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THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

‘Rice farm mechanization level to hit 3 hp/ha by 2031’

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

November 18, 2024 | 12:00am



Photo shows farmers harvesting their plot of land in Rosario, La Union on October 4, 2024.

STAR / Andy Zapata

MANILA, Philippines — The average mechanization level of the country’s rice farms could hit three horsepower per hectare (hp/ha) by 2031, improving the sector’s productivity while reducing labor costs, the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) said.

PhilMech said it is “confident” the rice mechanization level in the country would reach the said level at the end of the proposed extension of the rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF) mechanization program.

Under the proposed extension, PhilMech, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, would get a guaranteed allocation of P9 billion beginning next year until 2031 to sustain its mechanization program for rice farms.

The amount is almost double than the P5 billion it is getting under the present form of RCEF, which is set to expire by the end of this year.

The agency said local rice farms' mechanization level, or the level that farms use machines for their crop production, has reached 2.77 hp/ha as of October, slightly higher than the 2.68 hp/ha recorded at the end of 2022.

The improvement in mechanization level was attributed to the RCEF mechanization program that started in 2019.

The agency said it has distributed 29,583 units of farm machinery and post-harvest technologies to eligible beneficiaries under the earmarked program. The figure represents 95.15 percent of its 30,100 target units.

PhilMech said it is confident it would achieve its target before June next year.

Last month, the attached agency of the DA said it would be able to mechanize about 44 percent of the country's rice farms by the end of 2031 once the RCEF mechanization program is extended.

PhilMech earlier noted that the initial rollout of RCEF covered only 14 percent of the country's rice farms under the mechanization component.

The higher RCEF budget allocation, PhilMech said, would be able to cover up to 30 percent new rice farms during the extension period, resulting in a 44-percent mechanization coverage nationwide.

The expanded mechanization coverage would improve rice farmers' productivity and competitiveness and would cut down the country's dependence on imports.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/11/18/2400909/rice-farm-mechanization-level-hit-3-hpha-2031>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Philippines eyes \$1.6 million exports of avocados to Japan in 2025

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

November 18, 2024 | 12:00am



Bureau of Plant Industry director Gerald Glenn Panganiban said the government is targeting to ship 88,000 boxes or about 484,000 kilos (484 metric tons) of Hass avocados worth \$1.584 million to Japan next year.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The country plans to export almost half a million kilos of Hass avocados next year to Japan after gaining market access to the Asian market recently following the conclusion of 13 years of negotiations.

Bureau of Plant Industry director Gerald Glenn Panganiban said the government is targeting to ship 88,000 boxes or about 484,000 kilos (484 metric tons) of Hass avocados worth \$1.584 million to Japan next year.

The country succeeded in gaining market access to Japan's avocado market this month, a trade negotiation that began in 2011.

The first Hass avocado shipment of the country to Japan involved 2,240 boxes (12,320 kilos) valued at \$40,320, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“This is a testament to the Philippines’ dedication to expanding its agricultural exports and the high quality of our farm produce,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said yesterday.

“We are optimistic that this access granted by Japan will lead to opportunities in other international markets for locally grown Hass avocados,” Tiu Laurel added.

Panganiban said the new market access comes at a time when the Philippines is experiencing increasing agricultural exports to Japan, which is also the country’s top market for its prized bananas.

The Philippines exported \$1.1 billion worth of agriculture and fisheries products to Japan last year, according to the DA.

“Securing access to Japan’s highly competitive market for Hass avocados is a significant step forward in our trade relations with Japan,” he said.

The Hass variety, favored for its smaller size and pebbly skin that turns purplish-black when ripe, is particularly well-suited to Japanese preferences, the DA said.

The DA noted that Japan is a major importer of Hass avocados with imports valued at \$60 million in 2023. Key suppliers of Hass avocados to Japan include Mexico, Peru, Australia, New Zealand and the US.

“We are proud to announce that the Philippines is the first country in Asia to export Hass avocados to Japan,” said Aleli Maghirang, the country’s agriculture attaché in Japan.

“This provides local producers with an excellent opportunity to capitalize on Japan’s growing demand for fresh fruits,” Maghirang added.

The Philippines is currently exporting avocados to eight markets, including China, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Brunei Darussalam, United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

The country exported 1.04 MT of avocados in 2023, down by 30 percent from the 1.49 MT in 2022, based on Philippine Statistics Authority data. — **Bella Cariaso**

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/11/18/2400914/philippines-eyes-16-million-exports-avocados-japan-2025>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Successive typhoons to cut rice production – DA

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

November 18, 2024 | 12:00am



Despite scorching heat, farmers are busy putting their harvested rice inside the sacks in Calatagan, Batangas on March 30, 2024.

STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — The successive typhoons in the country in the past weeks will result in lower rice production until the end of the year, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

“Our (agriculture) sector was severely affected by the successive calamities and typhoons, especially our crops. We expect that the local production will go down starting from the third quarter and will be extended until the fourth quarter,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

The combined damage caused by Tropical Cyclones Kristine and Leon to the agriculture sector has reached P9.8 billion, apart from the damage from Cyclone Nika, which reached P248.47 million, according to the latest report of the DA.

For rice production, the damage amounted to P5.93 billion with a production loss of 325,860 metric tons (MT).

The DA has set the total rice production target for 2024 at 20.19 million MT.

Meanwhile, imported rice continues to arrive with total imports reaching 3.9 MT as of Nov. 7, based on data from the Bureau of Plant Industry.

De Mesa added that the Executive Order 62, which lowered the tariff on imported rice to 15 percent from the previous 35 percent, helps in ensuring enough supply.

“The good news is our level of importation will be able to balance (the impact of the typhoons), so since the tariff (was reduced) from 35 to 15 (percent), it will provide a balance (in the) supply and in terms of retail prices, we can expect to maintain a good level,” De Mesa added.

He noted that P42 to P45 per kilo of regular and well-milled rice are now available in markets.

At the same time, De Mesa assured the public that the current retail prices of rice will be maintained until the holidays.

Based on monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, the retail price of local rice is still cheaper compared to imported grains.

Local regular milled rice ranged between P40 and P50 per kilo; local well-milled rice, between P42 and P53 per kilo; local premium rice, between P42 and P53 per kilo; and local special rice, P60 per kilo.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/11/18/2401009/successive-typhoons-cut-rice-production-da>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Surigao coastal residents thrive through seaweed farming initiative

By: [Alexander Lopez](#) -

Philippine News Agency / 07:22 AM November 18, 2024



QUALITY CHECK. Jupiter Casas, president of the People Unite to Guard Aqua Marine Wealth, Inc., inspects seaweeds being dried at a facility in Barangay Loyola, Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur on Saturday (Nov. 9, 2024). (PNA photo by ALEXANDER LOPEZ)

HINATUAN, Surigao del Sur — In the coastal community of Barangay Loyola, residents are witnessing the transformative impact of seaweed farming, thanks to the I-REAP (Investments for Rural Enterprises and Agricultural and Fisheries Productivity), a component of the Department of Agriculture–Philippine Rural Development Projects (DA-PRDP).

The project, managed by People Unite to Guard Aqua Marine Wealth, Inc. (Pugaw, Inc.), provides sustainable income for community members who were once engaged in practices harmful to marine ecosystems.

Formed in 1997, PUGAW consists of 160 members focused on sustainable aquaculture.

PUGAW's journey began with DA-PRDP support in December 2022, following training and project preparation.

The program allocated P10.5 million for seaweed production and marketing, covering inputs, equipment and facilities, including a P1 million capitalization boost and P400,000 from the DA Kadiwa program, which involves direct selling to consumers instead of intermediaries.

World Bank loans and Philippine government contributions funded the initiative.

“The DA-PRDP project was handed over to the group on Dec. 28, 2023, once all requirements were fulfilled,” Elvin Jamito, DA-PRDP Business Development Officer for Caraga Region, said.

The shift to sustainable practices has improved both community livelihoods and marine conservation efforts.

Bonifacia Bughao, Pugaw manager, noted that before, residents harvested mangroves unsustainably for charcoal and firewood.

However, recurring weather disturbances led the community to reconsider such practice and focus on restoration.

Now, with a designated 422 hectares for seaweed farming, Barangay Loyola's farmers contribute to an annual town-wide seaweed harvest of about 600 metric tons.

Since the DA-PRDP's intervention, Pugaw alone has produced 120 metric tons, yielding approximately P5 million in revenues.

With major buyers from Gingoog City and Cebu province, as well as local markets, Pugaw is well-positioned in the seaweed supply chain.

“Seaweed is crucial for cosmetics, food and pharmaceuticals, making raw dried seaweed highly marketable,” Pugaw president Jupiter Casas said.

In addition to raw dried seaweed, Pugaw has expanded into value-added products like seaweed-infused rice cakes and pasta, which are distributed locally.

The Scale-Up program is underway to further strengthen Pugaw’s capabilities, focusing on expanding production and ensuring project sustainability.

Scale-Up is one of the DA flagship programs designed to address the gaps in the commodity value chains by improving the efficiency of the food supply chain towards greater connectivity, mobility, accessibility, availability and affordability of food in the market.

“Our goal is to increase Pugaw’s production area and output of quality seaweed,” DA-13 Executive Director Arlan Mangelen said.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2006519/surigao-coastal-residents-thrive-through-seaweed-farming-initiative>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

House insists on ‘ayuda’ Senate wants to defund

By: [Jeannette I. Andrade](#) - Reporter / [@jiandradeINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:50 AM November 18, 2024



File photo

MANILA, Philippines — Even as the Senate said it was inclined to defund a program giving aid, called “ayuda” in the vernacular, to the almost poor, a senior lawmaker filed a second bill to make permanent the government’s Ayuda para sa Kapos ang Kita Program (Akap).

Batangas Rep. Gerville Luistro’s House Bill (HB) No. 11048, or the proposed Akap Act, underwent first reading during plenary session on Nov. 13 at the House of Representatives, two days after it was filed. It was referred for further study to the committee on social services.

A similar measure, HB 10700, was filed earlier in July by Camarines Norte Rep. Rosemarie Panotes and was referred to the same panel in August.

Luistro said: “Inflation has reduced the purchasing power of many Filipino workers, leaving many of them and their families barely surviving on a day-to-day basis if not completely living in a state of perpetual poverty.”

She noted that salary hikes still fall short of living wages that would enable workers to live decently and provide ample support to their families.

Regular gov’t program

She added her draft measure seeks to make Akap a regular government program and ensure its continued implementation.

HB 11048 declares as state policy the protection of the rights of minimum wage earners and provides “assistance geared towards alleviating and improving the quality of life of every worker, especially the minimum wage earners.”

The bill states that qualified beneficiaries can avail from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) food, medical and funeral financial assistance, as well as cash-relief aid.

It added: “Financial assistance may be given in outright cash if the amount of assistance ranges from P5,000 to P15,000, subject to the assessment of the DSWD. For assistance above P15,000, the same shall be provided through a guarantee letter approved by the secretary of the DSWD or his duly authorized representative.”

Financial aid for qualified beneficiaries coursed through local governments would be called “rice assistance,” the amount for which would be “equivalent to half of the cost of 25 kilograms of rice based on the suggested retail price from the Department of Agriculture.”

“The amount of each transfer [from the DSWD] to the local government unit shall not exceed P30 million,” it added.

HB 11048 tasks the DSWD to craft the implementing guidelines of the measure and to provide funding for the program in its annual budget.

In Panotes' HB 10700, which contains the same provisions as HB 11048, the lawmaker cited the success of the DSWD's Akap in tiding over low-income earners through the high costs of goods and services, being a program under a special provision in the 2024 General Appropriations Act.

Crucial aid

Panotes maintained it was crucial to continue the program regardless of who leads the country.

Last week, several House leaders, including vice chairpersons of the committee on appropriations, vowed to fight to retain Akap funding in the 2025 national budget, asserting that it has been a "lifeline" for millions of minimum wage earners who are ineligible for government assistance for indigents.

Assistant Majority Leader Raul Angelo Bongalon, who is vice chair of the appropriations panel, described Akap as a "crucial aid for those who are most vulnerable to economic shocks."

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2006404/house-insists-on-ayuda-senate-wants-to-defund>

BUSINESS WORLD:

PHL ships first batch of Hass avocados to Japan

November 18, 2024 | 12:03 am



FREEPIK

THE PHILIPPINES has gained access to Japan's export market for avocados, having shipped 12,320 kilos of the Hass variety from Mindanao worth \$40,320 (P2.4 million) this month, the Agriculture department said on Sunday.

"We are optimistic that this access granted by Japan will lead to opportunities in other international markets for locally grown Hass avocados," Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement.

Next year, the Southeast Asian nation is targeting to sell 484,000 kilos of Hass avocados to Japan worth \$1.58 million.

Japan is a major buyer of Hass avocados, having imported 61,000 metric tons worth \$160 million in 2023, the agency said. Key suppliers were Mexico, Peru, Australia, New Zealand and the US.

In the same statement, Agriculture Attaché to Japan Aleli Maghirang said the Philippines is the first country in Asia to export Hass avocados to Japan. "This provides local producers with an excellent opportunity to capitalize on Japan's growing demand for fresh fruits," she added.

The Philippines already exports bananas, pineapples and mangoes to Japan.

"Securing access to Japan's highly regulated market for Hass avocados is a significant step forward in our trade relations with Japan," Bureau of Plant Industry Director Gerald Glenn F. Panganiban said in the statement.

“The inclusion of Hass avocados in the Philippine export portfolio to Japan... is the culmination of over a decade of effort,” he said.

The Philippines had requested access of locally grown avocados to the Japanese market in 2011.

The agency said the addition of Hass avocados increases the Philippines’ share in Japan’s imported fruit market.

“With increasing demand for Philippine fruits in Japan and globally, the Philippines is well-positioned to strengthen its presence in the Japanese market and expand its agricultural exports throughout Asia and beyond,” the Agriculture department said.

In 2023, the Philippines exported \$1.1 billion worth of agriculture and fishery products to Japan. — **A.H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/11/18/635442/phl-ships-first-batch-of-hass-avocados-to-japan/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Russian farmers rush to sell grain to profit from high interest rates

November 18, 2024 | 12:02 am



FREEPIK

MOSCOW — Russian farmers appear to be changing their habit of withholding excess grain for better times amid low global prices, as high interest rates make it attractive to cash in and deposit money in banks at home, analysts said.

The Russian central bank hiked its key interest rate to 21% last month, the highest level in more than 20 years, as it fights inflation in the overheated economy. Many banks are now offering short-term deposits with interest rates of up to 25%.

“It is easier to sell grain right away, put it in a bank at over 20%, and forget about it,” Dmitry Rylko, head of the IKAR agriculture consultancy, said.

“No one is holding anything back here, quite the opposite. This year, we have no incentives to hold on to it, which is why we had such a large export,” he added.

In analysts’ view, the possibility of further hikes in wheat export duty in recent weeks, on top of recent sharp rises, also outweighed the benefits of holding back stocks.

While in many regions of the world, [farmers are reluctant](#) to sell grain at current prices, Russian sales are proceeding at a near-record pace, with domestic stocks falling and firms turning to state auctions to buy more grain for exports.

According to Sovecon consultancy, Russian wheat stocks were down 14% to 38.7 million metric tons as of Oct. 1, compared with last year. The stocks were up 21% year on year in the second quarter.

“The wheat reserves have sharply decreased compared to the previous quarter due to low production levels of Russian wheat and active exports,” the consultancy said.

Russia’s seaborne grain exports rose 11% year on year in October to 6.3 million metric tons, and so far this year are up 2.1% on the same period of 2023, according to shipping data obtained by Reuters.

Analysts estimate that Russia has already shipped about 45% of its grain export potential for the current season, which is estimated officially at 55-57 million tons.

The agriculture ministry forecasts this year’s grain harvest at 130 million tons, following months of bad weather. This figure represents a 12% decrease from 148 million in 2023 and an 18% reduction from a record 158 million tons in 2022.

Earlier this year, when early spring frosts and then drought inflicted heavy losses on the Russian harvest, some farmers considered holding back sales until global prices rebound.

“Poor harvest years in agriculture occur periodically, so to get through them, a rise in prices is needed. We are waiting,” Konstantin Yurov, a farmer from the Krasnodar region, said in August. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/11/18/635441/russian-farmers-rush-to-sell-grain-to-profit-from-high-interest-rates/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Seaweed farming brings hope to Kenyan villagers hit by climate change

November 18, 2024 | 12:01 am



KIBUYUNI SEAWEED FARMERS

KWALE COUNTY — The people of Kenya’s coastal village of Mwazaro used to earn their living mainly growing cassava and maize, until the ravages of drought forced them to try a new crop — seaweed.

They plant it on the beachfront and lay it out to dry inland, joining scores of other communities feeding a growing demand at home and abroad for associated products including soap, shampoo and seaweed powder, used in food.

Seaweed farming was first introduced in Kenya in 2008 and has expanded rapidly to cover 20 villages, David Mirera, a scientist at the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), said.

Higher temperatures, rising sea levels and poor rains have all played their part in the shift.

Along the coast in the village of Kibuyuni, investments in seaweed farming have led to improvements in infrastructure and electricity, said Kassim Ramtu Bakari, who does marketing for the Seaweed Farmers’ Cooperative there, which employs more than 100 households.

Tima Jasho, a mother of seven in Kibuyuni, said she was now able to pay her children’s school fees and move her family from a mud home to a brick house.

“If you grow seaweed, you don’t have to depend on a man,” she told Reuters. “I can earn my own money.”

In 2022, the industry produced almost 100 tons of seaweed worth more than \$30,000, according to KMFRI data. Farmers export dry seaweed to China, France, the United States and other countries.

The global market for seaweed has tripled in size in the last two decades, according to a 2024 United Nations Report, growing from \$5 billion in 2000 to \$17 billion in 2021.

It is Tanzania's third largest export and employs over 26,000 farmers, said George Maina, a scientist at The Nature Conservancy, an environmental nonprofit which supports seaweed farmers in Kenya and Tanzania.

Kenya has a long way to go before it becomes a global industry leader like its neighbor, Mr. Maina said.

"It's still lagging in terms of production," he said. "But it's a sector that is growing." — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/11/18/635440/seaweed-farming-brings-hope-to-kenyan-villagers-hit-by-climate-change/>

ABANTE:

Fishing ban sa Visayan sea umarangkada na

Abante News

- **November 17, 2024**



NAGSIMULA nang ipatupad ang tatlong-buwan na fishing ban sa Visayan sea na itinuturing na isa sa pinakamalaking pinangingisdaan sa bansa.

Opisyal na inilunsad ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) ang pagsasara sa pangangisda sa nasabing karagatan sa ilalim ng Fisheries Administrative Order No. 167-3 mula noong Nobyembre 15, 2024 hanggang Pebrero 15, 2025.

Ayon kay BFAR-6 Regional Director Remia Aparri, mabibigyan ng pagkakataon ang mga isdang mackerel sardine, short-bodied mackerel, Goldstripe sardine, Indian mackerel, Fimbriated sardine at rainbow sardine na magparami para sa kabuhayan ng nasa 100,000 mangangisda sa rehiyon.

“The closed season is not enough. We have to provide a very good environment for these species by protecting the critical habitats,” ani Aparri.

Sakop ng ban ang Gigantes Island sa Iloilo; Olotayan Island – Culasi Point sa Capiz; northeastern tip ng Bantayan Island sa Cebu; westward ng Guimaras Strait at northern coast ng Negros Island.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/11/17/fishing-ban-sa-visayan-sea-umarangkada-na/>

THE MANILA TIMES:

Fish catch up 4.37% in Jan-Sept

By Janine Alexis Miguel
November 18, 2024

PORTS across the country recorded higher fish deliveries in the third quarter (Q3) of 2024 compared to a year earlier, the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) said.

In a quarterly report, the agency said that fish unloaded from July to September totaled 129,227 metric tons (MT), 4.37 percent higher than the 123,813 MT in the same period of 2023. The figure, however, was lower than the 186,557 MT in Q2 this year.

Fish catch in July was the highest at 50,862 MT. In August it was 42,354 MT and September, 36,844 MT.

Regional fish ports served 8,750 clients in quarter with 19,619 vessels having unloaded. The PFDA said the opening of fishing grounds improved the utilization rate of port facilities with piers and quays recording a 189-percent usage. "Once the rehabilitation and improvements projects in PFDA regional fish ports come to completion, this high utilization rate could [further improve]," the agency said.

The usage of market halls reached 86 percent and cold storage at 74 percent. The utilization rate for commercial and industrial areas was 84 percent. Construction and rehabilitation of five regional ports are ongoing.

The Davao Fish Port Complex, which is almost fully built, can cater to more clients and stakeholders not only in the region but also in nearby provinces.

The Sual Fish Port Complex is 97.8-percent complete; Iloilo Fish Port, 93.13-percent; Zamboanga Fish Port, 53.2-percent; and the Camaligan Fish Port Complex is 50.6-percent done.

The PFDA likewise reported that it had signed an agreement in August for the construction of a new fish port in Libas, Roxas City, Capiz — popularly known as the seafood capital of the Philippines. The region boasts a wide array of seafood delicacies and abundant marine life produce.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/11/18/business/top-business/fish-catch-up-437-in-jan-sept/2006043>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

‘Nika’ damage to fisheries, crops, infra hits ₱248.5M

Ada Pelonia
November 18, 2024

TYPHOON Nika has damaged crops, fisheries and farm infrastructure worth P248.47 million, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The DA said in its latest bulletin that typhoon Nika displaced 10,891 farmers and fisherfolk, with 11,958 hectares of farmland. Of this, 514 hectares showed no chance of recovery.

“There are no reported damage and losses yet due to [typhoon] Ofel. However, additional damage and losses are expected as assessment is ongoing in areas affected by [typhoons] Nika and Ofel.”

The agency also said that the volume of production losses across regions was 8,504 metric tons (MT).

Broken down, high-value crops sustained the bulk of the damage at 5,946 MT. This was followed by rice at 2,496 MT, corn at 62 MT, and fisheries at 0.17 MT.

The agency said these were equivalent to P97.72 million for high-value crops; P49.08 million for rice, P14.61 million for corn, and P1.71 million for fisheries.

Based on the DA report, irrigation facilities were also hit by the storm, with damage valued at P85.35 million.

Amid the damage sustained by the sector, the DA said it provided affected farmers with several interventions. This includes P84.88 million worth of agricultural inputs like rice, corn, and vegetable seeds; as well as drugs and biologics for livestock and poultry.

It added that available funds from the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC) would also be disbursed to indemnify affected farmers.

The PCIC recently issued indemnification checks worth P24.73 million to farmers and fishers from Oriental and Occidental Mindoro as compensation for the damage brought by recent typhoons.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. led the distribution of the indemnity checks to 1,437 insured farmers.

“The timely release of these indemnity payments is part of government’s commitment to immediately provide assistance to farmers and fisherfolk who suffered due to typhoons,” Laurel said.

According to the PCIC, P16.046 million was given to 918 beneficiaries in Occidental Mindoro, while P8.684 million was allocated to 519 affected farmers and fisherfolk in Oriental Mindoro.

The government insurer added that the compensation could aid in their recovery from the typhoon’s damage to crops, fishing equipment, and other livelihood assets impacted by the storms.

“PCIC’s swift action follows the series of typhoons that battered the provinces in recent weeks. The storms caused widespread destruction in areas that heavily depend on agriculture and fishing for economic survival. The indemnity checks provide critical financial relief for farmers and fisherfolk,” said the DA chief.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/18/nika-damage-to-fisheries-crops-infra-hits-%e2%82%b1248-5m/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

PHL aims to export more avocados to Japan

Ada Pelonia
November 18, 2024

THE Philippines is targeting to ship more Hass avocados to Japan next year after it gained access to the East Asian nation's food market.

The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), an agency attached to the Department of Agriculture (DA), said Manila wants to increase Haas avocado shipments to 484,000 kilos, or 484 metric tons, worth \$1.584 million in 2025.

BPI Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban said the inclusion of Hass avocados in the Philippine export portfolio to Japan was the culmination of over decade-long efforts, with initial access requests dating back to 2011.

“Securing access to Japan’s highly competitive market for Hass avocados is a significant step forward in our trade relations with Japan,” he said in a statement.

The Philippines recently delivered its first shipment of 2,240 boxes of Hass avocados equivalent to 12,320 kilos worth \$40,320.

“[The] target next year is to ship 88,000 boxes equivalent to 484,000 kilograms of Hass avocados amounting to \$1.584 million.”

Japan is a major buyer of Philippine agricultural products. Last year, Japan’s purchases of local agri-fisheries products reached \$1.1 billion, allowing the Philippines to enjoy a trade surplus of \$990 million.

According to Tokyo-based Agriculture Attaché Aleli Maghirang, the Philippines is the first country in Asia to export Hass avocados to Japan.

“This provides local producers with an excellent opportunity to capitalize on Japan’s growing demand for fresh fruits.”

Japan is a major importer of Hass avocados, with imports valued at \$160 million or equivalent to 61,000 metric tons (MT) in 2023. Key suppliers include Mexico, Peru, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

The agency said the Hass variety, favored for its smaller size and pebbly skin that turns purplish-black when ripe, is particularly well-suited to Japanese preferences.

“Gaining entry into Japan’s discerning market is anticipated to pave the way for Philippine-grown Hass avocados to access other international markets. The successful entry of Hass avocados underscores the potential for further expansion of Philippine agricultural product exports.”

With increasing demand for Philippine fruits in Japan and globally, the DA said the Philippines is well-positioned to strengthen its presence in the Japanese market and expand its agricultural exports worldwide.

“This is a testament to the Philippines’ dedication to expanding its agricultural exports and the high quality of our farm produce,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement.

“We are optimistic that this access granted by Japan will lead to opportunities in other international markets for locally-grown Hass avocados.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/18/phl-aims-to-export-more-avocados-to-japan/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

Experts: Open dialogue key to increasing support for GM crops

Bless Aubrey Ogerio
November 18, 2024

Researchers engaged in genetic modification (GM) and gene editing (GE) may not fully consider the broader social and ethical implications of their work, according to experts.

During a forum titled “#GeneTalks,” scientists and legal experts discussed the need for accountability and transparency in advancing genetic research and technology in the country. The forum was organized by the University of the Philippines Diliman College of Science’s Office of the Associate Dean for Research, Innovation, Development, and Enterprise.

According to the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications, the Philippines is fifth in Asia and 14th globally in genetically modified crop adoption. GM maize, for one, is cultivated by nearly half a million planters.

However, a 2015 Supreme Court ruling effectively halted field testing for GM eggplant, signaling a more cautious stance toward GM technologies that now influences both public perception and regulatory policy.

During the campaign’s first session on November 4, experts discussed GM research’s role in agriculture, the regulatory landscape, and food security.

Ernelea Cao, Professor Emeritus at the UP Diliman Institute of Biology, detailed regulatory processes governing GM research, while lawyer Edmund Jason Baranda explained a recent Court of Appeals ruling restricting “use, field testing, direct use as food or feed, or processing, commercial propagation, and importation” of GMOs in the Philippines.

Given these restrictions, Pia Bagamasbad, director of the UP Diliman College of Science National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (NIMBB), noted the “potential disconnect” between scientific research and its broader consequences.

“Scientists may not always be aware of the broader implications of GM research and products,” said Bagamasba, adding that there is a need for explaining how GM technology affects society.

A study cited by the Alliance for Science indicated that the economic value of GM corn grew significantly between 2002 and 2019, with GM corn acreage expanding by an annual average of 31 percent. Today, nearly a third of Filipino corn farmers, or around 460,000 families, rely on GM corn, which is planted in 835,000 hectares of farmlands.

Despite this, misconceptions about GM crops still persist. A 2023 study in the International Journal of Food and Agriculture Science pointed out that while many Filipino stakeholders support biotechnology, health risks and environmental safety concerns continue to affect public opinion.

The second session of the forum last November 11 explored the applications and ethical considerations of GE technologies. Reynante Ordonio of the Philippine Rice Research Institute discussed biotechnology’s role in agriculture, while Ron Leonard Dy, NIMBB associate professor, focused on GE’s uses in diagnostics.

Ma. Anita Bautista, NIMBB Deputy Director for Research and Extension, said open dialogue is essential and that communicating genetic research through talks provides transparency.

“When scientists share information about genetic research and their outcomes, they implicate their authenticity, accountability, and moral and social values.”

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/18/experts-open-dialogue-key-to-increasing-support-for-gm-crops/>

BUSINESS MIRROR:

‘PHL, other SE Asian nations to buy more farm machines’

Estrella Torres
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Bologna—The Philippines is fast becoming a major market for agriculture equipment, along with Vietnam and Thailand, as nations step up food production in the face of climate change-induced disasters.

While sales of farm machines in rich countries like Europe and North America have slowed, demand for these products is growing in Southeast Asia, according to FederUnacoma, the organization that hosted the 46th annual EIMA International Exhibition.

The Philippines, with a population of 110 million is expected to increase farm machine imports by 7.8 percent, while Vietnam is expected to increase purchases by 6.2 percent in the next four years.

Thailand, which has not been buying significant quantities of imported farm equipment in the last 15 years, is projected to boost its purchases by an average of 6.8 percent from 2024 to 2027.

Mariateresa Maschio, president of FederUnacoma said the demand for agricultural machinery will grow “significantly” due to population growth.

“In the coming years, the geography of the markets will still see Europe and North America in the foreground, yet an increasing role will be played by countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand, which are already recording growth in imports of specific machinery,” Maschio said during a recent press briefing held at the opening of EIMA International Exhibition held at the Palazzo dei Congressi.

She said the agricultural sector must respond to the challenges of the markets in terms of increasing production yields and sustainability.

“The agricultural machinery sector must produce technologies that adapt to the most diverse environmental and climatic contexts, and that support agriculture in solving problems related to the lack of water resources and the loss of soil fertility.”

The leader of FederUnacoma said that while there is a contraction in the sales of agricultural equipment, this may be attributed to “cyclical factors” rather than a real decline to global demand.

FederUnacoma cited the unfavorable trend in the agricultural and industrial sectors in the first six months of 2024.

“No trend reversals are expected for the rest of the year,” said Maschio, stressing that the decline is due to cyclical factors, not to a drop in the need for technologies, driven by a constantly developing agriculture.

She said the farm sector is directly affected by the high cost of raw materials and energy supplies—linked to geopolitical factors and the war in the Middle East—while the restrictive monetary policies implemented to contain inflation has reduced access to credit and slowed investments.

Data from Agrievolution, the organization that brings together the manufacturers’ associations of the main countries, indicate a 12 percent year-on-year drop in overall tractor sales in the first six months of the year compared to the first half of 2023.

India, which has seen an almost uninterrupted upward trend in sales in recent years, recorded a 10-percent decline as did China. Sales of American-made farm equipment dropped by 12 percent.

Manufacturers in European countries, such as France and Germany also sold fewer equipment.

Significant drops were also recorded in Canada (-16 percent), Japan (-28 percent), Russia (-32 percent) and Turkey (-20 percent).

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/11/18/phl-other-se-asian-nations-to-buy-more-farm-machines/>