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MANILA BULLETIN:

Public governance system

PEACE BY PEACE

BY SECRETARY CARLITO G. GALVEZ, JR.

Jul 1, 2024 07:05 AM

GUEST COLUMNIST



“Ultimately, what gets measured gets managed. I think if we don’t get conscious of measurement, we will never be able to improve our performance,” said Guillermo ‘Bill’ M. Luz, chief resilience officer of the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) at the end of his message of commitment as the new Chairperson of the Multi-Sector Governance Council (MSGC) of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU) during the oath-taking ceremony of its new MSGC members on Tuesday, June 25.

The MSGC is an integral part of OPAPRU’s Performance Governance System (PGS), a holistic and collaborative framework for designing, executing, and sustaining strategy roadmaps towards institutional reforms. It is an adaptation of the Balanced Scorecard Management System developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton of the Harvard Business School. The Balanced Scorecard System was adapted in the context of governance in the Philippines by economist Jesus ‘Jess’ P. Estanislao, our 6th Socio-economic Planning Secretary and Director-General of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). He is also from Harvard.

The oath taking ceremony of the new set of members of the MSGC marked the next milestone in our organization's PGS journey. After a brief pause to attend to the pressing tasks of getting the nation through the trying period of a pandemic, the OPAPRU had to reorganize for our goal of reaching the PGS proficiency stage, then later institutional stage.

The OPAPRU started its PGS journey through a strategic planning workshop facilitated by the Institute of Solidarity in Asia (ISA) in 2019. In 2020, then known as the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the agency received the Gold Trailblazer Award at the Initiation Stage. In 2021, it received the Silver Trailblazer Award for its Compliance Stage. Aside from these achievements, OPAPP earned the Most Outstanding Accounting Office Award given by the Association of Government Accountants of the Philippines in 2021.

I was introduced to the PGS while I was still in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in 2004 when we were writing the Philippine Military Academy Strategic Roadmap 2005-2015 with the group of Secretary Jess Estanislao. The AFP with its Major Services then followed and later implemented their more refined Transformation Roadmaps.

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When I assumed the leadership of then OPAPP in 2018, after my retirement in the AFP, the adoption of the PGS as a framework to help us translate our vision (of a just and lasting peace for the nation) into actionable strategies was one of the first things I and the new management team put into place. As an agency, we made the commitment to collectively develop as an efficient and effective unit in order to deliver our mandate to manage, direct, integrate, and supervise the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Process.

Chairperson Luz, continuing in his speech, cited the most recent Philippine Human Capital Review by the World Bank, where the bank gave the Philippines a Human Capital Index (HCI) score of 0.52.

“It was among the lowest if not the lowest in ASEAN, we (the Philippines) are below Indonesia, Vietnam, well below Malaysia, well below Thailand, way, way below Singapore,” Bill said. The HCI “calculates the contributions of health and education to worker productivity.” A score of 0.52 means a “Filipino born today, by the time he reaches 18 years old will only achieve 52 percent of his potential in terms of productivity and contribution ... If we start late in terms of investing in HCI, we miss zero to six years or zero to 10 years, the trend is harder to reach or irreversible.”

As a long-time member and chairperson of the National Competitiveness Council, Bill also mentioned global competitiveness and regional competitiveness. The disparity between the country's developing regions and the regions which suffered from conflict is so pronounced. This makes it obvious that “there's no development if there's no peace, and there's no peace if there's no development.” Even in mathematics, equations that are formulated this way are among the most difficult to solve – what more when it deals with the lives of our people.

We could not agree more with the words of Chairperson Luz. Reports from institutions like the World Bank should be properly heeded as a measure of our progress in the work that we are doing. In fact, the factors that get into the index, such as numbers representing nutrition, stunted

growth, training and education, are purposively integrated to our programs in so-called peace and development focus areas. Admittedly, we have much to learn as an agency when it comes to these things. We are confident that with the guidance of our new set of MSGC members, the OPAPRU will be able to do this and contribute in full to peace and nation building.

Aside from Chairperson Bill Luz, we welcomed the new members of the MSGC and the OPAPRU family – Vice Chairperson Austere A. Panadero, executive director of Zuellig Family Foundation; members Amina Rasul-Bernardo, president of the Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy; Undersecretary Maria Catalina E. Cabral of the Department of Public Works and Highways; Professor Jasmin N. Galace of the Department of International Studies, Miriam College; Evaristo “Titoy” S. Francisco, Jr., chief executive officer, Institute for Solidarity in Asia; Dr. Cameron P. Odsey, DVM, former regional executive director for CAR of the Department of Agriculture; and Professor Manuel J. De Vera of the Asian Institute of Management.

With the right metrics and measurements in pursuing our sworn objectives, we hope that the milestones we reach in ‘Peace and Development Focus’ areas do not remain as anecdotes but are rather reflected as concrete achievements. We hope that ultimately what we will be counting are the smiles on the faces of our people and the messages of appreciation from those whose lives were uplifted.

(Secretary Carlito G. Galvez, Jr., is the presidential adviser on peace, reconciliation and unity. He advises the President on the implementation of the Philippine Comprehensive Peace Process.)

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/1/public-governance-system>

MANILA BULLETIN:

A look at the economy of the Zamboanga Peninsula

BY [JOHN TRIA](#)

Jul 1, 2024 07:05 AM

#MINDANAO



This week I would like to take a look at the economy of the Zamboanga Peninsula or Mindanao's Region 9. Composed of Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga Sibugay, this region includes the cities of Zamboanga and Isabela, Basilan, Pagadian, and Dipolog.

With a regional population of 3,875,576 based on the 2020 census, data from the PSA indicate that its economy grew by 4.6 percent in 2023 to a size of P447.32 billion, roughly half the size of the Davao region and northern Mindanao's economies. Fifty-four percent of its economy is held by the services sector, with industry at 28.8 percent and agriculture, fishery and forestry at 17.1 percent.

Being a peninsula surrounded by vast waters including the large Moro Gulf, this economy holds much potential for even more growth through the blue economy leveraging on fisheries and related food production and processing that can drive investment. This, along with sustainable forestry and natural resources can provide livelihoods for many residents who do not live in its urban centers. Like other Mindanao regions, more manufacturing activities can maximize the value of its natural and agricultural resource base and further bolster employment and increase trade boosting the service sector even further.

The region hosts various cultural and natural attractions which include an impressive museum in historic Fort Pilar in Zamboanga City, a delightful melting pot, educational hub and culinary hotspot. I look forward to visiting this region again.

US Presidential debate

The recent presidential debate in the United States between former President Donald Trump and current President Joseph Biden left me slightly surprised because the early debate allowed these prospective frontrunners the opportunity to flex their capabilities ahead of other nominees

before the formal nominating conventions of their respective parties. More than this, however, the significance of this event is that it pitted a former president against a current president. Both have had the experience of the presidency, allowing many to compare their responses against their presidential experience, policies, and perspectives into the future.

I will leave you to listen to the analyses and evaluations of American political pundits and analysts featured in different global media outlets. This being 2024, you all have the chance to watch the debates as replayed on online media platforms, and the analysts commenting on them.

What I would encourage you to take a deeper look into is how their proposed trade and economic policies will affect our economy and your businesses, especially if you are exporting or do business in the US or other countries. The impact on financial markets and interest rates may affect your borrowing costs. As a context, look at how the Trump administration's tariff rate increases affected global trade and your businesses in 2019 and 2020.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/1/a-look-at-the-economy-of-the-zamboanga-peninsula>

MANILA BULLETIN:

RE firm secures regulatory approvals on stock offering

BY [MYRNA M. VELASCO](#)

Jul 1, 2024 00:00 AM

AT A GLANCE

- Turning to investors in the stock market is one of the strategies being pursued by project-sponsors of RE facilities so they can partly raise funding for the commercial development of their targeted installations.

Filipino-led renewable energy (RE) firm NexGen Energy Corp. (XG) had secured regulatory approvals for its initial public offering (IPO), which will wind up at its July 16 listing at the local bourse.

The company announced that it cornered both the go-signal of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) for its stock offering.

The company will start its shares offer by July 1 and that will conclude by July 8; then listing at the stock market will follow on July 16.

NexGen emphasized that it will offer to the public up to 300 million shares at an approved price of P1.68 per share.

“There will be an over-allotment option that would allow for the sale of up to 45 million secondary common shares,” the RE firm stressed.

At the targeted scale of issue and the over-allotment option, NexGen could potentially raise up to P579.6 million proceeds.

The sole issue manager, joint lead underwriter and sole bookrunner for the IPO will be China Bank Capital Corporation; while Investment & Capital Corporation of the Philippines will serve as joint lead underwriter.

NexGen is lining up pure clean technology deployment play for solar and wind farm installations, which is very much aligned with the RE Development Roadmap being advanced by the government.

The company currently has three solar farms that are already operating; and it is eyeing buildout of additional 1,500 megawatts of solar and wind power facilities moving forward – although the project-sites and offtake arrangements had not been specified at this time.

On top of that, the company indicated that it will also develop power facilities for its parent firm, Pure Energy Holdings Corporation, primarily to underpin its venture into agricultural technology (AgTec), which is climate-controlled type of indoor farming and touted as the future of the agriculture sector.

Turning to investors in the stock market is one of the strategies being pursued by project-sponsors of RE facilities so they can partly raise funding for the commercial development of their targeted installations.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/1/re-firm-secures-regulatory-approvals-on-stock-offering>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Birthday thoughts and wishes



[GO NEGOSYO PILIPINAS ANGAT LAHAT!](#) - [Joey Concepcion](#) - The Philippine Star

July 1, 2024 | 12:00am

I spent my birthday last week with the people who matter most to me: my family. All that time, I kept receiving warm greetings that just filled my heart with gratitude for the life I have. Greetings came from close personal and family friends, and from people I've had the privilege of working with these past few years. People from my job at RFM and from my work at Go Negosyo, the heads of the big-brother companies, government officials, the subject-matter experts I've met through the years and countless small entrepreneurs who've sent their greetings over social media.

Reflecting on this, I realize that I would never have had the opportunity to engage with such a diverse array of individuals had it not been for my work with MSMEs. The breadth and scope of this sector is truly astounding, and it has given me a deeper appreciation for the integral role that these businesses play in our society and our economy.

The country's biggest malls, for instance, are dependent on the network of small entrepreneurs who supply them with the merchandise that fill their stores. Even the constant emergence of new, innovative kiosks and pop-ups in these malls helps keep the shopping experience fresh and exciting. Beyond the retail sector, manufacturing companies, agricultural giants and real estate developers, all rely heavily on the thriving ecosystem of MSMEs. The health and success of these small businesses are crucial in achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Their prosperity is linked to the wealth and well-being of not only their owners and employees, but also the larger community of the big corporations.

Birthdays are a time for reflection. As I've grown older, I've come to realize that time is a precious commodity. That one has only so much time on this earth can guide one to his purpose and priorities. One realizes, for example, that true success is not defined solely by one's individual efforts, but by the collaborative spirit that one is able to cultivate and inspire in others.

Birthdays are also a time for thanksgiving. Being able to run one of the country's largest corporations, for example, is thanks largely to the mentorship of my grandfather and my father. Moreover, the support of a competent team and a loving family makes it possible for me to carry out my duties.

I am also deeply grateful to the people who have been instrumental in my work with MSMEs. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to our former president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who was the first to entrust me with the task of advising on matters of entrepreneurship. Her faith in me has been a driving force. I am also immensely thankful for the abiding support of First Lady Liza Araneta Marcos, who has been a steadfast ally of Go Negosyo, and Vice President Sara Duterte, who has helped us extend our reach to the Filipino youth.

None of my achievements would have been possible without the support of like-minded organizations, including PCCI, PFA, PRA, MBC, MAP, PMA, WomenBiz, SEIPI, PALSCON, PropTech, RestoPH, SCMAP, PHOA, PCA, PAMPI, PMAP, ECCP, IBPAP, Fil Indian Chamber, FFCCIII, KCCP, AMCHAM Ph, British Chamber, ECCP, CONWEP, ICSB, DSAP, DCOM, the Philippine Bankers Association, the Rural Bankers Association, the Chamber of Thrift Banks, the Anvil Business Club, MCPI, PhilWen, FINEX, AFFI and CEAP.

I am also deeply grateful for allies in the government, including the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Tourism, Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Education, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Migrant Workers and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity.

Family has always played a pivotal role in my life. Growing up, my parents instilled in me a deep appreciation for the importance of family and the value of maintaining a good reputation. As I've grown older, I've come to understand the significance of legacy even more profoundly. The good name that one leaves behind is a precious gift to one's children, and it is a legacy that I have strived to uphold and pass on to my own children.

I firmly believe that one can only accumulate so much wealth, as material possessions cannot be taken with us when we leave this world. What truly endures is the positive impact we have made on the lives of others and the good name we leave behind. My greatest wish is for more MSMEs to scale up and flourish so that

micro entrepreneurs become small entrepreneurs, the small become medium-sized businesses and the medium-sized enterprises grow into large, successful companies. It is in this way that we can create a sustainable, resilient and thriving economic ecosystem with a large, strong base.

Every small business owner whose face lights up with hope and renewed determination because of our collective efforts is a source of profound inspiration to me. For them, and for the future of our nation, we must continue to work together, leverage our resources and create an environment that empowers every MSME to reach its full potential. Their success is our success, and with every small business we help, we take one step closer to our ultimate goal: bringing prosperity and growth to all.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/07/01/2366745/birthday-thoughts-and-wishes>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

PH designates land for dairy farming to increase milk sufficiency

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

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:04 AM July 01, 2024

The National Dairy Authority (NDA) is allocating nearly half a billion for the development of four dairy livestock breeding farms in Luzon and Mindanao, which are scheduled for completion by 2025.

In a message to the Inquirer, the NDA said it earmarked a total of P498 million to establish four breeding farms designed to scale up local dairy production.

“They are being established this year and hopefully, it will be operational by next year,” it said.

Properties

The government set aside four properties to the NDA, a government-owned and controlled corporation attached to the Department of Agriculture (DA), for building these breeding farms.

In Department Order No. 11, the NDA was ordered to help develop government properties assigned to the agriculture sector for dairy farming and forage development: a 50-hectare property situated within the Peñaranda River Forest Reserve in General Tinio, Nueva Ecija; a 50-hectare land and a 15-hectare property in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon; and a 35-hectare property in Carmen South Cotabato, Bukidnon. Each facility has a capacity for 150 heads.

‘Low-hanging fruit’

The DA had vowed to support local milk production, noting the industry was “a low-hanging fruit” ready for the taking while also increasing the farm sector’s contribution to the economy.

“If we increase the number of cattle in the milking-line, then we can increase production. Immediate effects will be felt,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in February.

“Developments in this sector will not only benefit our farmers but also help address malnutrition in the provinces,” he added.

The NDA aims to increase the country’s milk sufficiency by 5 percent, targeting 80 million liters produced by 2028.

The Philippines produced just 29.1 million liters of milk in 2023, down by almost 4 percent a year prior, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

The country imports 99 percent of its dairy requirements, mostly from the US and New Zealand. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/466454/ph-designates-land-for-dairy-farming-to-increase-milk-sufficiency>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Occasional rains in Bohol not enough to save parched fields

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

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 04:35 AM July 01, 2024



RUNNING DRY Large portions of Malinao Damin Pilar, Bohol, remain without water, as shown in this June 26 photo, worrying rice farmers who will start planting this season. Other dams in Bohol also face critical water levels. —Leo Udtohan

TAGBILARAN CITY, BOHOL, Philippines —The dry spell in Bohol continues to persist despite the start of the rainy season, with numerous farms still reeling from the effects of lack of water.

As of June, the drought's damage to agriculture and fisheries had reached P459 million and affected 22,000 farmers in the province, according to acting provincial agriculturist Larry Pamugas.

Water levels at the major dams in Bohol have also almost reached critical levels, the National Irrigation Administration reported last week.

The Malinao Dam in Pilar town, the province's oldest water reservoir that supplies water to 4,740 hectares of rice fields in the towns of Pilar, Alicia, Ubay, San Miguel and Dagohoy, is short of water.

The Capayas Dam in Ubay town that services 1,160 ha of rice fields, was below normal level while the Bayongan Dam in San Miguel town was close to drying up.

The water shortage has so far affected at least 533.5 ha of rice fields in Bohol, considered the rice bowl of Central Visayas.

Pamugas said the recent rains in Bohol were not enough to give relief to dried up farms.

Cloud seeding

To induce rain, the provincial government of Bohol has defrayed P2.5 million for cloud seeding operations as a counterpart to the P5 million secured from the Department of Agriculture Bureau of Soils and Water Management under the National Rice Program-Production support services.

Bohol experienced some rain following a cloud seeding operation on June 24 but it did not fill the dams.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who visited Bohol last Friday, turned over P50 million in checks to Bohol acting Gov. Dionisio Victor Balite and assured local residents of continuous assistance from the government.

The President also distributed aid, farm equipment and seeds intended for some 7,634 farmers and fisherfolk severely affected by the El Niño weather phenomenon during the first half of the year.

“We want to make sure that they get all the benefits they deserve to get from the government,” said Marcos, who was on his first visit to Bohol since he was elected president in 2022.

Also present during the event were Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., Interior Secretary Benhur Abalos and Special Assistant to the President Antonio Lagdameo Jr.

Bohol has approximately 136,613 ha of agricultural land, excluding watersheds and forest reserves, that require irrigation, including 58,222 ha of rice lands, 5,886 ha of cornfields, 34,846 ha planted with high-value crops, 35,338 ha of coconut land and 2,321 ha planted with other crops. Only 28,207 ha of rice fields are irrigated, leaving 30,015 ha dependent on rainfall.

Bohol has been under a state of calamity since May 21 as a result of the prolonged dry spell.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1956558/occasional-rains-in-bohol-not-enough-to-save-parched-fields>

How to unmask the smugglers

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

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

RICE IMPORTS

YEAR	VOLUME (TONS)	PESOS/MT IMPORTER	REFERENCE (IN BILLION PESOS)	% DIFFERENCE	DIFFERENCE IN PESOS
2023	3.6M	24.1	30.8	22%	7.5
2024 (Jan – April)	1.7M	28.0	32.6	17%	3.1

SOURCE: BOC, FFF

Bureau of Customs (BOC) officials must team up with legitimate importers for job security and career development.

This was the conclusion reached among BOC and agriculture leaders during a June 19 meeting. The BOC was represented by Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio and Deputy Commissioners Vener Baquiran and Juvymax Uy. The agriculture leaders were from the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura, and Alyansa Agrikultura (AA). The meeting was prompted by Finance Secretary Ralph Recto, who wanted a significant increase in tax collections.

Recto publicly stated he did not want new taxes or increased rates. But since additional government revenue was needed, Recto said the BOC had to significantly increase its collection.

Let's look at the problem first. The corruption BOC is usually accused of happens largely through technical smuggling via imported product undervaluation.

Measuring smuggling

Many years ago, a finance secretary admitted smuggling was difficult to measure. But a leader from AA suggested this could actually be estimated by looking at the amount exporting countries say they send to the Philippines then comparing it with the amount the BOC reports that we receive. The difference is a smuggling indicator.

In other words, if an exporting country says they sent us \$100 million, but we report that we received only \$70 million, then \$30 million was lost to smuggling.

Based on data provided by the United Nations Comtrade, there has been an astounding increase in smuggling over the years. In 2019, the difference between data reported by exporting nations and the value the Philippines actually received was P500 billion. It more than doubled to P1.2 trillion in 2021.

FFF's Raul Montemayor provided a summary (check table).

If the reference value (which reflects the average true value from government and private sector sources) is used instead of the reported undervalued amounts from illegitimate importers, we would be able to collect from rice imports alone an additional P9.4-billion revenues for 2023 (at 22-percent undervaluation) and P1.8 billion from January to April for 2024 (at 17-percent undervaluation).

The BOC must finally address the problem of undervaluation especially now that their jobs are at stake.

Importer action

Why is this undervaluation happening? Importers emphasize a World Trade Organization (WTO) rule that the only value the BOC can use is the “transaction value” importers record in their submissions. Many importers undervalue to pay less taxes. Many BOC corrupt officials turn a blind eye to this, then get paid by the importers for their blindness.

If these illegitimate importers are suspected of lying on their submitted transaction values, WTO allows six other methods of computing the correct import value.

One way is to simply get the actual invoices with the correct value from legitimate importers who are actually paying the correct higher taxes based on their higher recorded transaction values. The BOC said, however, they do not have enough of these to justify collecting the correct taxes.

During the June 19 meeting, the agriculture leaders committed to talk to the legitimate importers and get their invoices with the correct higher transaction values.

Rubio welcomed this move. He can now use these documents to negate the false low “transaction values” and collect much higher taxes based on the correct values. This should be used as a key performance indicator at the BOC.

The challenge now is whether the legitimate importers will be willing to submit their invoices while earning the ire of the illegitimate ones who will now have to pay the higher correct taxes. The outcome of this effort will be known in the next few weeks.

This should determine the success or failure of Recto’s efforts—and the job security of the BOC officials who are responsible for such a critical task. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/466458/how-to-unmask-the-smugglers>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Sustainable farm tech seen raising agri competitiveness

July 1, 2024 | 12:04 am



REUTERS

By **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**, *Reporter*

THE GOVERNMENT must make it easier to trade agricultural commodities within the region while introducing sustainable farming practices to raise the competitiveness of its farms, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

“I think this is something related to how we can balance the process. We, of course, need to be aware about the interests of the local farmer organizations, but same time, this is also related to the consumer side,” Qingfeng Zhang, senior director of the ADB’s Agriculture, Food, Nature, and Rural Development Sector Office, told *BusinessWorld*.

He cited the need for stronger regional and international cooperation through joint ventures to “scale the adoption of new technology, enhance it, reduce the cost. Then your competitiveness will increase.”

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. has ordered the reduction of rice import tariffs to 15% from the current 35% until 2028, in the face of opposition from farmers’ groups.

“When we reduce the import tariff, we also need to increase competitiveness of producers,” Mr. Zhang said. “And in the end, we can manage inflation and the rice (price) spike.”

Continued upticks in global rice prices will pose upside risk to Philippine inflation, Mr. Zhang said, noting the impact of export bans imposed by rice producing countries, climate change, and Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Rice accounts for 8.9 percentage points (ppts) of the consumer price index (CPI) basket, while food overall makes up 34.78 ppts of the CPI, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

"This type of trend will continue for some time before we see some change. We always say that we need to learn from the 2008 food crisis," Mr. Zhang said.

"We should encourage open trade. Otherwise, we are going to see this continued disruption and rice price increases," he added.

Competitiveness in Philippine agriculture has been hindered by climate risk, land disputes, and slow modernization.

Regional cooperation should not only facilitate better trade, but also help promote low-carbon and climate-resilient agriculture, he said.

"That means we're not only just looking at production itself; we also need to look at the farm-to-fork food system," he said.

Low-carbon and climate-resilient farming practices include water-saving technology in rice production, social protection measures for vulnerable farmers, digital methods to cut fuel waste, and the decarbonization of transport systems, cold storage warehouses and other facilities, Mr. Zhang said.

Better rural roads and flood risk facilities, restoration of wetlands and grasslands, would also help make agriculture competitive and resilient, he added.

The environmental cost of current food systems worldwide is estimated at \$3 trillion annually, according to ADB.

Establishing a natural capital accounting system, which measures the stock of a country's natural resources, would help bring in "more financing globally to support good agricultural practice," Mr. Zhang said.

Mr. Marcos signed Republic Act No. 11995 or the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System last month.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/01/605083/sustainable-farm-tech-seen-raising-agri-competitiveness/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

June inflation likely within target

July 1, 2024 | 12:34 am



A vendor

waits for customers in a public market in Quezon City. — REUTERS

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

HEADLINE INFLATION likely remained steady in June and settled within the central bank's 2-4% target for a seventh straight month, analysts said.

A *BusinessWorld* poll of 14 analysts yielded a median estimate of 3.9% for the consumer price index (CPI) in June. This is within the 3.4-4.2% forecast of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) for the month.

If realized, June inflation would match the 3.9% in April. It will also be slower than the 5.4% print in the same month a year ago.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) is set to release June inflation data on Friday (July 5).

“We expect inflation to remain unchanged at 3.9% year on year in June. Soaring prices of rice over the last few months have broadly stabilized, as we’ve passed the peak of the dry spell period,” Sarah Tan, an economist from Moody’s Analytics, said in an e-mail.

The staple grain is one of the significant contributors to the country’s inflation. Rice inflation eased to 23% in May from 23.9% a month earlier, marking the second straight month of slower inflation as global rice prices declined.

“We forecast that inflation remained at 3.9% in June. For the next six months of 2024, however, we believe that inflation could ease to an average of 2.6%. This is primarily because of the impact of the lower tariff on imported rice,” Philippine National Bank economist Alvin Joseph A. Arogo said in an e-mail.

Rice prices are seen to drop further after President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. last month signed Executive Order No. 62, which slashed tariffs on rice imports to 15% from 35% previously.

The month of June also saw lower electricity rates, HSBC economist for ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Aris Dacanay said in an e-mail.

“Electricity rates in the Philippines fell by around 17% year on year due to an order by energy authorities to stagger the collections distributors would need to cover their wholesale electricity purchases in May, in contrast to a one-time, big-time price adjustment. This represents a big fall in the inflation outlook,” he said.

Residential customers served by Manila Electric Co. saw a P1.9623 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) reduction in their electricity bills for June. This brought the overall rate down to P9.4516 per kWh in June from P11.4139 per kWh in May.

This after the Energy Regulatory Commission ordered all distribution utilities and electric cooperatives to implement a staggered collection of charges on their purchases from the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market in May.

On the other hand, analysts also cited upside risks that could stoke inflation.

“Upward price pressures in June likely came from other agricultural produce besides rice. For example, *pechay* — a leafy vegetable commonly used in Filipino cuisine — and ginger were reported by authorities to record higher average retail prices in the first half of June, compared with May,” Ms. Tan said.

Mr. Dacanay also noted inflationary pressures from fruit and vegetables such as calamansi, snow cabbage and eggplant.

“Continued peso weakness and elevated food inflation could add into further inflationary pressure,” Zamros Bin Dzulkaflī, economist at Maybank Investment Banking Group, said in an e-mail.

The peso depreciated by 10 centavos to P58.61 against the greenback as of end-June from P58.51 as of end-May.

For the month, its weakest close was at P58.86 per dollar on June 26. This was its worst finish in 20 months.

POLICY

IMPACT

Bank of the Philippine Islands Lead Economist Emilio S. Neri, Jr. said that if inflation can remain close to target over the next few months, this may fuel the chances of a rate cut.

“If the print for both June and July stays close or below 4%, we think the chances of a BSP (rate) cut in August will be pretty high whether the Federal Open Market Committee cuts rates in July or not,” he said in a Viber message.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. last week said that the central bank is on track to cut rates by its Aug. 15 meeting.

Security Bank Corp. Chief Economist Robert Dan J. Roces said that inflation is expected to remain elevated but will moderate by July and August and return to within target by September.

The BSP sees inflation potentially breaching the 2-4% target in July before returning to target.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said in a Viber message that inflation could settle slightly above the 4% levels in June to July amid base effects then return to within target from August to December.

“Assuming the June print remains within the target range, then I think the BSP can feel confident from the next meeting (August) onwards to start easing gradually, as June should mark the peak of headline inflation for the year,” Pantheon Macroeconomics Chief Emerging Asia Economist Miguel Chanco said.

Ms. Tan said that the central bank will want to wait for inflation to further ease before making any moves.

“We expect inflation to moderate in the third quarter, which will allow the BSP to start planning for its monetary policy easing,” she said.

At its policy meeting last week, the BSP said that an improved inflation outlook would allow a “less restrictive” policy stance.

“Still, the BSP cautioned that there are uncertainties in external conditions that could keep inflation from receding at the anticipated pace. Should the inflation print for June match or ease from May, this will give the BSP confidence to begin its policy easing cycle sooner rather than later,” Ms. Tan added.

On the other hand, Union Bank of the Philippines, Inc. Chief Economist Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion said that the BSP could delay its easing to the fourth quarter.

“We sense the weak peso paired with oil price upticks recently, argue for the BSP delaying its rate cut to the fourth quarter when the US Fed is expected to trim its policy rate as well,” he said in an e-mail.

Mr. Asuncion said that the BSP may want to keep interest rates elevated for now to “mitigate the risk of a buildup of cost pressures from this tandem of weak peso and high oil prices, that can conspire to reignite faster second-round price effects later in the year,” he added.

Mr. Remolona has said that the BSP “occasionally” intervenes in the peso to ensure that it does not depreciate sharply.

“However, the BSP may not want to wait for the US Fed in the event it delays its rate cuts to early next year, since the sky-high, real interest rates across the local curve — a by-product of BSP’s high interest rate policy — may severely restrain production and investment activities into next year,” Mr. Asuncion added.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee expects the peso to range from P56 to P58 this year.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/07/01/605186/june-inflation-likely-within-target/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Some Vietnam coffee farms thrive despite drought, but may not stop espresso price hikes

July 1, 2024 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

PLEIKU, Vietnam — Vietnamese coffee growers have been hit hard this year by the worst drought in nearly a decade, raising concerns of pricier espressos across the world, even as some farmers keep yields healthy with clever countermeasures.

Domestic forecasts for next season's harvest in Vietnam, the world's second biggest coffee producer, remain grim. The Mercantile Exchange of Vietnam expects a 10-16% fall in output because of the extreme heat that hit the Central Highlands coffee region between March and early May, according to deputy head Nguyen Ngoc Quynh.

However, a return of rains in recent weeks has improved the outlook, boosting confidence among farmers and officials. But it remains unclear whether the improved weather will help boost output and drive down prices of robusta beans, the variety most commonly found in espressos and instant coffees, of which Vietnam is the world's top producer.

"I expect the country's output to fall by 10-15%, but my farm will increase production," said Nguyen Huu Long, who grows coffee in a 50-hectare plantation in Gia Lai, one of the top coffee-producing provinces in Vietnam.

To protect his trees during the heatwave, he kept the soil around the plants moist by covering it with leaves. Contrary to the local practice of cutting trees after a few years to boost soil quality, he keeps his growing for decades. As a result, plants have deeper roots and broader access to underground water reserves.

Farmers in his plantation also soften the soil around plants to improve absorption of rainwater and fertilizers, said Doan Van Thang, 39.

Tran Thi Huong, a tenant farmer who works in another plantation 20 km from Pleiku, Gia Lai's capital, resorted to using more water than usual.

Thanks to abundant reserves from canals built by local authorities, she could keep her plants sufficiently irrigated during the heatwave.

Coffee cherries are smaller than in previous years, but she expects the overall output to be unaffected. It also helped that she timely intervened with biopesticides against bugs that were more numerous than usual because of the extreme weather.

That is in line with the forecast from the US Department of Agriculture which estimates Vietnam's next harvest would be roughly steady versus the current season's output — far less pessimistic than domestic projections.

Whatever the impact on the harvest will be, coffee prices for drinkers around the world are likely to rise. Wholesale prices in Vietnam and London-traded robusta futures have risen to record highs earlier this year mostly after an underwhelming harvest in Vietnam and because of fears over the country's next harvest after the drought, according to multiple traders and analysts.

Record wholesale prices have so far had a limited impact on consumer prices, with coffee inflation up by only 1.6% in the 27-country European Union (EU) in April, according to the latest Eurostat data, and 2.5% in robusta-loving Italy.

While well below price rises from a year earlier, it was higher than 1% in the March EU reading, a sign roasters may have started to pass their higher costs on consumers.

Besides, worries about Vietnam are far from over, as insufficient rains after the drought or excessive downpours before the upcoming October harvest season could further reduce output, warned a Vietnam-based trader.

The high wholesale prices may also be there to stay, as robusta demand is growing globally and farmers have boosted their leverage in the current circumstances, with many having also replaced coffee plants with pungent smelling durian, a tropical fruit experiencing huge demand in China.

“They have the financial ability to hoard and hold on to goods, so they will not be in a hurry to sell,” said Le Thanh Son, of Simexco, one of Vietnam's biggest coffee exporters. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/01/605082/some-vietnam-coffee-farms-thrive-despite-drought-but-may-not-stop-espresso-price-hikes-2/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Denmark will be first to impose CO₂ tax on farms

July 1, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

COPENHAGEN — Denmark, a major pork and dairy exporter, will introduce a tax on livestock carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from 2030, making it the first country to do so and hoping to inspire others to follow, the government said.

A tax was first proposed in February by government-commissioned experts to help Denmark reach a legally binding 2030 target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 70% from 1990 levels.

The centrist government reached a wide-ranging compromise with farmers, industry, labor unions and environmental groups on policy linked to farming, the country's largest source of CO₂ emissions.

“We will be the first country in the world to introduce a real CO₂ tax on agriculture. Other countries will be inspired by this,” Taxation Minister Jeppe Bruus of the center-left Social Democrats said in a statement on Tuesday.

While subject to approval by parliament, political experts expect a bill to pass following the broad-based consensus. The deal proposed taxing farmers 300 Danish crowns (\$43.16) per ton of CO₂ in 2030, increasing to 750 crowns by 2035.

Farmers will be entitled to an income tax deduction of 60%, meaning that the actual cost per ton will start at 120 crowns and increase to 300 crowns by 2035, while subsidies will be made available to support adjustments in farm operations.

The tax could add an extra cost of 2 crowns per kilo (2.2 pounds) of minced beef in 2030, Minister for Economic Affairs Stephanie Lose told public broadcaster DR.

Minced beef retails from around 70 crowns per kilo at Danish discount stores.

New Zealand this month scrapped plans to introduce a similar tax after facing criticism from farmers. But while Danish farmers had expressed concerns that the country's climate goals could force them to lower production and cut jobs, they said the compromise makes it possible to maintain their business.

“The agreement brings clarity when it comes to significant parts of the farmers’ conditions,” the L&F agriculture industry group said. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/01/605006/denmark-will-be-first-to-impose-co2-tax-on-farms/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

US food safety regulators expand bird flu testing in milk products

July 1, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has begun testing more dairy products for evidence of the bird flu virus as outbreaks spread among dairy herds.

More than 120 dairy herds in 12 states have tested positive for bird flu since March, according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Federal officials have warned that further spread among dairy cows could heighten the risk of human infections.

The risk to the general public from bird flu remains low, federal officials have said, though it is higher for workers on dairy farms, who should wear personal protective equipment to reduce the risk of infection.

The focus of additional testing, which will sample 155 products, is to ensure that pasteurization inactivates the virus, said Don Prater, acting director of the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, on a call with reporters.

Prior FDA testing of 297 retail dairy samples came back negative for evidence of the virus. The agency continues to strongly advise against consumption of raw milk products, Mr. Prater said.

No infected dairy cow herds are known to be contributing to the raw milk supply, said Eric Deeble, USDA's acting senior adviser for its bird flu response.

More than 690 people who were exposed to infected or suspected infected animals have been monitored for flu symptoms, and 51 people who developed flu-like symptoms have been tested, Demetre Daskalakis, director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, said on the press call.

Three dairy farm workers have tested positive for the virus with mild respiratory or conjunctivitis symptoms, and all have recovered.

The CDC is providing technical support to the state of Michigan as it begins serological testing of farm workers for signs of prior infection by the virus and will ensure the testing can be completed in other states, Mr. Daskalakis said.

The USDA is conducting research on how dairy cattle contract the virus through contact with infected milk or respiratory droplets, Mr. Deeble said.

The development of a bird flu vaccine for dairy cows "is going to take some time," and the agency hopes to eradicate the virus in dairy cattle without the use of a vaccine, Mr. Deeble said.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told Reuters on June 12 that the agency is in talks with two dozen companies on the development of a bird flu vaccine for cattle. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/01/605080/us-food-safety-regulators-expand-bird-flu-testing-in-milk-products/>

ABANTE:

P5K, bigas swak sa 8,000 residente ng Leyte

- [Abante News](#)
- [June 30, 2024](#)



Pinangunahan ni Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez ang pamimigay ng P5,000 cash assistance at bigas sa may 8,000 kuwalipikadong residente ng Leyte sa ilalim ng dalawang program na kanyang isinulong.

Ayon kay Romualdez, kinatawan ng unang distrito ng Leyte, tuloy-tuloy ang pagtulong ng administrasyong Duterte sa mga Pilipinong nangangailangan ng tulong.

“Kayo po ang ibinilin ng ating mahal na Pangulong Bongbong Marcos Jr. sa Kongreso na tulungan at siguruhin ang kapakanan sa panahong ito,” sabi ni Romualdez.

“Dito natin ipinadadama ang kalinga ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Marcos Jr. at inilalapit ang serbisyo ng gobyerno para doon sa mga kailangan ng tulong. Saang sulok man kayo ng Pilipinas, aabutin namin kayo,” dagdag pa nito.

Dumalo si Romualdez sa distribusyon ng ayuda sa ilalim ng Cash and Rice Distribution (CARD) Program at Integrated Scholarship and Incentives for the Youth (ISIP for the Youth) Program sa magkahiwalay na event noong Sabado.

Para sa CARD Program, may 5,000 kuwalipikadong benepisyaryo na nakatanggap ng tig-P5,000 sa ilalim ng Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) Program ng Department of Social and Welfare Development, at 20 kilong bigas sa isang simpleng seremonya sa Tacloban Astrodome sa Tacloban City.

Nasa 3,000 kuwalipikadong benepisyaryo naman ang nakatanggap ng tig-P5,000 cash assistance at limang kilong bigas sa event na ginanap sa Alba Hall ng Leyte Normal University. (Billy Begas)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/06/30/p5k-bigas-swak-sa-8000-residente-ng-leyte/>

ABANTE:

Biyahero ng agri product pinaparehistro sa DA

- Abante News
- June

30,

2024



Hinikayat ni Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) Spokesperson Julius Corpuz ang mga motorista na nagdadala ng mga produktong agrikultural na magparehistro sa Department of Agriculture upang hindi maapektuhan sakaling may pagtaas sa toll fee.

Sinabi ito ng opisyal sa panayam ng programang Bardagulan dito sa Teletabloid kaugnay ng libreng toll sa Manila-Cavite Expressway sa buong buwan ng Hulyo simula sa Lunes.

Pabor man ito sa mga motorista, ibinahagi ni Corpuz na hindi nila tukoy kung maaapektuhan ng libreng toll ang pasahe ng mga commuter.

Gayunman sinabi ni Corpuz na libo-libong motorista ang makikinabang sa libreng toll at paraan na rin ito upang madiskubre ang nasabing expressway.

“In fact ang latest count po sa mga vehicles na gumagamit ng entire CAVITEX, MCTEP is around 180, 000 per day. Marami po iyan. Marami po ang makikinabang na ating mga kababayan na gumagamit ng MCTEP at the same time para na rin sa ibang hindi pa nasusubukan sigurong gamitin ‘yung segment 2 na kabubukas lamang ‘yung Sucat Interchange natin. R1 to Sucat na napasinayaan ng ating mahal na Pangulo noong nakaraang Huwebes yata yun upang makita nila ang kagandahan nitong ating express-ways,” saad ni Corpuz.

Meta:

Hinikayat ni Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) Spokesperson Julius Corpuz ang mga motorista na nagdadala ng mga produktong agrikultural na magparehistro sa Department of Agriculture, upang hindi maapektuhan sakaling may pagtaas sa toll fee.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/06/30/bivahero-ng-agri-product-pinaparehistro-sa-da/>

Where do we go from here?

By Lito Banayo

July 1, 2024, 12:10 am

“We ended our reunion after more than three hours, happy we are still around, yet with the sinking feeling that the future would be bleak.”

So many events transpired in the two weeks we serialized our observations and suggestions on how to deal with the country’s food staple.

The promulgation of the executive order that would bring down tariffs on rice, corn, frozen meats, and other products until 2028, or as clarified later by the NEDA, echoed days after by DA, that such reductions could be revised upwards as inflation eases.

If so, why prescribe till 2028? The signal to our farmers and livestock sector was bad.

Then there was the Reuters investigative report on how the US demonized COVID vaccines produced by China, a dastardly misinformation that caused thousands of death while Pfizer and Moderna, the US vaccines, were yet unavailable, for which our ambassador to the US of A tried to finagle from his host country (once our colonial masters who a former president of our “republic” praised for its “benevolence” in his inaugural address) by suggesting a trade-off between vaccine availability and VFA extension but was still rebuffed.

There was the June 17 attack by Chinese militia on a supply mission upon the beached MV Sierra Madre.

Government clearly did not know what reaction it should make until after five days, when no less than the executive secretary pooh-poohed the attack as an “accident,” likely a “misunderstanding,” and declared that hereon we will announce the schedules of our re-supply missions to our marooned men in the decrepit navy vessel to prevent such “misunderstandings.”

This pusillanimous reaction was to be rebutted two days after by our defense secretary who declared the June 17 attack was a “deliberate, aggressive action and an illegal use of force.”

And when questioned the day after in a Senate committee hearing, he declared “it is not a misunderstanding or an accident,” and he put it “on the record...under oath.”

So which is which?

Meanwhile, our president prefers to just mouth the usual platitudes, speechifying in King’s English mixed with good Tagalog in front of his soldiers.

Which brings me to a very recent dinner of five, four of whom had served in government along with a respected journalist who refuses to retire.

After many observations on the true “state of the nation,” including a first-hand encounter with a high official who demanded “something” for doing an act which is part of his usual responsibility to the people, all of us wondered what kind of country we would be leaving to our future generations.

“Where do we go from here?” I asked, “we” referring to the Filipino people, not necessarily to myself who in senior years keeps ruing the fact that our electorate always elect the least among us to lead us, be it local or national dynasts who have consigned us to becoming a feudal state under the false patina of democracy.

One of us tried to be a bit more optimistic, as he tried to convince another to run for public office once more, and perhaps give some “sense and sanity” to a much devalued Senate.

I kept mostly quiet on the matter as I do not want our common friend to suffer through another six years of crusading for something that is impossible to achieve given our existing polity and the systems by which governance in this land is practiced.

Nor do I think his better principles would rub off on his pork-addicted colleagues, some of whom have been convicted both by magisterial bar and the bar of public opinion.

We ended our reunion after more than three hours, happy we are still around, yet with the sinking feeling that the future would be bleak.

Then again, our recently resigned education secretary and vice-president said our former president, her father, and two of her brothers would altogether run for senator in next year's mid-terms.

My own reading of the out of the blue announcement: don't bet on it.

It's straight from the patriarch's playbook — keep everybody guessing.

The likelier scenario come October: FPRRD runs for mayor of his city once more, while one of his sons, likely Mayor Baste, will go for a senatorial post next year while Paolo guns for re-election as Davao City representative.

And Inday Sara either goes back to Davao in 2028, or if the political climate is good for her, she will go for the presidency.

<https://manilastandard.net/opinion/columns/so-i-see-by-lito-banayo/314465887/where-do-we-go-from-here-2.html>

MANILA STANDARD

The cold chain link to food security

By Orlando Oxales

July 1, 2024, 12:00 am

“By investing in agricultural infrastructure, we can create a future where farmers, communities, and the whole of society will thrive”

Food security as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations “exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

The availability and pricing of food, the balance between supply and demand, along with the efficiency of the food distribution network are critical factors in a nation’s socio-economic and political stability.

The current dynamics and issues affecting the food ecosystem of the Philippines was the focus of discussions in last week’s forum on “Achieving Food Security: Advancing Investments for Agricultural Sustainability,” co-organized by PHINMA Corp., the Stratbase Institute and the Makati Business Club.

PHINMA Construction Materials Group executive vice president Eduardo Sahagun opened the forum by emphasizing the urgent need for food security in the Philippines amid the damaging effects of climate change, rising food demands, and logistical challenges.

He cited Agriculture Secretary Francisco Laurel Jr.’s statement that 30 percent of the country’s agricultural produce is wasted due to poor logistics, as nearly 51 million Filipinos are coping with moderate or severe food insecurity, which, according to United Nations data, is the highest in Southeast Asia.

This UN report reveals the alarming statistic that nearly half of Filipinos face increasing difficulties in accessing food due to resource constraints, leading to insufficient nutrition and hunger.

Sahagun shared PHINMA’s hope for farmers and fisherfolk to be enabled with enough accessible facilities to store their products for longer periods, reducing wastage and increase their value.

Stratbase Institute president Prof. Victor Andres “Dindo” Manhit emphasized the need to transition from a services-dependent economy to one that prioritizes agriculture, forestry, and industry.

Prof. Manhit pointed out while we have recovered from COVID-19, hunger remains a persistent issue and the big challenge is addressing poverty amidst the cost-of-living crisis and inflation, which for Filipinos is driven by the cost of food.

To boost the nation’s productivity and food supply, he advocated for increased investments in the manufacturing sector, particularly for the domestic market, within the agro-industrial sphere. In so doing, the domestic market will expand with more affordable goods and essential commodities such as food. It will also enhance our position within the global supply chain.

COO of Union Insulated Panel Corporation Ms. Danielle del Rosario pointed out enhancing agricultural infrastructure is pivotal for food security.

“Investments in modern irrigation systems, cold storage facilities, and cold chain logistics networks reduce post-harvest losses, increase crop yields, and ensure that fresh produce reaches markets efficiently,” she stated.

This approach not only stabilizes food prices but also makes nutritious food more accessible, combating hunger and malnutrition.

By preserving perishable goods at optimal temperatures, cold storage facilities ensure that food reaches tables instead of landfills, significantly reducing waste.

However, the Philippines lags significantly behind global standards in per capita cold storage capacity, with only 0.04 cubic meters per person compared to the global average of 0.15 cubic meters.

The Department of Agriculture is keenly aware of these challenges.

Undersecretary Asis Perez highlighted the need for a robust logistics system, modernized farming practices, and enhanced post-harvest infrastructure.

By developing efficient logistics systems, the country can significantly reduce post-harvest losses and improve food distribution networks.

Adopting modern agricultural technologies is another critical aspect of this transformation.

As Makati Business Club Executive Director Roberto Batungbacal pointed out, agritech solutions are gaining traction among startups and major tech companies.

Identifying and implementing technologies that are tailored to the Philippines' unique agricultural landscape is essential for success.

Engr. Arnel V. De Mesa, Assistant Secretary for Special Concerns at the Department of Agriculture, emphasized the importance of sustainable practices such as alternate wetting and drying technology to reduce greenhouse gases.

Additionally, he advocated for the adoption of solar technology in agriculture, which offers an inexpensive and reliable energy solution.

Achieving food security in the Philippines is challenging yet full of opportunities. Investing in cold storage infrastructure is crucial for reducing waste, stabilizing food prices, and ensuring access to nutritious food for all Filipinos.

This effort demands collaboration from the government, private sector, and community stakeholders.

Agriculture is central to our nation's progress. By investing in agricultural infrastructure, we can create a future where farmers, communities, and the whole of society will thrive.

<https://manilastandard.net/opinion/columns/open-thoughts-by-orlando-oxales/314465884/the-cold-chain-link-to-food-security.html>

DA chief wants to address aging farmer population

By Othel V. Campos

June 30, 2024, 7:00 pm

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. views technology as the key to revitalizing Philippine agriculture as he underscored the urgency of modernization to address the aging farmer population and unlock the sector's full potential.

Agriculture employs a significant portion of the workforce, but contributes less than 10 percent to the gross domestic product. This, coupled with the average farmer's age exceeding 55, strengthens the call for a paradigm shift.

"The big challenge we face is making farming profitable. The solution lies in embracing technology-based farming methods," Tiu Laurel said in a recent forum with business owners.

He cited successful local examples where advancements like water management systems and irrigation techniques drastically reduced resource use and boosted productivity.

Inspired by South Korea's extensive use of greenhouses, the DA aims to scale up this technology in the Philippines.

Tiu Laurel stressed the importance of supportive policies, drawing insights from Vietnam's successful model that includes subsidies and crop insurance.

A crucial aspect of the plan involves a shift in agricultural education. The focus will move from traditional methods to comprehensive training in modern techniques, empowering landowners and tenants for success.

Tiu Laurel also underscored the significance of robust crop insurance coverage to mitigate risks for farmers, thereby fostering confidence in adopting new technologies and sustainable practices.

He also called for increased access to government-backed loans facilitated by the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC), which disbursed only P100 million out of its P600-million available funds.

Tiu Laurel's four-year plan outlines a future where technology and innovation propel Philippine agriculture toward significant growth, profitability and global competitiveness.

The strategic shift positions agriculture as a key driver of economic development and food security.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314465948/da-chief-wants-to-address-aging-farmer-population.html>

Marcos extends P50M aid to Cebu farmers

By Kaiser Jan Fuentes
July 1, 2024

CEBU CITY — The Office of the President has allocated P50 million to provide a substantial financial boost to Cebuano farmers and fisherfolk whose livelihoods were severely affected by the El Niño phenomenon.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. personally led the distribution of Presidential Assistance to Farmers, Fisherfolk and Families for both Cebu and Bohol provinces. The ceremony took place at the Carlos P. Garcia Sports Complex in Tagbilaran City.

According to the Cebu Provincial Capitol, Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia was presented with a ceremonial check worth P50 million from Marcos.

In his address, Marcos emphasized the government's commitment to supporting the agricultural sector.

"Hindi namin titigilan at hindi [kami] titigil [sa] pagsisikap upang maibigay ang inyong mga pangangailangan. Walang sawa kaming [magpapatupad] ng mga programang [makabubuti] po sa inyo, magsasagawa ng mga iba't ibang proyektong [makapagbibigay] ng ginhawa sa inyong buhay, at [mamumuhunan] para sa inyong kapakanan at kasaganahan (We will not stop and we will continue our efforts to meet your needs. We are tirelessly implementing programs that will benefit you, conducting various projects that will bring relief to your lives, and investing in your welfare and prosperity)," Marcos said in his speech.

Selected farmers and fisherfolk from four local government units in the Camotes Islands in eastern Cebu received direct assistance of P10,000 each from the President.

Among the beneficiaries were Bryan Amancio, Isidro Luchavez and Rinan Otida from the Municipality of San Francisco; Esteneli Gallo, Venus Granada and Rita Sixto from the Municipality of Poro; Joselito Huete and Fransito Garciano from the Municipality of Tudela; and Dominador Montes and Raul Coraza from the Municipality of Pilar.

The province of Bohol also received a similar allocation to aid El Niño-affected farmers and fisherfolk.

Key officials present at the event included DILG Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr., Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian, Special Assistant to the President Antonio Lagdameo Jr., and Cebu 2nd District Rep. Edsel Galeos.

The agriculture offices of Cebu's cities and municipalities pre-identified beneficiaries, ensuring prompt aid delivery to mitigate climate change impacts on agriculture and improve welfare and prosperity for farmers and fisherfolk in the region.

Earlier, the state weather bureau explained that the El Niño phenomenon is marked by abnormally warmer sea surface temperatures, which may lead to adverse effects such as dry spells and droughts. KAISER JAN FUENTES

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/07/01/regions/marcos-extends-p50m-aid-to-cebu-farmers/1954250>

NFA's P92M claim against DepEd junked

By **Peter Tabingo**

July 1, 2024

THE Commission on Audit has “affirmed with finality” its January 31, 2020 decision that denied a P92.8 million claim filed by the National Food Authority (NFA) against the Department of Education (DepEd).

In its en banc ruling, the COA held that the NFA’s motion for reconsideration must be denied because it failed to submit proof that there was actual delivery of rice under the DepEd’s Food for School Program (FSP) from 2006 to 2010 despite being accorded ample time to do so.

In its petition, the NFA claimed that it made excess deliveries of rice to the DepEd that were not paid by the latter.

Among the documents it submitted in support of the claim were a certification from DepEd Undersecretary Francisco Varela that the agency received rice deliveries amounting to P92,797,212.50 and an answer from former Education Secretary Armin Luistro admitting the certification from Varela as well as its contents.

The COA, however, said the admissions by DepEd officials did not amount to sufficient proof of the validity of an enforceable obligation against the Education department.

“At the outset, the NFA still failed to submit all the necessary documents to support the claim ... which included various MOAs (memoranda or agreement), WSIs (warehouse stock issues), the request of DepEd for the excess rice deliveries, and the Inspection and Acceptance Report,” the commission said.

It declared that the WSI’s were “indispensable to substantiate the claim of the NFA that there were deliveries” as they were the accepted basis for billing, reconciliation of records, and release of payment.

It pointed out that while copies of the duplicates of WSIs were submitted to the audit team and the Schools Division Offices, the original copies were retained by the NFA.

“Mere reliance on the certification by the Heads of Offices and other documents mentioned by NFA in its MR without proper validation from the CO A auditor are not considered substantial to establish its claim against the DepEd,” the commission said.

It pointed out that if it were to allow claims based on mere admission from parties, it might “open a floodgate of problems” where claims against government funds would be supported by mere agreement between transacting parties when they are unable to produce the necessary documents.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_news/nfas-p92m-claim-against-deped-junked/

Panel eyes faster farm imports unloading

Reine Juvierre S. Alberto

July 1, 2024

TO manage high commodity prices in the country, the government is looking to expedite the unloading of imported agricultural products, fast-tracking the release of subsidies to various sectors and addressing exporting delays.

The Department of Finance (DOF) said on Sunday the Economic Development Group (EDG) and the Inter-Agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook (IAC-IMO) convened on June 28 to discuss updates on proposed measures to combat inflation.

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) was urged by the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) to ensure accurate valuation and imposition of tariffs on rice imports.

Tariff revenue loss due to rice undervaluation, or failure to disclose in full the price actually paid or payable, amounted to P7.2 billion in 2023, according to the Federation of Free Farmers.

The Neda Board, led by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., approved the rice tariff reduction to 15 percent from 35 percent until 2028 to lower rice prices to P29.00 per kilo at least for the poor.

The BOC was also instructed by Neda to accelerate and prioritize unloading of imported agricultural products in accordance with Administrative Order No. 20. This directive aims to simplify administrative processes and eliminate non-tariff barriers to facilitate better processing.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will also import 200,000 metric tons of refined sugar, which will arrive no later than October 2024, to address production shortfall and replenish stocks for the second half of the year, according to the DOF.

To address non-food inflation, the DOF called on the DA, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) and Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to speed up the implementation and disbursement of targeted subsidies to vulnerable sectors.

Moreover, the government is looking into using the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) as a registration and validation system to distribute subsidies efficiently.

The Department of Energy (DOE), meanwhile, has requested the DOF to review fiscal policies for a “more liberal approach” towards the power sector as it faces constraints and challenges on power generation and transmission.

Additionally, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) has been enhancing its research and development initiatives for safe and affordable medicine, along with locally developed medical technologies.

To mitigate delays and added costs affecting exporters, the DTI will collaborate with the DOF and the BOC in assessing the possible exemption of Philippine exporters from the Electronic Tracking of Containerized Cargo (E-TRACC) system.

Office of Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs (OSAPIEA) Secretary Frederick Go chaired the meeting. The next EDG Meeting is scheduled on August 30, 2024.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/01/panel-eyes-faster-farm-imports-unloading/>

Manila clears gene-edited banana varieties

BusinessMirror

July 1, 2024

The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, granted certificates of noncoverage from Joint Department Circular (JDC) 1, series of 2021, to Tropic Biosciences.

Tropic Biosciences developed the reduced browning bananas (TRB011011 and TRB11002) using the CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing system.

“These bananas have the potential to reduce food waste and carbon dioxide emissions equivalent to removing 2 million cars from the road per year,” the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) said in the June issue of its online weekly publication, Biotech Update.

The product developer submitted scientific evidence to BPI to obtain the non-coverage certificate. According to BPI, the decision is based on the Technical Consultation for Evaluation and Determination procedure described in DA Memorandum Circular No. 08 s. 2022 Rules and Regulation to Evaluate and Determine when Products of Plant Breeding Innovations (PBIs) are covered under JDC 1.

“The Philippines government has implemented a science-based, transparent, and efficient process for assessing the safety of gene-edited plants. This is exactly the type of system that encourages companies like Tropic to invest in innovative technologies to develop sustainable solutions for Filipino farmers,” said Dr. Ofir Meir, Tropic’s chief technology officer.

BPI has granted the same certification to another reduced browning banana by Tropic in 2023.

Banana is one of the Philippines’s top exports. Last year, data from the PSA showed that the country’s earnings from shipments of the fruit to other

countries reached \$1.22 billion, 17 percent higher than the \$1.097 billion recorded in 2022.

ISAAA also said Sanatech Seed's Sicilian Rouge tomato with high levels of gamma-aminobutyric acid was also cleared this year.

The certificate allows the said gene-edited crops to be imported and cultivated in the country.

Last May, ISAAA said high GABA tomato was first released by Sanatech in Japan in 2021. It was developed using CRISPR-Cas9 technology to contain high levels of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), an amino acid that helps lower blood pressure. The gene-edited tomato has four to five times more GABA than conventional tomato varieties.

Based on the scientific evidence provided by the developer, BPI determined the gene-edited tomato as a non-GMO. This means that it will not go through the regulatory pathway in evaluating the biosafety of GMOs in the country, guided by JDC 1.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/01/manila-clears-gene-edited-banana-varieties/>

‘DA to embrace innovative farming methods’

BusinessMirror and Ada Pelonia

July 1, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) will increasingly adopt “technology-based” planting methods to make farming more attractive to young Filipinos.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said there is “an urgent need” to modernize farming methods to cater to aging farmers and stimulate the country’s growth.

He noted that the local farming sector is facing serious challenges due to an aging farming population, with the average age of Filipino farmers pegged at 56 years old.

“The big challenge we face is making farming profitable [...] The solution lies in embracing technology-based farming methods,” Laurel said in a statement.

He pointed to successful local innovations in Hermosa and Dinalupihan, Bataan, where advancements like small water impounding systems, fertigation techniques, and drip irrigation have “revolutionized” crop production.

According to the DA, these technologies have shown the potential to significantly reduce fertilizer use by up to 70 percent and cut water consumption by 30 percent, thereby optimizing resource efficiency and lowering costs for farmers.

Laurel also expressed interest in scaling up agricultural practices through large-scale greenhouse facilities, inspired by South Korea’s extensive use of such technology across 52,000 hectares (ha). In contrast, only 500 ha in the Philippines are currently dedicated to greenhouse farming.

“I am committed to personally investing in testing these greenhouse technologies before endorsing widespread adoption.”

Drawing inspiration from Vietnam’s successful agricultural policies, which include subsidies and guaranteed earnings for farmers through credit and crop insurance, the agri chief stressed the need for similar supportive measures in the Philippines.

Laurel also noted a need for a paradigm shift in agricultural education. He said the focus must be on comprehensive training in modern farming techniques instead of traditional methods he referred to as “Bahay Kubo technology.”

He called for increased access to government-backed loans facilitated by the Agricultural Credit Policy Council, which has so far disbursed only P100 million out of P600 million available funds.

Laurel underscored the significance of “robust” crop insurance coverage to mitigate risks for farmers, thereby fostering confidence in adopting new technologies and sustainable practices.

He expressed optimism about the “transformative impact” of these initiatives on Philippine agriculture, envisioning a future where technology and innovation propel the sector towards enhanced productivity, profitability, and global competitiveness.

Laurel said the four-year plan crafted by his team aims to increase agri-fishery production by increased mechanization, improvement of post-harvest systems and infrastructures, development of efficient logistics systems for input and production output, expansion of market access, digitalization, and strengthening partnership with farmers, fisherfolk, and the private sector.

“The strategies outlined mark a strategic shift towards modernization and sustainability, positioning Philippine agriculture as a cornerstone of economic growth and food security in the years to come.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/01/da-to-embrace-innovative-farming-methods/>

Solon: Govt must boost rice buffer stock, pass cheaper rice bill

BusinessMirror

July 1, 2024

With La Niña expected to arrive in the country in the third quarter, the government must shore up its rice buffer stock to last for 15 to 30 days, according to a partylist representative.

Agri Partylist Rep. Wilbert T. Lee said the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) indicated an optimal level of rice buffer stock.

“Our inventory must be sufficient to cover 15 to 30 days of national consumption or equivalent to at least 350,000 metric tons (MT) in case of emergencies or disasters. This is the optimal level of rice buffer stock stated in the IRR of RTL,” he said.

“But the NFA said recently that the national rice inventory would only last for four days during emergencies or disasters. This is not enough.”

According to the NFA, its palay procurement reached nearly 3.37 million 50-kilo bags as of June 13, equivalent to 168,262 metric tons (MT).

While the solon recognized the efforts of NFA to boost the rice inventory by buying local palay for higher price, he maintained that this mechanism should be institutionalized.

Lee then called for the urgent passage of his proposed House Bill 9020 or the “Cheaper Rice Act” which will mandate the government to implement a “price subsidy” program to buy palay from local farmers at a higher farmgate price to ensure their profit and entice them to boost their production.

“Under this bill, the government will be mandated to buy rice from farmers at P5 to P10 higher than the prevailing farmgate price. With a higher buying price, farmers would be encouraged to increase their output,” he said.

“Our farmers deserve better prices for their products, so it is only fair that we demand better for them.”

The solon from Bicol further stressed that the best defense against inflation is supporting farmers whom he considers as “food security soldiers.”

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the country’s unmilled rice production in January to March slid by 1.96 percent to 4.69 million metric tons (MMT) from the 4.78 MMT recorded in the same period in 2023.

The production of irrigated farms fell by 2.34 percent to 3.6 MMT from last year’s 3.69 MMT. Rainfed farms, which depend solely on rainfall, produced 1.086 MMT, slightly lower than the 1.094 MMT recorded in 2023.

Meanwhile, the palay output of Central Luzon, the country’s rice granary, declined by 10.55 percent to 775,644 MT from last year’s 867,084 MT. Central Luzon remained as the country’s top rice-producing region during the period.

Cagayan Valley, another top rice producer, had 754,833 MT or nearly 15 percent higher than last year’s 657,636 MT.

Based on the PSA’s data, palay or unmilled rice production in 2023 reached a record 20.06 MMT. The figure is 1.56 percent higher than the 19.76 MMT recorded in 2022.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/01/solon-govt-must-boost-rice-buffer-stock-pass-cheaper-rice-bill/>

FAO chief urges innovation, focus on production and smallholders

BusinessMirror

July 1, 2024

Achieving a food-secure requires not just economic policy measures but strong political and social commitments, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

FAO Director General Qu Dongyu made the pronouncement during a high-level session during the Global Review of Aid for Trade hosted by the World Trade Organization in Geneva last week.

“We have to look after our own planet before it’s too late,” he said.

Qu spoke on a panel with Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana, Cameroon’s Minister of Trade, Mathieu Guibolo Fanaa, Chad’s Minister of Trade and Industry, and other experts. The discussion focused on how to make trade policy an enhancing variable in achieving global food security goals.

Feeding the world is not just a technical issue but a security challenge with humanity’s future at stake, said Atangana, who said that clear and binding rules are critical for developing nations and emphasized that Aid for Trade initiatives must be in the service of helping the supply side and developing production, without which infrastructure has less value.

Food security should be a priority for the WTO, said Fanaa, adding that this will require increasing agricultural production in Africa, which in turn will require equitable conditions in international markets.

Qu offered five suggestions for how to improve global food insecurity, noting that FAO’s modeling forecasts there will still be nearly 600 million chronically undernourished people in 2030.

“First is to support growth by investing in rural infrastructure, including broadband and financial services, roads, and storage facilities to improve access to markets by smallholders who produce most of the world’s food and, while major private investors, cannot do everything on their own.”

Qu also pushed for investments in research, development and innovation—all of which he described as part of the “bottom line for any trade policy”—to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of agrifood systems while at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fostering integrated and sustainable water management and use.

“This is the only way to produce more with less.”

Reducing food loss and waste is a third cardinal point, Qu said.

His fourth point was that the best way to achieve the previous goals is to focus on smallholders and vulnerable populations.

“Lastly, stronger global collaboration and governance will be required to achieve a food-secure and sustainable world.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/01/fao-chief-urges-innovation-focus-on-production-and-smallholders/>

ABANTE TONITE

DA: Mga magsasaka paubos na sa katandaan, agri sektor nanganganib

June 30, 2024

Nahaharap ngayon sa malaking hamon ang sektor ng agrikultura dahil sa aging population o tumatandang populasyon ng mga magsasaka sa bansa kung saan nasa 56 taong gulang na ang average na edad ng mga ito.

Dahil dito, binigyang-diin ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. ang kahalagahan ng modernisasyon sa agrikultura upang mahikayat ang mga nakababatang populasyon na bigyan ng pagkakataon ang sektor para sa mas pangmatagalang pag-unlad ng ekonomiya.

Ang pagyakap sa teknolohiya o makabagong pamamaraan ang nakikitang solusyon ni Laurel para mas maging kapaki-pakinabang ang pagtatanim sa bagong henerasyon.

Samantala, nananatili pa rin umano na mas mababa sa 10 porsiyento ang ambag ng sektor ng agrikultura sa gross domestic product ng bansa. (Andrea Salve)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/06/30/da-mga-magsasaka-paubos-na-sa-katandaan-agri-sektor-nanganganib/>

China pinasok na food security ng Pinas - PAOCC

[Doris Franche-Borja](#)

July 1, 2024 | 12:00am



Ito ang sinabi ni Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC) Executive Director at Undersecretary Gilbert Cruz kung saan kumikilos na ang China sa pagbili ng ilang lupain na pinagmumulan ng supply ng bigas.

[Philstar.com/Irish Lising](#)

MANILA, Philippines — Hindi lamang ang mga illegal na Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs) ang pinagkakaabalahan ng China kundi pati umano food security ng Pilipinas ay pinasok na rin.

Ito ang sinabi ni Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC) Executive Director at Undersecretary Gilbert Cruz kung saan kumikilos na ang China sa pagbili ng ilang lupain na pinagmumulan ng supply ng bigas.

Ayon kay Cruz, gamit ang ilan nilang kinatawan, uupa muna sa una ang mga Chinese hanggang sa bibilhin na ang mga lupa ng magsasaka sa Palawan, Nueva Ecija at ilan pang mga lalawigan na pinanggagalingan ng bigas.

‘Hindi lang yung pagbili ang ginagawa nila. Ang unang ginagawa ay uupahan nila ng P80,000 hanggang P100,000 yung rice field per hectare. So kung ikaw yung magsasaka, ito siguradong kita na, yung isang ektarya mo may upang ibibigay sayo hindi ka na magtatrabaho,ʼ ani Cruz.

Sinabi ni Cruz na matutuwa ang mga magsasaka dahil hindi na sila mahihirapan sa pagsasaka bagkus ay kumikita sa upa ng mga dayuhan pero kalaunan baka ang mga dayuhan na aniya ang magkontrol sa food security ng Pilipinas.

Sa katunayan, mayroon na silang iniimbestigahang mga probinsiya kaakibat ang impormasyon sa pag-uupa at pamimili ng lupa ng mga magsasaka ng mga kinatawan ng mga dayuhan.

Dito ay kontrolado na ng mga dayuhan ang biniling lupang sakahan at puwedeng kontrolin ng mga dayuhan kung ano ang itatanim.

Sakaling taniman ng palay, hindi malayong ang mga ito na ang magkokontrol ng presyo ng bigas sa bansa.

Bunsod nito, sinabi ni Cruz na makikipag-ugnayan sila sa Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) at Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) upang ipaalam sa mga lokal na pamahalaan ang nangyayari sa kanilang nasasakupan na maaari nilang imbestigahan.

Payo ni Cruz sa mga magsasaka, huwag magpasilaw sa malaking halaga at sa halip ay sinupin ang kanilang lupain lalo pa at ibinibigay naman ng pamahalaan ang lahat ng tulong sa mga magsasaka.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/07/01/2366783/china-pinasok-na-food-security-ng-pinas-paocc>