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MANILA BULLETIN:

The rise of the Southern Mindanao Economic corridor

BY JOHN TRIA
Sep 2, 2024 06:04 AM

#MINDANAO



In 2015 I had the privilege to help organize the Southern Mindanao Growth Corridor business conference, a gathering of business leaders from all over the country to explore the opportunities in the economic corridor composed of the Soccsksargen region that covers the Cotabato provinces, Sultan Kudarat, and Sarangani and the adjacent Davao region which covers all Davao provinces and Davao City. Back then, many of the delegates who came for the conference were pleasantly surprised to find out just how the corridor is an area conducive to investment, commerce, and trade.

In the years after 2016, Davao City has grown a taller skyline, with new central business townships that can take investors in. General Santos now hosts a new campus of the University of Santo Tomas. The General Santos and Davao International Airports are prepared to welcome new flights from key Philippine and Asian cities. The highways linking the major urban areas of Tagum, Davao, Digos, General Santos, and Koronadal are impressive and scenic roadways. This corridor's proximity to the Brunei Indonesia Malaysia Philippines Growth area amplifies this potential.

According to the 2020 census, this large corridor's population is per the 2020 census. Soccsksargen's residents number 4,901,386 while the Davao region clocks in at 5,243,536 residents. When combined, this makes the region a big consumer market. It is also an economic powerhouse since it has the potential to produce homegrown products and export them since Agriculture, Fisheries and forestry account for 24.8 percent of the Soccsksargen economy, and 14.5 percent of the ₱1.02 trillion Davao Region economy. Homegrown income such as this makes the two regions resilient, and a big market for goods and services.

In terms of business potential often take these two regions as one since this used to be one administrative region, as the Soccsksargen provinces were taken together with the Davao provinces with Davao as the regional capital. Nonetheless, the trade and business links have endured and remained robust. Companies often integrate business and marketing operations in the Davao and

Gensan markets. Some agribusiness companies based in Davao plant and harvest bananas and pineapples in the Soccsksargen area.

Moving forward, I foresee that South and North Cotabato, for instance, will supply larger volumes of durian given the increase in export demand. Perhaps an updated roadmap from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Agriculture for the durian industry is needed given these developments. Increased rural employment will be achieved. Let's look at bottlenecks to increased production volume, and even agro-processing opportunities to boost demand.

Knowing these things, expanding business in this area becomes a compelling proposition when you take these two regions together, accounting for the rise in population and economic growth over the last decade.

A key element to sustain and expand this growth is to promote more manufacturing to add value to the fresh produce and reach more markets. Having more markets pulls production up, expanding employment opportunities for residents. Having more jobs raises demand for more goods and services that, in turn, contribute to growing the economy and boosting opportunities further.

Another means to boost economic activity is ensuring more efficient and affordable logistics. Both regions bear a robust Agriculture Forestry and Fishery Sector that produce and export fresh products. Having more cold chain and port facilities at par with global standards promotes fast delivery to markets and global supply chains.

We look forward to this corridor's economy growing even more into the future.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/9/2/the-rise-of-the-southern-mindanao-economic-corridor>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Transport of hogs from ASF-affected areas allowed

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

September 2, 2024 | 12:00am



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Administrative Circular 6, amending AC 2 issued in 2022, which prohibited the transport of live pigs within the one-kilometer radius from infected areas up to the boundary of a city or municipality classified as red zones.

AFP / File

To prevent pork supply shortage

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) has allowed the transport of healthy hogs from areas affected by African swine fever (ASF), to prevent shortage in the supply of pork and pork products during the holiday season.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Administrative Circular 6, amending AC 2 issued in 2022, which prohibited the transport of live pigs within

the one-kilometer radius from infected areas up to the boundary of a city or municipality classified as red zones.

“In areas identified as red zones, it is imperative to identify, select and safeguard the healthy population of pigs from potential infection and subsequent mandatory depopulation to minimize economic losses,” Tiu Laurel said in AC 6.

He approved a petition submitted by the regional agricultural and fishery council as well as by provincial veterinarians in Calabarzon.

The group asked the DA to allow the transport of healthy hogs from identified infected areas to slaughterhouses.

“Epidemiological knowledge, clinical manifestation as well as available diagnostic tools can confidently identify healthy animals within the red zones. There is a need to utilize products derived from these healthy animals to avert further waste and address the low supply of pork in the market,” Tiu Laurel said.

Under the approved circular, transport of pigs outside the 500-meter to one-kilometer radius from an area where the virus was detected may be permitted within the city or municipality, provided the hogs were proven healthy or tested negative for ASF.

Tiu Laurel said that transport of live pigs from other zones may be permitted across all areas upon compliance with all documentary requirements and conditions.

“The pigs must be transported directly from the point of origin to the specified destination. Loading and unloading of pigs during transit is strictly prohibited. All (hogs) must be slaughtered within 24 hours upon arrival at the slaughterhouse,” he said.

Any violation will result in the suspension of the license to transport issued by the Bureau of Animal Industry as well as issuance of a show-cause order or criminal prosecution, the DA said.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/09/02/2382170/transport-hogs-asf-affected-areas-allowed>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘Delayed arrival to soften prices of rice imports’

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

September 2, 2024 | 12:00am



This, industry sources told The STAR, could generate savings in both the prices of imported rice as well as their freight costs that could translate to lower landed costs of the staple, resulting in cheaper retail price.

Philstar.com / Jovannie Lambayan

MANILA, Philippines — Prolonging the deadline for the arrival of rice shipments would allow local importers to negotiate better rates for their imports amid threats that their contracts are being canceled due to volatility in prices, resulting in lower landed costs and retail prices.

This, industry sources told The STAR, could generate savings in both the prices of imported rice as well as their freight costs that could translate to lower landed costs of the staple, resulting in cheaper retail price.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. told The STAR that he extended the must ship-out date for imported rice to 60 days from 30 days to allow local importers to “shop around and get better rates” for freight costs.

Tiu Laurel explained that freight companies have increased their rates on local rice importers due to the earlier 30-day deadline for rice imports to arrive in the country.

“The 30-day [deadline] served its purpose before to make clear how much volume of rice would enter last November and December,” he said.

The must ship-out date stipulates the deadline that an allowed rice import must enter the country beginning on the day that the shipment’s sanitary and phytosanitary import clearance (SPSIC) was issued.

Initially, the must ship-out date for rice imports was 60 days to 90 days but was cut short to 30 days by Tiu Laurel last December to force importers to bring in their applied import volume.

Last week, Tiu Laurel issued a memorandum circular reverting the must ship-out date to 60 days citing the need to protect local farmers and the need to ensure food security.

Industry sources told The STAR that rice traders and importers have appealed to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), which issues the SPSIC, to extend the must ship-out deadline after they faced cancellation of contracts by Vietnamese exporters, who are seeking better prices for their stocks.

Vietnam accounts for at least three-fourths of the country’s annual rice imports.

The extension of the must ship-out date would provide rice importers with the “flexibility” to look for other suppliers should their contracts be cancelled within the 60-day deadline, said Danilo Fausto, president of the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc.

“If it is kept at 30-day (deadline) then the (importers) will not have that flexibility to look for other suppliers which could cause a problem for our supply – our supply will be jeopardized because we really need the imports to fill in the gap in local supply,” he said.

Fausto said some Vietnamese rice exporters are taking advantage of the government’s decision to lower rice tariffs to 15 percent by hiking their export prices.

“I do not think it is the world market causing the increase in export prices but it is more on a profit motive,” he said.

The Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement co-founder Orly Manuntag earlier said rice export prices in the neighboring Southeast Asian country have increased by \$60 to \$70 per metric ton, forcing Vietnamese suppliers to call off contracts with Philippine importers.

International reports indicate that Vietnamese rice export prices have steadily increased in recent months on the back of foreseen higher global demand for the grain, especially in neighboring countries like the Philippines and Indonesia.

The price uptick happened just weeks after the lowering of the country’s rice tariffs from 35 percent to 15 percent took effect on July 5, industry players said.

The rise in export prices would reduce whatever savings would be generated and passed on to consumers due to the tariff reduction, they added.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/09/02/2382141/delayed-arrival-soften-prices-rice-imports>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Ripening Indian crops seen under threat from prolonged monsoon

September 2, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

MUMBAI — India’s monsoon rains are likely to be prolonged into late September this year due to the development of a low-pressure system in the middle of the month, two weather department officials told Reuters.

Above-normal rainfall due to the delayed withdrawal of the monsoon could damage India’s summer-sown crops like rice, cotton, soybean, corn, and pulses, which are typically harvested from mid-September.

The crop damage could lead to food inflation, but the rains may also result in higher soil moisture, benefiting the planting of winter-sown crops such as wheat, rapeseed, and chickpea.

“There is an increased probability of a low-pressure system developing in the third week of September, which could delay the withdrawal of the monsoon,” said a senior official of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), who sought anonymity as the matter is sensitive.

India, the world's second-largest producer of wheat, sugar, and rice, has imposed various curbs on the export of these farm commodities, and any losses due to excessive rainfall could prompt New Delhi to extend those curbs.

The monsoon generally begins in June and starts to retreat by Sept. 17 from northwestern parts of the country, ending across the country by mid-October.

The lifeblood of a nearly \$3.5-trillion economy, the annual monsoon brings almost 70% of the rain India needs to water farms and replenish reservoirs and aquifers.

Without irrigation, nearly half the farmland in the country depends on the rains that usually run from June to September.

Monsoon rainfall in September and October could be influenced by La Niña weather conditions, which are likely to develop from the next month, said another IMD official.

In the past, when La Niña develops during the second half of the monsoon season, it has led to a delayed monsoon withdrawal, said the official, adding that "this year, we could see a similar pattern."

The two sources shared their assessment ahead of the IMD's monthly forecast for September rainfall and monsoon withdrawal, which is scheduled for this weekend.

India has received 7% more rainfall than average since the monsoon season began on June 1. However, some states have experienced as much as 66% more rainfall than average, leading to flooding.

Heavy rains during the third and fourth weeks of September and early October could affect early sown crops that are nearing harvest, said Ashwini Bansod, vice-president of commodities research at Phillip Capital India.

"The impact would depend on the intensity and duration of the rainfall. If the rains persist into the first half of October, it could cause more damage if fields get flooded," Bansod said. — Reuters

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/09/02/617293/ripening-indian-crops-seen-under-threat-from-prolonged-monsoon/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Fake cows ready for milking at US state fairs as bird flu threat looms

September 2, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

WEST ALLIS, Wisconsin — In Michigan this year, where dairy workers and herds have fallen ill from bird flu, a pair of unlikely prized cows are being prepped to take the state fair stage.

State fair organizers are this year featuring Milkshake and Buttercup, two life-sized fiberglass cows complete with rubber teats and water-filled udders, for a popular milking demo.

The head of the Minnesota State Fair's Moo Booth came up with a similar work around for its hands-on milking event: a fake dairy cow named Olympia.

"Normally, we'd have a real cow out there," said Jill Nathe, the fair's deputy general manager of agriculture and competition. "We just can't do that right now."

As avian influenza continues to spread, infecting cattle herds for the first time this year as well as four dairy workers, US state and county fair organizers have been forced to reimagine nostalgic summer traditions long celebrated by city and rural folk alike.

For farmers and students eager for blue ribbons and bragging rights, the outbreak has forced them to navigate new testing rules and manage logistical headaches in order to obtain a clean bill of health for animals before entering the show ring.

State and local officials say they are trying to protect people and animals from the H5N1 virus as some dairy farmers have declined to test their herds.

Experts worry that further transmission of the virus could help it adapt to spread between humans. The risk of viral spread among herds prompted some county fairs in Michigan to cancel dairy shows, while the Iowa State Fair shuttered its milking barn.

In Minnesota, state fair staff procured extra gloves and face shields from COVID-era stockpiles for the livestock crew, and kept pregnant dairy cows out of the fair's birthing center.

Several farm states, including Wisconsin, required lactating cattle to test negative within seven days of arriving at the fairgrounds.

Wisconsin dairy farmer Rick Thompson said he had to carefully time visits from his veterinarian, so the milk test results for H5N1 would fall within the required window for different fairs. His vet's wife personally drove samples to a state lab in Madison to ensure they arrived on time for testing. "It's not a convenient thing," said Thompson, 57, who has attended Wisconsin's state fair for 46 years.

Michigan banned lactating cows from all public exhibitions until the state goes two months without finding an infected herd. With only one state fair per year, the chance has passed for 2024.

Michigan last reported a case on Monday.

"We were all waiting for that 60-day window," Michigan State Fair livestock director LC Scramlin said. "But we kept having another case and another one happen."

At the Wisconsin State Fair, where visitors can buy everything from cream puffs to hot tubs, veterinarians inspected cattle before they stepped off their trailers to make sure the animals were healthy upon arrival — a departure from previous years, exhibitors said.

The risk of bird flu was enough to convince Jennifer and Bethany Droessler to keep a lactating cow at home. The sisters from Cuba City, Wisconsin, instead hauled other cattle to show at the event's Dairy Lane, where fairgoers petted and took selfies with animals topping the scales at more than 1,000 pounds (454 kg).

"We'll aim for next year and hopefully it won't be an issue," said Jennifer Droessler, 30.

More than 190 dairy herds nationwide have been infected since March, and 13 farm workers tested positive following exposure to cows and poultry. The workers all recovered, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says H5N1 remains a low risk for the general public.

Still, CDC is advising people not to eat, drink or touch anything in animal areas at fairs. Several fairgoers in Wisconsin, the No. 2 milk-producer and top cheese-making state, said they were not aware of, or concerned about, the guidelines.

Visitors chomped on treats including taffy apples and cheese curds as they strolled between cows chewing their cud.

"I don't think it's a big risk," said O.E. Glier of Delafield, Wisconsin, 88, who came to the fair with grandchildren. "The CDC overreacts with a lot of stuff." — Reuters

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/09/02/617291/fake-cows-ready-for-milking-at-us-state-fairs-as-bird-flu-threat-looms/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Volume landed at fishports in July declines 12.9% month on month

September 2, 2024 | 12:03 am



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE catch landed at regional fishports (RFPs) totaled 50,862.42 metric tons (MT) in July, down 12.9% from a month earlier, according to the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA).

“Despite some setbacks due to weather and closed fishing season, the PFDA and its RFPs are consistently doing their best to provide sufficient and affordable fishery products to its clients and stakeholders,” the PFDA said in a report.

The General Santos Fishport Complex reported deliveries of 25,205 MT, down from 29,635.67 MT reported the previous month.

Deliveries at the Navotas fishport decreased 18.5% to 17,765 MT during the month.

The Iloilo fishport reported landed volume of 3,053.05 MT, up 21.86% from a month earlier.

It added that the Lucena Fish Port Complex received deliveries of 1,793 MT while Bulan fishport in Sorsogon had 1,785 MT.

The Davao Fish Port Complex had deliveries amounting to 182.4 MT.

It said that a closed fishing season was in force along the Davao Gulf between June 1 and Aug. 31.

The catch landed at the Zamboanga and the Sual, Pangasinan fishports rose 10.45% and 3.69% respectively during the period. It did not provide volume data for the month. — Adrian H. Halili

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/09/02/617292/volume-landed-at-fishports-in-july-declines-12-9-month-on-month/>

MANILA STANDARD

DA's coconut comeback plan: Planting dreams, harvesting delusions

By Louis 'Barok' Biraogo
September 2, 2024, 12:05 am

“The reality is the DA's vow to support the coconut industry is as solid as a coconut shell—on the outside, it looks tough, but crack it open, and you're left with a lot of liquid promises”

Has the Department of Agriculture finally discovered a way to make coconuts grow faster than political promises?

The DA, with its usual flair for bold proclamations and elusive results, is vowing to restore the Philippines to its former coconut throne, currently occupied by—wait for it—Indonesia.

Because nothing says “we're back” like chasing after a country that's already miles ahead in the coconut game.

We'll just have to wait and see if this latest attempt to revive the coconut industry is anything more than another episode in the never-ending telenovela of Philippine agriculture.

Let's take a brief (and unpleasant) stroll down memory lane, shall we?

The Philippines was once the undisputed king of coconuts, producing enough to quench the thirst of the entire world.

But as the coconut trees aged, so did our global standing.

Senile trees, poor replanting practices, and a government that seemed more interested in collecting slogans than planting seedlings led to a steady decline.

Meanwhile, Indonesia, our coconut nemesis, decided to take the lead, leaving the Philippines to cling to the consolation prize of “Second-Largest Exporter.”

It's a title we hold dear, mostly because it reminds us of the glory we once had but no longer deserve.

But there's no need to panic!, baroks!

The DA has a plan.

And it's as ambitious as it is likely to succeed—which is to say, not very.

Undersecretary Roger Navarro, in a display of optimism that only a government official could muster, declared, “We have been quite declining in the global stage, but we will return.”

Ah, the classic strategy of acknowledging failure before making promises that will undoubtedly be forgotten by the next coconut harvest.

To achieve this coconut renaissance, the DA plans to plant 100 million coconut trees by 2028.

Yes, a mere 100 million, because if there's one thing we've learned from past agricultural promises, it's that numbers on paper grow much faster than actual trees.

But let's give credit where it's due.

The DA isn't just planting trees; they're also planting hope.

Hope the government and private sector will suddenly discover a magical synergy, solving problems like low prices, stiff international competition, and the minor detail of senile trees.

And let's not forget the logistical challenges, because nothing says “we're on top of things” like a port congestion issue that can turn a coconut shipment into a game of “Will It Arrive Before the Next Election?”

Of course, there are reasons—quixotic, improbable reasons—why the DA's plan might just work. Perhaps coconut farmers will suddenly find themselves showered with government support, free from the burden of land ownership disputes and the struggle for a decent market price.

Maybe the global demand for coconut products will spike overnight, propelling the Philippines back to its rightful place atop the coconut world.

Or, in a truly miraculous turn of events, the DA will discover that the key to agricultural success isn't in the number of trees planted, but in the number of press releases issued.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

The reality is the DA's vow to support the coconut industry is as solid as a coconut shell—on the outside, it looks tough, but crack it open, and you're left with a lot of liquid promises.

In the spirit of constructive satire, here are a few recommendations for the DA:

Invest in Time Travel: Since the best days of the Philippine coconut industry are behind us, why not focus on going back to when we were on top? It's a surefire way to reclaim our global standing—if we can just figure out how to make a time machine out of coconuts.

Slogans Over Seeds: Why bother with the messy business of planting when you can simply create catchy slogans? “Coconuts for a Brighter Tomorrow” sounds like a winner, and it doesn't require any actual coconuts.

Partnerships with Reality: Instead of aiming for 100 million trees, perhaps a partnership with reality would yield better results. Let's focus on managing the trees we already have, supporting the farmers who grow them, and ensuring our coconuts don't end up as another export statistic in someone else's success story.

The DA's vow to support the coconut industry is a classic case of promising the moon when all we really need is a sturdy ladder.

So here's to the DA, the coconut industry, and the grand tradition of making bold promises that are just a little too high to reach.

If nothing else, it's bound to be a cracking good time.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/opinion/columns/citizen-barok-by-louis-biraogo/314491624/das-coconut-comeback-plan-planting-dreams-harvesting-delusions.html>

MANILA STANDARD

Urban farming option cultivates climate resilience and food security



A social enterprise that runs the BGC Community farm aims to inspire the youth to engage in agriculture. Photo from Urbanfarmersph

By [CCC News](#)
September 2, 2024, 6:50 pm

As the impacts of climate change continue to challenge global food security, innovative solutions are emerging.

Among them is urban farming, a practice that has gained significance as cities become more populated and space for traditional agriculture dwindles.

With climate change altering weather patterns and reducing arable land, urban farming offers a resilient alternative, helping to reduce the risk of supply chain disruptions.

A notable example of this is the City Ordinance No. SP-2972, passed by the local government of Quezon City in 2020.

The ordinance encourages property owners to transform idle lands into productive urban farms.

Rather than leave their lands unused while still paying taxes, many property owners have embraced urban agriculture and food production.

To qualify for the idle land tax exemption, the entire land must be devoted to urban agriculture for a minimum of three years and must yield agricultural produce for either personal or public consumption.

As a result, these farms now supply fresh vegetables to the community, reduce the need for long-distance transportation and cut down on greenhouse gas emissions.

As of December 31, 2023, there are 1,026 urban farms in Quezon City. Beyond providing food, the program has created livelihoods for around 25,650 urban farmers, who are now engaged in green jobs.

One of the most efficient techniques in urban farming is hydroponics, which involves growing plants in a nutrient-rich water solution instead of soil.

This method uses up to 90 percent less water than traditional farming and can be implemented in compact spaces such as rooftops, balconies, and even indoors. CCC news

Urban farming initiatives not only provide fresh, locally grown produce but also create opportunities for education and community engagement.

Hydroponic farms are being established in schools, community centers and residential buildings.

These projects teach people how to raise their own food, reduce their carbon footprint and build resilience against the impacts of climate change.

The Department of Agriculture plays a key role in supporting local communities by transforming unused spaces into thriving hydroponic farms.

Facilities were recently established in Bukidnon and Catanduanes, further expanding the reach of urban farming across the country.

For urban farming and hydroponics to reach their full potential, it is important to support policies and programs that provide access to resources, training, and funding for these initiatives.

By embracing urban farming and other innovative practices, the Philippines can lead the way in building resilient, green cities.

CCC news

<https://www.manilastandard.net/spotlight/environmental-and-sustainability/314492090/urban-farming-option-cultivates-climate-resilience-and-food-security.html>

What else do we not import?

By Lito Banayo
September 2, 2024, 12:10 am

“We export humans, their labor in distant lands fueling the consumption needs of the people they have left behind”

August has come and gone.

Typhoon Carina lashed before the ghost month, which ends today, with no major weather disturbance except for the persistent “habagat” of our wet season, which oldtimers at the NFA always dreaded because the third quarter were lean months, when the summer harvest is supposed to supply the nation’s consumption needs as it awaits the harvest of September till November.

Our celebratory events coincide with the palay harvest:

May was the merry month when the harvests sustained our population during the pre-independence era.

Most of our fiestas gravitate around this period, when farmers thank the good Lord for the bounty of the good earth.

Then comes the holiday season celebrating the birth of the Christ. It also comes after the harvest two months before the Siberian cold winds descend upon our warm climate, bringing a welcome chill.

While the “simbang gabi” starts us off the novena of masses prior to Christmas Day, we have through the years begun the celebratory mood as early as September, when our ubiquitous malls start putting up the tinsel and the lights to entice consumers to buy for the customary gift-giving of the holiday season.

But, enough of the trivia.

My attention was called by recent news items about how our imports of beef and even pork have increased tremendously.

The USDA forecasts our 2025 beef imports to increase to some 226,000 metric tons next year. It attributes this to strong consumer purchasing power and population growth.

The former is a good economic indicator, if it were not for the inequality by which such growth is distributed.

The latter has been a perennial problem — we produce more and more mouths to feed while we hardly produce enough of the wherewithal to feed them here.

Far away Brazil rejoices at our meat imports from them, so does Australia, New Zealand and the US of A, and of course, for the very rich, the Japanese for their wagyu.

So, we import more and more, because “hungry stomachs know no law,” a quote I always heard from former president Erap.

Not only beef, but pork likewise.

USDA estimates next year, we will be importing 510,000 metric tons of a food commodity which we used to export once upon a long forgotten time to China.

That’s because of the African swine fever which our quarantine officials failed to suppress from entering the country as early as 2018.

I was then a resident of Taiwan, and unable to bring in goodies like frozen Vigan or Alaminos longanisa or even chicharron from Carcar or Baliwag which I missed terribly as I do not like Taiwanese sausages which were on the sweet side.

Now we have not been able to totally eradicate ASF-infested hogs such that even our provinces forbid the entry of meat from other provinces, some kind of hog racism.

Do many of us know that we import pork not from those of Asian provenance, but as far as from Netherlands and Spain?

Despite the cost of logistics, importers say they come out cheaper than if they were to buy locally produced pork.

But worse is the fact that we import our rice because our palay production is not commensurate to our rice consumption.

Under PNoy, DA and NFA estimated the annual shortfall to be 10 percent when the heavens were kind, 15 percent when it unleashed its fury through strong winds and rain.

Now that shortfall is 20 percent, and, if are to believe the USDA, it could be more.

The DA recently warned our traders to already import and take advantage of the tariff reduction our president decreed to lower the price of rice which is hounding him endlessly because he made a promise that was impossible to begin with.

But the Viets and the Thais are wise. You reduce your tariffs; time for us to increase our selling price.

We also import chicken because again, prices of deboned chicken are lower.

We import galunggong, which used to be the poor man's fish, since replaced by tilapia which thrives in brackish water perhaps contaminated by human detritus.

We import carrots and mushrooms, almost all kinds of vegetables save for sitaw and upo, from China and Taiwan.

And we pay atrociously high prices for these vegetables, which are really of poor quality compared to what they eat in their countries.

We also import 95 percent of our garlic, and at one time, our onions became the most expensive aromatic and sauteeing ingredient in the whole wide world.

That is food. But we also import almost all of our oil requirements, and all the cars that use oil for fuel.

But we export humans, their labor in distant lands fueling the consumption needs of the people they have left behind.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/opinion/columns/so-i-see-by-lito-banayo/314491626/what-else-do-we-not-import.html>

MANILA STANDARD

DA pushes sustainable coconut farming in PH

By FAO News
September 2, 2024, 7:05 pm

The Department of Agriculture and the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) vowed to improve the lives of Filipino coconut farmers and transform the industry toward sustainability.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr., in a message read by Agriculture Undersecretary Roger V. Navarro during the celebration of the 38th National Coconut Week, said the event highlights the role of coconut farmers in building a prosperous, better and sustainable coconut industry.

“The coconut is more than just a symbol of our rich agricultural heritage. It is a powerhouse of Philippine agriculture. At present, we export more than 50 percent products and earned more than one billion or a billion dollars annually from crude coconut oil alone,” Tiu Laurel said.

“Today, we highlight the collaboration and partnership among the public and private sector of the coconut industry. We are committed to work together to strengthen every facet of the coconut value chain—from research and development to market access and farmer empowerment—we need to work more sustainably,” he added.

The agriculture chief also stressed the need to maximize opportunities to uplift the lives of coconut farmers, drive economic growth, and achieve the goal of a prosperous and progressive nation.

The United Nations, through the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), has provided alternative coconut-based farming livelihoods in targeted communities in the Philippines, especially after Typhoon Yolanda caused destruction in November 2013. An estimated 44 million trees were damaged or destroyed by the typhoon, affecting around 1 million coconut farmers. FAO News, DA

The program helped restore agricultural production, increased access to alternative certified seeds and quality planting materials, improved crop varieties and animal breeds, and introduced new methods of agro-ecology.

Coconut is one of the most important crops in the Philippines with the country being the second largest coconut producer in the world.

FAO implemented the Coconut-Based Farming Systems program which was part of the organization's US\$39.7-million Typhoon Haiyan Strategic Response Plan aiming to address the recovery needs of affected farming families.

Through the program, activities were designed to enable small-scale coconut farmers to plant short term vegetable cash crops and annual crops to provide alternative livelihood sources, while also integrating climate-smart farming technologies.

Restoring livelihoods and building the resilience of coconut farmers was a paramount consideration in the aftermath of the typhoon and this meant providing farmers with a stable source of alternative livelihood that can be sustained even with limited land resources and capital.

FAO and its partners established 129 Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT) sites to enable coconut-based farming communities to plant vegetables and other cash crops to complement their main crops like coconut and corn.

By planting short-term, medium-term and permanent crops, farmers are able to gain alternative livelihood sources and make use of idle land under coconut plantations. **FAO News, DA**

<https://www.manilastandard.net/spotlight/environmental-and-sustainability/314492100/da-pushes-sustainable-coconut-farming-in-ph.html>

PH logs lower fish catch in July

By Janine Alexis Miguel
September 2, 2024

PORTS across the country logged in lesser fish catch in July compared to June, the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) said, citing closed-fishing season and weather disturbances for the low output.

The PFDA reported that transactions for fish and its by-products last month totaled 50,862 metric tons (MT), down by 14 percent from 59,259 MT in June.

Among the nine regional fish ports monitored by the PFDA, five recorded a negative output last month due to unfavorable weather conditions and fishing bans implemented annually.

The Navotas Fish Port, the largest in the country, yielded 17,765 MT of fish and fish products, a decrease of 18.47 percent from 21,792 MT.

Also posting declines in deliveries were the following: Lucena Fish Port Complex with 1,793 MT, slightly down from 1,794 MT; General Santos Fish Port Complex, 25,205 MT, a drop of 14.9-percent from 29,635 MT; and Bulan Fish Port Complex, 1,785 MT, a decline of 22.06 percent from 2,308 MT.

The biggest decrease was in the Davao Fish Port Complex with 182.377 MT, or 89.8 percent lower than its 1,794 MT catch last June. This was blamed on the closed fishing season implemented annually in Davao Gulf from June 1 to August 31.

But other ports were fortunate, such as the Sual Fish Port and Zamboanga Fish Port Complex, which reported increases of 10.45 percent and 3.69 percent fish catch, respectively.

Likewise, the Camaligan Fish Port posted a 29.05-percent rise in fish output, while the Iloilo Fish Port Complex's catch grew by 21.86 percent.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/02/business/top-business/ph-logs-lower-fish-catch-in-july/1968320>

Women planters contribute for food security in Albay

September 2, 2024

LIGAO CITY — Women for Progress movement, which involves close to 10,000 women planters in Albay's third district, continues to cultivate a communal garden to produce vegetables, corn and root crops to help the government sustain the availability of food in the countryside.

The Baligang Women Planters Association in Barangay Baligang in Ligao City have harvested pechay and other vegetables out of the one-fourth hectare land located within the six-kilometer danger zone at the foot of the Mayon Volcano. The land is owned by the city government of Ligao.

Cherry Patriarca, who leads the group, said her group was organized in 2023 while they were temporarily housed at an evacuation center in Basag, Ligao City following the eruption of Mayon volcano in June to August last year.



WOMEN PLANTERS IN ACTION Women farmers in Baligang village, Ligao City, are shown here as they harvest various vegetables in a city government-owned land near the foot of Mayor Volcano to help Albay province achieve food security. PHOTO BY RHAYDZ B. BARCIA

The association has 34 members who are all women and generate income and provide fresh vegetables to the villagers and to the public market here. They continue the communal garden using the idle land owned by the city government of Ligao.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/02/regions/women-planters-contribute-for-food-security-in-albay/1968269>

Sugar, glass 'sensitive' under UAE deal

By Philippine News Agency
September 2, 2024

LOCAL sugar millers and glass manufacturers are urging the government to look into the sensitivity of sugar and glass products under the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

During the public consultation of the Philippines-UAE CEPA at the Tariff Commission on August 30, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)-Export Marketing Bureau Director Bianca Sykimte said that part of the interest of UAE in the Philippines was the exports of sugar and glass products.

Sykimte said the Philippine negotiating team was eyeing to offer UAE zero tariffs for products that are "not locally produced or locally produced but not in sufficient quantity."

She said part of the possible offer of the Philippines to the UAE to be given zero tariffs by 2025 were other sugar, including chemical pure lactose, maltose, glucose and fructose, in solid form; sugar syrups not containing added flavoring/coloring; and artificial honey and caramel.

DTI data showed that between 2019 and 2022, the country's annual average import of these products amounted to \$83.13 million.

Philippine Sugar Millers Association executive director Cocoy Barrera requested the Tariff Commission during the public

consultation that sugar, raw and refined, be excluded from the PH-UAE CEPA.

"Although [the] UAE has no agricultural sector to speak of, it has some of the world's largest sugar refineries. In fact, the two biggest, if I can recall, are Al Khaleej and Emirates. And their procedure is they import raw and export refined to the world markets. So, they can export sugar refined to the Philippines," Barrera said.

"Although right now, we are not a part of their traditional export market, but we don't know the dynamics in the future. They are looking for additional markets at the top considering that they have invested heavily, particularly the government of UAE, in their sugar refining sector," he added.

Barrera said there should be an alignment of policies since the government is spending heavily through the Sugar Exchange Industry Development Act for the development of the local industry and it is also opening the market to potential importation.

Moreover, Glass Manufacturers Association of the Philippines Inc. (GMAPI) associate member Anthony Cabrera also voiced the concern of the local producers that UAE glass imports might flood the Philippine market.

Sykimte said the Philippine negotiating team might also open the local market to other glassware for kitchen, table, toilet, office, indoor decoration, or similar purposes from UAE for zero tariffs under CEPA.

The average Philippine import of these products amounted to \$62.5 million between 2019 and 2022, with 7.19 percent or \$4.5 million outsourced from the UAE.

Cabrera said the local industry had noticed a big surge of glass products being sent from the UAE to the Philippine market, "which

is obviously impacting the dynamics of the local manufacturers and encroaching into our market."

This was seconded by GMAPI member Rommel Dino, also the glass planning business manager at San Miguel Yamamura Packaging Corp.

"There's [an] increasing level of importations coming into the Philippines, and we noted that the UAE is one of the countries that has the most importations," Dino said.

"And this is very specific to the glass containers, which are being used by the beverage, liquor, and pharmaceutical industries in the Philippines. And as mentioned by my colleague, Mr. Cabrera, this has affected the local manufacturers, particularly the pharmaceutical industry."

The parties are given until September 4 to submit their position papers to the DTI.

DTI Undersecretary Allan Gepty said the PH-UAE CEPA would hold the third negotiations from September 16 to 18.

Both countries target to conclude formal talks this year as part of the 50th-anniversary celebration of diplomatic ties between the Philippines and the UAE.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/09/02/business/top-business/sugar-glass-sensitive-under-uae-deal/1968318>

BOC, PCCI partner vs smuggling

By **Angela Celis**

September 2, 2024



Rubio (4th from left) and PCCI president Enunina Mangio (3rd from left) show the signed MOU as Ortiz-Luis (second from left) and other witnesses look on. (BOC Photo)

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) have entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) aimed at improving revenue collection, combating smuggling and safeguarding local industries.

This partnership will involve joint monitoring of commodities and ensuring fair trade practices.

In a statement, the BOC said the agreement was signed during the 6th Customs and Industry Consultative Advisory Council meeting hosted by the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. in Manila last August 30.

In his keynote address, PhilExport president and Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. acknowledged BOC's efforts in sustaining the vital role of public-private partnership.

"Thanks to BOC commissioner (Bienvenido) Rubio and his predecessors who tend to build up on each other's gain—since global trading is very dynamic, government and private sector (have remained) vigilant and pro-active in ensuring that the Philippines is not left behind on trade facilitation," Ortiz-Luis said.

During the same meeting, the bureau introduced Customs Memorandum Order 08-2024 which provides clear guidelines on the implementation of the ATA Carnet System in the Philippines.

Often referred to as the "passport for goods," the ATA Carnet is an international Customs document that permits the tax-free and duty-free temporary export and import of non-perishable goods for up to one year.

Members of the private sector also presented several proposals in alignment with BOC's goals to improving trade facilitation.

For his part, Rubio reaffirmed the bureau's commitment to enhancing collaboration with stakeholders.

"This meeting has once again put a spotlight on reinforcing partnership among us. Through our joint efforts, we aim to keep pace with the dynamic global trading environment and enhance trade facilitation. Our commitment is to ensure that the Philippines remains competitive and protects local industries and consumers," Rubio said.

In the same event, Rubio received the 2024 Outstanding Achievement Award from the International Container Terminal Services Inc. for his dedication and leadership.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/boc-pcci-partner-vs-smuggling/

APEC committed to food security goals

By **Jed Macapagal**

September 2, 2024



NAVARRO

FOOD security ministers from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) member-economies including the Philippines have committed to abide by the roadmap meant to combat food waste and loss in the region.

“Food security has consistently been a top priority in the Philippines, where the prevention and reduction of food loss and waste are crucial,” said Undersecretary Roger Navarro of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in a statement over the weekend.

Navarro represented the Philippines at the 9th APEC ministerial meeting last month in Trujillo, Peru.

In a joint statement, the APEC food security ministers reaffirmed commitment to the APEC Food Security Roadmap Towards 2030 which emphasizes the need for open, fair, transparent, productive, sustainable, resilient, innovative and inclusive agri-food systems.

The DA said APEC officials noted the need for tailored approaches to agricultural sustainability rather than a one-size-fits-all solution.

For the Philippines, Navarro highlighted several ongoing initiatives by the DA, including the development of advanced post-harvest technologies, improved storage facilities, better packaging solutions and enhanced distribution systems.

Navarro said these efforts aim to support farmers, fisherfolk and stakeholders across the food value chain and agro-processing industry.

DA said the meeting also focused on fostering multi-sectoral, context-specific, voluntary and science-based approaches to tackle food loss and waste apart from strengthening institutional frameworks; promoting public-private partnerships and stakeholder coordination; encouraging research, innovation, technology; and digitalization.

Other focus areas of the meeting are enhancement of capacity building, awareness and education; improvement of data collection and knowledge management; creation of an enabling environment for infrastructure investment; and promotion of food rescue and donation.

The DA said ministers pledged to support access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food while addressing climate change and promoting biodiversity conservation, citing the 2024 State of Food Security and Nutrition Report which highlighted that up to 757 million people globally, experienced hunger in 2023.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/apec-committed-to-food-security-goals

DA allows transport of swine, but issues strict requirements

Ada Pelonia
September 2, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is disallowing the transport of live pigs for slaughter from infected farms and those within a 500-meter radius from where an Africal Swine Fever (ASF) infection was detected.

The prohibition is part of Administrative Circular 6 which modified the movement protocols for live pigs for slaughter purposes. The circulate was signed by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

“There is a need to utilize the products derived from these healthy animals, thereby averting further waste and addressing the low supply of pork in the market,” the circular read.

AC 6 also specified that the movement of hogs outside the 500-meter up to 1-kilometer radius from where the deadly hog disease was detected is allowed within the city or town, provided that the pigs tested negative for ASF.

It added that live pigs from areas outside the 1-kilometer radius but still within the red (infected) zone could be transported for slaughter across all zones, subject to compliance with the requirements outlined in the circular.

DA said red zones are cities or towns with confirmed outbreaks of ASF.

The documentary requirements include the ASF-Transport Clearance (ASF-TC); Local Shipping Permit (LSP) which is valid only for the duration of the ASF-TC; and livestock, poultry products, and by-products Transport Carrier Registration.

The ASF-TC is a certificate issued by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) or DA Regional Field Office (Darfo) to farms authorizing the transport of live pigs that have undergone laboratory testing and confirmed negative for ASF.

“The pigs must be transported directly from the origin to the specified destination in the LSP. Loading and unloading of pigs during transit is strictly prohibited,” the circular read.

It added that all hogs should be slaughtered within 24 hours of arrival at the slaughterhouse.

Meanwhile, the circular noted that the trader or shipper should implement strict precautionary measures to ensure that all vehicles and conveyances used for hauling are subjected to appropriate biosecurity protocols before and after each shipment.

This is to prevent any risk of contamination that could endanger farms and healthy animals, according to the circular.

“Any violation of this Circular by the shipper shall result in the immediate suspension of the BAI Handlers License and Transport Carrier Registration, and may lead to the issuance of a show cause order or criminal prosecution,” it read.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/02/da-allows-transport-of-swine-but-issues-strict-requirements>

Manila Bay fish still unreasonably priced—group

Jonathan L. Mayuga
September 2, 2024

WITH the recent announcement of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (Bfar) that fish caught at Manila Bay are now safe to eat, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) said that it is only fair for traders to start buying fish at a fair price.

Fishermen from Cavite, Bataan, and Navotas, however, reported a “further decrease” in the farm gate prices of their fishery products following the oil spill last July.

Because of this, the group is prodding Bfar to step in and take the cudgels up for the fishermen by ensuring that the fish traders will buy the fish at a reasonable and fair price.

Fish being brought to fish ports have no signs of oil contamination yet unscrupulous fish traders “take advantage” of the oil spill scare to further pull down the farm gate prices.

In Bataan, the price of alubaybay-isdang salinas decreased from P120 to P50 per kilogram. While in Cavite, the farm gate price of blue crab (alimasag) went down to P70 from P170 per kilo before the oil spill. Operators of mussel farms (tahungan) were not spared from the unfair pricing from traders, as their catch dramatically dropped to P300-P500 per tub (banyera) from the regular P1,200 per tub, owing to speculations that the products are tainted with oil.

“The oil spill is not the reason for the loss in income of Manila Bay fishermen, but the traders who take advantage and buy fish at unreasonably low prices,” Pamalakaya vice chairman Ronnel Arambulo said.

“Now that fish caught in Manila Bay has been determined to be safe for consumption, Bfar should issue a directive to fish ports in Cavite, Bataan, and Navotas to set a reasonable price for the fish,” says Arambulo.

Based on the Bfar’s latest test results, fish caught in all areas in Manila Bay are now safe for human consumption, the group said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/02/manila-bay-fish-still-unreasonably-priced-group/>

DA issues rules for controlled ASF vaccination

Ada Pelonia
September 2, 2024



Personnel from the Quezon City Veterinary Department inspect delivery vans along Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City, last August 20, 2024, as part of efforts to control the spread of African swine fever.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has issued guidelines for the controlled use of vaccines against African swine fever (ASF), a fatal animal disease that continues to threaten hog production in the Philippines.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. signed Administrative Circular (AC) 5 which indicated that the controlled use of the ASF vaccine in eligible farms would assess its safety and efficacy.

Laurel said the result would be used to assist the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in their evaluation of the vaccine against the deadly hog disease.

Under the circular, vaccination would only be allowed in barangays unaffected by the virus, are ASF-negative within a red zone, and cities or municipalities that are under pink zone status.

Red zones are cities or municipalities with confirmed outbreaks of ASF while pink zones are areas where the hog disease is not detected but demarcated immediately around the former when an area has been confirmed as an infected zone. The latter aims to prevent and manage spillover of cases from the red zone through biosecurity measures and surveillance.

The circular noted that a minimum of 50 eligible pigs per farm or cluster should be identified for vaccination. The eligible pigs should be at least 4 weeks of age or older and must be healthy and tested negative for ASF before vaccination.

“Vaccination procedures must be supervised by a licensed veterinarian to ensure compliance with established protocols,” the circular read, noting that a minimum of 30 days post-vaccination monitoring is required.

It also indicated that farms should adhere to the monitoring period which could last to a maximum of 120 days post-vaccination.

“Any observation of at least one clinical sign or mortality indicative of ASF must be immediately reported to the LGU [local government unit], DARFO [DA Regional Field Office], and BAI [Bureau of Animal Industry].”

According to the circular, the movement of vaccinated pigs for slaughter would only be allowed if the pigs have completed the minimum 30 days post-vaccination monitoring and have tested negative for the ASF virus.

“Clearance for the movement of vaccinated pigs must comply with current regulations, including securing a Certificate of Free Status on ASF.”

Meanwhile, the DA created a task force for “proper and effective implementation” of these guidelines.

Laurel also issued Special Order (SO) 1265, which designated Agriculture Assistant Secretary Constante J. Palabrica as leader of the task force on ASF vaccination. BAI Officer-in-Charge Hyacinth G. Napiloy and BAI Livestock Research and Development Division chief Marivic M. De Vera will serve as vice-chairs.

“The task force shall provide the oversight on the implementation of the controlled roll-out on the use of vaccine against ASF,” SO 1265 read.

The government began its pig vaccination drive in Lobo, Batangas last August 30. ASF struck hog farms in a number of towns in Batangas, which is one of the country’s major hog-producing provinces.

The DA said it is mulling over the grant of ASF vaccine subsidy for backyard raisers. The initial cost of the vaccines could range from P400 to P500 per dose.

Aside from vaccinating pigs, the government had also set up livestock checkpoints to control the spread of the virus.

Image credits: [Nonoy Lacza](#)

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/02/da-issues-rules-for-controlled-asf-vaccination/>

Costly chicken due to ASF outbreak, humidity—report

Bless Aubrey Ogerio
September 2, 2024

The outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) and supply disruptions caused by humidity have resulted in more expensive poultry meat in Metro Manila, according to the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD).

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the sectoral council under the Department of Science and Technology said in a report that the average chicken price in Metro Manila's jumped to P220 per kilogram from P190 per kg in mid-August.

On August 24, PCAARRD said the price of chicken went up by almost 19 percent to P240 per kg, from P202 per kg a month earlier.

PCAARRD said the trend matches the price changes seen in the first half of 2024. The average farmgate price of chicken in June reached P158.94 per kg, higher than the P133.61 per kg recorded in January.

“The margins between retail and farmgate prices have steadily decreased over the first half of 2024. In January, the margin was P62.88, but by June, it had narrowed to P39.26.”

Adding to the industry's woes is the “third quarter syndrome,” which could make it more difficult for the sector to satisfy the rising demand for chicken.

The United Broiler Raisers Association has warned that the high humidity during this time of year can result in smaller broiler sizes and longer rearing times, which will not only limit production but also drive up the costs associated with poultry farming, further inflating chicken prices.

“Compounding these challenges is the increased risk of bird flu, which thrives in high-humidity conditions. On August 12, 2024, the Food and Agriculture Organization issued a regional alert, emphasizing that the persistence of bird flu under these conditions could further strain the poultry industry.”

PCAARRD said the government has intensified biosecurity measures to address the persistent risks of bird flu, especially in high-humidity environments.

Bird flu cases are still being tracked by the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Bureau of Animal Industry, with a focus on Central Luzon and the Cordillera Administrative Region. These regions continue to be the only ones where cases are still occurring as of August 16.

In response to the threat, the DA has also issued warnings against the use of unregulated avian influenza vaccines sold online, stressing the dangers of unauthorized products.

In 2023, the DOST launched a program aimed at identifying key areas affected by bird flu, analyzing spatiotemporal patterns (how things are located and how they change over time), and conducting extensive laboratory tests.

One major finding from the program was the 99 percent genetic similarity between local avian influenza strains and those from Korea, Japan, and China, suggesting a broader regional risk.

To combat the disease, the program has trained livestock inspectors and veterinarians on biosafety and disease detection, with an early warning protocol to predict pathogenic strains expected to be finalized by the end of 2024.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/09/02/costly-chicken-due-to-asf-outbreak-humidity-report/>