

EU approves \$1.61 billion for Dutch government to buy out farmers, cut nitrogen pollution

AMSTERDAM — The European Commission said it approved two Dutch plans worth a combined 1.47 billion euros (\$1.61 billion) to buy out livestock farmers to reduce nitrogen pollution, saying they are permissible under state aid rules.

The Dutch need to reduce excess nitrogen levels, caused in part by decades of intensive farming, a problem that has led to courts blocking important construction projects until the issue is resolved.

Discontent over government plans to address the problem until now date led to a major defeat for Prime Minister Mark Rutte's governing coalition in regional elections in March.

Farm buyouts are seen as an important step toward a comprehensive plan to address the issue.

In the schemes approved by the European Union's (EU) executive body, the Netherlands reserved the money to compensate farmers who voluntarily close farms located near nature reserves.

The plans will have "positive effects that outweigh any potential distortion of competition and trade in the EU," the Commission said in a statement approving the aid. — **Reuters**

PHL seeking to tap \$25M from World Bank's Pandemic Fund

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) will apply for about \$25 million from the World Bank's (WB) Pandemic Fund to strengthen the Philippines' capacity to contain animal diseases.

"Our focus is surveillance, to improve the biosecurity (measures), the laboratories and our response to animal diseases," DA Assistant Secretary Arnel V. de Mesa told reporters.

The Pandemic Fund is supported by donor countries, co-investors, foundations, and civil society organizations. It is jointly run by WB and the World Health Organization.

According to its website, the WB said that the fund is intended

to finance "critical investments to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness, and global response capacities" and is focused on aiding low and middle-income countries.

The bank's board approved \$300 million in the first round of releases from the fund.

Mr. De Mesa said that the DA and the Department of Health (DoH) have submitted Expressions of Interest and will send a final proposal before the deadline on May 19.

"The government can propose separately or jointly. We still don't know about the proposal of the DoH but we also

want to have a joint submission to have a (stronger application)," he said.

According to Mr. De Mesa, the proposal hopes to course the funding through the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) Scale-Up, a WB-funded rural development program run by the DA.

The PRDP project aimed to "improve farmer and fisherfolk access to markets and increase income from selected agri-fishery value chains."

According to a document uploaded to the WB website, the PRDP Scale-Up project cost is about \$827 million.

Mr. De Mesa said the project was approved last month by the Investment Coordinating Committee of the National Economic and Development Authority at the cabinet committee level.

The original PRDP has been operating for eight years. Its focus was the modernization and proliferation of climate-smart agriculture and fisheries practices.

The Scale-Up component of the PRDP will focus on rebuilding "the whole value chain," providing infrastructure support, and mainstreaming institutional reforms in DA programs and projects.

It is targeted for launch by July. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Another onion trial growing site established in Davao de Oro after Davao del Sur pilot

THE Agriculture department's Davao office is expanding onion production in the region with a 5,000-square meter trial farm in Monkayo, Davao de Oro.

Abel James I. Monteagudo, the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Davao regional director, said the DA organized a trial planting, which it called an "onion derby," at the site last week to determine which varieties are best suited to local conditions.

"The derby is like a contest to determine which seeds are good (for the region's soil and climate). There are four players that planted together in the same area," he said during the Agribiz Media Forum at SM Lanang Premier last week.

"Through this onion derby, seed companies can showcase their best varieties and technologies, and find out what variety can grow in particular climate conditions," he added.

Onion is not a traditional crop in the region, whose main commodities are banana, coconut and other high-value fruits as well as staples such as rice, corn, and vegetables.

Mr. Monteagudo said an onion harvest is due in a few months, and arrangements are being worked out for direct purchase by SM supermarket branches in the region.

Mr. Monteagudo said the trial will eventually address issues with onion supply and demand in the region.

DAVAO DEL SUR

Magsaysay and Matanao, Davao del Sur have started producing red bulb onions at a 1,190-square meter site with assistance from the DA regional office's P1-million Spring Development Project.

"This cropping season, I harvested 600 kilos of bulb onion. This can be sold



FARMER Yoy Saban shows off their onion harvest from his farm in Davao del Sur.

at P130 per kilo," farmer Yoy Saban was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the DA.

"I am encouraging my fellow B'laans to return to the community and once again cultivate their idle land," he said.

A series of earthquakes in 2019 triggered landslides in upland areas of Magsaysay, prompting members of the B'laan indigenous group to abandon their farms.

Another farming community in Matanao has seen improved productivity after the communist insurgency in the area receded.

"That was something that could never happen when sitios in that barangay were still under control of the New People's Army," Ezra L. Balagtey of the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion said on Friday during the closing ceremony for the three-month Peace and Development Alternative Literacy System project, an inter-agency intervention program for areas declared as "peace zones."

"Their productivity has also improved because they can now move

freely in their farms without fear of getting caught in rebel-military encounters," Matanao Mayor Vincent F. Fernandez said.

The community is home to B'laans and migrants from the Visayas whose means of livelihood is rice and vegetable farming and propagation of fruit trees.

Rodulfo T. Lauda, chairman of Barangay Donganpekong, said traders now come to the area to buy produce without fear for their safety.

"There has been a big improvement compared to the time when there were armed men around collecting money and asking for food at gunpoint," he said.

Davao's regional peace council declared the region free from communist insurgency in October 2022. — **Maya M. Padillo and John M. Unson**



TELEBISYON

- Huwag pabayaang naka-standby mode ang TV at ibang appliances dahil kumokonsumo pa rin ito ng kuryente. Bunutin ang mga ito mula sa saksakan kapag hindi ginagamit.

NGCPC

ENERGY CONSERVATION

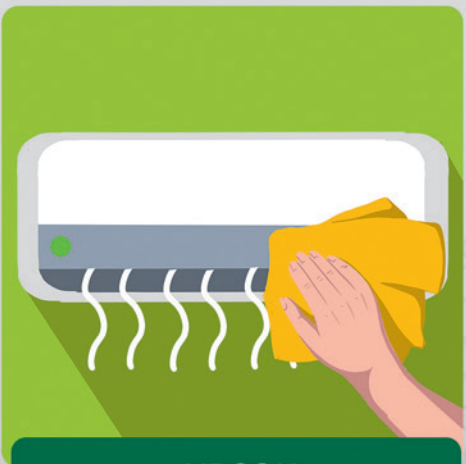
Tipid Tips

MENOS SA KONSUMO,
MENOS SA GASTOS!



ILAW

- Linising maigi ang mga bumbilya mula sa mga dumi at alikabok para mas maliwanag ang mga ito.
- Gumamit ng LED bulb - ito ay 75% mas matipid kaysa sa incandescent bulb.



AIRCON

- Linisin ang filter at condenser ng aircon kada anim na buwan.
- Isara ang pinto at mga bintana bago buksan ang aircon para mas madaling lumamig.



PLANTSA

- I-schedule ang pagplantsa nang isang beses sa isang linggo. Gawin ito sa off-peak hours o bago mag-9AM o pagkalampas ng 9PM.



REFRIGERATOR

- Tunawin ang yelo ng refrigerator kapag lampas na ito sa sangkapat na pulgada.
- Siguraduhing nakasara nang mabuti ang pinto ng refrigerator para tiyak na hindi lalabas ang lamig.



BENTILADOR

- Regular na linisin ang blades ng bentilador para mas malakas na ang hangin, mas matipid pa sa konsumo.