers Field School of Grains Production National Competency 2 with the help of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority in Cagayan Valley.

Among the subjects in the farm school are farm preparation, planting, and harvesting of rice using modern methods and machines.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/03/regions/modern-way-of-planting-used-in-cagayan/1949721>

DA imposes ban on cattle imports from UK

By Janine Alexis Miguel

June 3, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture has banned the import of live cattle and cattle by-products from the United Kingdom in response to recent cases of Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or mad cow disease.

To mitigate potential consumer risks and protect the local livestock industry, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Memorandum Order 20 on May 30, imposing a temporary ban on the importation of live cattle, meat, meat products, bovine processed animal proteins and cattle semen originating from the UK following a recent case of the said animal disease.

"Mad cow disease can cause fatal nerve damage in cattle, and its entry or possible spread in the country could undermine the livestock industry and compromise food safety," the Department of Agriculture (DA) said in a statement on Sunday.

Additionally, the DA noted that the disease could lead to Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in humans, a condition characterized by brain shrinkage and deterioration.

The temporary import ban was issued after a classical strain, C-type BSE, was detected in South Ayrshire, Scotland, on May 10. It was then confirmed by the World Organization for Animal Health—World Animal Health Information System (WOAH-WAHIS) and the official letter received by the DA from the UK Chief Veterinary Officer.

Tiu Laurel emphasized the importance of precautionary measures to protect the domestic livestock industry, valued at P260 billion last year. He added the need to protect public health, as beef is an ingredient in both fast-food and high-end restaurants, as well as a key input in processed and canned foods.

From January to March this year, beef imports from the UK totaled 1.01 million kilograms (kg) or 2.87 percent of the total 35.3 million kg of beef imports for that period. Last year, UK beef imports reached 2.53 million kg, accounting for 1.74 percent of the total 145 million kg of beef imports.

To facilitate uninterrupted trade while addressing the potential spread of BSE, shipments originating from the UK that are currently in transit, loaded or accepted at port will be permitted, given that these products were slaughtered or produced on or before April 10, 2024, according to the DA.

The department also emphasized the implementation of heightened inspections for all incoming meat and meat by-products from cattle, including live animals and bovine processed animal proteins, at entry ports to ensure that only uncontaminated and safe commodities enter the country.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/03/business/top-business/da-imposes-ban-on-cattle-imports-from-uk/1949713>

Rice imports up 20.3% to nearly 2 million MT

By Janine Alexis Miguel

June 3, 2024

THE Philippines' rice imports reached nearly 2.0 million metric tons (MT) in the first five months of the year, higher compared to last year's level, data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) showed.

The latest report from the BPI showed that the country's rice imports from January 1 to May 23 went up by 20.3 percent to 1.97 million MT, higher compared to last year's 1.64 million MT. The BPI is an agency under the Department of Agriculture (DA).

For May alone, rice deliveries were tallied at 299,258.01 MT, slightly lower from the 321,582.36 MT posted in the whole of the same month last year.

Since the year started, the BPI has released a total of 4,066 sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances to accredited importers of the staple.

Vietnam remains the country's top source of the staple from January 1 to May 23, shipping 1.44 million MT of rice or 72.9 percent of total imports. Thailand delivered some 300,227.24 MT of rice, Pakistan followed with 144,834.50 MT, and some 65,080 MT came from Myanmar.

The remaining volume, meanwhile, came from India, China, Japan, Cambodia, Italy and Spain.

Last year, inbound shipments of the staple totaled 3.6 million MT, down 5.9 percent from the record high of 3.82 million MT logged

in 2022. For this year, the DA projects rice imports not exceeding last year's import volume.

However, the United States Department of Agriculture said that "the Philippines is expected to again be the largest global rice importer."

The US agency forecast the country's imports to hit a record 4.2 million MT due to continued growth in consumption.

Local rice inventory, meanwhile, declined by 10.9 percent as of April due to the effects of the El Niño, the Philippine Statistics Authority said. Rice inventory as of the beginning of the month was estimated at 1.64 million MT, lower than the 1.84 million MT logged in the same period of 2023.

Month-on-month, the volume of rice stocks inventory recorded an increase of 20.2 percent from the previous month's inventory of 1.37 million MT.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/03/business/top-business/rice-imports-up-203-to-nearly-2-million-mt/1949715>

DA bans entry of beef from UK

By Jed Macapagal

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June 3, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has ordered a temporary ban on the importation of live cattle, meat, meat products, bovine processed animal proteins and cattle semen originating from the United Kingdom (UK) following the recent case of classical Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) better known as mad cow disease in the country.

The move was made by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. through Memorandum Order No. 20 issued last May 30.

DA said C-type BSE was detected in South Ayrshire, Scotland on May 10, as confirmed by the immediate notification reported in the World Organization for Animal Health-World Animal Health Information System and the official letter received by the agency from the UK chief veterinary officer.

Mad cow disease can cause fatal nerve damage in cattle and its entry or possible spread in the country could threaten the livestock industry and compromise food safety.

The DA said the animal disease is also zoonotic in nature and causes Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans manifested through brain shrinkage and deterioration.

The agency said since imported beef is a staple in fast-food and high-end restaurants and a key ingredient in processed and canned food, all shipments coming from the UK that are in transit, loaded or accepted unto port shall be allowed provided the products were slaughtered or produced on or before April 10, 2024.

The DA added it will implement more stringent inspections of all arrivals of meat and meat by-products derived from cattle, including live animals and bovine processed animal proteins at the ports of entry, ensuring that only non-infected and safe commodities shall enter the country.

Based on data from the Bureau of Animal Industry, from January to March this year, more than a million kg of beef were shipped from the UK to the Philippines equivalent to 2.9 percent of the 35 million kg total beef imports in the country for the period.

The UK provided 2.5 million kg or 1.7 percent of the 145 million kg total beef to the Philippines last year.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/da-bans-entry-of-beef-from-uk/

DA imposes ban on live cattle, meat imports from UK

Ada Pelonia

June 3, 2024

THE Philippines slapped a temporary ban on live cattle and meat imports from the United Kingdom after mad cow disease was detected in Scotland.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement that he issued Memorandum Order (MO) 20 to mitigate the spread of mad cow disease.

The DA banned cattle and beef from the UK following reports of classical Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease, detected in South Ayrshire, Scotland.

The World Organization for Animal Health—World Animal Health Information System (WOAH-WAHIS) confirmed the reports. In addition, the UK Chief Veterinary Officer, sent the DA a notification letter on the matter.

“Given the potential risk to the consumers and to protect the local livestock industry which plays a significant role in the Philippine economy and was valued at P260 billion last year, Secretary Tiu Laurel has imposed a temporary import ban emphasizing the importance of precautionary measures to safeguard public health,” the DA said in a statement.

According to DA, the mad cow disease could cause fatal nerve damage in cattle and its entry or possible spread in the country could “undermine the livestock industry and compromise food safety.” It added that the zoonotic disease could cause Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans and manifest through brain shrinkage and deterioration.

“Imported beef is staple fare in both fast-food and high-end restaurants, and a key ingredient in processed and canned food. Thus, in order to facilitate continuous trade while mitigating the possible risk of spread of BSE infection,

all shipments coming from the United Kingdom that are already in transit, loaded or accepted unto port shall be allowed provided that the products were slaughtered or produced on or before 10 April 2024,” the DA said.

The department added that it would implement more stringent inspections of all arrivals of meat and meat by-products derived from cattle, including live animals and bovine processed animal proteins at the ports of entry, ensuring that only non-infected and safe commodities should enter the country.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/03/da-imposes-ban-on-live-cattle-meat-imports-from-uk/>

Group: ‘Collective fishing’ in WPS peaceful assertion of sovereign rights

Jonathan L. Mayuga

June 3, 2024

THE Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) on Sunday said sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea can be asserted peacefully and independently, citing the successful two-day collective fishing expedition launched by the group on June 1 and 2.

Local affiliates of Pamalakaya in Zambales from the Panatag Fisherfolk Association, Pilipinong Nagkakaisa Para sa Soberaya (P1NAS), Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), and the League of Filipino Students (LFS), conducted a “collective fishing expedition” off Masinloc, Zambales, last week.

While the groups were not able to reach their target fishing destination due to big waves caused by the northeast monsoon, they said they were able to uphold sovereign rights in a form of collective economic activity.

“Totally initiated by Filipino small fishermen and their patriotic advocates, our fishing expedition attests that we can assert our territorial waters without relying on any foreign superpower, more so to provocative militaristic solutions.

Moreover, the expedition was carried out not only to resist China’s unjust fishing ban in the West Philippine Sea, but also to reject the continued US warmongering efforts in our territory,” Fernando Hicap, national chairman of Pamalakaya said in a statement.

“We assert that our territorial waters must remain exclusive for economic activities including but not limited to fishing and trade routes, thus, demilitarization,” says Hicap, a fisherman based in Cavite.

He said the government's neglect to support Filipino fisherfolk and local scientists to utilize and explore our marine resources in the West Philippine Sea has enabled foreign exploitation and intervention.

Hicap added that there has been no concrete plan on how to modernize and strengthen our local fishing industry to make the most of our fishery resources.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/03/group-collective-fishing-in-wps-peaceful-assertion-of-sovereign-rights/>

DA creates group to craft AO 20 implementing rules

Ada Pelonia

June 3, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) created a technical working group (TWG) that would issue the implementing guidelines for streamlining administrative procedures and policies and removing non-tariff barriers to farm imports.

The DA took its cue from Administrative Order (AO) 20 signed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. last April which aims to ensure the country's food security by removing non-tariff barriers to agricultural products. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/22/marcos-wants-non-tariff-curbs-on-farm-products-out/>).

“It is imperative to further streamline administrative procedures to foster transparency and predictability of policies on the importation of agricultural products in order to help ensure food security, maintain sufficient supply of agricultural goods in the domestic market, and improve local production,” Marcos said in the four-page AO, which he issued through Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Special Order (SO) 768 which “would make it easier for importers to secure licenses or exempt licensed importers from submission of registration requirements.”

Under SO 768, the committee will consult with the National Economic and Development Authority's Committee on Tariff and Related Matters to allow importation of certain agricultural products even beyond the quantity allowed under the Minimum Access Volume and reduce, if not remove, administrative fees pertaining to such importation and streamline the process and requirements for the issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary permits needed for the importation of agricultural products.

It will take steps to improve logistics, transport, distribution and storage of imported agricultural products.

“The TWG may invite resource persons and/ or experts from other concerned agencies, operating units, or private sector, as necessary, during meetings,” the order read.

SO 768 mandated concerned DA agencies to publish their respective guidelines on the streamlines procedures, requirements, and policies.

Meanwhile, Laurel also ordered the creation of the TWG’s secretariat, to be led by lawyer Jomila May Fugaban. The team would also be responsible for regular reporting to the DA Secretary including the efficient functioning of the TWG.

Last April, the Neda defended AO 20, saying it aims to ensure the country’s food security. It said imports remain necessary as local production is still unable to meet demand for key commodities like rice and pork.

The Inter-Agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook (IAC-IMO) expects the local production of key commodities such as rice, pork, onion, and sugar to fall short of domestic demand this year.

“By streamlining administrative procedures and removing non-tariff barriers, we aim to create a regulatory environment that enables—rather than hinders—the delivery of goods and services that our people need while safeguarding the welfare of our citizens,” Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said.

“It would be irresponsible not to augment local supply during periods of acute shortages. Failing to do so would lead to highly elevated prices, adversely affecting everyone—even farmers who are also consumers of agricultural products and fall victim to higher food prices themselves,” he added.

Balisacan said domestic production of rice is expected to fall 15 percent below demand despite the 0.7-percent increase in output in 2024. There is also a deficit in the production of pork due to the African swine fever.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/03/da-creates-group-to-craft-ao-20-implementing-rules/>

Potatoes can improve nutrition, food security—FAO

BusinessMirror

June 3, 2024

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) called for more investments that will allow nations to tap into the full potential of potato, an important staple food.

FAO, which recently celebrated the International Day of Potato, highlighted the significant of the crop, which is eaten by over a billion people. It is the also the third most available food crop globally, after rice and wheat.

“The potato has been the most important lifesaving, staple food and nutritious vegetable in the world,” FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu said in a video message to mark the event, under the theme, “Harvesting diversity, feeding hope.”

Qu added that in Europe, the increase of potato production after the 16th century following Christopher Columbus’ return from the Americas with the potato, which originated in the Andes, had a dramatic impact on food security.

Participants in a high-level event at FAO’s headquarters in Rome to mark the day included Angel Manuel Manero Campos, Minister of Agrarian Development and Irrigation of Peru, who spoke about the country’s efforts to ensure its potato producers can obtain a fair price for their crop and Paula Narváez, president of the UN Economic and Social Council, who underlined the importance of protecting the potato and its significance for achieving a number of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In an earlier special event, speakers from the World Potato Congress, the private sector and the International Potato Center (CIP), shared lessons learned and perspectives on their future work on the potato. This technical

panel was convened by Peru—which championed the designation of the International Day by the UN General Assembly last year—with the support of Belgium, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands.

Participants underscored the significant advances in the genetic improvement of the crop and the agronomics as well as the importance of plant health. They also called for concerted efforts to tackle constraints including pests and diseases, especially in light of climate change pressures and an increasing global population.

Qu highlighted three key aspects of the potato’s relevance in addressing current global challenges, including conflicts, the climate crisis and economic shocks.

For one, FAO noted that the potato contains vital nutrients, and is consumed by more than two-thirds of the world’s population in different forms.

“While many other crops, especially cereals, are not sufficiently resilient to challenges, such as soil degradation and water scarcity, the potato has potential for increased productivity. Farmers in approximately 160 countries now produce almost 400 million tons of potato a year. With 735 million people suffering from hunger, potatoes can have a significant role in improving food security and nutrition.”

Also, the UN agency said the genetic diversity of potatoes encompasses about 5,000 varieties planted worldwide, yet most of the potatoes produced globally come from a narrow genetic background.

“Tapping the genetic diversity could help address stresses due to climate change, pests and diseases, and also further improve the potato’s nutritional value. This will require strengthening research and development, especially for genetic improvement—using efficiency-enhancing technologies that shorten the plant breeding cycles, and new methodologies for virus-free seed tubers production.”

FAO said the potato offers livelihood opportunities for the many farmers who grow it as a cash crop, and those working along its value chain, especially rural small-scale and family farmers.

“However, we need to exploit its full potential from production, through processing to consumption. With appropriate technologies and equipment, farmers can minimize inputs, minimize damage to the soil and reduce the loss of crops. Processors can innovate with new functional and healthy products, adding value to products and growing their profit margins.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/03/potatoes-can-improve-nutrition-food-security-fao/>

BUSINESS MIRROR

Solon sounds alarm over aging fishers in PHL

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz

June 3, 2024

The chairman of the House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries expressed concern over the increasingly detrimental impact of the Philippines’s aging fishermen population on the nation’s food security.

Bicol Saro Partylist Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan, the panel chairman, said on Sunday that the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) reported to his committee that of the 2.5 million Filipinos dependent on the country’s oceans and inland water bodies for their livelihood, about 24 percent, or 600,000, are above 60 years old, while another 21 percent, or about 525,000, are aged 51 to 60.

Yamsuan said this means that almost half, or about 1.1 million, are aging fishers. Only 8 percent, or about 200,000, are young fishermen aged 21-30, while the rest are 31-40 years old.

“While we salute the courage, dedication, and diligence of our fishermen, we are concerned that there may come a time when their numbers will decline unless we act fast to strengthen this sector and encourage the youth to embark on careers in aquaculture and fisheries.”

He said the “disturbing trend” is reflected in the decline in production in the sector and the country’s growing dependence on fish imports.

In his report during the hearing, BFAR Assistant Director Zaldy Perez said in the first quarter of 2024, fisheries production dropped with a recorded volume of 987,193.69 metric tons (MT), which is 0.52 percent lower than the previous year's 992,334.28 MT. The observed decline resulted in a decrease of 5,140.59 MT in the volume of locally caught and produced fish.

The decrease in the sector's total production is the result of the 8.69 percent contraction of the municipal fisheries subsector, which provides the means of livelihood for small fishers.

Amid the increasing demand for fish and the decreasing domestic production, the country has relied on imports to fill the supply gap.

BFAR's mother agency, the Department of Agriculture (DA), had approved last April the importation of 25,000 MT of frozen fish to ensure sufficient supply of the food ahead of the closed-season fishing ban to be imposed in the last quarter of the year.

Yamsuan said the government should also step up the implementation of its post-harvest and marketing programs for the sector to make fishing and its related activities more appealing and profitable for young Filipinos.

He said the lack of cold storage facilities and reliable means of transport forced fishermen to resort to turning their products into "daing," or dried fish, instead of storing them in blast freezers and other similar equipment to preserve their quality and extend their shelf life.

He agreed with fellow committee members Batangas Rep. Eric Buhain and ABONO Rep. Robert Raymund Estrella on the need to beef up the implementation of BFAR's post-harvest programs for the fisheries sector.

In terms of providing scholarships to attract more young Filipinos to take up careers in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, Yamsuan noted that there appear to be few takers, despite BFAR's program, which provides successful applicants with free tuition, a generous monthly stipend, a book allowance, monetary support for thesis and research projects, graduation assistance, and on-the-job training support.

BFAR reported that only 1,384 students so far have been granted scholarships by the bureau. In 2019, out of the 2,354 applicants, only 388 passed the

scholarship criteria. In contrast, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) had close to 80,000 applicants for its science and technology scholarship program last year, of which over 9,000 students passed.

Yamsuan said BFAR should seek the assistance of the congressional districts with coastal communities and launch an information campaign on social media to target more students interested in the scholarship program.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/03/solon-sounds-alarm-over-aging-fishers-in-ph/>

Smuggling of tobacco poses threat to UHC, farmers—BIR

Reine Juvierre S. Alberto

June 3, 2024

Rampant smuggling of tobacco products, which reduces the excise taxes collected by the national government, puts the funding of universal healthcare and support to local tobacco farmers at risk, according to an official of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

BIR Excise Large Taxpayers Field Operations Division Chief Venus Gaticales told reporters that excise tax collections dropped by P6.6 billion from January to April due to illicit tobacco trade.

The tobacco industry has contributed a total of P46.69 billion, or 40.16 percent, in excise taxes as of April.

Gaticales further cited data from the BIR's collection of excise taxes on tobacco, which declined to P134.874 billion in 2023, down by P25.5 billion or 15.91 percent, from P160.300 billion in 2022.

“That’s how the excise tax on tobacco collection has been greatly affected by the illicit trade.”

The current excise tax on cigarettes is at P62.40 per pack of cigarettes and is set to increase by 4 percent annually under the Republic Act (RA) 11346, or the Tobacco Tax Law of 2019. The BIR is targeting to collect about P325 billion in excise this year.

Excise tax is levied on the production, sale or consumption of a commodity. The revenues collected from the excise tax on tobacco products are allotted for the universal healthcare (UHC) program and local government units (LGUs) producing burley and native and Virginia tobacco.

Gaticales said the decline in revenues poses a threat to UHC and the livelihood of tobacco farmers in the country.

The Department of Finance (DOF) said it will not increase excise taxes, particularly sin taxes, despite the expected drop in revenue collection this year.

Gaticales said that apart from the smuggling of cigarettes to the country due to its archipelagic nature, other factors in the decline in excise taxes on tobacco products include the shift of preference from consuming cigarettes to vape products, which is now becoming a trend among the youth.

“The contributions of the excise tax on vapor products, although it almost increased by 100 percent or more, it is not enough to compensate the decrease as far as the cigarette excise tax collection is concerned.”

Vape products are also smuggled into the country, further threatening the collection of tax collections, similar to cigarettes.

To combat this, the BIR has ordered the attachment of tax stamps on all imported and locally manufactured vape products sold in the market starting June 1.

The BIR said it imposed the requirement as a way of checking the proper tax compliance of the vape industry.

“The BIR will monitor the internal revenue stamps for the vape industry. If your products do not have any internal revenue stamps by June 1, we will raid your stores and seize the products,” BIR Commissioner Romeo Lumagui Jr. said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/03/smuggling-of-tobacco-poses-threat-to-uhc-farmers-bir/>

ABANTE TONITE

Scholarship program ng BFAR 'nilalangaw' – Cong Brian Yamsuan

June 2, 2024

Kinalampag ni Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan ang Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) upang dumami ang kumukuha ng scholarship program nito.

Nangangamba kasi si Yamsuan sa epekto ng tumatandang populasyon ng mga mangingisda sa seguridad ng pagkain sa bansa.

Iginiit ni Yamsuan, bagong chairperson ng House committee on aquaculture and fisheries, ang kahalagahan na palakasin ang scholarship program para sa mga estudyante na nais kumuha ng karera sa aquaculture at fisheries sectors.

Sa unang pagdinig na ipinatawag ni Yamsuan, iniulat ng BFAR na mayroong 2.5 milyong indibiduwal na nasa sektor ng pangingsda ang ikinabubuhay.

Sa bilang na ito, 24% o 600,000 ang nasa edad 61 pataas samantalang ang 21% o 525,000 ay edad 51 hanggang 60.

Tanging 8% o 200,000 ang 21-30, at ang nalalabi ay edad 31-40.

“This is alarming. The fisheries and aquaculture industry, a major source of protein for our people, is vital to our food security,” sabi ni Yamsuan.

Pinuna rin ni Yamsuan na kakaunti lamang ang kumukuha ng scholarship ng BFAR kahit na nagbibigay ito ng libreng matrikula, maayos na buwanang allowance, book allowance, monetary support sa thesis at research projects, graduation assistance at on-the-job training support.

Ayon kay Perez, tanging 1,384 lamang ang nabigyan ng scholarship ng BFAR. Noong 2019, sa 2,354 aplikante, 388 lamang umano ang nakapasa sa itinakdang criteria.

Iminungkahi ni Yamsuan sa BFAR na makipag-ugnayan sa mga congressional district na mayroong mga coastal community upang makapaglunsad ng information campaign kaugnay ng scholarship program bukod pa sa paggamit ng social media. (Billy Begas)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/06/02/scholarship-program-ng-bfar-nilalangaw-cong-brian-yamsuan/>

ABANTE TONITE

Agri memo binawal karneng baka galing United Kingdom

June 2, 2024



Pansamantalang ipinagbawal ng Department of Agriculture (DA) ang pagpasok sa bansa ng mga buhay na baka at mga produktong karne mula sa United Kingdom (UK) kasunod ng naitalang kaso ng mad cow disease sa Scotland noong nakaraang Mayo.

Base sa Memorandum Order No. 20 na inilabas noong Mayo 30, 2024 ng DA, pansamantalang ipinagbawal ang pag-angkat ng mga buhay na baka, karne, mga produktong karne, mga protina ng hayop na naproseso ng baka, at semilya nito mula sa UK.

Hindi pa inilalabas ng DA ang kopya ng memorandum ngunit nabanggit na ito ay dahil sa nadiskubrenang isang classical strain C-type BSE sa South Ayrshire sa Scotland noong Mayo 10, gaya ng nakumpirma sa isang ulat ng World Organization for Animal Health -World Animal Health Information System.

Ayon sa DA, ang Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) na mas kilala bilang mad cow disease, ay maaaring magdulot ng fatal nerve damage sa mga baka, at ang pagpasok at posibleng pagkalat nito sa Pilipinas ay maaaring makaapekto sa industriya ng mga hayop at makompromiso ang kaligtasan ng pagkain.

Maaari rin itong magdulot ng sakit na Creutzfeldt-Jakob sa mga tao na nagdudulot ng pagkasira ng utak o brain disorder.

Pero nilinaw ng DA na lahat ng mga shipment mula sa UK na nasa biyahe o nadiskaraga na ay papayagan pang makapasok basta't kinatay o ginawa ang mga ito bago ang Abril 10, 2024. (Vincent Pagaduan)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/06/02/agri-memo-binawal-karneng-baka-galing-united-kingdom/>

Fishing areas sa West Philippine Sea, protektado ng Philippines Maritime Zones Law

[Malou Escudero](#)

June 3, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Tiniyak ni Senate Majority Floor Leader Francis “Tol” Tolentino sa Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) na ang Philippine Maritime Zones Law, sa sandaling maipatupad, ay hindi lamang magpoprotekta sa fishing areas sa West Philippine Sea (WPS), bagkus ay pakikinabangan din ng iba pang fishing grounds sa buong mundo.

Bilang pangunahing may-akda ng Philippine Maritime Zones Law, tiniyak ni Tolentino na mapoprotektahan ang fisheries resources, kasunod ng pagkabahala ni BFAR spokesperson Nash Briguera sa pagkasira ng marine ecosystem sa WPS.

Sinabi ni Briguera na humigit-kumulang 385,000 mangingisda mula sa apat na rehiyon sa Pilipinas ang umaasa sa resources ng pangisdaan sa WPS. Nag-aambag aniya ito ng 14 porsyento ng pambansang produksyon ng isda sa bansa.

“Makatutulong po ang Philippine Maritime Zones Laws dahil sa batas hanggang doon sa contiguous zone, 24 nautical miles, allowed tayo na mag-enforce ng environmental laws,” sabi ni Tolentino.

Nagkasundo ang senador at tagapagsalita ng BFAR na ang pagsira sa marine ecosystem at mga buhay na organismo sa WPS ay makaaapekto sa iba pang mga lugar ng pangangisdaan sa buong mundo.

Para maipatupad ang Philippine Maritime Zones Law, sinabi ni Tolentino na kailangan muna itong isumite sa Secretary General ng United Nations na maglalabas naman ng abiso sa lahat ng signatories sa United Nations Convention of the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) at ipaaalam sa kanila ang Philippine Maritime Zones Law, na may mga ganitong probisyon, na dapat igalang.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/06/03/2359944/fishing-areas-sa-west-philippine-sea-protektado-ng-philippines-maritime-zones-law>