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MANILA BULLETIN:

Young Farmers From Asia Pacific Unite in Mt. Makiling

Cultivating the future of agriculture at the 1st Asia-Pacific Young Farmers Camp and Agrilympics

BY JUNEP OCAMPO & MANILA BULLETIN AGRICULTURE

Aug 14, 2024 10:02 PM



The BP International Hotel in Mt. Makiling came alive with vibrant energy as 120 young farmers, fishers, pastoralists, and forest-users from 20 countries across Asia and the Pacific gathered for the inaugural Asia-Pacific Young Farmers Camp and Agrilympics (YFCA).

Held from August 12-16, 2024, the event, the first of its kind, sought to address one of the most pressing challenges of our time: the future of agriculture in the face of climate change, an aging farming population, and diminishing interest in farming among the youth.

The event highlighted the need for food security and sustainability, and the crucial role young people play as a crucial force for innovation and resilience. The United Nations reports that 1.8 billion young people, the largest generation of youth in history, are poised to enter the workforce. Their choices will shape the future of all industries, particularly agriculture.

Yet, for decades, rural youth have been neglected by their communities and governments, leading to unemployment, underemployment, and migration to urban areas. Those who remain on farms often do so out of necessity, not choice. This has resulted in an aging farming

population, a phenomenon that is not just local to Asia but a global issue. Experts warn of a critical shortage of farmers within the next decade, threatening food sufficiency and agricultural sustainability.

Against this backdrop, the YFCA emerged as a call to action. Organized by the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), the International Cooperative Alliance-Asia Pacific (ICA-AP), and the Pacific Farmers Organisation (PFO), the event aimed to create an enabling environment for young people to actively engage in agriculture.



The camp's theme, "Strengthening Engagement of Young Farmers in Cooperatives and Organizations to Contribute to Safe, Just, and Resilient Food Communities," underscored the urgent need to inspire and empower the next generation of agricultural leaders.



The week-long event kicked off with a Parade of Nations, a colorful celebration of the diversity and unity among the young farmers from across Asia-Pacific. The lighting of the cauldron, reminiscent of the Olympic Games, marked the official opening of the camp and set the stage for a week of rigorous and enlightening activities.



One of the highlights was the Agrilympics, where participants engaged in a series of games that cleverly incorporated agricultural themes, from planting challenges to soil testing competitions. These activities not only fostered camaraderie but also emphasized the practical and innovative aspects of farming.

In addition to the games, the YFCA featured hands-on workshops on topics critical to the future of agriculture. Participants delved into digital agriculture, learning about the latest technologies that could revolutionize farming practices. They also explored forestry management and organic farming, gaining insights into how these practices can contribute to more sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture.



A particularly impactful session was the Youth Talks forum and Buzz Groups, where participants discussed the role of cooperatives as a viable model for agricultural development. The importance of institutionalizing young farmers' engagement in governance and decision-making processes was a recurring theme, as was the potential of agroecology to serve as a pathway to sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture.



The impact of climate change on agriculture was a central focus of the YFCA. Through a series of talks and video presentations, participants learned about the devastating effects of disasters and climate change on food security. The urgency of building climate resilience within farming communities was underscored in group activities designed to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges ahead.

One of the standout moments of the camp was the appearance of Jon Jon Sarmiento, a climate activist, farmer, and agroecology practitioner. Sarmiento shared his experiences and insights on how agroecology can be a powerful tool in combating climate change while promoting sustainable farming practices.

Meanwhile, recognizing that effective communication is key to advocacy and agribusiness, the YFCA included a session on storytelling and communication. Participants had the opportunity to visit the DZLB and TV studios, where they learned how to craft compelling narratives that can drive change and influence public perception of agriculture.



They also explored the potential of digital platforms through the Agriculture Training Institute's Digital Farmers Program, which aims to bridge the digital divide and empower farmers with the tools they need to succeed in the modern world.

The YFCA also served as a platform for young farmer entrepreneurs to showcase their innovations and pitch their ideas for agricultural development. Among the inspiring stories was that of Loeut Nary from Cambodia, who has built a thriving mushroom production business through the Kanteut II Samaki Banan Meanchey Agricultural Cooperative. Nary's story is a testament to how young people can innovate and drive change in agriculture.

Another remarkable participant was Sory Channath, also from Cambodia, who has successfully engaged in poultry farming through the Cheap Santhe Pheap Satrei Khlahan Agricultural Cooperative. Channath's business acumen and dedication to sustainable practices have made her a role model for young farmers in her community.



From Kyrgyzstan, Madina Karmysheva shared her experiences in agroforestry through the Kyrgyz Association of Forest and Land Users (KAFLU). Her work in integrating forestry with agriculture has not only contributed to environmental sustainability but also provided a viable livelihood for her community.

The Philippines was well-represented by Princess Rhya Ballon, who has made significant strides in seaweed farming and oyster sauce production through the Kapunungan sa Gagmayng Mangingisda sa Concepcion (KAGMAFICO). Ballon's innovative approach to aquaculture has opened new markets and opportunities for coastal communities.

As the YFCA draws to a close on August 16, the participants reflect on the lessons learned and the networks built over the course of the week. The event's closing ceremonies will be graced by esteemed guests, including Dir. Remelyn Recoter of the Department of Agriculture-Agriculture Training Institute (DA-ATI), Esther Penunia of AFA, and Losalini Qiolevu of PFO, among others.

The formation of a young farmers' organization network in Asia and the Pacific will be a key outcome of the YFCA, marking the beginning of a new era of collaboration and innovation in agriculture. As these young leaders return to their respective countries, they carry with them the knowledge, skills, and inspiration needed to secure the future of farming.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/14/young-farmers-from-asia-pacific-unite-in-mt-makiling>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA personnel, cops set up checkpoints to prevent spread of African Swine Fever

BY AARON RECUENCO

Aug 14, 2024 05:13 PM

As the government still awaits the arrival of vaccines, checkpoints will be set up in various parts of the Luzon to contain the spread of African Swine Fever in Batangas, the Department of Agriculture announced on Wednesday, Aug. 14.

DA Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. said the additional border controls are designed to halt the movement of diseased hogs, which have been a significant factor in the rapid spread of ASF in Batangas.

“The checkpoints are a temporary measure while the government awaits the arrival of ASF vaccines, a process that could take a few weeks,” said Laurel.

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“We have the funds to procure the vaccines and the emergency funds to indemnify hog raisers adversely affected by the resurgence of the ASF virus. The vaccine procurement is essential for controlling the outbreak but acknowledged the delay in securing those vaccines,” he added. The rapid spread of ASF in Batangas is suspected to have been exacerbated by unscrupulous hog traders selling diseased pigs.

DA Assistant Secretary for Swine and Poultry Constante Palabrica explained that the border controls will help prevent the transport of other diseased animals, including birds.

“We have set up additional livestock quarantines and will keep it there at least until December 31. Policemen along with Bureau of Animal Industry and other DA personnel will man the checkpoints,” said Palabrica.

The new ASF outbreak has led several towns in Batangas to declare a state of calamity to access emergency funds, whose availability is critical for addressing the immediate impacts of the outbreak and for managing the disease’s spread.

Palabrica said the DA has identified central burial sites for hogs infected with ASF or those that have died from the virus.

The measure is part of the broader effort to control and eventually eradicate the virus, which has severely impacted the hog industry since it was first reported in 2019.

The ASF outbreak has had a devastating effect on the national hog population, which dropped from 12.7 million in 2019 to an estimated 9.9 million by the end of 2023.

According to Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) monitoring, ASF has spread across all 17 regions of the Philippines and affected 74 provinces. As of August 8, 64 municipalities in 22 provinces have reported active ASF cases.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/14/da-personnel-cops-set-up-checkpoints-to-prevent-spread-of-african-swine-fever>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DA urged to establish satellite laboratory to contain ASF in Cotabato

BY KEITH BACONGCO

Aug 14, 2024 05:11 PM

DAVAO CITY – Gov. Emmylou Taliño-Mendoza has urged the Department of Agriculture to establish a satellite animal disease diagnostic laboratory in Cotabato province as part of measures to contain the spread of African Swine Fever (ASF).



PASSENGERS step on footbaths in a quarantine checkpoint in Makilala, Cotabato. The provincial government has beefed up biosecurity measures to contain African Swine Fever. (Keith Bacongco)

The laboratory would help hasten the process to determine if the hogs in a specific area are positive for ASF, Mendoza said.

As of now, specimens are being taken to the Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory Office in General Santos City which is at least 140 kilometers away from Kidapawan City, the capital of Cotabato province, she added.

This laboratory is the sole facility that serves the entire Region 12 composed of the provinces of Cotabato, Sarangani, South Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat.

“It will take us about three hours of land travel. Although the laboratory can immediately release the result, it will also take time to wait because there are others in the queue,” Mendoza said.

Mendoza suggested that the DA put up satellite laboratories in strategic areas to hasten the sampling of suspected ASF-hit areas and help speed up measures to contain the disease.

As of August 14, the governor reported that 6,712 hogs from 65 out of 480 barangays in 11 municipalities in Cotabato have been depopulated. Cotabato is composed of 17 towns and a city.

Mendoza added that the ASF outbreak has affected 733 farmers who have incurred an estimated P71 million in losses.

Movement of hogs and pork are restricted and other biosecurity measures have been implemented within affected municipalities.

Since the first ASF case was reported in early July, local government units have established quarantine checkpoints to prevent the entry of any frozen pork products.

Mendoza bared that she has ordered the police to treat ASF like a crime and conduct investigation as she suspects that some large-scale hog raisers could be keeping some information.

The governor added that large-scale hog raisers may have already been affected by the ASF but just kept the information. “Ang kawawa ang mga backyard hog raisers (Backyard hog raisers are affected).”

Mendoza said that the provincial government wants to know if there was negligence among local government officials that resulted in the spread of ASF.

The governor disclosed that ASF is already affecting the prices of pork products in every municipality.

The provincial government, with augmentation from the Department of Social Welfare and Development, has initially distributed P3,000 cash assistance and food packs to each affected hog raisers in the province.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/14/da-urged-to-establish-satellite-laboratory-to-contain-asf-in-cotabato>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Landbank honors outstanding partners in countryside, national development

Celebrating 61 years of serving the nation

BY MB BUSINESS

Aug 14, 2024 04:48 PM



Finance Secretary and LANDBANK Chairman Ralph G. Recto (2nd from left), Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. (leftmost), and LANDBANK President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz (center) confer the Uirang Magsasaka Award to Deodany L. Cara (3rd from left) with his wife, Ma. Cecilia Cara (4th from left) during the LANDBANK 2024 MERIT Awards on Aug. 8, 2024 in Malate, Manila. Joining them are LANDBANK Directors Virginia N. Orogo (6th from left) and Nancy D. Irlanda (7th from left), together with Executive Vice President Ma. Celeste A. Burgos (8th from left) and Vice President Rolando G. Santos. (rightmost).

Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK) celebrated its 61st anniversary by recognizing its exceptional development partners in the delivery of essential financial and support services in local communities nationwide.

During an appreciation event held on 08 August 2024 at LANDBANK Plaza in Manila, the Bank honored outstanding clients and partners across various sectors through the Models of Excellence Recognition Initiative for Top Bank Clients (MERIT) Awards.

“The success stories of our awardees mirror the potential of our nation. It illustrates how far we can progress when we commit to being each other’s steadfast partners in development,”

said Finance Secretary and LANDBANK Chairman Ralph G. Recto in addressing the MERIT awardees.



Finance Secretary and LANDBANK Chairman Ralph G. Recto congratulates the MERIT awardees for their achievements and contributions to building a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economy.

“Your work and contributions send a powerful message—that we can put an end to poverty not by looking out only for ourselves, but by working hand in hand together,” he added.

The LANDBANK MERIT Awards recognized the Bank’s high-performing clients who have become models of operational excellence, which include cooperatives, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), corporations and large enterprises, countryside financial institutions (CFIs), microfinance institutions (MFIs), and individual farmers.

LANDBANK President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz expressed appreciation to the MERIT awardees for their contributions to advancing agriculture, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion, and reaffirmed the Bank’s commitment to helping them achieve their full potential.



LANDBANK President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz expresses her gratitude to clients and partners for their continued trust and support for the Bank.

"When our clients thrive, we thrive. Every achievement represents our shared success; each milestone is a reflection of the strength of our partnership. That's why it is only fitting that we pay tribute to you—our dear clients and partners—for your steadfast support and invaluable contributions on this meaningful journey," said LANDBANK President and CEO Ortiz.

Finance Secretary Recto and LANDBANK President and CEO Ortiz were joined by Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr., LANDBANK Directors Virginia N. Orogo, Nancy D. Irlanda, and David D. Erro, and LANDBANK Executive Vice President Ma. Celeste A. Burgos and Vice President Rolando G. Santos in presenting the awards to 14 MERIT awardees.

Department of Finance (DOF) Undersecretary Maria Luwalhati C. Dorotan-Tiuseco, Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary Atty. Asis G. Perez, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Assistant Secretary Lennard Constantine C. Serrano, Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) Assistant Secretary Santiago S. Lim, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Assistant Director Daisy B. Pabuaya, and Philippine Guarantee Corporation (PGC) Senior Vice President Emmanuel R. Torres also graced the event.

Under the Gawad sa Pinakatanging Kooperatiba (Gawad PITAK), the Alicia Neighborhood Multi-Purpose Cooperative and Sorosoro Ibaba Development Cooperative were hailed as outstanding agri-based cooperatives in the medium and large categories, respectively. The Ating Ani Nueva Ecija Multipurpose Cooperative and Ligas Kooperatiba ng Bayan sa

Pagpapaunlad were likewise honored for their outstanding contributions under the non-agricultural category.

The Gawad MSME was awarded to Ms. Fralyn B. Cruz and Sandig Medical Clinic and Hospital under the agri-based and non-agri-based sectors, respectively.

The Gawad Kaagapay was given to DoubleDragon Corporation, Asialink Finance Corporation, and Soliman E.C. Septic Tank Disposal for their contributions as corporations and large enterprises to growing the local economy.

ProFarmers Rural Banking Corporation, Producers Savings Bank Corporation, and ASA Philippines Foundation, Inc. were recognized with the Gawad PFI for their exceptional performance under the rural bank, thrift bank, and microfinance categories, respectively.

The Ulirang Magsasaka award was awarded to Mr. Deodany L. Cara, while Mr. Roderick G. Capalongan received a special citation for his innovative approach to integrated farming.

LANDBANK is celebrating its 61st anniversary this month, representing more than six decades of advancing development, inclusion, and sustainability in serving the nation.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/14/landbank-honors-outstanding-partners-in-countryside-national-development-1>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Fish, shellfish from Cavite province still not safe for human consumption—BFAR

BY JEL SANTOS

Aug 14, 2024 10:56 AM



(MB FILE PHOTO)

Fish and shellfish from Cavite province are still considered unsafe for consumption following the oil spill, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) reported on Tuesday, August 13.

“In the province of Cavite, fish and shellfish samples collected are still not safe for human consumption based on sensory evaluation,” the agency stated in its Bataan Oil Spill Bulletin No. 4.

Meanwhile, BFAR stated that fish from Bataan, Bulacan, Pampanga, Batangas, and Metro Manila (Navotas, Parañaque, and Las Piñas) are safe for human consumption.

“Results of sensory evaluation for traces of oil and grease since the oil spill was first reported, until August 12, 2024, have consistently shown that all sampled fish and shellfish from different sampling sites in Bataan, Bulacan, and Pampanga are free from oil and grease contamination,” it said.

The BFAR also reported that fish and shellfish samples from Navotas, Manila, Parañaque, and Las Piñas were free of oil and grease contamination, according to sensory evaluations conducted on July 31, August 6, and August 12.

The agency said it will maintain fish sampling and sensory evaluations to monitor for oil and grease in potentially impacted areas.

“Continuous monitoring and testing is essential in ensuring the safety of the consuming public,” it said.

50,000 fishers affected

Fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) said over 50, 000 fishers from Cavite, Bataan, and Metro Manila are now facing the severe impacts of the oil spill’s aftermath.

According to the group, fish traders are exploiting the oil spill to drive down fish prices even further, putting fisherfolk and mussel operators at a disadvantage.

Pamalakaya noted that before the oil spill, the regular farmgate price of mussels was ₱1,200 per tub. However, it has now plummeted to ₱300 to ₱500 due to concerns that the products might be contaminated with oil.

“Pahirapan na ang bentahan ng isda at tahong sa Navotas. Napipilitan ang mga mangingisdang pumayag sa napakababang presyong itinatakda ng mga komersyante kesa walang bumili at mabulok ang mga isda (The sale of fish and mussels in Navotas has become difficult. Fisherfolk are being forced to accept very low prices set by traders rather than having their catch go unsold and spoil),” Pamalakaya Vice Chairperson, Ronnel Arambulo, said in a statement.

The fishers' group previously condemned the government's fishing ban, stating it is even more damaging than the oil spill itself.

In Cavite and Bataan, Pamalakaya reported that most coastal areas are under a fishing ban with "no alternative or regular support" for the affected fisherfolk.

The group has called for government intervention to address the "exploitation and manipulation" by fish traders regarding farmgate prices in relation to the oil spill.

Gov't aid to fishers

On Saturday, August 3, the BFAR confirmed that it has provided food packs to all registered fishers in Noveleta, Cavite, impacted by the oil spill.

According to the agency, 1,612 fishers have received these packs, which contain essential items such as rice, canned goods, and other non-perishable foods to support their families.

Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa, the spokesperson of the Department of Agriculture (DA), had earlier said that DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. has ordered BFAR to give fuel assistance to fisherfolk affected by the oil spill, allowing them to access fishing areas far from the contaminated waters.

“Iyong bawat mangingisda ay makakatanggap ng P3,000 assistance mula rito sa fuel subsidy na ibinibigay ng DA (Each fisherman will receive ₱3,000 in assistance from the fuel subsidy provided by the DA),” he told the media.

On July 25, motor tanker (MT) Terranova, carrying 1.4 million liters of oil, capsized and sank off the waters of Limay, Bataan.

Green groups Greenpeace and Oceana had earlier called on the government to ensure accountability for the "preventable" incident, demanding action from both the responsible government agencies and the private owners of the tanker.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/14/fish-shellfish-from-cavite-province-still-not-safe-for-human-consumption-bfar>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Setting standards for oyster mushrooms in PH

The Department of Agriculture is gathering data to ensure quality of Philippine-grown mushrooms

BY JUNEP OCAMPO & MANILA BULLETIN AGRICULTURE

Aug 15, 2024 07:03 AM



To enhance the quality and marketability of oyster mushrooms in the Philippines, the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (DA-BAFS) Standards Research Division conducted Field Data Gathering activities in Nueva Vizcaya and Agusan del Sur recently.

These initiatives, organized in coordination with the respective DA-Regional Field Offices, are critical components of the ongoing efforts to develop the Philippine National Standards on Oyster Mushrooms, specifically focusing on product standards, grading, and classification, said the DA-BAFS.

From August 7 to 8, 2024, the Standards Research Division team gathered in Nueva Vizcaya, the third-highest producer of mushrooms in the country, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) 2023 data. This province, known for its agricultural diversity, was selected as an ideal location for gathering data that will help establish national standards to ensure oyster mushrooms produced in the region and beyond meet the highest quality benchmarks.



The DA-BAFS said the two-day Field Data Gathering activity in Nueva Vizcaya was designed to collect local data on key aspects of oyster mushroom production, including minimum quality requirements, classifications based on quality and size, tolerances for quality and size variations, presentation, marking or labeling, and methods of analysis and sampling.

“The inclusion of one-on-one interviews with oyster mushroom growers from the municipalities of Bayombong, Bagabag, and Villaverde added a vital layer of insights, grounding the standards in real-world farming conditions,” the DA-BAFS added.



Earlier, from July 23 to 25, 2024, a similar Field Data Gathering activity was conducted in Agusan del Sur, which is part of the Caraga region—identified as the top-producing region of mushrooms in the country, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority’s 2023 report.

Agusan del Sur is where majority of Caraga's oyster mushroom interventions have been focused. According to DA-BAFS, the province provided a rich source of data for the standards development.

The Field Data Gathering activity in Agusan del Sur followed the same rigorous process as in Nueva Vizcaya, aiming to collect data on the minimum quality requirements, classifications, tolerances, presentation, marking or labeling, contaminants, hygiene, and methods of analysis and sampling.

“By involving local growers, we ensure that the standards being developed would reflect the unique conditions and needs of mushroom farmers in the region,” the DA-BAFS said.

For local farmers in both Nueva Vizcaya and Agusan del Sur, the development of these national standards could be a game-changer.

“Standardized grading and classification could open up new markets, both domestically and internationally, for their oyster mushrooms. It could also lead to better pricing structures, as buyers would have clear criteria for assessing the quality of the produce,” said the DA-BAFS.

“Aside from this, the emphasis on proper hygiene, contaminants control, and accurate labeling could enhance food safety and traceability, factors that are increasingly important to consumers. As these standards are adopted nationwide, they could significantly elevate the competitiveness of Philippine oyster mushrooms in both local and global markets,” the bureau added.



In the ASEAN region, a set of standards has been formulated since 2014 and sets comprehensive guidelines for the quality and classification of commercial oyster mushrooms, specifically from the *Pleurotus* species, excluding King Oyster mushrooms.

The ASEAN Standards emphasize that mushrooms must be whole, fresh, and free from pests, damage, or foreign matter, ensuring they can withstand transport and handling. The mushrooms are classified into three grades: "Extra," Class I, and Class II, based on quality and appearance. Additionally, the standard outlines size classifications, packaging requirements, labeling, and compliance with hygiene practices.

The standards aim to ensure uniformity and safety in the marketing and consumption of fresh oyster mushrooms. They also include the vernacular names for oyster mushrooms in nine of the 10 ASEAN countries. Of these countries, Brunei has two names for the oyster mushrooms while Cambodia does not have a local term for it.

Vernacular Names for Oyster Mushroom

Country	Vernacular Names
Brunei Darussalam	Kulat tiram Cendawan tiram
Cambodia	Pset amboh
Indonesia	Jamur tiram
Lao PDR	Hed Nang Rom
Malaysia	Cendawan tiram
Myanmar	
Philippines	Kabute
Thailand	Hed Nang Rom
Viet Nam	Nam so

Photos courtesy of the Department of Agriculture Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (DA-BAFS) Facebook page.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/8/15/setting-standards-for-oyster-mushrooms-in-ph>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

ASF checkpoints set up in Metro

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

August 15, 2024 | 12:00am



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MANILA, Philippines — Checkpoints have been set up in Metro Manila as part of the government’s efforts to contain the spread of African swine fever (ASF), the Department of Agriculture (DA) said yesterday.

The checkpoints were set up along Commonwealth, Mindanao and Balintawak Avenues in Quezon City and in Marulas and Malanday in Valenzuela, DA spokesman Arnel de Mesa said during a briefing.

“These inspection sites will check the shipping permits and veterinary certificates as per Administrative Order No. 5. If shippers fail to present a shipping permit, the shipment will be returned to point of origin,” he said.

De Mesa added that the pigs would be condemned immediately once the animals show signs of ASF.

According to De Mesa, Philippine National Police personnel will assist veterinary officials from the Bureau of Animal Industry and local government units in the inspection.

He said that the checkpoints aim to protect the ongoing repopulation program in Central Luzon.

“The checkpoints are located in the north and south. We have an ongoing big repopulation program in Central Luzon, most especially in Bulacan and Pampanga areas, so we don’t want to compromise our repopulation program amid the new infected zones in Southern Luzon,” De Mesa said, referring to the fresh outbreaks of ASF in Batangas.

The Batangas provincial government has declared a state of calamity in the province amid the spread of ASF.

De Mesa said that the checkpoints would be operational until the end of the year.

He said that checkpoints were also set up in Barangay Turbina in Calamba, Laguna; along the STAR tollway in Sto. Tomas, Batangas and in Barangay Amuyong, Alfonso, Cavite. – **Janvic Mateo**

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/08/15/2377967/asf-checkpoints-set-metro>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

BFAR: No plan to lift Cavite fishing ban

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

August 15, 2024 | 12:00am



Greenpeace Philippines on July 28, 2024, reported that the oil spill from the tanker Terra Nova that sank off the coast of Bataan has now reached the waters of Hagonoy, Bulacan, approximately four kilometers from the coastline.

Facebook / Greenpeace Philippines

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources is not planning to recommend the lifting of the fishing ban in Cavite as fish in affected coastal areas are not safe for human consumption, a BFAR official said yesterday. At a press conference, BFAR spokesman Nasser Briguera said fish samples taken from the coast of Cavite did not pass the laboratory analysis standards.

“We are following scientific protocols in terms of declaring whether or not a particular area can be declared negative of traces of oil. As of now, we don’t recommend the lifting of the ban in Cavite based on the results of our laboratory analysis,” Briguera said.

Earlier, fishers' group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) urged Cavite Gov. Jonvic Remulla to lift the ban imposed on eight coastal municipalities due to the sinking of oil tankers in Bataan.

“It will compromise the safety of the public if there are still traces of oil and grease (in fish caught in affected areas),” Briguera said.

Pamalakaya said the ban is detrimental to the livelihood of fisherfolk as these areas are not affected by the oil spill.

Remulla declared a state of calamity in Bacoor, Kawit, Maragondon, Naic, Noveleta, Rosario, Tanza and Ternate after two oil tankers sank in the waters off Bataan.

A no-catch zone has been implemented for all shellfish in the province.

In the latest bulletin issued following the oil spill in Bataan, the BFAR said that fish samples taken from Cavite showed traces of oil and grease, and presence of harmful contaminants called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH).

Briguera said the fishing ban would remain indefinitely until fish samples test negative for PAH.

He said fish from Bataan, Batangas, Bulacan, Pampanga and Metro Manila are safe for human consumption.

“Fish and shellfish samples from Las Piñas, Parañaque and Navotas were found to be free from oil and grease contamination based on the results of the sensory evaluation conducted on July 31, and Aug. 6 and 12,” the BFAR said.

It said fish samples from Batangas, particularly in Nasugbu, Lian and Calatagan also tested negative for oil and grease.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/08/15/2377920/bfar-no-plan-lift-cavite-fishing-ban>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

NFA stocks more than double in H1

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

August 15, 2024 | 12:00am



This photo shows two workers passing a sack of NFA rice.

The STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The National Food Authority (NFA) more than doubled its rice stocks at the end of first half, driven by more purchases from local farmers on the back of a higher buying price.

The state-run grains agency reported that it held 2.94 million 50-kilogram bags of rice or about 147,199 metric tons at the end of June, which was 142 percent over last year's 60,820 MT inventory.

At the end of June, the NFA had 4.32 million 50-kilogram bags of palay or about 216,000 MT.

The NFA noted that it procured 3.43 million 50-kilogram bags of palay or about 171,608 MT in the second quarter, exceeding its target of 101,010 MT.

Furthermore, the volume procured was 86.7 percent higher than the 12,899.85 MT of palay bought in the same quarter of last year, according to the NFA.

“The procurement performance exceeded its target due to the ongoing implementation of the PRICERS program, which has effectively encouraged more farmers to deliver and sell their palay harvests, particularly in areas with sporadic harvests,” it said in its recent accomplishment report.

The program was implemented by the state agency in April that allows it to buy palay on a price range basis depending on the prevailing market price in a given province to be able to compete with private traders.

Under the program, the NFA buys clean and dry palay between P23 and P30 per kilogram while it purchases fresh or wet palay from P17 to P23 per kilo, depending on the market conditions in a given area.

The NFA posted the highest palay procurement during the quarter in May with a total volume purchase of 2.24 million bags, followed by April with 833,521 bags and June with 355,910 bags.

Meanwhile, the state agency said it distributed 130,527 bags of rice or about 6,256.34 MT as part of its buffer stocking mandate.

“Sales of NFA rice was limited only to disaster/calamity response of local government units and other government relief agencies which did not require substantial volume for the government’s relief intervention,” it said.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/08/15/2377875/nfa-stocks-more-double-h1>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

LANDBANK honors outstanding partners in countryside, national development

INQUIRER.net BrandRoom / 09:00 AM August 14, 2024

Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK) celebrated its 61st anniversary by recognizing its exceptional development partners in the delivery of essential financial and support services in local communities nationwide.



Finance Secretary and LANDBANK Chairman Ralph G. Recto (2nd from left), Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. (leftmost), and LANDBANK President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz (center) confer the Ulirang Magsasaka Award to Deodany L. Cara (3rd from left) with his wife, Ma. Cecilia Cara (4th from left) during the LANDBANK 2024 MERIT Awards on 8 August 2024 in Malate, Manila. Joining them are LANDBANK Directors Virginia N. Orogo (6th from left) and Nancy D. Irlanda (7th from left), together with Executive Vice President Ma. Celeste A. Burgos (8th from left) and Vice President Rolando G. Santos. (rightmost).

During an appreciation event held on 08 August 2024 at LANDBANK Plaza in Manila, the Bank honored outstanding clients and partners across various sectors through the **Models of Excellence Recognition Initiative for Top Bank Clients (MERIT) Awards**.

“The success stories of our awardees mirror the potential of our nation. It illustrates how far we can progress when we commit to being each other’s steadfast partners in

development,” said Finance Secretary and LANDBANK Chairman Ralph G. Recto in addressing the MERIT awardees.

“Your work and contributions send a powerful message—that we can put an end to poverty not by looking out only for ourselves, but by working hand in hand together,” he added.



(Left) Finance Secretary and LANDBANK Chairman Ralph G. Recto congratulates the MERIT awardees for their achievements and contributions to building a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economy. (Right) LANDBANK President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz expresses her gratitude to clients and partners for their continued trust and support for the Bank.

The LANDBANK MERIT Awards recognized the Bank's high-performing clients who have become models of operational excellence, which include cooperatives, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), corporations and large enterprises, countryside financial institutions (CFIs), microfinance institutions (MFIs), and individual farmers.

LANDBANK President and CEO Lynette V. Ortiz expressed appreciation to the MERIT awardees for their contributions to advancing agriculture, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion, and reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to helping them achieve their full potential.

"When our clients thrive, we thrive. Every achievement represents our shared success; each milestone is a reflection of the strength of our partnership. That's why it is only fitting that we pay tribute to you—our dear clients and partners—for your steadfast support and invaluable contributions on this meaningful journey," said LANDBANK President and CEO Ortiz.

Finance Secretary Recto and LANDBANK President and CEO Ortiz were joined by Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr., LANDBANK Directors Virginia N. Orogo, Nancy D. Irlanda, and David D. Erro, and LANDBANK Executive Vice President Ma. Celeste A. Burgos and Vice President Rolando G. Santos in presenting the awards to 14 MERIT awardees.

Department of Finance (DOF) Undersecretary Maria Luwalhati C. Dorotan-Tiuseco, Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary Atty. Asis G. Perez, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Assistant Secretary Lennard Constantine C. Serrano, Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) Assistant Secretary Santiago S. Lim, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Assistant Director Daisy B. Pabuaya, and Philippine Guarantee Corporation (PGC) Senior Vice President Emmanuel R. Torres also graced the event.

Under the Gawad sa Pinakatanging Kooperatiba (Gawad PITAK), the Alicia Neighborhood Multi-Purpose Cooperative and Sorosoro Ibaba Development Cooperative were hailed as outstanding agri-based cooperatives in the medium and large categories, respectively. The Ating Ani Nueva Ecija Multipurpose Cooperative and Ligas Kooperatiba ng Bayan sa Pagpapaunlad were likewise honored for their outstanding contributions under the non-agricultural category.

The Gawad MSME was awarded to Ms. Fralyn B. Cruz and Sandig Medical Clinic and Hospital under the agri-based and non-agri-based sectors, respectively.

The Gawad Kaagapay was given to DoubleDragon Corporation, Asialink Finance Corporation, and Soliman E.C. Septic Tank Disposal for their contributions as corporations and large enterprises to growing the local economy.

ProFarmers Rural Banking Corporation, Producers Savings Bank Corporation, and ASA Philippines Foundation, Inc. were recognized with the Gawad PFI for their exceptional performance under the rural bank, thrift bank, and microfinance categories, respectively.

The Ulirang Magsasaka award was awarded to Mr. Deodany L. Cara, while Mr. Roderick G. Capalongan received a special citation for his innovative approach to integrated farming.

LANDBANK is celebrating its 61st anniversary this month, representing more than six decades of advancing development, inclusion, and sustainability in serving the nation.

About LANDBANK

LANDBANK is the largest development financial institution in the country promoting financial inclusion, digital transformation, and sustainable national development. Present in all 82 provinces in the country, the Bank is committed to provide accessible and responsive financial solutions to empower Filipinos from countryside to countrywide.

ADVT.

This article is brought to you by LANDBANK.

<https://business.inquirer.net/474570/landbank-honors-outstanding-partners-in-countryside-national-development>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Marcos orders DA to make soil testing more accessible nationwide

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

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 01:17 PM August 14, 2024



URBAN RICE FIELDS / JANUARY 17, 2024 A farmer inspects farm plots after planting rice for second cropping season at a 1,000 square meter rice field in Sitio Libis, Barangay Krus na Ligas in Quezon City on Wednesday, January 17, 2024. (INQUIRER file photo / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE)

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. directed the Department of Agriculture (DA) to improve the number of soil testing centers nationwide, Malacañang said on Wednesday.

According to the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), Marcos issued the directive during a meeting with the DA in Malacañang on Tuesday.

“Kulang na kulang tayo sa (we severely lack) soil analysis. We cannot tell the farmers how much fertilizer to use. We cannot give them any advice because we don’t know ourselves what the condition of the soil is,” the PCO quoted Marcos as saying.

that there should be at least one soil testing center for every region to allow agriculturists to “respond promptly to farmers seeking guidance on crops suitable on their lands.”

Meanwhile, the DA, for its part, said “restructuring” efforts are now being undertaken to increase the number of government soil testing centers.

The DA said it is aiming to have a total of 12 facilities by 2025.

<https://business.inquirer.net/474814/marcos-orders-da-to-make-soil-testing-more-accessible-nationwide>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Explainer: Manila Bay oil spills' harm on fishing, environment, public health

By: [Cristina Eloisa Baclig](#) - Content Researcher Writer / [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 08:57 AM August 14, 2024



OIL SPILL composite image from Inquirer/PDI file photos

MANILA, Philippines—As the oil spill from three sunken vessels — MT Terranova, MTKR Jason Bradley, and MV Mirola 1 — spreads across a significant portion of Manila Bay, contaminating the waters of Cavite, Bulacan, and Bataan, authorities are issuing urgent warnings about the severe health risks posed by exposure to this environmental disaster.

While the government, environmental organizations, and health authorities intensify their efforts to manage the escalating crisis, the public is strongly urged to take preventive measures.

An international ocean protection and conservation group further warned about how the toxic spill continues to pose a grave threat to the environment and the health and livelihood of communities in affected areas.

What happened?

The series of maritime disasters began on July 25, 2024, when MT Terra Nova, a tanker carrying 1.4 million liters of industrial fuel oil, capsized off the coast of Limay, Bataan. The vessel, en route to Iloilo, sank while Typhoon Carina (Gaemi) ravaged Metro Manila and surrounding provinces.

Just two days later, on July 27, 2024, the MTKR Jason Bradley, which was anchored in the waters off Bataan, sank nine meters deep near Barangay Cabcaben in Mariveles — approximately 600 yards from the shore.

The vessel was carrying 5,500 liters of diesel when it sank during the onslaught of Super Typhoon Carina. Initially, the shipping company claimed that there was no fuel cargo onboard.

The latest incident occurred on July 31, 2024, when the MV Mirola 1 ran aground in shallow waters off the coast of Sitio Quiapo, Barangay Biaan — also in Mariveles — causing the ship to tip over.

Oil spills endanger public health. Depending on how people come in contact with an oil spill, the following are some of the immediate health effects that an individual may experience:

The infographic consists of three horizontal bars, each with a white icon on a blue background and text on a light gray background. The first bar shows a person's head in profile with small circles representing particles being inhaled. The second bar shows an open hand. The third bar shows a plate with a fork and a spoon. Below these is a dark blue box with white text and a phone icon.

Through inhalation
Nausea, eye irritation, increased blood pressure, irregular heart rhythm, headache, loss of appetite, and difficulty concentrating.

Through skin contact
Skin irritation, blisters, burns, peeling skin, and dermatitis.

Through ingestion
Vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, irritability, and unconsciousness. Large amounts may result in convulsions, coma, or death.

If you are experiencing any symptoms from exposure to the oil spill, seek immediate medical assistance from the nearest health facility and healthcare professional.

 **1555**
DOH hotline

GRAPHIC: Ed Lustan / INQUIRER.net

According to Karagatan Patrol, an online platform created by the renowned marine conservation organization Oceana, it is estimated that the oil spill from the sunken vessels affects 50 percent of Manila Bay, with the pollution spreading to Cavite, Bulacan, and Bataan.

Manila Bay serves as a crucial spawning ground for fish like sardines, a key source of protein for millions of Filipinos.

Oceana warned that the oil spill threatens to smother and kill vital mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass beds in the bay, which are essential for the breeding and feeding of marine species.

The bay also provides habitat for at least 60 migratory bird species, including 12 threatened ones, just as their migration season begins.

“The destruction of these habitats leads to long-term ecological damage for years to come and puts the coastal nation at further risk from increasing storms,” Oceana said.

Recovery, siphoning efforts

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) began recovery operations for the MV Mirola 1 on August 1. Photos shared on the PCG’s official Facebook page showed personnel manually collecting the oil inside the vessel.

The PCG said the collected oil was carefully placed into large drums, which were then prepared for transport to a waste disposal facility to prevent any potential health hazards to local residents.

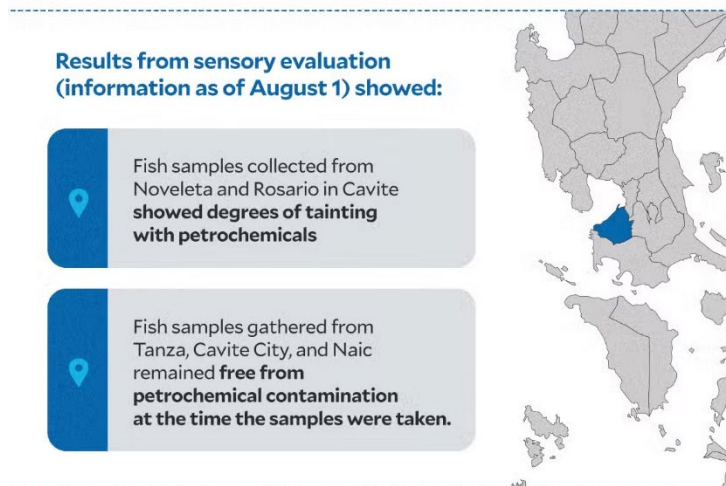
Additionally, on August 7, the PCG took part in a simulation exercise at Lamao Port in Limay, Bataan. This drill was described as a crucial part of the ongoing siphoning operation for the MTKR Terranova.

“We learned that heavy fuel oil flows when siphoned and confirmed the necessity of hot tapping each tank to prevent water mixing,” said Harbor Star Shipping Services Inc., the salvor contracted for the cleanup.

“This process is time-consuming due to water depth and divers’ 25-minute limits. With these insights, we can establish a timeline by Friday,” it said.

Oceana has reported that traces of oil have already been detected in fishing villages in the provinces of Bulacan and Cavite. In Cavite, the Ternate Marine Park, a popular beach destination and a nesting ground for sea turtles, is also feared to be affected by the spill.

Continuous fish sampling is being conducted by the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in affected areas.



But BFAR maintains that as a precautionary measure, fish harvested from areas where oil slicks are observed are deemed unsafe for human consumption. This is to avoid incidents of food poisoning as a result of ingesting contaminated seafood.

INQ | SOURCE: DA-BFAR

GRAPHIC: Ed Lustan / INQUIRER.net

Eight towns in Cavite—Bacoor, Kawit, Noveleta, Rosario, Tanza, Naic, Maragondon, and Ternate— have already declared a “state of calamity.”

Under the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, a state of calamity is defined as “a condition involving mass casualty and/or major damages to property, disruption of means of livelihoods, roads and normal way of life of people in the affected areas as a result of the occurrence of natural or human-induced hazard.”

‘Unsafe for consumption’

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has issued a warning to the public to avoid consuming fish caught in areas impacted by the oil spill in Bataan province, as these fish are deemed unsafe for human consumption.

“[T]he Bureau maintains that as a precautionary measure, fish harvested from areas where oil slicks are observed be deemed unsafe for human consumption. This is to

avoid incidents of food poisoning as a result of ingesting contaminated seafood,” BFAR said in a bulletin.

BFAR stated that it is carrying out continuous fish sample tests in the affected areas of Central Luzon, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon), and the National Capital Region (NCR) to determine if fish and other seafood are contaminated.

Results from a sensory evaluation showed fish samples collected from the towns of Noveleta and Rosario in Cavite province have “some degree of tainting with petrochemicals, albeit before any oil slicks were noticed in the area.”

Fish samples gathered from Cavite City as well as the towns of Tanza and Naic remain free from petrochemical contamination.

In a radio interview last July 30, PCG spokesperson Rear Admiral Armand Balilo said fishing in areas affected by the oil spill in Manila Bay is not advisable

A no-catch and no-sell zone for all shellfish has also been issued in the province of Cavite.

Health impacts

In addition to the BFAR’s warning, the Department of Health (DOH) emphasized the immediate health risks associated with consuming contaminated water or seafood, including symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, coughing, irritability, and unconsciousness.

The DOH also warned that ingesting large quantities of contaminated water or seafood could lead to more severe outcomes, such as convulsions, coma, or even death.

Oil spills pose a significant threat to public health, not only through ingestion but also via other forms of exposure. The immediate symptoms associated with these exposures include:

- **Inhalation: Nausea, eye irritation, increased blood pressure, irregular heart rhythm, headaches, loss of appetite, and difficulty concentrating.**
- **Skin contact: Skin irritation, blisters, burns, peeling skin, and dermatitis.**

Individuals experiencing any of these symptoms due to exposure to the oil spill are urged to seek immediate medical attention at the nearest health facility or consult a health care professional.

Do's and don't's

The DOH has issued comprehensive guidelines for residents living in or near areas impacted by the oil spill, detailing both recommended actions and essential precautions.

According to the DOH, the following measures should be observed:

- **Keep children away from affected areas.**
- **Erect warning signs near contaminated water bodies to inform the public.**
- **Ensure your drinking water is clean and sourced from approved suppliers.**
- **Maintain strict cleanliness of food for both human consumption and farm animals.**
- **If exposed to the oil spill or any related chemicals, decontaminate by removing all affected clothing.**
- **Immediately wash any exposed areas of your body with mild soap and water.**

- **Seek prompt medical attention at the nearest health facility or consult a healthcare professional if you experience any symptoms related to exposure.**

The DOH also provided specific instructions for responders, volunteers, and cleanup workers, highlighting the importance of the following:

- **Wear protective gear such as gowns, gloves, boots, and goggles.**
- **Wash any oil-contaminated clothing and glasses after each cleanup operation.**
- **Properly dispose of used gloves.**

DO'S AND DON'TS DURING AN OIL SPILL

WHAT TO DO

- ✓ **Keep children away** from affected areas.
- ✓ **Put up warning signs** in affected areas, near affected bodies of water.
- ✓ **Ensure your drinking water** is clean and from approved water sources.
- ✓ **Food cleanliness** for both humans and farm animals must be ensured.
- ✓ When exposed to the spill or any chemical from it, **decontaminate by removing all clothes exposed to oil.**
- ✓ **Immediately wash** exposed areas of your body with mild soap and water.
- ✓ If experiencing symptoms from exposure to the oil spill, **seek immediate medical assistance.**

THINGS TO AVOID



Do not bathe, wash clothes, or wade in oil spill-affected areas.



Do not bathe or have your pets or farm animals drink from these bodies of water.



Do not eat seafood like fish and shellfish from affected areas and nearby water sources unless cleared by local authorities. These will be examined to ensure food safety.



Do not burn debris (such as dirty trash or driftwood) contaminated with oil.

INQ | SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

GRAPHIC: Ed Lustan / INQUIRER.net

Additionally, the health department asked the public to avoid the following:

- **Bathing, washing clothes, or wading in areas affected by the oil spill to avoid exposure to the oil and any chemicals used in the cleanup.**
- **Allowing your pets or farm animals to bathe in or drink from contaminated water sources.**
- **Consuming seafood, such as fish and shellfish, from affected areas and nearby water bodies unless cleared by local authorities. These will be tested to ensure food safety.**

- **Burning debris, such as oil-contaminated trash or driftwood.**

“While oil spills are rare, they can cause extensive damage to marine life and pose significant health risks to those exposed,” the DOH warned.

Fishermen struggle amid fishing bans

BFAR has estimated that the oil spill will devastate the livelihood of tens of thousands of fishers in Bataan, Bulacan, Pampanga, and Cavite, with projected monthly revenue losses of up to P83.8 million in Bataan alone and more than P70 million in Bulacan and Pampanga.

Data from the Department of Agriculture (DA) further detailed that 28,373 fishers and 5,810 boats have been hit with an estimated forgone income of P78.69 million over eight days since the fishing ban was imposed on July 30, 2024.



GRAPHIC: Ed Lustan / INQUIRER.net

The Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya), a progressive fisherfolk organization, criticized the “indefinite fishing ban” imposed on nine coastal towns in Cavite, arguing that the ban is more harmful to fishers’ livelihood than the oil spill itself.

“The government’s response to the oil spill has done more harm to the fishers’ livelihoods than the spill itself. While Cavite is under a fishing ban, the fishers are not receiving any regular support,” Ronnel Arambulo, vice chairperson of Pamalakaya, said in Filipino.

“We are calling for the lifting of the fishing ban because the oil is no longer directly affecting the fishing grounds of the province,” Arambulo added.

Stakes are high

“Toxic oil spills in our oceans are like fires in our forests, leaving a path of destruction that brings decades of negative impacts,” Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Oceana’s vice president in the Philippines, said in a statement.

Ramos added that oil spills are “a deathtrap for marine ecosystems” and have detrimental effects on people, wildlife, and the environment.

She warned that if more than one million liters of oil onboard one of the sunken vessels is not safely removed, the resulting spill could have devastating effects, potentially killing marine wildlife, destroying mangroves, and endangering people’s health, food supply, and livelihood.

“We know what’s at stake here: jobs, food, exports, and even lives. Even after the oil pollution is cleaned up, seafood may be contaminated for years,” she said.

Ramos also underscored the long-term impact on the country, stating: “[t]he people of the Philippines will be dealing with the impacts of this devastation long after the headlines fade, and the government must do everything it can to mitigate this disaster as quickly as possible.”

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1972664/explainer-manila-bay-oil-spills-harm-on-fishing-environment-public-health>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Learning from innovative Zero Hunger programs in Spain, Belarus, Niger

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:12 AM August 15, 2024



MANILA, Philippines — According to the World Food Programme (WFP), as many as 309 million people across 71 countries are facing acute levels of food insecurity in 2024. The Sustainable Development Report 2024 also revealed that, at a global level, particular progress among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) has been stagnant since 2020, including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

As the world strives to attain the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs, it is worth looking into the strides some countries have made toward the goal of zero hunger.

Spain's score this year in SDG 2 indicated moderate improvement, but still with major challenges. A 2024 report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Spanish companies showed a notable increase in companies' interest in sustainability. The report, carried out by the United Nations Global Compact Spain, recognized the Armando Alvarez Group—a private company representing one of Spain's largest family-run companies, engaged in sectors such as agriculture, geosynthetics, forestry and renewable energy—for its good business practices that contribute to SDG 2.

The group achieved this recognition through strategic partnerships with third parties to create innovative products in agriculture that provide resource efficiency and promote more sustainable and responsible agricultural development.

In the 2023 Global Hunger Index (GHI), Belarus ranked as one of 20 countries with a low GHI score of less than five. The GHI looks into undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting and child mortality to compute a country's GHI score.

But an initiative by Ekaterina Telegina and GreenWise LLC showed how women's social entrepreneurship in rural areas can help support SDG 2 in Belarus. In April 2024, the initiative launched a project to create a vegetable cleaning production facility to supply high-quality and fresh produce. This involved cleaning and vacuum-packaging vegetables to increase their shelf life and nutritional properties.

The products became in demand among catering establishments, cafes and restaurants, and the project was supported by the Brest Local Regional Development Fund as well as by national and international organizations.

Another good practice related to ending hunger is the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). Featured in the SDG Good Practices by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2020, the FMNR is a low-cost land restoration technique used to combat poverty and hunger among poor subsistence farmers in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

The FMNR began its operation in 1983 in Niger. Since then, it has helped farmers protect and manage the growth of trees and shrubs that regenerate naturally in their fields. An easy, low-cost way for farmers to increase the number of trees in their fields, the program has been replicated successfully in other African countries, with FMNR helping not only increase food security but also improve gender equality. —*sources: sdgs.un.org, wfp.org, dashboards.sdgindex.org, sdgs.by, globalhungerindex.org, armandoalvarez.com, pactomundial.org*

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1972908/learning-from-innovative-zero-hunger-programs-in-spain-belarus-niger>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Fish production declines 6% in second quarter

August 14, 2024 | 8:40 pm



PHOTOGRAPH © ALO LANTIN/WWF-PHILIPPINES/ WWF.ORG.PH

FISHERIES output fell 6% in the second quarter led by the marine municipal fisheries, inland municipal fisheries, and aquaculture segments, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

In its fisheries report, the PSA said production was 1.02 million metric tons (MMT) in the second quarter.

The commercial fishery segment reported a 21.9% year-on-year gain for the quarter to 286,602 MT.

Marine municipal fisheries, which accounted for 25.5% of overall output, declined 6.1% year on year to 259,465 MT.

Inland municipal fisheries production declined 21.9% to 30,100 MT. Its output was equivalent to 3% of overall fisheries production.

The PSA added that aquaculture production for the three months to June period fell 17.7% to 471,400 MT, accounting for 46.3% of total output.

Of the 20 major species, declines were posted by tiger prawns or *sugpo* (40.3%), grouper or *lapu-lapu* (34.8%), and seaweed (25.8%).

Production gains were reported for skipjack (141.2%), bigeye tuna (94.1%), and yellowfin tuna (43.2%).

The Department of Agriculture said it is looking to improve conservation and management of tuna species to maintain the population and long-term industry viability.

It made the statement at the 20th regular meeting of the Scientific Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

“For the Philippines, the outcomes of this session are of particular significance. The tuna industry is a major catalyst of economic growth and food security in our nation,” Agriculture Undersecretary for Fisheries Drusila Esther E. Bayate said.

“As such, we are deeply interested in ensuring fair and equitable access to tuna resources,” she added.
— **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/08/14/614123/fish-production-declines-6-in-second-quarter/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Rice tariff cuts to hurt collections, says Customs

August 15, 2024 | 12:31 am



Well-milled rice is being sold for P45 per kilo at a Kadiwa store in Manila, Aug. 1, 2024. — PHILIPPINE STAR/EDD GUMBAN

THE BUREAU of Customs (BoC) expects the implementation of rice tariff cuts to hurt its revenue collection this year, its chief said.

“Definitely, there’s an impact on our collection on revenue for rice importations because reducing the tariff rate from 35% to 15%, even if the same volume arrives, you’re basically reducing 20% of what we should have collected. So, there’s an impact,” Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio told reporters on the sidelines of a Senate hearing late on Tuesday.

Since the start of the year, the BoC has collected P29 billion in tariffs from rice importations, he said.

In June, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. issued Executive Order No. 62, cutting tariffs on rice imports to 15% from the current 35% until 2028.

Mr. Rubio recognized the need to reduce tariffs to make rice prices more affordable to the public.

“If we lose revenues, at least the (tariff) reduction will cause the price of rice to be reduced,” he said.

In the first half of the year, Customs collected P456.04 billion, exceeding its P442.62-billion goal for the period by 3.03%.

The BoC expects to collect P939.69 billion in 2024 and P1.06 trillion in 2025.

“If the imports arrive, we will do a proper assessment duties and taxes so we can collect them,” Mr. Rubio said in mixed English and Filipino.

During the Senate hearing before the Development Budget Coordination Committee on Tuesday, Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto said that tariff cuts are temporarily implemented while the government works on scaling up productivity in the agriculture sector.

“Today, we’re importing roughly 20% of our demand, so if we’re importing that much, it would be appropriate to reduce our tariffs while we are increasing production,” he said.

Rice prices are expected to go down to below P50 per kilogram by end-August, the Finance chief said.
— **BMDC**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/08/15/614097/rice-tariff-cuts-to-hurt-collections-says-customs/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

El Niño triggers 3-million ton corn deficit in Southern Africa

- **BusinessMirror**
- **August 15, 2024**



A failed corn crop due to drought at a farm in Glendale, Zimbabwe.

Southern African nations battling the fallout of a record El Niño-induced drought this year will need to import at least an additional 3 million tons of corn in the coming months, driving up food costs, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network said.

Farmers from Angola to Zambia and Mozambique suffered the worst dry spell in more than a century during the middle of the growing season earlier this year. That wiped out vast swathes of the main crop of corn, or maize as it's known locally.

More than 30 million people impacted by the El Niño-induced drought will need humanitarian help through March, Fews Net said in a report late Tuesday. Peak regional food-aid requirements will be about 25 percent higher than the previous severe drought caused by the weather phenomenon in 2016-17, the US Agency for International Development-funded organization said.

“While several countries are in the process of securing contracts to import maize from international markets, particularly in South America, constrained regional market supply is driving inflated maize prices,” it said. “In Malawi and Zimbabwe,

for example, maize grain prices are already around 130 percent to 150 percent above average for this time of year.”

The United Nations’ World Food Programme is seeking 290,000 tons of corn from as far afield as Mexico and Ukraine as it mounts its biggest-yet drought response in Southern Africa, the organization said earlier this month.

Coffee and pepper producer Phuc Sinh Corp. will receive a loan of as much as \$25 million from SAIL Investments’ Netherlands-based &Green Fund.

The Ho Chi Minh City-based company, which also exports chilies, cashew nuts, cassia and other products, is the first Vietnamese company to get direct support from the environmentally focused foundation, Phuc Sinh said in an emailed statement. It will use the funds to ensure deforestation-free coffee supply chains, the company said.

“We are committed not only to improving product quality but also to ensuring that Phuc Sinh’s production process contributes to environmental protection and community support,” the company said.

Founded in 2017, SAIL’s &Green invests in agricultural enterprises that meet ESG standards to promote green economic development, environmental protection, and climate change mitigation, according to its website. Vietnam is one of ten jurisdictions the fund is investing in.

Vietnamese businesses have been under growing pressure to implement ESG practices as global investors push for both profits and sustainability. The Southeast Asian nation has said it aims to reach the goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Phuc Sinh exports products to markets including the United States, Europe and Australia, and says it’s the Southeast Asian nation’s top pepper exporter, accounting for 8 percent of the global market share.

&Green invested \$20 million in Netherlands-based Mercon B.V. in late 2022 to promote a sustainable Vietnam coffee supply chain. *Bloomberg News*

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/15/el-nino-triggers-3m-ton-corn-deficit-in-southern-africa/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Groups file raps against TC over rice tariff reduction

- Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz
- August 15, 2024



Farmers' groups on Wednesday filed complaints of grave misconduct and gross abuse of authority with the Office of the Ombudsman against the Tariff Commission (TC) over the implementation of Executive Order 62 (EO 62), which reduced tariffs on imported rice to 15 percent.

According to Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (Sinag), the EO violates the limitations and conditions under Republic Act (RA) 10863, or the Modernizing the Customs and Tariff Administration Act.

Rosendo So, head of the group, said their monitoring since the implementation of EO 62 shows "no noticeable decrease" in rice prices.

He noted that the target prices of P29 or even P45 to P49 per kilo of rice are not yet seen in the markets.

Atty. Virgie Lacsa Suarez, the group's legal counsel, alleged that the TC committed grave misconduct and gross abuse of authority by failing to conduct the necessary consultations, hearings, and investigations before recommending the tariff reduction.

She added that the TC violated the Flexible Clause of RA 10863, which mandates a proper process before modifying tariffs.

The complaint was filed by Sinag, the Federation of Free Farmers, the United Broiler Raisers Association, and the Magsasaka Partylist. The respondents in this complaint include TC Chairperson Marilou P. Mendoza, TC Commissioner Ernesto L. Albano, and TC Commissioner Maricosa Paderon.

The groups said previous EOs involving tariff reductions were preceded by consultations, investigations, and hearings. However, in the case of EO 62, there was no petition from any party, no investigation, and no public hearing before the order was issued.

“All previous issuances of EOs on tariff reduction, prior to EO 62—consultations, investigations, and hearings were conducted. A specific hearing for each item was conducted, notices of hearings were sent, and we, the complainants, were even asked to submit our respective positions,” said So.

He also said they had written to the TC to clarify the legal basis of EO 62, but the TC responded with “statements that were inconsistent with their own rules.”

“The TC made a mockery of its own rules when it claimed that past hearings would suffice to issue an executive order. This is both absurd and dangerous.”

In EO 62, the groups said no petition was filed by any interested party before the tariff reduction was recommended, and no investigation was conducted on any petition related to the modification of the tariff and its duration on rice, maize, and pork.

The groups also claimed that no findings or recommendations were submitted by the TC officials to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) Board based on any petition related to the modification of the tariff.

According to the complaints, no investigation was conducted under the Flexible Clause of RA 10863. The TC is required to complete its investigation and submit its report of findings and recommendations to Neda within 30 days after the public hearing. The last public hearing conducted by the TC was in October 2023, and the investigation took place that same year. The tariff extension was eventually approved under EO 50 in 2023.

The groups stated that there was never any proposal to reduce tariffs, specifically for rice, to 15 percent until 2028, which was communicated to stakeholders before EO 62 was issued.

They added that if the respondents argue that the comprehensive review is the basis for their recommendations for the implementation of EO 62, this does not equate to compliance with the public hearing and investigation required under the Flexible Clause.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/15/groups-file-raps-against-tc-over-rice-tariff-reduction/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

‘Regional cooperation will ensure viability of fishing industry’

- **Andrea E. San Juan**
- **August 15, 2024**

The Philippines is banking on regional cooperation and collaboration among the 26 member countries of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to ensure the viability of the fishing industry, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In her speech at the opening ceremony of the 20th Regular Session of the Scientific Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), Agriculture Undersecretary for Fisheries Drusila Esther E. Bayate said the outcomes of the session are of “particular significance” as the tuna industry is a major catalyst of economic growth and food security in the Philippines.

“As such, we are deeply interested in ensuring fair and equitable access to tuna resources.”

Bayate said climate change presents “significant” challenges to the country’s fisheries, affecting the distribution and abundance of fish stocks.

“This is a pressing issue for the Philippines, and we are eager to engage in discussions on how to address these challenges.”

She said regional cooperation and collaboration among WCPFC member countries will address shared challenges and allow them to achieve their sustainable fisheries management goals.

The Scientific Committee (SC) 20 Agenda, Bayate said, is set to cover issues on stock assessments of the following fish species: South Pacific albacore, Pacific bluefin tuna stock, Southwest Pacific striped marlin, silky shark, mako shark; improvement of MULTIFAN-CL software; and research findings on the impacts of climate change and environmental variability on fish stocks and marine ecosystems.

“These topics are of critical importance, and I am confident that our collective expertise will lead to valuable insights and actionable recommendations.” The member countries of WCPFC are Australia, China, Canada, Cook Islands, European Union, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Chinese Taipei, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America and Vanuatu.

In a statement on Wednesday, the DA said the outcome of the discussion will help the Philippines develop adaptive strategies.

“The Philippines is also expected to benefit from the review of the Conservation and Management Measures for key tuna species such as bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack, essentially maintaining their populations and ensuring long-term industry viability.”

Bayate said the Western and Central Pacific Ocean is where more than half of the global tuna catch is caught. Notably, unlike other oceans, over 80 percent of the WCPFC tuna catch occurs in the waters of coastal states.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Bayate said the Philippines produced around 409,000 metric tons of various species of tuna last year.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/15/regional-cooperation-will-ensure-viability-of-fishing-industry/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Dry spell slashes corn output by 20% in Q2

- **Ada Pelonia**
- **August 15, 2024**

Corn production registered a double-digit contraction in the second quarter due to El Niño, which devastated local farms, according to the Philippine Maize Federation Inc. (PhilMaize)

Figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that corn production in April to June fell by 20.3 percent to 1.174 million metric tons (MMT), from last year's 1.473 MMT.

“The adverse weather condition is the biggest factor behind the decline along with the delay in planting,” PhilMaize President Romualdo Elvira Jr. told the BusinessMirror on Tuesday, speaking partly in Filipino.

Figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that the country's farm output contracted by 3.3 percent in the second quarter due to the weather phenomenon. Crop production, which amounted to P220.04 billion, declined annually by 8.6 percent, with the value of corn production posting a 20.3-percent decline.

Despite this, Elvira said the development is not yet alarming. “We will have wait for the harvest because some farmers planted in July. Maybe in the third quarter we can see the picture and by then we will know the actual situation.”

He also said the country imports feed wheat as replacement for corn, noting that these are cheaper than the staple crop.

Impact on livestock

Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) President Danilo Fausto said, however, fewer local corn could result in an increase in the cost of animal feeds and eventually put pressure on meat prices.

Data from the PSA showed that corn production in the first half reached 3.706 MMT, or 7.17 percent lower than the 3.993 MMT recorded a year ago. Output of yellow corn used in animal feeds declined to 3.030 MMT from last year's 3.258 MMT.

However, for the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) president Danilo Fausto, the decline in corn production could hike the cost of animal feeds and therefore affect chicken prices.

“Despite the growth and increase of chicken production, the price of chicken is high because of the increasing input cost,” Fausto told the BusinessMirror.

The PhilMaize official seconded this, noting that it would also affect other key agricultural commodities like pork and eggs—the cheapest source of protein for Filipinos.

“When the price of feed increases, prices of eggs, chicken, and pork will also rise,” Elvira said in Filipino.

The prevailing price of chicken and medium-sized egg in Metro Manila markets reached P220 and P8 as of August 13, respectively. Meanwhile, pork ham and pork belly reached P320 and P380, respectively, according to the latest price monitoring report of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The increase in food prices was one of the major drivers of inflation in July. PSA data showed that food inflation at the national level accelerated to 6.7 percent in July from 6.5 percent in June. Faster annual increments were noted in the indices of corn which reached 17.5 percent.

Silage data

Meanwhile, Fausto pushed for the inclusion of corn silage in the PSA's collection of data on corn. He said corn silage has become the major source of feed for ruminants.

According to the PCAFI official, corn silage can be harvested in 75 days, faster than the 120 days for corn.

“Farmers earn good income from silage. Those who are planting corn no longer wait for it to grow and harvest silage which would lead to lower corn production,” he said.

“The corn production data should include silage since it’s not in the PSA’s data. If the input of chicken like corn grains are part of the feed, the input of ruminants which are silages should also be incorporated.”

Elvira said the market for corn silage is “not yet significant” and that they do not have the record of harvested volume.

“We also produce corn silage but the market for it is irregular.”

To boost corn output, Elvira urged the government to provide more postharvest facilities such as dryers, as farmers have limited capability to dry and store their corn harvest.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/15/dry-spell-slashes-corn-output-by-20-in-q2/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Too few soil testing centers curb yield–PBBM

- **Samuel P. Medenilla**
- **August 15, 2024**

THE lack of government soil testing centers is hampering government efforts for high production farmlands, according to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

“We really lack soil analysis. We cannot tell the farmers how much fertilizer to use. We cannot give them any advice because we don’t know ourselves what the condition of the soil is,” the President said during Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC) meeting in Malacañang on Wednesday.

He made the remark after the Department of Agriculture (DA) recommended conducting soil mapping and agricultural liming in Luzon as part of its efforts to expand sugar production.

The Philippines continues to import sugar since local production is unable to meet market demand.

Last June, the DA announced it is planning to import 200,000 metric tons (MT) of refined sugar by this September to address the supply gap until the next harvest and refining cycle.

This, despite the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) reporting the country’s total refined sugar stocks in June rose to 492,985.7 MT compared to the 432,215.05 MT in the same period last year.

Marcos said he wants at least one soil testing laboratory to be established in each region.

In response, DA said it is targeting to establish 12 soil testing laboratories next year.

During the recent PSAC meeting, the President also said he supports the “Bayani ng Pilipinas” initiative of the council to urge the youth to pursue farming as a profession.

He also ordered the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA) to coordinate with agriculture cooperatives and the Local Government Units (LGUs) to strengthen development and training of farmers.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/15/too-few-soil-testing-centers-curb-yield-pbbm/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Despite lower rice tariff take, BOC says will hit 2024 targets

- **Reine Juvierre S. Alberto**
- **August 15, 2024**



Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio

DESPITE worries about the reduced rice tariff collections for the year, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) remains optimistic about hitting its revenue targets through proper assessment of duties and taxes, according to its top official.

Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio told reporters on the sidelines of the 2025 national budget Senate deliberations that the BOC has already collected P29 billion in rice tariffs this year.

However, Rubio said the lowered rice tariffs would “definitely impact” its revenue collections from rice importations.

To recall, the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) Board led by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., approved the tariff reduction for rice to 15 percent from 35 percent as part of the Comprehensive Target Program (CTP) for 2024 until 2028.

“Of course, I should be worried because our collection is already lessened,” Rubio said.

“Reducing the tariff from 35 to 15 percent, even if the same volume would arrive, we are basically reducing 20 percent of what we should have collected,” the BOC chief added.

In the meantime, Rubio said the BOC will try to maximize everything that they have as well as conduct proper assessment of duties and taxes of imported rice to achieve its targets.

The lowered rice tariffs will be beneficial to the people, although the Bureau will suffer some consequences. Rubio said it will reduce the prices of rice and benefit the rice-eating public.

“Let me worry about our collection and let the President worry about addressing the conditions of the people,” Rubio added. The BOC’s revenue collection target for 2024 is pegged at P939.7 billion.

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto said the Department of Finance (DOF) estimates P8.1 billion will be collected from rice tariffs in the second half of 2024.

Amid the lowered rice tariffs which will take effect until 2028, the government still stands to gain P53.9 billion from 2024 to 2026 but lose P49.9 billion in foregone revenues.

If the EO were not implemented, a total of P103.7 billion could have been collected from rice tariffs until 2026.

“It makes perfect sense to reduce the tariffs at this point. If we do the computation, we can expect rice prices to go down by at least 5 pesos in August to September,” Recto said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/08/15/despite-lower-rice-tariff-take-boc-says-will-hit-2024-targets/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Campsite for future agri leaders launched

[By The Manila Times](#)

August 15, 2024

WITH the need to educate the youth about agriculture getting more urgent, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) and Kiwanis International-Philippine Luzon District unveiled a compact educational campsite called RICEsParK, established to help cultivate the next generation of agricultural leaders.

The recently launched initiative seeks to inspire young "RICEponsible" leaders who are aware of the challenges faced by Filipino farmers and the importance of rice and rice science to the nation.

"At RICEsParK, we aim to develop leaders who are mindful of farmers' struggles, understand the significance of rice and are equipped with leadership skills and values needed to impact the country's rice sector," said Glenda Hufano, governor of the Kiwanis International-Philippine Luzon District.



The RICEsParK campsite in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, established by the Philippine Rice Research Institute and Kiwanis International-Philippine Luzon District. PHILRICE PHOTO

The 1,000-square-meter facility, situated within the 5-hectare FutureRice Farm in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, offers an alternative to typical recreational activities for children such as usual mall visits and frequent use of gadgets.

"RICEsParK is designed to creatively engage youth ages 10 to 15 as potential leaders in rice science and catalysts for prosperity in farming communities. They will be exposed to the work of DA-PhilRice and its partners, such as the Kiwanis International, in these areas," said Karen Eloisa Barroga, PhilRice deputy executive director for development.

She said that the Department of Education will be tapped in engaging the youth to join the campsite programs, which combine leadership development with hands-on learning in rice science and farming.

ADVERTISEMENT

At the RICEsParK, participants will gain valuable lessons through farm adventure games like kayaking and obstacle races, while exploring rice technologies, including advanced farm machinery and digital applications.

Set amid rice fields, the campsite also aims to nurture future leaders as progressive and entrepreneurial food producers.

John de Leon, PhilRice executive director, said that the initiative, one of the Institute's new approaches, aligns with Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.'s vision of making agriculture "sustainable, profitable and attractive to the younger generation."

PhilRice is an agency under the Department of Agriculture (DA).

It can be recalled that during his appointment, the secretary highlighted the need to make agricultural investments and careers profitable to draw in young farmers and fishers.

Meanwhile, as part of the prelaunch activities, attendees also witnessed the planting of rice paddy art, featuring a Filipino who recently brought pride to the country.

The RICEsParK campsite and rice paddy art will be showcased during the upcoming Lakbay Palay event on September 18-19, which is expected to attract a thousand participants, including farmers, students and other stakeholders.

PhilRice is the country's lead agency for rice research and development, aiming to improve rice farming communities despite challenges such as land conversion, population surge, high food consumption and climate change.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/15/business/agribusiness/campsite-for-future-agri-leaders-launched/1964212>

THE MANILA TIMES:

PHilMech distributes farm machines to Agusan groups



By Philippine News Agency

August 15, 2024

BUTUAN CITY — Twenty-nine farmer-groups in Agusan del Sur province were provided with various farm machinery and equipment in a distribution activity conducted on August 12.

Agusan del Sur Gov. Santiago Cane Jr. and Jingle Paloma, the focal person of the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PHilMech) in the Caraga Region, led the distribution of the farm machines at the provincial capitol in Prosperidad town.



The Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization recently distributed agricultural machines to farmers in Agusan del Sur. PHILMECH FACEBOOK PHOTO

Each of the 21 organizations received over P2.2 million worth of mini four-wheel drive farm tractors. The other eight farmer groups

were also provided various farm machinery and equipment worth P41.9 million through the provincial government's Sustainable Lowland Agriculture Development program.

The machines distributed include four rice combine harvesters, four mini four-wheel drive hand tractors and four corn combine harvesters.

In a statement, Cane said the farm equipment "will surely improve the productivity of our farmers in producing a more sustainable and secured food for Agusan del Sur and for the rest of the country."

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/15/business/agribusiness/philmech-distributes-farm-machines-to-agusan-groups/1964213>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA addressing tomato wastage



[By Philippine News Agency](#)

August 15, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is coordinating with regional offices to prevent tomato wastage amid the offseason harvest.

"We are talking already with the regional field office of Cordillera and Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) to check on these surpluses of tomatoes," Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said partly in Filipino in an interview following reports of tomato disposal in Nueva Vizcaya.

He said the DA may either bring the possible surplus in Kadiwa sites or markets in Metro Manila through logistics assistance.

Besides the Cordillera Administrative Region and Cagayan Valley, other regions with reported high volumes of harvest are Central Luzon and Region 4A (Calabarzon).

Earlier, Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura Chairman Rosendo So said coordination and linkages between the DA and farmers' cooperative associations should be improved.

He cited the possible drop in retail prices of tomatoes due the volume of offseason harvest following the spiking prices in early July which reached P140 to P220 per kilogram (kg).

De Mesa, however, said the current retail prices are still within the P60/kg to P80/kg reasonable bracket price for tomatoes.

As of August 12, the prevailing price range of tomatoes in Metro Manila is at P60/kg to P130/kg, according to the DA Bantay Presyo.

De Mesa also underscored the urgency in securing agri-infrastructure for cold storage and postharvest facilities to resolve challenges during the harvest seasons.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/15/business/agribusiness/da-addressing-tomato-wastage/1964214>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Kasibu boosts claim as 'citrus capital'



[By Leander C. Domingo](#)

August 15, 2024

KASIBU's staging of the Second Citrus Festival 2024 reinforces its claim as Luzon's epicenter for the popular tropical fruit.

Anchored on the theme "Deeper for Resiliency and Productivity," the festival held on August 8 showcased the outstanding contribution of citrus farmers to making Kasibu known for its vast plantations of citrus.

It was on June 24, 2022 when Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, was declared the "Citrus Capital of Luzon" by then-agriculture secretary William Dar, paving the way for the municipality to celebrate the annual citrus festival to showcase the rich culture and bountiful citrus harvest of the town.



The annual citrus festival of Kasibu showcases the town's bountiful harvest of the tropical fruit.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kasibu Mayor Romeo Tayaban, Vice Mayor Alberto Bumolo and members of Kasibu Sangguniang Bayan (municipal council) led the town in welcoming and thanking visitors for attending the festival.

Tayaban also gave tribute to Kasibu's citrus growers.

"One of the reasons why Kasibu is known as the Citrus Capital of Luzon is because of your hard work and dedication to improve and increase your harvest. You are the first to be recognized as a top producer of citrus in Luzon," he said.

The mayor also thanked various agencies for their willingness to help and support the continued prosperity and development of the town.

Representing DA Region 2 Executive Director Rose Mary Aquino during the event, DA Officer in Charge for Region 2 Technical for Operations and Extensions Roberto Busania congratulated the local government unit (LGU) of Kasibu for the success of the citrus festival.

Busania also assured all cooperatives and farmers of Kasibu that the DA "shall continue to provide training, programs and agricultural interventions, especially on food processing."

"We are so happy that we have seen the fruits of our sacrifices and efforts to promote the citrus industry here in Kasibu. We hope that our support and cooperation will continue to expand the production of citrus into other agricultural commodities," Busania said.

Representing Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., Cherry Marie Natividad-Caballero, DA undersecretary for High Value Crops Development Program, said that "the DA will continue to support the citrus industry and collaborate with the provincial government of Nueva Vizcaya to support the fast-growing agricultural industry of Kasibu."

"We assure that the Department of Agriculture shall continue to provide support on technology adaptations to farmers, programs and

training, particularly on food processing, marketing and digital agriculture, through the use of drones," Caballero said.

She said that to empower citrus farmers and sustain their strength in farming, "we will continue to support and partner with LGUs for the continuous growth and development of the citrus industry here in Kasibu in tandem with our partners in the public and private sector."

"We earnestly hope for heightened support from industry stakeholders to continue and sustain the much-needed backing and support toward a stronger and more prosperous citrus industry," Caballero said.

She also lauded the untiring efforts of the farmers in Nueva Vizcaya for their big contributions to ensure food security not only in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) but for the entire Philippines as well.

"I believe that as we work together, we will be able to face all the challenges that we may encounter. We will make the citrus industry more productive and profitable to attain our goal of affordable, safe and nutritious food for all," Caballero added.

Joining the festival were Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma and Gov. Jose "Jing" Gambito, who gave tribute to the municipality's initiatives on agriculture.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/15/business/agribusiness/kasibu-boosts-claim-as-citrus-capital/1964216>

THE MANILA TIMES:

DA sets fish imports to address supply lack

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

August 15, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will allow the importation of 30,000 metric tons (MT) of fish to address a supply deficit.

The amount is higher than in April when the the DA said it would allow the importation of 25,000 MT upon issuance of a Certificate of Necessity to Import, a procedural requirement based on anticipated supply needs and aligned with sufficiency projections for the year.

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) spokesman Nazario Briguera said on Wednesday that the fish importation was a response to the shortfall caused by the closed fishing season in the Davao Gulf and waters off the Visayas and Zamboanga Peninsula. The country's fish sufficiency level stood at 91.6 percent as of April 2024.

The imports are expected to arrive by the fourth quarter.

Fish imports are typically done toward the end of the year based on updated projections of fish supply and demand.

In the second quarter of 2024, the country's fisheries production was recorded at 1.02 million MT, down 6.2 percent from the 1.08 million MT a year earlier, the Philippine Statistics Authority said.

A decrease in production was noted in marine municipal fisheries, inland municipal fisheries and aquaculture, while commercial fisheries reported an increase in production.

In light of a recent oil spill affecting Cavite's fishing grounds, the BFAR has maintained a fishing ban in the province to protect public health.

Briguera said laboratory tests were being conducted to ensure fish were safe for consumption. He added the bureau was actively monitoring the situation and providing updates to the public.

As of August 7, around 28,373 fishers were affected by the oil spill in Bataan with an estimated loss in income tallied at P78.69 million since the fishing ban was imposed on July 30.

Based on a DA validation, some 28,373 fishers and 5,810 boats were affected out of initial projections of 46,090 fishers and 16,586 boats.

The affected areas include the waters of the National Capital Region, Central Luzon (Region 3) and Calabarzon (Region 4A).

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/08/15/business/top-business/da-sets-fish-imports-to-address-supply-lack/1964310>

MANILA STNADARD:

PBBM backs farmers as ‘heroes’

NewsNational



PRESIDENT AS FARMER. President Marcos drives a tractor as he and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel (below) inspect rice stalks at a field in Candaba, Pampanga on Saturday. PCO Photo



By Charles Dantes

August 14, 2024, 11:55 pm

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has expressed his support for the “Bayani ng Pilipinas (Hero of the Philippines)” advocacy to promote farming in the country, Malacañang said Wednesday.

This, after the Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC), in a meeting with Mr. Marcos at Malacañan Palace in Manila on Tuesday, pitched the Bayani ng Pilipinas campaign to advocate farming as a “good way of life” and encourage the younger generation to pursue farming as a profession.

Presidential Communications Office (PCO) Secretary Cheloy Garafil said the PSAC wants to champion local farmers as the country’s heroes, considering their sacrifice to provide food for Filipinos and sustain the supply.

Mr. Marcos said the government would start formulating ideas to better promote the project.

“Yes, it’s hard (farming) but look what they, how, what they do. If, you know, if they didn’t farm, we wouldn’t have anything to eat,” the President said.

The campaign, led by PSAC, seeks to highlight farming as a valuable profession and inspire youth to pursue it.

Garafil said campaign materials would be produced and effective strategies would be implemented to ensure the campaign’s success.

She said the advocacy is also one way of celebrating and empowering Filipino farmers.

“The President is prioritizing the agricultural sector to uplift farmers and fisherfolk to promote food security in the country,” Garafil said.

The government, through the Presidential Assistance to Farmers, Fisherfolk, and their Families (PAFFF), has distributed P906 million in assistance to over 90,000 beneficiaries in Cagayan Valley, Bicol Region, Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao Region, Soccksksargen, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao from May 9, 2024 to June 5, 2024.

Several irrigation projects have also been completed and rehabilitated by the Marcos administration to develop Philippine agriculture.

Additionally, 2.16 million hectares of irrigable land have been developed under the administration’s irrigation projects.

***Editor’s Note:** This is an updated article. Originally posted with the headline Marcos backs ‘Bayani ng Pilipinas’ campaign for farmers*

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314484053/pbbm-backs-farmers-as-heroes.html>

REMATE:

Mga isda, shellfish sa Cavite ‘di pa rin ligtas kainin – BFAR

August 14, 2024 10:37



MANILA, Philippines – Ang mga isda at shellfish mula sa baybaying dagat ng lalawigan ng Cavite ay nananatiling hindi karapat-dapat para kainin ng tao, ayon sa Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) nitong Martes.

Sa isang pahayag, sinabi ng BFAR na ito ay batay sa on-ground sensory evaluation nito sa mga lugar ng pangangisda at komunidad sa paligid ng Manila Bay pagkatapos ng oil spill noong nakaraang buwan sa lalawigan ng Bataan.

Ang paglilinaw ay inilabas sa gitna ng panawagan ng grupo ng mangangisda na Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) na alisin ang pagbabawal sa pangangisda na ipinataw sa walong munisipalidad sa baybayin ng Cavite, na nagsasabing hindi sila apektado ng oil spill.

Bilang tugon, sinabi ng BFAR na ang “no catch and no-sell zone for all shellfish in the coastal areas of the province of Cavite” batay sa Executive Order No. 38 na inilabas noong Hulyo 31 ay may bisa pa rin.

Ipinaliwanag ng BFAR na ang mga sample ng isda ay regular na kinokolekta at sinusuri para sa mga bakas ng langis at grasa at ang pagkakaroon ng mga nakakapinsalang contaminants na tinatawag na polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) mula noong lumubog ang MTKR Terranova at MTKR Jason Bradley noong Hulyo 25 at Hulyo 27, ayon sa pagkakabanggit, at ang pagsadsad ng MV Mirola 1 noong Hulyo 31 sa karagatan ng Bataan.

Bukod dito, nanatiling ipinagbabawal ang lahat ng aktibidad sa pangingsda sa loob ng apat na kilometrong radius ng lokasyon ng MTKR Terranova sa Bataan, partikular ang Limay, at Barangay Cabcaban sa Mariveles, batay sa Executive Order 32 na inilabas noong Agosto 1. *RNT*

<https://remate.ph/mga-isda-shellfish-sa-cavite-di-pa-rin-ligtas-kainin-bfar/>