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Tolentino urges DFA to seek ICRC aid in resupply missions to BRP Sierra Madre

BY DHEL NAZARIO

Jun 18, 2024 08:33 PM

AT A GLANCE

- Senate Majority Leader Francis "Tol" Tolentino on Tuesday, June 18 asked the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to seek assistance from the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) in delivering food supplies to Filipino soldiers stationed at the grounded BRP Sierra Madre at the Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal.

Senate Majority Leader Francis "Tol" Tolentino on Tuesday, June 18 asked the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to seek assistance from the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) in delivering food supplies to Filipino soldiers stationed at the grounded BRP Sierra Madre at the Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal.

In a letter dated June 18, 2024, Tolentino made the recommendation to DFA Secretary Enrique Manalo after China's "dangerous and reckless" behavior in the West Philippine Sea (WPS). This, after a disrupted resupply mission in Ayungin Shoal that led to injuries of Filipino troops.

"In view of the escalating conditions in the West Philippine Sea (WPS), particularly near the Ayungin Shoal relative to our resupply missions, my humble recommendation is to seek the assistance of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) based in Geneva, Switzerland," Tolentino said in his message to Manalo.

The AFP attempted to bring fresh food supplies and other provisions to troops manning the BRP Sierra Madre outpost in Ayungin Shoal early Monday, June 17, but the mission was intercepted by the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), China Coast Guard (CCG), and Chinese maritime militia (CMM) vessels, according to the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

The Chinese maritime forces "engaged in dangerous maneuvers, including ramming and towing," the task force said.

"The ICRC, under the Geneva Convention, can facilitate the necessary humanitarian aid to our Navy personnel living in BRP Sierra Madre and would pave the way for delivering the needed food supplies by our soldiers therein," Tolentino said.

He added that now is the time for the Philippines to file a case against China at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and other Human Rights Council agencies because of its harassment of Filipino soldiers and fishermen.

He said China has no right or jurisdiction to implement domestic law over its neighbor, especially in the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Tolentino says China is violating several international laws, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS), and many more.

Alternative livelihood for fishermen

Meanwhile, Tolentino urged the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture (DA), to work closely with local governments to provide alternative livelihoods for fisherfolk groups affected by the raging West Philippine Sea (WPS) dispute.

Tolentino visited three coastal municipalities in Zambales – Sta. Cruz, Masinloc, and Subic – where he provided assistance to more than 500 fisherfolk. He also led town hall meetings dubbed, ‘Talakayang WPS,’ together with local government leaders, representatives from BFAR and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), as well as leaders and members of various fishers’ cooperatives and associations.

"We will explore what alternative means of livelihood can be provided, and I promise to press our government agencies to assist you," the senator assured local fisherfolk.

Tolentino expressed confidence that the proposed Philippine Maritime Zones Act (Senate Bill No. 2492), which he principally authored and sponsored, will be passed and enacted following the resumption of the Senate session in July.

Tolentino also chairs the Senate Special Committee on Maritime and Admiralty Zones.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/6/18/tolentino-urges-dfa-to-see-icrc-aid-in-resupply-missions-to-brp-sierra-madre>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Davao region records P203-M agricultural loss from El Niño

BY ANTONIO COLINA IV

Jun 18, 2024 04:32 PM

DAVAO CITY – The Department of Agriculture (DA)-Davao said that the El Niño phenomenon has destroyed P203 million in agricultural crops in the Davao region.



FARMLAND affected by El Niño.

Joedel Leliza, focal person for Disaster Risk Reduction Management of the DA-Davao, said during the Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas on Tuesday that 14,736 farmers were affected by El Niño here and the provinces of Davao del Sur and Davao Oriental.

He said heavily affected high-value crops were banana, cacao, coffee, and corn with a total area of 7,155.49 hectares.

Leliza said they will form a rehabilitation plan to help farmers recover from the impact of El Niño.

He said that they continuously consult local government units to identify what interventions farmers need for possible funding from the national government.

Macario D. Gonzaga, DA-Davao regional executive director, said they have set aside an initial budget of P24.550 million to assist affected farmers.

He added that among the interventions that they have provided were P5,000 cash assistance for rice farmers for the purchase of hybrid rice seeds and fuel discounts.

Gonzaga said that affected farmers also received P10,000 each from the Office of the President.

Last June 6, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. assured that the national government would help farmers severely affected by the onslaught of El Niño in Davao region.

During his speech at the distribution of presidential assistance to farmers, fisherfolk, and families at the Davao del Norte Sports Complex in Tagum City, Marcos said that the national government is working closely with local government units to ensure that support will reach them.

Marcos led the turnover of P36 million in agri-fishery livelihood projects, post-harvest facility, equipment, and materials under the DA, fiberglass reinforced plastic boats, fishing gears, and paraphernalia under the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), and toolkits under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

He distributed cash assistance amounting to P30 million or P10 million each to select beneficiaries in the provinces of Davao del Norte, Davao de Oro, and Davao Occidental.

Marcos added that he directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and BFAR to improve the supply of fish through aquaculture production and planting of mangroves.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/6/18/davao-region-records-p203-m-agricultural-loss-from-el-nino>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Pinoy farmers forced to sell palay for P17-P18 per kilo—SINAG

BY JEL SANTOS

Jun 18, 2024 04:12 PM



Filipino farmers are forced to sell their palay (unmilled rice) for P 17 to P18 per kilo as millers stopped buying for P30, farmers group Samahang Industriya ang Agrikultura (SINAG) said on Tuesday, June 18.

What further aggravated the matter for the farmers, according to the group, is that the National Food Authority (NFA) is no longer purchasing palay.

On June 16, the NFA announced that it surpassed its palay procurement target for the first half of this year, totaling 3.37 million 50-kilo bags. The agency's target was 3.36 million bags for the first half of the year.

NFA Administrator Larry Lacson clarified some of their warehouses still purchase palay. "Bumibili pa rin kami sa ibang mga warehouses. Hindi na sa lahat (We are still buying from other warehouses. Not from all of them anymore)," he said.

"Farmers are forced sa presyo na willing lang bilhin ng millers [which is] P17 to P18 per kilo (Farmers are forced to sell at the price that millers are willing to pay, which is P17 to P18 per kilo)," Jayson Cainglet, the executive director of SINAG, said in an interview.

"Iyong mga naghahabol [ng] third cropping na rice farmers ay tinamaan na ng P17 to P18 per kilo farmgate; dahil stop buying na ang millers sa P30 per kilo. At hindi na raw kinukuha ng NFA dahil puno na raw stocks nila (The rice farmers who are rushing for the third cropping have been affected by the P17 to P18 per kilo farmgate price because millers have stopped buying at P30 per kilo. Also, the NFA is reportedly not accepting more because their stocks are already full)," he went on.

Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, the spokesperson of the Department of Agriculture (DA), said it is only normal for the farmgate price of palay to go down as the harvest season has already ended.

“Natural na bumabagsak ang presyo dahil wala nang harvest---tapos na ang harvest season (It is natural for the price of palay to decrease as there is no more harvest---the harvest season has already ended),” he said in an ambush interview.

Cainglet agreed that the palay price was bound to decrease, but not by 45 percent.

“Yes, bumababa. But not from P30 to P17 kasi 45 percent drop na ‘yun (Yes, it is decreasing. But not from P30 to P17 because that would be a 45 percent drop),” he said.

Should the price of the farmgate of palay remain around P17 to P20 a kilo during the fourth quarter harvest, SINAG said a lot of farmers will be discouraged from farming.

“Just like any business. Kapag nalulugi ka, titigil ka na (Just like any business. When you're losing money, you'll stop),” the executive director of SINAG said.

The cost to produce palay, according to Cainglet, is P15 to P16 per kilo.

“If bibilhin lang sa farmers ng P17 to P18, ang kikitain lang nila is P2 per kilo (If the farmers are only paid P17 to P18, they will earn only P2 per kilo),” he pointed out.

To encourage farmers to continue planting despite the low farmgate price, De Mesa said that they will provide farm inputs and that the DA will request a larger budget for the NFA.

“Unang-una magbibigay pa rin ng additional inputs pa rin ang DA in terms of fertilizer, seeds, pieces of machinery, etc. (First and foremost, the DA will still provide additional inputs such as fertilizer, seeds, machinery, etc.),” he said.

“Hihiling ng mas malaking budget ang NFA (The NFA will request a larger budget). I cannot say for now,” he added.

SINAG fears that the price of unmilled rice will decline further because of the forthcoming tariff reductions planned by the Philippine government.

Caintlet dared National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan to purchase palay in Pampanga for P30 per kilo.

“Nasaan si Secretary Balisacan? Pumunta siya sa Pampanga at bilhin sa P30 per kilo ang ngayon palang ay bagsak presyong palay na ng mga magsasaka (Where is Secretary Balisacan? He should go to Pampanga to buy palay at P30 per kilo, which is already the current low price for farmers),” he said.

Recently, 17 agriculture groups opposed to tariff cuts have called for the resignation of Balisacan, citing his "pro-importation ideology." The groups are SINAG, FFF, KMP, PHILCONGRAINS, ABONO Party-list, UBRA, Phil Egg Board, NFHFI, AGAP Party-list, Phil Palay, PCAFI, PhilMaize, AA, RWAN, IRDF, Bantay Bigas, and P4MP.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/6/18/pinoy-farmers-forced-to-sell-palay-for-p17-p18-per-kilo-sinag>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA: Plans in place to revitalize local rubber industry

BY CHINO S. LEYCO

Jun 18, 2024 02:34 PM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) vowed its full support for the revitalization of the rubber industry following its decline in the aftermath of the pandemic.

In a statement, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said the Philippines holds significant potential in the rubber sector, being ranked as the 13th largest producer of natural rubber worldwide.

In 2022, the country contributed one percent to global rubber production, yielding a total output of 109,000 metric tons.

The majority of rubber exports originate from Mindanao, where nearly 98 percent of the 234,600 hectares dedicated to rubber cultivation in 2022 are situated.

However, the value of Philippine rubber and rubber product exports posted a decline in 2022, falling to \$278.2 million from \$578.3 million in 2021 due to the closure of processing and manufacturing facilities amid Covid-19 mobility restrictions.

To aid in the industry's recovery, the DA is extending support to the Philippine Rubber Research Institute (PRRI) by providing infrastructure and other essential facilities.

During the signing of various agreements between the DA and PRRI, Tiu Laurel assured the government's commitment to fostering a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive agricultural sector.

"Today, we set a new benchmark in our pursuit toward a brighter tomorrow for rubber farmers," he said.

The agreements include the allocation of a 7.48-hectare property for PRRI's research and development facilities, joint utilization of an existing rubber testing laboratory in Zamboanga Peninsula and extension of PRRI's tenure in the interim office.

These initiatives are crucial steps to provide rubber farmers with necessary resources for advancement, Sec. Tiu Laurel said.

The Philippine Rubber Industry Roadmap for 2023-2028 cites the country's significant potential, ranking it as the 13th largest producer of natural rubber globally.

Tiu Laurel acknowledged the potential for growth of the local rubber industry and its capacity to lift many in Mindanao out of poverty.

"The challenge for PRRI is to actively push for development programs and projects to support the 700,000 rubber growers in the country," he said.

Despite challenges like the decline in rubber exports, the agriculture chief remains optimistic about the industry's prospects.

“Only when the PRRI succeeds in these initiatives can it ensure a rubber industry that is dynamic, innovative and self-sufficient,” he added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/6/18/da-plans-in-place-to-revitalize-local-rubber-industry>

Mixed signals on rice



DEMAND AND SUPPLY - Boo Chanco - The Philippine Star

June 19, 2024 | 12:00am

BBM's administration is giving mixed signals on rice policy, a gut issue of importance to the masa. That's not good. It makes our government look confused, like it is being managed by clueless katzenjammer kids. There is no doubt that it is a controversial issue, but once BBM makes a decision, everyone down the line must support it.

On June 5, the newspapers carried a story announcing a decision of BBM, as chairman of the NEDA Board, reducing imported rice tariff for both in- and out-quota rates from 35 to 15 percent until 2028. NEDA Secretary Arsi Balisacan explained that the newly approved tariff rates aim to ensure affordability of rice, an essential commodity, while at the same time balancing the interest of consumers and local producers.

"The Department of Agriculture is aiming for a reduction (to) P29 per kilo, at least for the poor, because we will complement this tariff reduction with direct subsidies to the poor and the vulnerable, so they can access the food (rice)," Balisacan said. "But overall, with the tariff reduced from 35 to 15 percent, everybody will benefit from that. This is crucial because world prices are still increasing," he added.

On June 15, the newspapers carried a story about how Agriculture Undersecretary Asis Perez told a Senate hearing that the Department of Agriculture (DA) wanted to raise the tariff on rice to 50 percent, in direct opposition to the reduction approved by BBM. Perez, a lawyer rather than an agriculturist or economist, said the DA was consulted regarding the rice tariff reduction before the NEDA Board approval.

“Our recommendation is very different (from the 15 percent tariff). Our recommendation during the discussions at the CTRM (Committee on Tariff and Related Matters) – was to bring (the rice tariffs) back to 50 percent,” he told the Senate committee on agriculture, food and agrarian reform during a hearing on the proposed amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law.

The CTRM is a Cabinet-level inter-agency committee that tackles matters relating to tariffs chaired by the Trade and Industry Secretary and co-chaired by the NEDA Secretary. It submits its recommendations to the NEDA board, which is chaired by President Marcos.

It is a question of primary objectives. The economic managers, aware of the political pressure on the President, are most concerned about how to immediately bring down the retail price of rice which is now P48 to P55 a kilo for some varieties, way above the affordability level for many Filipinos.

Balisacan clarified that the P29 per kilo rice price “is the target cost of rice for the poor, those who are targeted for the 4Ps. So, it’s not a general price,” he said. Balisacan said the government would continue supporting domestic production through tariff cover as well as increased budgetary support to improve agricultural productivity.

The economic managers are hoping a sharp reduction in the tax that rice importers pay will immediately bring down retail prices. Traders who have large inventories will unload their stocks right away for fear of losing money, and that will bring prices down even before new imports paying lower tariffs arrive. But lower import taxes, if that causes a drop in retail rice prices, will also make traders lower their local palay buying prices and farmers will complain.

The howl of protest from the usual groups claiming to represent farmers was expected. Rice farming is very protectionist. A cabal of rice traders who provide logistics and financing to farmers, use farmers for political cover to protect their interests.

It didn’t help that the reduction in the tariff did not follow legal procedure on revising tariff which allows the President to move only if Congress is not in session. Second, Vietnamese traders are reportedly starting to sell at lower prices.

A fixed tariff for four years might not be advisable given rice market volatility. What if India lifts its rice export ban. That will lead to a significant decline in world rice prices. A 15 percent tariff at that time will hurt our local rice farmers. The best, some rice academics suggest, is a variable tariff system, like what Bangladesh adopted. High during harvest season; low during lean months. This will protect our local farmers during harvest season and protect consumers in the lean months.

The new BBM order should have recognized that nuance. Instead of imposing the lower tariff rate up to 2028, it should provide for the ability of the government to easily change the rate depending on developments in the rice market, here and abroad. The government should also keep the rice traders guessing, something a variable tariff system makes possible.

Balisacan said the President would issue an executive order to implement the new tariff program. Maybe it is not too late to provide for this nuance in the order.

But what is worrisome is how BBM's team members are giving mixed signals. There was enough time to share alternative views while the policy was being formulated. But once done, the administration must speak with one voice. Otherwise, they give the impression that they don't know what they are doing.

There is also something to be curious about Usec Perez. His boss, the DA Secretary, agreed with his fellow cabinet members on the tariff reduction. Perez should have told the Senate that he cannot speak about the details of internal discussions on the issue due to executive privilege and also, because a decision has already been made by his superiors which binds him.

I am told Perez was the lawyer of the group that sued for the banning of genetically modified food. But now he must defend the DA position in favor of genetically modifying many food crops to improve the quality and quantity of harvests so we can be more food secure.

Hay naku. A bunch of amateurs in government and our lives depend on them.

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

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/19/2363794/mixed-signals-rice>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Philippines to end 2024 with 95-day rice stock

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

June 19, 2024 | 12:00am



Workers unload sacks of rice from a delivery truck along Dagupan Street in Tondo, Manila on January 22, 2024.

STAR / Ernie Penaredondo

MANILA, Philippines — The country could end the year with a rice stock level that would last for over three months as the Department of Agriculture (DA) sticks with its palay production target of 20 million metric tons (MT).

The DA is projecting a total rice inventory at the end of the year of about 3.6 million MT, which is sufficient to last for 95 days, Agriculture Assistant Secretary U-Nichols Manalo said.

The foreseen year-end rice stocks would provide the country with a comfortable supply at the start of 2025 amid weather disturbances and global trade uncertainties such as the persisting export ban by India on its non-Basmati rice.

Earlier, the government encouraged private traders and importers to bring in more rice from abroad to ensure that the country has ample supply and to stabilize domestic prices of the staple.

For the first semester, the DA is expecting a palay output of 8.8 million MT, down by at least 200,000 MT compared to the nine million MT recorded volume in the same period last year.

The production target for the January to June period factored in the ill effects of the El Niño phenomenon on local rice production.

The DA is also keeping its full-year palay production target of 20.4 million MT.

Manalo explained that the agency is now monitoring and preparing against the anticipated impact of La Niña phenomenon on rice production in the second half.

He noted that La Niña is historically “more destructive” than El Niño because of its more frequent and longer occurrence.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) earlier projected that palay production in the second quarter likely tumbled by 8.4 percent to 3.9 million MT as farms reeled from the ill effects of the dryer weather conditions.

In its latest production forecast, the PSA said palay or unmilled rice harvest from April to June likely declined to 3.89 million MT, 360,000 MT lower than the actual 4.25 million MT output in the same period last year.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, meanwhile, said total rice imports this year could be more than the 3.6 million MT imported volume last year based on recent trends.

De Mesa noted that rice imports so far have been higher by 400,000 MT to 500,000 MT on an annual basis.

Latest Bureau of Plant Industry data showed that rice imports from January to May reached 2.125 million MT, about 485,000 MT higher than the 1.64 million MT recorded import volume during the same period last year.

“Rice imports could further increase if the impact of La Niña on rice production. Would be huge,” De Mesa told reporters yesterday.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/19/2363803/philippines-end-2024-95-day-rice-stock>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Notes on the beat: A look at the DA's dream team

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

June 19, 2024 | 12:00am



Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Dream Team. It's the nickname of what has been considered as perhaps the greatest basketball Olympic team ever formed.

It was in 1992 when the “Dream Team” became a reality: the first team to be fielded by the USA composed of active, professional National Basketball Association players – Jordan, Pippen, Robinson, Bird, Ewing and so on.

And that term has been used in various fields and disciplines to describe a team stacked with unprecedented caliber in talent and skill.

It's also a term that the current Department of Agriculture (DA) leadership is describing itself.

Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., the fishing tycoon-turned-agriculture secretary, has formed the biggest leadership roster in the department's history – 13 undersecretaries and 13 assistant secretaries.

The team is composed of technocrats, returning agriculture officials and private stakeholders from retired technical people to former industry leaders.

This mix of officials, Tiu Laurel points out, is necessary for the department to attain a whole-of-nation approach in tackling the problems of the country's agriculture sector.

Run it like a business

Some of the undersecretaries attest to Tiu Laurel's wisdom. One undersecretary said the Secretary wanted to bring his "business" or "private sector" style of management to the bureaucracy by designating specific people to every critical line of operations.

"He wants to run it like a business, like a corporate entity. There is an accountable person per portfolio," Christopher Morales, undersecretary for rice industry development, said.

"We are like small business units," Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero, undersecretary for high value crops, said.

And this policy mindset is the primary reason why the DA has a record number of undersecretaries and assistant secretaries today.

"We have a huge coverage and there is somebody that should focus on each area," Tiu Laurel previously said.

Indeed, the DA is one of "most complicated" agencies in the bureaucracy. It has nine attached bureaus (from training, soil to fisheries and livestock), eight attached agencies (from credit, pesticide to carabao and fibers) and nine attached corporations (from tobacco, dairy to sugar and irrigation).

During the early days in office, Tiu Laurel turned to former agriculture chief Luis Lorenzo Jr., who like himself is also a businessman, for advice on how to run the department, according to sources.

More meetings, faster actions

Government insiders said meetings have been more frequent within the DA leadership akin to business meetings of corporate firms. And these meetings which have been described as "boardroom style" last more than five hours, forcing the leadership to cut it to three hours.

One of the differences with the meetings at the DA today is that they are more results-oriented, sources said. People say that Tiu Laurel is not a micromanager.

Undersecretaries and assistant secretaries have the full trust of the agriculture chief when it comes to implementing their concerned programs and projects. Tiu Laurel gives the greenlight once the proposed programs and projects are sound and feasible to uplift the concerned agriculture subsector.

What Tiu Laurel is mindful of, however, are the results. Like companies, each undersecretary office is evaluated through a key performance indicator.

The DA leadership has also established a regular meeting with industry stakeholders, serving as a direct line between industry groups and the government. Issues in these meetings vary far and wide.

The industry players are able to submit their recommendations directly to Tiu Laurel, who from time to time adopt them as policies in the department. One of which was the temporary import ban on onions.

On top of its huge leadership team, the DA continues to collaborate with the Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC) that advises President Marcos on various issues, including agriculture.

Where's who and who's who?

“Where is the office of [insert an Undersecretary or Assistant secretary]?”

This was one of the common questions asked around the DA compound during the first few months of the current leadership.

Well, it is natural for leadership reorganization to move spaces. What was uncommon, however, was that nobody exactly knew where the new officials were holding office physically. Much more, if they are 10... 15... 20... 23 undersecretaries and assistant secretaries.

Officials had to make do with whatever space was available to them given the limited offices in the DA. Some of the officials are holding office in attached bureaus or agencies of the DA adjacent to the main compound.

One ranking official even joked about it: wala pa nga akong opisina. Another one said: wala pang kuryente sa office ko.

The “moving in” season in the DA compound continues even until today.

Another birth pain of the current leadership is the overlapping of roles and functions.

Tiu Laurel admits that given the number of undersecretaries he has, there would be confusion and overlapping regarding certain issues and programs.

But undersecretaries interviewed by The STAR noted that overlapping of duties and concerns is unavoidable.

But what is unavoidable? Collaboration and teamwork, they say. And this is how they iron out differences they have to ensure smooth and efficient collaboration and implementation of the department's projects and programs, sources said.

The returning class

For returning DA officials, it was the vision of President Marcos and Tiu Laurel for the agriculture sector that convinced them to stay or return to the DA.

"I am kind of optimistic because the current administration, particularly the President and the Secretary, has real bias for the farmers," Asis Perez, undersecretary for policy and planning, said.

"The decision of the administration really is in a way gearing toward self-sufficiency. Kung ganoon ang takbo, eh syempre, sama ka diba?" Perez, a former head of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, added.

Joining Perez in the returning class of officials are Morales, Natividad-Caballero and Allan Umali (undersecretary for administration).

Morales has been in government service for almost 27 years. He was away for four years from the agriculture department as he served as assistant secretary at the tourism department from 2019 to 2023.

Natividad-Caballero first became an undersecretary during the second term of William Dar as agriculture chief during the Duterte administration. She exited the DA after Dar's term ended.

Umali previously served as assistant secretary handling the same portfolio during the leadership of Proceso Alcala.

From outside and within

Seasoned government officials from different departments outside and within the agriculture portfolio have also joined the undersecretary ranks.

Long-time National Economic and Development Authority assistant secretary Mercedita Sombilla joined the agriculture department at the turn of the Marcos Jr. administration as an agriculture undersecretary.

Sombilla first handled the policy and planning portfolio during the tenure of President Marcos as agriculture chief. She is now tasked to oversee the attached bureaus of the department.

Former Department of Budget and Management director Nora Oliveros has also joined Tiu Laurel's team as undersecretary for finance. In the past, there was only one undersecretary handling both administration and finance.

Former BFAR official Drusila Bayate is now the undersecretary for fisheries while Zamzamin Amputan, who was appointed undersecretary in 2019, is the undersecretary for BARMM.

Agnes Catherine Miranda, who has been in government service for nearly three decades, most of which with the DA, is now the undersecretary overseeing the department's attached agencies and corporations.

From private to public

Former lawmaker and governor Deogracias Victor Savellano is one of the first appointees of the agriculture department, tasked to handle the livestock portfolio.

There are also first time agriculture officials like Roger Navarro who has been a corn industry group leader for decades having been an official of the Philippine Maize Federation Inc. (PhilMaize).

He first joined the government as special assistant to former National Food Authority administrator Roderico Bioco, who was also a former official of PhilMaize.

Navarro said he accepted the challenge to become an undersecretary to be able to experience first-hand how the bureaucracy works, having been on the other side of the fence all this time.

He has been tasked to handle one of the most critical portfolios in the department: operations. For him, it is an opportunity to make their advocacies in the private sector a reality now that he is part of the government.

Wrapping up the undersecretary team are Jerome Oliveros (Special Concerns and for ODA - Foreign Aid/Grants) and Alvin John Balagbag (DA Inspectorate and Enforcement and Chief-of-Staff).

The second 13

The half of Tiu Laurel's team are perhaps known as the second 13. Coincidentally, there are also 13 assistant secretaries in the department.

Almost each undersecretary has an assistant secretary for the portfolios and programs that they are in charge of.

Like the undersecretaries, the roster of assistant secretaries are a mix of veteran officials and first-timers. There are also new portfolios for assistant secretaries such as exports, national task force on west philippine sea, logistics and two items related to livestock and poultry.

Seasoned agriculture officials Noel Padre (Planning and Project Development), Arnel de Mesa (Special Concerns and for ODA - Foreign Aid and Grants / Spokesman), Paz Benavidez II (Policy and Regulations), Telma Tolentino (Finance) and U-Nichols Manalo (Operations) lead the assistant secretary roster.

Veterinarians Constante Palabrica and Benjamin Albarece have joined Tiu Laurel's team as assistant secretaries. Palabrica is in charge of swine and poultry while Albarece oversees ruminant livestock, both portfolios are new to the department.

Palabrica was a former technical director of Robina Farms of conglomerate JG Summit Holdings Inc. with over 40 years of private sector experience.

Albarece has been serving as adviser for various entities on livestock and poultry, including a stint as a senior adviser on livestock of the DA from 2003 to 2005. He was also a former president of the Federation of Cattle Raisers Association of the Philippines.

Allen Kristopher Anarna, a lawyer and partner of Anarna Law firm, is in charge of administration while Genevieve Velicaria-Guevarra, the sister of Communications Secretary Cheloy Velicaria-Garafil, handles the consumer affairs as well as legislative affairs.

Exporter Philip Young is tasked to oversee the export development unit of the DA while Daniel Alfonso Atayde is in charge of handling the logistics portfolio, one of the key units identified by Tiu Laurel as a priority.

James Layug, who was appointed assistant secretary in 2022, is now the assistant secretary for Executive Order 70 series of 2018 and for the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea. Carlos Carag, assistant secretary for DA inspectorate and enforcement, completes the team.

Six months in the making

It took at least six months to “formally” form the team since the players had to wait for their appointment papers from Malacanang. But even before the appointment papers were released, Tiu Laurel's team had been silently working at the department.

As early as a month after Tiu Laurel became agriculture chief, some of his handpicked officials have been at the DA already, shadowing and overseeing their eventual portfolios.

Game time

By April, the team was 90 percent complete. Last month, it was finally game time.

For some agriculture industry players, the number of DA officials is not a concern, or at least not yet. What matters most, they say, is that the department delivers on its promise of improving farmers' welfare.

If Tiu Laurel's team would be able to surpass the achievements of his predecessor, then having such a number of undersecretaries and assistant secretaries is perhaps justified, sources told The STAR.

They added, however, that they would not hesitate to criticize and call out the current DA leadership if they fail.

Indeed, the stakes in agriculture far exceed that of the Olympics. It is not just pride, honor or prestige that is on the line. It is the security of a nation. Food security.

And only time will tell if the "dreams" of Tiu Laurel's team for a better agriculture sector would become a reality for Filipino farmers and consumers alike. Game on.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/19/2363804/notes-beat-look-das-dream-team>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

El Niño affected over 180,000 farmers, says the agriculture department

By: [Adrian Parungao](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:39 PM June 18, 2024



Drought-hit farm in Imus, Cavite (File photo taken on March 2, 2024 by RICHARD A. REYES)

MANILA, Philippines — More than 180,000 farmers and fisherfolk were affected by the El Niño phenomenon in 2024, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Tuesday.

According to DA Assistant Secretary U-Nichols Manalo, the top agricultural commodities that were destroyed during this period were rice and corn.

“No’ng tinerminate itong El Niño, out of the 9.2 metric tons production target, nasa 191,000 metric tons lang po ‘yong damage on rice. So that’s around two percent,” Manalo said in a media briefing.

(When the El Niño ended, out of the 9.2 metric tons of production target, only 191,000 metric tons of rice were damaged. So that's around two percent.)

Manalo added the country's supply of rice and corn was not severely affected.

“Do'n sa corn, out of the 4.5 million metric tons na production target ng corn, nasa 188,000 metric tons lang po ang damage sa corn. So that's four percent,” he said.

(For corn, out of the 4.5 million metric tons production target for corn, only 188,000 metric tons of corn were damaged. So that's four percent.)

“Ibig sabihin, hindi po gaanong apektado ang ating supply galing sa palay at galing mais,” he noted.

(That means to say, our supply of rice and corn was not affected severely.)

The DA likewise said that 170,000 hectares of farmland was affected by the El Niño.

Damage to produce was estimated at 441,801 metric tons, equivalent to around P9.8 billion.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration declared the end of the El Niño on June 7.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1952667/el-nino-affected-over-180000-farmers-says-the-agriculture-department>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Fish production not seen affected by China threat to detain ‘trespassers’

June 18, 2024 | 9:04 pm



SCREENGRAB FROM PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD

THE Chinese threat to detain fishing boat crews “intruding” on the territory it claims in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) is not expected to have a significant impact on fish production, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

“In terms of production, yes, the contribution of the West Philippine Sea is significant... But we don’t see the unilateral declaration of China actually having an impact,” BFAR spokesman Nazario C. Briguera said in a briefing on Tuesday.

The Chinese government has authorized its coast guard to detain for 60 days without trial any boat crew members found in the disputed waters.

“First and foremost, the Philippines does not recognize this unilateral declaration of China,” he said.

“The Philippines will continue to fish in the West Philippine Sea because it is part of our waters, as our exclusive economic zone (EEZ),” he added.

The Philippines continued to protest the illegal presence and actions of Chinese vessels within the EEZ.

Mr. Briguera said BFAR has yet to receive reports of China detaining any boat crews from the Philippines.

“We have not heard of any fishermen being arrested and if there is, it is a new provocation on the part of China and it can be considered a new violation of international law, particularly of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

China’s coast guard has repeatedly used water cannons to turn Philippine vessels from entering contested areas within the EEZ, including Scarborough Shoal and Second Thomas Shoal.

Fish caught in the WPS amounted to 201,894.49 metric tons last year, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. This was up 14.85% from 2022. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/06/18/602707/fish-production-not-seen-affected-by-china-threat-to-detain-trespassers/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Year-end rice inventory target set at 3.64 million metric tons

June 18, 2024 | 9:03 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is aiming for a year-end national rice inventory level of 3.64 million metric tons (MMT), after a reading of just over 2 MMT in early May.

“At the end of the year we are looking at 3.64 MMT, equivalent to nearly 95 days’ demand,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Operations U-Nichols A. Manalo said in a briefing.

The national rice inventory rose 10.3% year on year in early May, while corn stocks were up 6.3%, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

In a report, the PSA said the rice inventory was estimated at 2.08 MMT, noting declines in volume held by the National Food Authority and households.

Mr. Manalo added that palay or unmilled rice production was estimated at 8.8 MMT during the first half of the year.

The DA said overall palay production could hit 20.44 MMT this year. This was a downgrade from the initial 20.8 MMT projection to account for the possible effects of El Niño and La Niña.

In a separate report, the PSA said that palay production may have dropped 8.4% year on year to 3.89 MMT during the second quarter.

The government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), has declared El Niño to have ended, and estimated the chances of La Niña setting in between July and September at 69%.

“Historically, the damage is greater during La Niña ...during rains and typhoons (the damage can hit) 500 to 600 thousand MT,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said on the sidelines of the briefing.

La Niña event increases the likelihood of above-normal rainfall in parts of the country, especially towards the end of the year.

He added that water management may be difficult during the La Niña months.

“It is more difficult to control, especially if there is too much water (beyond the capacity of flood-control systems),” Mr. De Mesa said.

La Niña may also lead to increased rice imports.

“It is possible that there will be an increase (in imports) especially with a severe La Niña,” he added.

Rice imports amounted to 2.17 MMT as of June 6, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

The US Department of Agriculture has upwardly revised its rice import forecast for the Philippines to 4.6 MMT this year, owing to higher consumption and lowered import tariffs.

The National Economic and Development Authority Board has approved a plan to lower tariffs on industrial and farm goods, including the further reduction of rice import tariffs to 15% from 35%, until 2028. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/06/18/602706/year-end-rice-inventory-target-set-at-3-64-million-metric-tons/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

NFA sees possible savings by discontinuing palay rebagging

June 18, 2024 | 9:00 pm



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE National Food Authority (NFA) said on Tuesday that it could realize major savings by no longer re-bagging procured palay (unmilled rice).

“More or less half a billion pesos could be saved by the NFA just tweaking that particular process,” Acting Administrator Larry R. Lacson said at a briefing.

He said that an NFA sack typically costs about P13 while handling costs are at P30 per bag.

The savings from no longer using sacks is roughly P130 million, while the savings in handling costs is P300 million, he added.

Mr. Lacson added that the move is still being studied, “but we’re really going in that direction.”

The NFA typically rebags the palay bought from farmers with NFA-branded sacks to store in its warehouses.

“If the specifications indicated by the farmers on their sacks are correct, there should be no problem,” he added.

According to the NFA, palay delivered by farmers is rebagged to verify that the grain within the sacks is suitable for storage.

“In reality the NFA’s product is not palay but milled rice,” Mr. Lacson added.

The NFA hopes to purchase 60% of the NFA’s requirements during the second half of the year. Its target inventory is 495 thousand MT by the end of the year, equivalent to 6.6 million bags.

Last week, Mr. Lacson said the buffer stock of rice held by the NFA was 3.37 million 50-kilogram bags as of June 13, equivalent to four days’ consumption. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/06/18/602754/nfa-sees-possible-savings-by-discontinuing-palay-rebagging/>

NFA to save P500M if it stops rebagging

By Janine Alexis Miguel

June 19, 2024

THE National Food Authority (NFA) is planning to do away with palay (unmilled rice) rebagging, using the agency's sacks to save approximately half a billion pesos annually.

NFA Acting Administrator Larry Lacson said the plan to remove rebagging in their process arose from observations during warehouse visits, showing that bagging takes farmers' time in selling their palay.

"The system is that when we buy the palay, we transfer it to NFA sacks, but in reality, palay is not NFA's product; its end product is rice," Lacson said at a media briefing on Tuesday.

Projected savings from this change will be substantial with each sack costing around P13, and considering that the NFA handles approximately 10 million sacks annually, this amounts to a savings of roughly P130 million.

Additionally, handling or logistics costs, estimated at P30 per sack, would save the NFA another P300 million, according to the NFA.

"That's totaling to more or less half a billion-peso savings for the NFA by just tweaking that particular process," Lacson said.

"It will also save us money... At the same time, we save money on handling costs because payment in this industry is per move. So, if we no longer rebag, we will save a lot on handling costs," Lacson added.

This initiative also responds to requests from farmers who have highlighted the inefficiencies and delays caused by the rebagging process.

Lacson said they were in the final stages of discussions on the proposal.

The move is seen to benefit both the NFA and the farming industry by reducing costs and fostering a cost-effective rice supply chain in the country.

On the other hand, Lacson projects ending rice inventory for 2024 to hit 3.64 million metric tons; this translates to carryover stocks enough for 95 days.

Palay procurement, meanwhile, reached nearly 3.37 million 50-kilo bags as of June 13, exceeding the upgraded target of 3.36 million bags. This translates to approximately 168,262 MT of palay, enough to cover four days of national consumption in case of emergencies or disasters.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/19/news/national/nfa-to-save-p500m-if-it-stops-rebagging/1952099>

MORE THAN A YEAR AFTER MINDORO OIL SPILL

Fishers waiting for fuel subsidy

By Ire Joe Laurente

June 19, 2024

CALAPAN CITY — More than one year after the oil spill incident in the waters off Oriental Mindoro, most fishermen affected by the maritime disaster are still awaiting the release of the fuel subsidy from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture.

In a presentation during the weekly "Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas" of the Philippine Information Agency, BFAR Mimaropa unit head for planning Raymund dela Cruz said that out of the P12 million allocation of the agency to affected fishermen in Oriental Mindoro, only P1,548,000 have been released as of June 5, 2024. The figure is based on the report of the Provincial Agriculturist Office (PAgO).

According to the PAgO report, P288,000 was released to fishermen in the town of Baco, P279,000 to fishermen in Naujan and P981,000 to beneficiaries in Calapan City.

In the same report, P9,777,000 is set to be distributed to fishermen in the towns San Teodoro, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Bulalacao, Bongabong, Mansalay, Roxas, Bansud and Pola. Another P675,000 is slated for the town of Pola because some claimants there are still in the process of validation with the town's local fisheries council.

BFAR Oriental Mindoro provincial officer Brenda Labiaga said that the amount of P12 million, which was committed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to affected fishermen during his visit in the province last year and reiterated during the anniversary of the oil spill in February this year, was already downloaded to the provincial government of Oriental Mindoro treasury department.

Labiaga also said that they have completed the necessary paper requirements for the release of the cash aid to its beneficiaries.

"We already prepared the scheduled cluster release and submitted this to the provincial government of Oriental Mindoro. We were informed by the PAgO that the release would probably commence this month of June until July," Labiaga said.

Affected fishermen have complained of the delay of the release of the fuel subsidy.

They said that it has been more than a year since the oil spill and until now, they are still waiting for the subsidy despite the numerous declarations of the provincial government that the fuel subsidy is ready for release.

Calapan City fishermen leader Benedict Sibayan, president of the Hanay ng mga Yumayabong at Umuunlad na Mangingisda said that in Calapan City 50 percent of the affected fishermen have not received the subsidy.

"Kausap ko lang ang aming vice president, humigit kumulang sa kalahati pa ang hindi nakatanggap ng subsidy. Tatlong barangay pa lamang ang alam naming na nakatanggap na, ang Parang, Maidlang at Navotas (I have just talked to our vice president, more or less half of the beneficiaries have not received the subsidy yet. As far as we have monitored, only three villages — Parang, Maidlang and Navotas — have received the subsidy," Sibayan said over the telephone.

The Manila Times tried to get a reaction from PAgO head Christine Pine but a staff in her office said that she's on travel to Manila for an official business.

The oil spill came from a fuel tanker that sank off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28, 2023.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/19/regions/fishers-waiting-for-fuel-subsidy/1952119>

NFA confident of hitting H2 target palay procurement

Ada Pelonia

June 19, 2024

THE National Food Authority (NFA) has expressed confidence that the grains agency would reach its target palay procurement for the second half of the year despite La Niña.

The NFA said it wants to procure 6.6 million bags for the wet season, noting safeguards to ensure the safety of the stocks amid the possible threats brought by the weather phenomenon.

“What we prepare are our warehouses, making sure safe ang stocks. Repair ng mga warehouses ang ginagawa namin [We focus on repairing warehouses],” NFA Acting Administrator Larry Lacson told the BusinessMirror via Viber.

Lacson said during a media briefing on Tuesday that the grains agency would use the remaining P12 billion for palay procurement in the second half. The NFA has a budget of P17 billion for its procurement this year, including rollover funds from the previous year.

“Pinaghahandaan namin [ang La Niña] in two ways kasi mas malaki yung volume na inaasahan naming papasok [We are preparing for La Nina in two ways because we expect a bigger volume to come in] this coming wet season,” he said.

He noted that the NFA has started milling the palay bought during the dry season for emergency needs and freeing up warehouse space to prepare for the influx of palay during the rainy harvest season.

“[In one] action we’re really targetting to address two concerns: mabigyan yung [give stocks to] relief agencies and at the same time make way for the incoming harvest,” Lacson said.

The NFA earlier said that its palay procurement reached nearly 3.37 million 50-kilo bags as of June 13, exceeding its target of 3.36 million bags. This translates to about 168,262 metric tons (MT) of palay.

“The total inventory is now sufficient to cover four days of national consumption in case of emergencies or disasters,” the state-run food agency said in a statement.

The grains agency said it exceeded its palay procurement target for the first half due to the increase in its buying prices.

The NFA Council earlier approved raising the buying price per kilo of palay to as much as P30 per kilo for clean and dry palay and as much as P23 per kilo for wet and fresh palay.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said farmers are reaping the benefits of the NFA Council’s decision to hike buying prices.

“We are very pleased with the outcome of the NFA Council’s decision to raise palay procurement price. We will continue with this program to ensure our rice farmers enjoy the fruits of their hardwork,” Laurel said in a statement.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/19/nfa-confident-of-hitting-h2-target-palay-procurement/>

A promising step towards curbing smuggling in PHL

BusinessMirror Editorial

June 18, 2024

The issue of smuggling has long plagued the Philippines, causing significant revenue losses for the government and undermining the integrity of the country's trade system. However, recent developments signal a promising step forward in tackling this pervasive problem. The implementation of the Pre-border Technical Verification and Cross-border Electronic Invoicing Systems, as outlined in Administrative Order No. 23, offers hope for a more transparent and efficient border protection system.

According to Dr. Jesus L. Arranza, chairman of the Federation of Philippine Industries, recent studies reveal that the country faces an annual influx of goods worth approximately P2.3 trillion due to both outright smuggling and technical smuggling. These illicit activities not only result in massive revenue losses of approximately P250 billion for the government, but also compromise national security and endanger consumer rights. Consequently, it is commendable that President Marcos has acknowledged the severity of the smuggling problem and expressed his commitment to taking legal action against smugglers during his recent State-of-the-Nation Address.

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto's announcement that the Philippines is now "one step closer" to ending smuggling, misdeclaration, and undervaluation with the implementation of the Pre-border Technical Verification and Cross-border Electronic Invoicing Systems is a significant development. These systems, established under Administrative Order No. 23, aim to revolutionize the inspection and monitoring of imported commodities, bolster national security, protect consumers, and combat the influx of substandard and hazardous goods. (*Read the BusinessMirror story: "PHL close to ending smuggling with pre-border system checks," June 15, 2024*).

The phased approach outlined in the administrative order demonstrates a well-thought-out strategy. By initially focusing on agricultural commodities and gradually expanding to non-agricultural goods with health and safety concerns, as well as other goods prone to misdeclaration, the government is prioritizing the

areas that require immediate attention. This targeted approach ensures that resources are allocated effectively and allows for a more streamlined implementation process.

The creation of the Committee for Pre-border Technical Verification and Cross-border Electronic Invoicing, chaired by the secretary of Finance and comprising representatives from various government agencies, is a commendable step toward promoting interagency collaboration and expertise. This committee's collective efforts will be instrumental in ensuring the successful implementation and completion of the systems within the stipulated two-year timeframe.

The utilization of digital technology, such as pre-border technical verification and cross-border electronic invoicing, will undoubtedly enhance the efficiency and transparency of the border protection system. By conducting safety testing and inspections before goods are shipped and exchanging real-time electronic invoices among relevant government entities, the Philippines will be better equipped to monitor international trade transactions and promptly identify any potential irregularities.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the successful implementation of Administrative Order No. 23 relies on the commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders involved. The government agencies represented in the committee must work diligently to ensure that the systems are fully operational within the designated timeline. Additionally, it is essential to establish robust mechanisms for accountability and oversight to maintain the integrity of the border protection system.

While the Pre-border Technical Verification and Cross-border Electronic Invoicing Systems offer a promising solution to the smuggling problem, it is important to remain vigilant and adaptable. Smugglers have a history of adapting their methods to circumvent existing measures, and it is incumbent upon the government to stay one step ahead. Regular evaluations and updates of the systems will be necessary to address emerging challenges and maintain their effectiveness in the long run.

The fight against smuggling is a multifaceted battle that requires a comprehensive approach involving legislation, law enforcement, and international cooperation. The implementation of Administrative Order No. 23 and the establishment of the Pre-border Technical Verification and Cross-border Electronic Invoicing Systems mark a significant milestone in the country's efforts to curb smuggling. It is a testament to the government's commitment to enhancing trade integrity, protecting consumers, and safeguarding national interests. As the systems take root and

evolve, they have the potential to restore confidence in the country's trade practices and generate the revenue needed for sustainable economic growth.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/18/a-promising-step-towards-curbing-smuggling-in-phl/>

PHL rubber production struggles amid global shortage, rising demand

BusinessMirror Editorial

June 18, 2024

Local suppliers grappled with a shortage of rubber three years ago, when they were forced to shell out more money to fill up their requirements. The global shortage caused Philippine companies to pay 40 to 50 percent more for their rubber needs in 2021 compared to what they had to pay in 2019 (*See, "Amid tighter supply, rubber prices rising," in the BusinessMirror, May 31, 2021*). Companies told this newspaper that prices of synthetic and natural rubber skyrocketed because of tight supply.

The shortage of rubber was exacerbated by the shipping crisis, which caused spikes in the cost of logistics. The impact of Covid-19 on global supply lines had put pressure on rubber prices and increased the production cost of local firms (*See, "Supply stiffness to stay as shipment issues seen spilling past Yule season," BusinessMirror, May 20, 2021*). They had no choice but to cough up the money for expensive rubber if they did not want to disrupt output in their own factories.

Prior to the pandemic, the country's production of rubber (coagulated cup lump) reached 431,674.76 metric tons, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). Output of rubber during the next year fell to 422,407.10 MT and this could be due to the mobility restrictions imposed by the government to stop the spread of Covid-19. The sector's performance improved in 2021, but this was not enough to shield local firms from high international prices caused by the global shortage.

The next two years were bleak for the local rubber sector as output declined after recording improvements in 2021. Data from the PSA showed that rubber production in 2022 declined by 3.45 percent year-on-year to 415,749.65 MT. Last year, output reached 378,818.13 MT, the first time in five years that it fell below the 400,000-MT mark.

As the economy continues to grow, the Philippines needs to expand its rubber output to meet the increasing demand for rubber-made goods. The world is also in need of more rubber, which means that there is an opportunity for local producers to increase their shipments. However, this would require substantial support from the government to encourage local producers to expand output.

Despite the suitability of the country's soil and climate for rubber production, there was only a slight increase in areas devoted to the crop in the last two years. In 2021, areas planted with rubber reached 239,140.50 hectares. In 2022 and 2023, areas planted with rubber inched up to 239,647.82 hectares and 240,107.62 has, respectively, according to data from the PSA.

The Department of Agriculture wants to encourage more farmers to go into the cultivation of rubber. Thus, it would do well for the government to deliver on its commitment to provide technical support and promote modern technologies and facilities to increase rubber production. As it is mostly grown in Mindanao, where certain provinces recorded a poverty incidence rate of more than 30 percent, rubber has the potential to help the government achieve of its goal of reducing poverty incidence to a single digit by 2028.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/18/phl-rubber-production-struggles-amid-global-shortage-rising-demand/>

ABANTE TONITE

Nancy Binay sa NFA: Huwag baratin mga magsasaka

June 18, 2024

Hinimok ni Senador Nancy Binay ang National Food Authority (NFA) na makipagtulungan sa local government units (LGUs) para tukuyin ang mga bulnerableng mga lugar na naapektuhan ng El Nino, gayundin ang pagdagsa ng mga imported na bigas.

Ayon kay Binay, ang vulnerability map ay makakatulong sa NFA para unahin ang mga lugar kung saan sila makakapagpokus sa kanilang ‘buying effort’.

Matagal nang napapabayaang ating mga rice farmers—‘di lang naman pagdating sa bilihan ng palay, pati na rin sa mga binibigay na ayuda at tulong sa pagsaka,” dagdag pa niya.

Sa pagtukoy ng mga rehiyon kung saan may mataas na bilang ng mga naghihirap na mga magsasaka, matitiyak ng NFA ang epektibong paggamit ng kanilang resources at maipamahagi sa higit na mga nangangailangang mga magsasaka.

Bagama’t nagbibibigay ang NFA Council ng konting ginhawa sa pamamagitan ng pagbenta ng bigas ng 20% na mas mababa sa market value (mga P40.45 kada kilo), nakasaad sa inamiyendahang Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), magbibigay ang NFA ng higit pang kapangyarihan para magbenta ng bigas na direkta sa pamilihan sa mas mababang presyo kaya’t parehong makikinabang ang mga magsasaka at konsyumer.

“Ang importante, buhusan natin ng suporta ang ating mga magsasaka at ‘wag sana nating babaratin sa presyo ng kanilang ani. They have long been suffering from neglect and unfair competition, ” sambit pa niya. (Dindo Matining)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/06/18/nancy-binay-sa-nfa-huwag-baratin-mga-magsasaka/>

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON

Wala pang naarestong mangingisdang Pinoy sa fishing ban ng China - BFAR

Angie dela Cruz

June 19, 2024 | 12:00am



Local fisherfolk are happy upon receiving their fuel and food packs at the boundary of the municipal waters and the country's Exclusive Economic Zone during the second civilian resupply mission to the West Philippine Sea on May 15, 2024.

STAR/Miguel de Guzman

MANILA, Philippines — Wala pang natatanggap na anumang report ang Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) kung may mga mangingisdang naaresto kasunod ng deklarasyon ng unilateral fishing ban ng China sa West Philippine Sea.

Sa Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas sa QC, sinabi ni BFAR Spokesperson Nazario Briguera na kung mayroon mang mangingisda ang maha-harass o maaresto ng China ay ituturing itong panibagong pag-uudyok at paglabag ng China sa international law, partikular ang United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Anyang, patuloy na mangingisda ang Pilipinas sa West Philippine Sea dahil parte ito ng exclusive economic zone ng bansa. Hindi rin anyang kinikilala ng bansa ang deklarasyong ito ng bansang China.

Pagdating naman sa produksyon ng isda, sinabi ng BFAR na malaki ang kontribusyon ng WPS sa fishery sector gayunman hindi naman anyang ito maaapektuhan ng unilateral declaration ng China.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/06/19/2363851/wala-pang-naarestong-mangingisdang-pinoy-sa-fishing-ban-ng-china-bfar>

REMATE:

Local rubber industry sinisilip buhayin ng DA

June 18, 2024 18:48



MANILA, Phiippines- Nangako ang Department of Agriculture (DA) ng buong suporta sa pagbuhay sa rubber industry kasunod ng paghina nito noong pandemya.

Inihayag ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. na hawak ng Pilipinas ang potensyal sa rubber sector, bilang ika-13 pinakamalaking prodyuser ng natural rubber sa buong mundo.

Noong 2022, nakapag-ambag ang bansa ng 1 porsyento sa global rubber production, katumbas nag kabuuang output na 109,000 metric tons.

Mayorya ng rubber exports ay galing sa Mindanao, kung saan matatagpuan ang halos 98 porsyento ng 234,600 ektaryang nakalaan para sa rubber cultivation noong 2022.

Subalit, humina ang Philippine rubber at rubber product exports noong 2022, sa \$278.2 million mula \$578.3 million noong 2021 dahil sa pagsasara ng processing at manufacturing facilities sa gitna ng COVID-19 mobility restrictions.

Upang tulungang makarekober ang industriya, nagpapaabot ng suporta ang DA sa Philippine Rubber Research Institute (PRRI) sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng infrastructure at iba pang mahalagang pasilidad.

Sa paglagda ng ilang kasunduan sa pagitan ng DA at PRRI, tiniyak ni Tiu Laurel ang commitment ng pamahalaan para sa mas “sustainable, resilient, and inclusive” na agricultural sector.

“Today, we set a new benchmark in our pursuit toward a brighter tomorrow for rubber farmers,” anang opisyal. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/local-rubber-industry-sinisilip-buhayin-ng-da/>

REMATE:

Rice stock ng Pinas sa pagtatapos ng 2024 papalo sa 3.64M MT – DA

June 18, 2024 18:36



MANILA, Philippines- Inaasaahang magtatapos ang 2024 na may mas mataas na rice stock inventory ang Pilipinas sa kabila ng mga hamong dulot ng El Niño at La Niña phenomena, ayon sa Department of Agriculture (DA) nitong Martes.

“At the end of the year, we are seeing, the latest... it could be 3.64 million metric tons (MT). Almost equivalent to 95 days,” pahayag ni DA Assistant Secretary for Operations U-Nichols Manalo sa Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas forum sa Quezon City.

Mas mataas ang end-2024 rice stock inventory kumpara sa 1.9 million MT rice stocks hanggang nitong Disyembre 2023.

Samantala, hanggang Mayo ng kasalukuyang taon, nananatili ang kabuuang rice stocks ng bansa sa 2.08 million MT, mas mataas ng 10.3% year-on-year.

Hanggang nitong unang quarter, lumabas sa datos ng Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) na bumaba ang palay output ng 1.96% sa 4.69 million MT mula 4.78 million MT sa parehong panahon noong nakaraang taon, dahil sa El Niño.

Sinabi ni Manalo na pananatilihin ng DA ang 20.44 million MT palay harvest goal nito para sa kasalukuyang taon.

Aniya, bubuo ahensya ng “climate-smart map of rice areas” na maaapektuhan ng “more destructive” La Niña.

“The strategy of the government for La Niña will be, as much as possible, a location-specific evaluation,” wika ni Manalo.

Hanggang nitong Hunyo 6, pumalo ang kabuuang pinsala dulot ng El Niño sa P9.89 billion, katumbas ng 441,801 MT ng napinsalang volume.

Iniuugnay ang mas mataas na inaasahang rice stock sa nakikitang mas mataas na importasyon ng Pilipinas ngayong taon dahil sa pagbaba ng import tariff rates sa 15% hanggang 2028.

Sa pagtataya ng United States Department of Agriculture sa June 2024 grains report nito, inaasahan na mag-aangkat ang bansa ng 4.6 million MT ngayong taon.

Sinabi ni DA Assistant Secretary and spokesperson Arnel de Mesa na nakapag-angkat na ang bansa ng 2.2 million MT hanggang nitong Hunyo 2024. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/rice-stock-ng-pinas-sa-pagtatapos-ng-2024-papalo-sa-3-64m-mt-da/>

REMATE:

BFAR: ‘Anti-trespassing’ policy ng Tsina walang epekto sa produksyon ng PH fisheries

June 18, 2024 16:02



MANILA, Philippines- Inihayag ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) nitong Martes na ang “no trespassing” policy ng China sa South China Sea, kung saan ilang bahagi ang saklaw ang exclusive economic zone ng Pilipinas, ay walang epekto sa fisheries production ng bansa.

“In terms of production, yes, the contribution of the West Philippine Sea is significant in terms of our national fisheries production,” pahayag ni BFAR spokesperson Nazario Briguera sa Kapihan sa Bagong Pilipinas forum sa Quezon City.

“But we don’t see the unilateral declaration of China will actually create impact in terms of production because first and foremost we don’t recognize this declaration,” dagdag ni Briguera.

Nauna nang inihayag ng BFAR na kumakatawan ang West Philippine Sea sa 6% hanggang 7% ng kabuuang fisheries sector ng Pilipinas. Halos 400,000 mangingisda rin ang nasa territorial waters.

Gayundin, sinabi ng Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) na dumami ang bilang ng Filipino fishing boats sa Scarborough Shoal o Bajo de Masinloc sa gitna ng implementasyon ng “no trespassing” policy ng China, na nagbabantang ididitene ang mga dayuhan sa South China Sea.

“First and foremost, the Philippines does not recognize this unilateral declaration of China. The Philippines will continue to fish in the West Philippine Sea because this is part of our exclusive economic zone,” wika ni Briguera.

“For now, we have not received reports that our fishermen are being arrested, but if they do so... this would be another provocation on the part of China and this is a new violation of the international law, particularly UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea),” ayon pa sa BFAR official.

Inaangkin ng China ang halos kabuuan ng South China Sea.

Pinairal ng Beijing ang isang resolusyon noong Hunyo 15, kung saan inaatasan ang coast guard nito na iditene nang walang paglilitis ang mga dayuhang manghihimasok sa South China Sea.

Hindi naman kinikilala ng Pilipinas ang nasabing polisiya.

Noong 2016, nagpalabas ng hatol ang international arbitration tribunal sa The Hague na nagsasabing ang claims ng China sa South China Sea ay walang legal na basehan, desisyong hindi kinikilala ng Beijing. **RNT/SA**

<https://remate.ph/bfar-anti-trespassing-policy-ng-tsina-walang-pekto-sa-produksyon-ng-ph-fisheries/>