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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# Bill seeking to entice youth to become farmers hurdles second reading – solon

**BY LIEZLE BASA IÑIGO**

Sep 15, 2024 04:46 PM

DAGUPAN CITY – The House of Representatives has approved House Bill No. 613 or the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Act on second reading that seeks to entice the youth to engage in farming, Pangasinan Rep. Christopher de Venecia said.



## **DE VENECIA (FB)**

De Venecia, author of the measure, said the bill aims to reverse the trend of declining youth participation in farming and fisheries by creating an enabling environment for young Filipinos to engage in these vital sectors.

The average age of Filipino farmers is between 57- and 59-year-old, he said.

"We need to make farming and fisheries more attractive to the youth by ensuring they are supported, valued, and empowered," said De Venecia.

"This bill will provide young Filipinos the opportunity to see agriculture not just as a means of livelihood, but as a promising career path that can contribute significantly to our nation's food security and economic development."

HB No. 613 proposes the establishment of the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program that will encourage young people to pursue careers in agriculture and fisheries.

The program will not only foster youth participation in policy formulation but also provides institutional support for the development of agri-businesses and agri-entrepreneurship, ensuring their roles as partners in agricultural modernization, De Venecia said.

The Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Council will oversee the program's implementation. Council members will include representatives from the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

The council will streamline access to essential resources for young farmers, including capacity-building programs, sources of credit, and marketing services.

The bill also promotes the adoption of cutting-edge agricultural technologies, including smart farming, aquaponics, and organic farming, while facilitating access to trade fairs, subsidies, and marketing opportunities.

It also extends significant support to young agricultural workers by guaranteeing scholarships and on-the-job training programs through partnerships with government agencies such as the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/15/article-2706>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# DA ensures stable food supply during ‘ber’ months

**BY RAYMUND ANTONIO**

Sep 15, 2024 12:37 PM

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is confident that there is adequate supply of holiday food staple, such as onions, pork, chicken, beef, and rice, as the country enters the “ber” months.



Speaking at a media forum held in Quezon City, DA Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said that not only is there adequate supply of these food items, but they are also appropriately priced because of importation and a good harvest season for onions.

“Iyong in terms sa supply ay bumabalik na po ulit sa dati at nakaprograma na naman din iyong importation natin ng karneng baboy at karneng manok, kasama na iyong baka (In terms of supply, it’s returning to normal and our importation of pork, chicken, and beef are already programmed) so you can expect na kasapatan po ng supply natin ngayong darating na holiday season (that there is enough supply this coming holiday season),” he said on Saturday, Sept. 14.

“Iyong bigas, napakaganda rin ng ating supply both local and imported despite iyong mga nangyaring kalamidad mula El Niño at iyong mga sunud-sunod na bagyo (We also have a very good supply of both local and imported rice despite the El Niño calamity and the typhoons),”

the official added.

De Mesa, who is a spokesperson for DA, described the prices of onions now as “very fair” as red onions are now priced between P75 and P120 per kilo, while white onions are priced between P100 and P120 per kilo.

In particular, he said that they don’t expect the prices of red onions to go up because the harvest last season had been “very good” at 40 percent.

The official added that DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. also ordered an additional importation of 6,000 metric tons of yellow onions, which will be delivered in tranches until December 2024 “in time for the harvest” of yellow onions in the last quarter of the year up to the first quarter of 2025.

De Mesa shared that the Certificate of Necessity to Import (CNI) was also approved for fish, and these are expected to arrive by October in time for the closing of the fishing season.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/15/da-ensures-stable-food-supply-during-ber-months>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# PLDT, Smart help farmers adapt to digital technology

The Philippine Star

September 15, 2024 | 12:00am



A farmer uses his cellphone to access information on pesticides from the internet.

STAR / File

## Digital Farmers Program

MANILA, Philippines — PLDT and its wireless unit Smart Communications Inc. continue to enhance the capabilities of rice farmers, particularly in Mindanao, through the Digital Farmers Program (DFP), a partnership with the Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Training Institute (DA-ATI).

Mindanao is known as the food basket of the Philippines mainly because of its rich soil and climate. With the great promise of agri-industrialization and rural development, PLDT and Smart are working with the DA-ATI to help make sure that the farmers themselves will also progress, with the help of digital technology.

“Since PLDT, Smart, and DA-ATI launched the Digital Farmers Program, we have heard testimonials from small-holder farmers who have greatly benefited from the digital tools and concepts of DFP 101 and 102. We are hopeful that our ladderized capacity-building program will help improve the lives and livelihood of more

farmers around the country, with the help of digital technology,” said Stephanie Orino, stakeholder management team head at PLDT and Smart.

Through the DFP, farmers and local government technicians from Northern Mindanao, SOCCSKSARGEN and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) joined in the trainings conducted in Tantaran, South Cotabato, Kabacan, North Cotabato, Tacurong City and Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat, and Lala, Lanao del Norte. The trainees learned about digital marketing and the effective use of digital tools to maximize crop yields.

Charlie Pasaquin, a rice farmer from the Midpapan Balogo Communal Irrigators Association, appreciated the training. “We would like to express our gratitude to PLDT and Smart for supporting the advancement of farming in the country, most especially the digitalization of the agriculture sector.”

PLDT and Smart also recently partnered with Mennonite Economic

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/15/2385262/pldt-smart-help-farmers-adapt-digital-technology>

# **DA urged to help lower agriculture input costs**

The Philippine Star

September 15, 2024 | 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Farmers, hog raises and poultry farmers are urging the Department of Agriculture to prioritize solutions that will lower the prices of vital agricultural inputs.

A comparison of the DA's Bantay Presyo data from May 1 to Sept. 5 showed a significant increase in the prices of essential agricultural inputs such as palm oil and corn which are key components in feed production.

During this period, the cost of 350 ml of palm oil rose by 8.06 percent, climbing from P27-P35 to P27-P40. Likewise, a 350 ml of coconut oil saw a 4.48-percent increase, with prices rising from P27-P40 to P30-P40. The price of corn experienced the most dramatic surge, jumping by 23 percent from P50-P80 to P60-P100.

The escalating costs, particularly vegetable oils, are critically impacting the supply chain.

Palm oil, a major import, is a key component in feed production, contributing to the rising prices of pork and poultry.

As highlighted in the Philippine Palm Oil Industry Roadmap 2024-2033, the Philippines remains heavily dependent on imports for its vegetable oil needs thus, making the country vulnerable to price fluctuations in global markets. This dependency directly impacts food affordability, especially for lower-income families.

Livestock and poultry producers, who depend heavily on these oils for feed, are now grappling with skyrocketing operational expenses. These increased costs are being passed on to consumers through higher prices for pork, chicken, and other essential food items. Earlier this year, the Pork Producers Federation of the Philippines Inc. expressed concern, citing that farm-gate prices have surged as a direct result of rising farm input costs.

The strain on consumers is undeniable. A July survey by Social Weather Stations revealed that 58 percent of Filipino families now consider themselves poor, a sharp jump from 46 percent in March. This is the highest level of perceived poverty since 2008.



Meanwhile, a recent Pulse Asia survey confirmed that inflation remains the top concern for Filipinos, further highlighting the mounting financial pressure.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/15/2385265/da-urged-help-lower-agriculture-input-costs>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Creative program to engage youth in agriculture launched

The Philippine Star

September 15, 2024 | 12:00am



Elementary school students take part in the RiceSpark planting program.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — Amid a decline in the number of young Filipinos entering rice farming, the Department of Agriculture-Philippine Rice Research Institute (DA-PhilRice) has launched new initiatives to spark interest in agriculture among students.

By involving the youth aged 10 to 12 in planting the institute's rice paddy art this wet season and by establishing a new compact site called RiceSpark, Karen Eloisa Barroga, DA-PhilRice deputy executive director for development, emphasized the importance of engaging the younger generation in agriculture, noting that the average age of Filipino farmers is 56 years as shown by the institute's Ricelytics.

"Introducing children to the art and science of rice farming at an early age fosters appreciation and responsibility toward agriculture while ensuring the continuity of innovation and passion in the field," she said.

For the institute's rice paddy art, Maligaya Elementary School students helped plant NSIC Rc 596 and traditional purple rice (IR1522) in a 1,500-sqm plot at the FutureRice Farm in Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija. The image features Filipino pride.

"My father plants rice too. Today, I realized that planting is not like playing — it requires serious effort and care to ensure a good harvest, so our family can eat every day," said 12-year-old John Carlo Biswal, one of the participants.

Eleven-year-old Glenn Adrian Corpuz echoed the sentiment, noting that videos of children farming on social media sparked his interest in rice planting.

Meanwhile, RiceSpark 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.

Supported by the Kiwanis International - Philippine Luzon District, the 1,000-sqm facility is situated within the five-hectare FutureRice Farm that offers an alternative to typical recreational activities for children such as usual mall visits and frequent use of gadgets.

“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 of the Kiwanis International-Philippine Luzon District.

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.

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.

The initiatives align with Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.’s vision of making agriculture “sustainable, profitable, and attractive to the younger generation.”

During his appointment, the secretary highlighted the need to make agricultural investments and careers profitable to draw in young farmers and fisherfolks.

DA-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.philstar.com/business/2024/09/15/2385272/creative-program-engage-youth-agriculture-launched>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# OP control of NIA seen boosting funding prospects for irrigation

September 15, 2024 | 7:29 pm



EMBASSY OF JAPAN HANDOUT PHOTO

THE government's transfer of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to the Office of the President (OP) is expected to improve its access to funding, analysts said.

"Placing NIA under the OP would help the agency get proper and timely funding," Federation of Free Farmers National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said via Viber.

He added that the move could have knock-on effects on the funding of other agencies like the National Food Authority in the form of marketing support to farmers and the Department of Public Works and Highways in terms of building irrigation infrastructure and farm-to-market roads.

"There should however be proper coordination with Department of Agriculture (DA) programs and implementers," Mr. Montemayor said.

Last week, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. issued Executive Order (EO) No. 69 transferring control of the NIA from the DA. EO 69 cited the need to streamline and rationalize the functions of the irrigation agency.

In his State of the Nation Address, Mr. Marcos pushed for more irrigation dams and bulk water projects to ensure sufficient usable water for communities.

“It is highly likely NIA will secure additional funding for irrigation projects,” University of Asia and the Pacific Center for Food and Agribusiness Executive Director Marie Annette Galvez-Dacul said via Viber.

She added that the transfer would hasten the decision-making and approval process for major irrigation projects.

On the other hand, Former Agriculture Undersecretary Fermin D. Adriano said that the NIA should have been kept within the purview of the DA.

“Management-wise, NIA should be under the DA because the former’s services cater to DA’s major clients, which are the palay farmers,” Mr. Adriano said via Viber.

“This assumes that DA leadership understands the science of raising palay productivity, lowering production costs and increasing farmer incomes,” he added.

Leonardo A. Lanzona, Jr., a professor of economics at the Ateneo de Manila, said the NIA mandate is to support agricultural production, and thus should be headed by the DA.

“The NIA does not belong in the OP but in the DA. Irrigation is only of the inputs for production. If improperly applied, in certain situations it can be either ineffective or disruptive to other inputs, such as labor,” Mr. Lanzona said via Facebook messenger.

Only 68% of the country’s farmland is irrigated as of 2023, or an estimated 2.11 million hectares, leaving 1.1 million hectares yet to be irrigated. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/09/15/621582/op-control-of-nia-seen-boosting-funding-prospects-for-irrigation/>

**REMATE:**

## **Bakuna vs ASF epektibo – DA**

September 15, 2024 11:41



MANILA, Philippines – Epektibo “at least for now” ang bakuna laban sa African swine fever (ASF), sinabi ng Department of Agriculture nitong Sabado, Setyembre 14, kung saan nananatiling buhay at malusog ang mga baboy na binakunahan noong Agosto.

Sa Saturday News Forum, sinabi ni DA Assistant Secretary and spokesperson Arnel De Mesa na limang baboy lamang ang namatay ngunit dahil sa pulmonary diseases, na nadiskubre matapos ang pagbibigay ng bakuna.

“May namatay na lima pero because mayroon silang precondition na hindi sinabi doon sa nag-a-administer doon sa Lobo (in Batangas province). But, iyong others ay talagang napaka-healthy hanggang sa ngayon,” aniya.

“Dahil iyong unang batch na exposed sa ASF, and in fact buhay pa sila ngayon at apparently healthy, can tell us na maganda iyong bakuna,” dagdag pa ni De Mesa.

Aniya, aabot ng 14 hanggang 30 araw bago mag-fully develop ang antibodies sa mga baboy.

Kamakailan ay inilunsad ng DA ang kauna-unahang government-controlled vaccination sa 41 malusog at ASF-negative na baboy sa malilit na babuyan sa Batangas.

Ang pagbabakuna ay palalawigin pa sa ibang lugar sa Visayas at Mindanao.

Ani De Mesa, pinagsisikapan din ng pamahalaan na makumpleto ang pagbili ng 600,000 vaccine doses laban sa ASF sa susunod na buwan.

“Ini-expect natin iyong procurement noong natitirang bakuna iyong kabuuan na 600,000 doses ay matapos mid-October para magtuluy-tuloy na iyong bakunahan natin,” aniya.

Naglaan ang pamahalaan ng P300 milyon para sa pagbili ng nasa 600,000 ASF vaccine doses na dinevelop ng Vietnam, at karagdagang P50 milyon para sa related inoculation costs. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/bakuna-vs-asf-epektibo-da/>

**REMATE:**

## 2M magsasaka makikinabang sa bagong agri credit facility

September 15, 2024 11:28



MANILA, Philippines – Mahigit dalawang milyong Filipino ang makikinabang mula sa bagong credit facility na inilunsad ng administrasyong Marcos ngayong linggo, kung saan papayagan ang mga magsasaka na makakuha ng hanggang P60,000 subsidiya sa panahon ng cropping season.

Sa forum nitong Sabado, Setyembre 14, sinabi ni Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary at spokesperson Arnel De Mesa na ang Agri-Puhunan at Pantawid Program (APP) ay kabilang sa mga kasalukuyang government subsidies sa mga magsasaka, katulad ng punla, irigasyon at makinarya.

Ang mga benepisyaryo ng APP ay makatatanggap ng net amount na P58,000 para sa production costs at subsistence allowance na P8,000 sa loob ng apat na buwan.

“PHP60,000 kada cropping season. So, hindi na mamumroblema iyong ating mga magsasaka kung saan sila kukuha ng additional na panggastusin nila, additional na pera para pambili ng fertilizer or additional inputs doon sa kanilang sakahan,” ani De Mesa.



“This is good for farmers na hindi lalampas sa dalawang hektarya iyong sinasaka. Sa mga rice farmers, more than two million rice farmers ito na makikinabang sa buong Pilipinas,” dagdag pa ng opisyal.

Aniya, ang mga benepisyaryo ay makatatanggap ng Interventions Monitoring Card (IMC) na magagamit nila para makabili ng punla at fertilizer, mula sa accredited suppliers ng DA.

“Ang pangunahin (na layunin) dito is makakawala sila doon sa mga,” sinabi ni De Mesa.

“Imagine mo, sa 5-6 that’s 20 percent per month — ito one percent sa isang cropping season o sa kalahating taon ay two percent per annum. Halos hindi ramdam ito ng ating mga magsasaka,” pagpapatuloy nito.

Nitong Biyernes, ay pinangunahan ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang paglulunsad ng Agri-Puhunan at Pantawid Program sa Guimba, Nueva Ecija. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/2m-magsasaka-makikinabang-sa-bagong-agri-credit-facility/>

# 'Young Farmers' bill gets approval

By Gabriel L. Cardinoza

September 15, 2024

**DAGUPAN CITY** — The House of Representatives has approved on second reading House Bill 613, also known as the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Act.

Introduced by Pangasinan 4th District Rep. Christopher de Venecia, the bill aims to reverse the declining youth participation in farming and fisheries by creating an enabling environment for young Filipinos to engage in these vital sectors.

"This was a significant step toward revitalizing the agricultural sector and securing the country's food future," said de Venecia.

The bill addresses the alarming reality that the average age of Filipino farmers is 58 years old.

As the number of farmers continues to decline, House Bill 613 proposes the establishment of the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Program, a comprehensive initiative that will encourage young people to pursue careers in agriculture and fisheries.

The program is designed to foster youth participation in policy formulation and provide institutional support for the development of agri-businesses and agri-entrepreneurship, ensuring their roles as partners in agricultural modernization.

To oversee the program's implementation, the bill seeks to create the Young Farmers and Fisherfolk Challenge Council, which will include representatives from various government agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Department of Science and Technology.

The council will streamline access to essential resources for young farmers, including capacity-building programs, sources of credit and marketing services.

The bill also promotes the adoption of cutting-edge agricultural technologies, including smart farming, aquaponics and organic farming, while facilitating access to trade fairs, subsidies and marketing opportunities.

In addition, House Bill 613 extends significant support to young agricultural workers by guaranteeing scholarships and on-the-job training programs through partnerships with government agencies, such as the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

The bill also mandates fee waivers for various government permits and licenses for young farmers and fisherfolk, making it easier for them to navigate the regulatory landscape.

Furthermore, the bill offers tax exemptions for donations made to the council, incentivizing private sector support.

"We need to make farming and fisheries more attractive to the youth by ensuring they are supported, valued and empowered," said de Venecia. "This bill will provide young Filipinos the opportunity to see agriculture not just as a means of livelihood but as a promising career path that can contribute significantly to our nation's food security and economic development."

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/15/regions/young-farmers-bill-gets-approval/1971569>

# Growing Green Hope: Zambales youth rediscover the wonders of farming

Henry Empeño  
September 15, 2024



**GIVING BACK:** Agriculture graduate Jerric Espinosa shows how correct pruning of grape vines is done at the BCV Farm. HENRY EMPEÑO

BOTOLAN, Zambales—In this wooded campus of the President Ramon Magsaysay State University (PRMSU) that overlooks the sea at Barangay Porac in this town, hundreds of youngsters are planting the seeds of a sustainable future for Zambales.

These are the students—all 407 of them—who are taking agricultural courses at PRMSU's College of Agriculture and Forestry.

The number of students here wanting to learn about farming could be a tell-tale sign of a significant shift that may impact food security and sustainability in the province.

In a memorandum circular last year that launched a grants program to encourage youth participation in farming, the Department of Agriculture (DA) noted that with about 45 percent of the Philippine population facing moderate or severe food insecurity—according to the 2023 report on world food security and nutrition by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)—the national decline in farming becomes an increasing concern.

And while experts say that threats to food security include natural disasters, climate change, conflict, and market factors like price fluctuations, the waning interest in farming appeared to pose a critical challenge.

Citing figures from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the DA pointed out that the farming population in the country has been decreasing from 2014 to 2018, with about 9.7 million persons employed in the agricultural sector out of a total population of 110.4 million in 2019. That was less than 9 percent.

Meanwhile, the average age for Filipino farmers now stands at between 57 and 59 years old, because young Filipinos reportedly shunned agriculture in part due to poor income. This “raises concerns about who will carry out the important task of farming in the coming years,” the DA said in its 2023 circular.



FARM PRETTY: The climate-resilient facilities at BCV Farm add a touristy feel to the agriculture learning center.

Green is ‘in’

Eighteen-year-old Denise Bea Umiten, 19-year-old Lhane Gabrielle Moises, and 34-year-old Ryan Ferrer are among those taking agriculture studies at PRMSU’s Botolan Campus. But this was not their first choice for an education, which they know would ultimately be their occupation.

“Initially, I was not inclined to do farming,” Ryan reveals to the BusinessMirror in a recent interview.

He says he first studied Psychology at the PRMSU Main Campus in Iba town, but the pandemic experience made him realize just how important food production is—and how there is a need to sustain the viability of their family farm.

Now taking up soil science, Ryan learned that farming is not as easy as it seemed. “Actually, it’s complicated. But we are learning a lot here. And with what knowledge we get, I’m sure many doors will open for us when we graduate.”

Like Ryan, Lhane and Denise also see the opportunity to work abroad as a major draw for students pursuing agriculture these days.

Lhane's first choice was Nursing, then somebody recommended agriculture, so she took up crop science. Later on, she saw that animal science was more interesting and thus had shifted to this study.

“With our experience here in school, there are a lot of doors we can choose from, although it will all be agri-focused” Lhane asserts. “We can do farm management, put up our own agri-business, or even go into teaching.”

“Up to now, there seems to be discrimination against farmers, who are sometimes looked down upon,” observes Denise, who is taking up animal science. “But we need to prove this wrong. Right now, there is a huge demand for agriculture graduates abroad—in New Zealand, Australia, and even Japan. For me, I would grab any opportunity that comes my way—I might go abroad to work, then return to the Philippines to apply whatever I have learned in other places.”

Ryan agrees: “We will be a farmer always. If there would be some opportunity abroad, I may also take it. But it seems like the better option would be to stay in the Philippines and help improve the farm industry. Maybe I would even stay here [at PRMSU] and teach.”

## New wave

FOR the first semester of schoolyear 2024-2025, PRMSU's College of Agriculture and Forestry (CAF) has enrolled a total of 654 students, 407 of whom are taking up Agriculture, major in either Animal Science or Crop Science. Of these, 223 are male and 184 are female.

The number of enrollees this year is, so far, the highest in the history of CAF, says Dr. Jocelyn B. Angeles, the college dean and herself a graduate of Agricultural Engineering. She further notes a continuous increase in enrollees for agriculture courses since 2018, when a national government program was launched for scholarship in agriculture.

According to CAF records, students enrolled in Bachelor of Science in Agriculture numbered 180 for the first semester, 164 for the second semester, and 64 for mid-year term for schoolyear 2018-2019.

In the succeeding years, semestral enrolment rose, respectively, to 190 and 187 for first and second semesters, and 76 for summer for SY 2019-2020;. The numbers were 248, 232, and 182 for SY 2020-2021; 301, 262, and 148 for SY 2021-2022; and 335, 322, and 170 for SY 2022-2023.

“Making agriculture a priority course in 2018 is a big factor in reviving student interest in agriculture, as it made the course very much in demand in both the government and private sectors,” says Angeles.

Mechanization of the farming industry, as well as the introduction of technology, she adds, makes farming more attractive to younger people who develop an easy grasp of farm machineries operation.

Then, there is the demand for agriculture workers abroad, a thing Angeles admits contributes to some brain drain in the industry. As many as 20 percent of the students from PRMSU find work abroad—mostly in the dairy farms of New Zealand, or in greenhouse food factories of Japan, Canada, and Israel, she says.

“We can say that graduates here don’t go idle after leaving the campus,” Angeles says with pride. “They either go into farm management, or they become agri-entrepreneurs.”

Angeles says that the agricultural education at PRMSU-CAF provides students with a well-rounded body of knowledge and skills that they can apply right after graduation. Aside from the basics of crop and animal sciences, the enrollees learn integrated farming; extension program, which is in fact community involvement; research; agricultural economics; and marketing.

“We have very enthusiastic learners here,” Angeles adds.

Seeds of hope

ASIDE from formal educational institutions like PRMSU-CAF, off-campus learning sites are increasingly contributing to greater knowledge about farming—and greater interest for it among the youth in Zambales.

One of these is LA Farm, located at Sitio Olpoy in Barangay Amungan, Iba, Zambales, which started out as a hobby to keep owner Lorraine Rico’s children busy during the Covid-19 pandemic.



“We asked the help of the municipal agriculturist, who taught us seed selection, growing and planting seedlings, soil preparation and mulching, and then production of organic fertilizer and vermiculture,” says Rico.

“At first, we were just happy that we had free vegetables for the table, but the garden soon expanded and we were selling our harvest at the parking area, then at the talipapa, then the market. We even made door-to-door delivery for orders by regular customers,” Rico recalls.

From there, the farm grew to include sunflower and fruits. Following further training for Rico and her children, as well as some staff workers from the community, LA Farm received accreditation from the Department of Agriculture for Philippine Good Agricultural Practices (PhilGAP).

The farm is now an accredited agricultural learning site supervised by daughter Faith, who brings in learners mostly from the young generation, Rico says.

The BCV Farm nearby is another site that attracts visitors for its demonstration farm that focuses on organic farming and building climate-resilient farm facilities that reverse the negative impact of agriculture on the environment.

Here, seeds of hope for a greener, more food abundant tomorrow are implanted into visiting students, who learn about making carbonized rice hull for organic fertilizer, fermenting fruit juices that can be used for pest control, composting, and carbon sequestration from owner Boboy Valles and his staff of young agriculture professionals.

The farm is planted to various vegetables and fruits, including grapes.

Ella May Verar, a 25-year-old graduate of Agricultural Education from Guinobatan, Albay, is at home at BCV Farm as an officer for special projects that include orientation for farm visitors. And she is happy about how students appreciate agriculture better.

“They are obviously very much interested not just in the general concepts, but also in the techniques for better food production,” Verar observes. “They want to know how it is possible to harvest more when you use commercial fertilizers and pesticides less.”

Verar agrees that mechanization and technology have democratized farming even more and made it more acceptable to young people.

“There was a time when we were worried that if in the coming 12 years, we don’t develop a new generation of farmers, food security in the Philippines would suffer,” Verar recalls. “Now, we see much hope.”

Valles cautions, however, that with all the transfer of farming knowledge and technology, the coming generations of farmers would still have to ensure for themselves adequate resources for production, particularly land and capital.

“If they would just gain skill sets while land continues to fall into the hands of big corporations, they would remain ordinary workers. They would have to be technically competent professionals with access to resources, if they want to be successful in this business,” Valles says.

### Starting ’em young

A GOOD starting point for agri-entrepreneurship may be in a government program designed to encourage active involvement among young farmers and fisherfolk in food security and agricultural development and modernization, as well as to propel them into agri-business and agri-entrepreneurship.

This is the Young Farmers Challenge (YFC) Program launched by the Department of Agriculture under the “Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997.”

Under the YFC Program, youth participants can avail themselves of either of the three components: YFC Start-Up, which provides financial grant assistance for new or start-up agri-fishery enterprises; YFC Upscale, which makes it possible for previous YFC winners to continue, improve, and upscale their current agri-business operations; and YFC Business Development Assistance, which provides YFC awardees with common-shared facilities, equipment for value-adding and processing, research and development, and trainings and capacity-building, among others.

The program is designed as a competition to encourage agri-business models that are innovative, have the potential to generate incomes comparable to incomes of salaried workers in urban areas, and integrate sustainability into their business strategy.

The competition starts at the provincial level, wherein awardees get P80,000 for each enterprise; followed by the regional level with additional financial grant of P150,000; and the national level, with P300,000 per awardee.

The DA has allotted 546 slots for awardees at the provincial level; 112 in the regional level; and 12 in the national level.

According to the Zambales Provincial Agriculture Office (PAO), 23 youth entrepreneurs have made it so far to the provincial level of the Young Farmers Challenge. These are for various projects that range from production of Rhode Island Red chicken, tower-type cultured mushroom, crayfish, and rabbit meat, to processing of tanglad jam.

Among these, two have made it to the regional competition, while one has reached the national level. This is the “KWAKtutubo” project of Philip Quitaneg Trinidad of Iba, Zambales, which fused the Kilusang Wais sa Agrikultura at Kaalaman group with the indigenous community (Katutubo) of Sitio Olpoy in Amungan, Iba, for a duck production enterprise.

The agri-business targets the “Lechon manok” market to give a twist to the taste, while offering new products like flavored salted eggs, mango-duck egg leche flan, egg drop burger, and other products like pre-marinated duck meat.

At the same time, the enterprise aims to produce organic fertilizer from duck manure.

With the YFC grant, capital meets technology and, thus, may pave the way for success in agriculture, as well as for a greener, more sustainable future.

Image credits: [HENRY EMPENÑO, LA FARM](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/15/growing-green-hope-zambales-youth-rediscover-the-wonders-of-farming/>

# India scraps floor price for basmati rice exports to boost appeal

Bloomberg News  
September 15, 2024



Workers gather rice at the New Foodgrain Market in Karnal, Haryana, India, on November 28, 2023.

India, the world's biggest exporter of rice, removed the floor price for basmati shipments to boost the premium variety's competitiveness in the global market.

The current minimum export price of \$950 a ton for issuing registration-cum-allocation certificates for the grain has been scrapped, the country's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said in a post on X on Friday. The decision will help increase basmati rice exports and farmers' income, he said.

The move is expected to soften global prices of the variety, which is generally grown in the Indian subcontinent and commands a healthy premium because of its longer grain size and unique aroma.

The country continues to curb non-basmati rice exports to keep a lid on local prices. Food inflation climbed 5.66 percent in August, according to the statistics ministry. However, prices could ease in the coming months as domestic grain reserves are ample and harvesting of rice crops will begin in few weeks.

India started prohibiting or adding taxes on key rice varieties in 2022 in an effort to shore up supplies and quell food inflation ahead of national elections. The moves sent the Asian benchmark price to the highest since 2008 last year and prompted panicked consumers to seek supplies from other nations.

The latest decision comes ahead of elections in October in the northern state of Haryana, a key producer of basmati rice and other agricultural commodities. About two-thirds of India's 1.4 billion population live in rural areas, making farmers an important voting bloc.

Separately, the nation removed the floor price of \$550 a ton for exports of onions with immediate effect, according to a commerce ministry notification.

The government also reduced wheat stockpile limits to prevent hoarding and lower prices of the food grain in the local market, according to a statement from the food ministry.

### Wheat supplies

Wheat futures traded in Chicago were set for a third week of gains as India's decision to limit stockpiles underscored the tightness in global wheat supplies.

Wheat for December delivery rose as much as 3.5 percent, the biggest intraday gain in more than a month.

The Indian government cut the size of wheat stockpiles traders and big retailers are allowed to maintain by 33 percent to 2,000 tons to prevent hoarding, according to a statement from food ministry on Friday.

"That is an indication that supplies are tight and that they want to try to bring domestic prices down by making more supplies available," said Angie Setzer, cofounder of farm advisory Consus Ag Consulting LLC.

The move adds to concerns that dry weather will hurt crops in key producing European countries as Russia and Ukraine, even as the United States Department of Agriculture raised its estimate for global wheat stockpiles at the end of the 2024-2025 crop season.

Yet, the escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine—with a Ukrainian ship carrying wheat to Egypt struck by Russia this week—also is bullish for wheat futures, Setzer said.

“We saw Russia targeting that grain ship yesterday—that’s the first time we’ve seen anything like that, and I think that’s a big deal,” Setzer said. “We’re coming to a point where folks may think they don’t have anything to lose.”

Image credits: **Kanishka Sonthalia/Bloomberg**

**<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/15/india-scrap-floors-price-for-basmati-rice-exports-to-boost-appeal/>**

**BUSINESS MIRROR**

# USC, Searca bioplastics from shrimp shells, mango waste win global accolade

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AN ordinary plastic is shown on the left, while the other is a bioplastic made from shrimp shells and mango waste, a project of the University of San Carlos and funded by Searca.

Their bioplastics project made from shrimp shells and mango waste landed the University of San Carlos (USC) and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca) in the global spotlight.

A video featuring the Searca Grants for Research toward Agricultural Innovative Solutions (GRAINS)-funded project of Cebu City-based USC was named one of the Top 10 entries in the prestigious Nature Awards for the Science in Shorts filmmaking competition.

This recognition shines a spotlight on groundbreaking work in sustainable agriculture, with the Searca x USC entry competing against 250 global submissions.

The winning video, titled “Unusually sustainable—bioplastics from shrimp shells plus mango waste!” introduces an innovative approach to tackling plastic pollution by creating biodegradable bioplastics from shrimp shells and mango waste.

This eco-friendly, low-carbon solution is a sustainable alternative to conventional plastics and addresses one of the most pressing environmental issues of today.

The project was led by Dr. Francis Siacor of USC with financial support from Searca GRAINS, which funds innovative agricultural research projects, supports knowledge sharing, and facilitates partnerships to accelerate the adoption of sustainable technologies.

USC’s bioplastics project exemplifies how GRAINS nurtures agricultural solutions that have both environmental and societal impact.

The USC project highlights the role of circular agriculture in waste management.

By transforming discarded materials into bioplastics, the project not only mitigates plastic pollution but also adds value to agricultural waste products.

This aligns with Searca’s mission of advancing agricultural innovation and fostering sustainable development.

The Nature Awards for Science in Shorts is a global competition that encourages researchers to communicate complex scientific ideas through creative and concise videos.



The competition showcases the importance of science communication to bridge the gap between research and public understanding.

USC's entry was celebrated at the Curious2024 Future Insight Conference in Mainz, Germany, where the Top 10 films were premiered.

“This recognition is a testament to the potential of agricultural research in addressing global challenges like plastic pollution, Director Dr. Glenn Gregorio, of Searca Center, said.

He added: “We are proud to support projects like this through GRAINS to accelerate the adoption of groundbreaking technologies that benefit both people and the planet.”

Atty. Eric Reynoso, Searca Program head for Emerging Innovation and Growth, said the Top 10 distinction showcased the potential of local research to make a significant impact on the global stage.

The Top 10 videos, including the Searca-funded USC entry, are available for viewing on the official Nature Awards Science in Shorts platform.

Image credits: [SCREENSHOT FROM SEARCA FACEBOOK PAGE](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/15/usc-searca-bioplastics-from-shrimp-shells-mango-waste-win-global-accolade/>