

## London insect farm hatches plan for greener way to feed animals

LONDON — Buzzing underneath a set of railway arches in central London are hundreds of thousands of little flies, showcasing insect-farming technology that could help fight climate change.

At its research center, eight-year-old startup Entocycle is aiming to show how the process of turning protein-rich bugs into food for chickens and pigs could be adopted on a large scale.

The flies themselves feed on almost any food waste and are better for the planet than traditional animal foods such as soy, which have a much higher carbon footprint, explains founder and chief executive Keiran Whitaker.

“We cut down rainforests to produce soy, we overfish the oceans to catch fishmeal, and then they get turned into protein feed that gets shipped all over the world again to feed the animals,” he says. “It’s incredibly unsustainable.”

Insect protein has become a popular alternative in recent years across agriculture and aquaculture as demand for animal feed surges, with companies including US food giant Cargill adopting the use of insect feed.

Entocycle, which Mr. Whitaker expects will become profitable later this year, aims to bring an industrial-level efficiency to insect farming, designing hardware that includes precise measuring devices, robotic arms and a temperature-controlled setup for breeding insects.

With the rumble of trains overhead and the acrid scent of

fly feces hanging heavy around the office, engineers and biologists in white lab coats are preparing for a significant expansion of Entocycle’s research center over the coming weeks.

At the heart of the effort is the humble and tiny black soldier fly, widely recognized for its potential to help fight climate change by being a more environmentally friendly protein source.

“It is the quickest, cheapest, most sustainable insect to farm and it’s a non-disease, non-pest species found all over the world,” Mr. Whitaker says of the insect, which gets turned into packageable protein during its wriggly, worm-shaped larva phase.

Most of the reared black soldier flies at its London center become insect protein.

But a small proportion are bred in a humid insectary, where they will chomp for days on food waste — organic matter derived from out-of-date sandwiches to barley discarded by local breweries — before laying hundreds of eggs, enabling the cycle to continue.

British entomologist George McGavin, who calls the black soldier fly the superstar of the edible insect industry, says insect farming can help produce “seriously large amounts of protein” in a small space and in very little time.

“Insect farming actually offers a very viable alternative — and one which is efficient, relatively easy to do, and without any ecological risks that I can see,” Mr. McGavin says. — **Reuters**

# Gov’t told to help automate Philippine leather goods sector

THE GOVERNMENT of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. should help the leather goods industry mechanize processes so local manufacturers can compete in the global market, an industry player said.

“We need programs that promote genuine leather and the businesses that use this to create quality goods,” William Lu, who owns Tony Tony Leather Crafting, said in an e-mail.

“The program can appeal to sustainability,” said Mr. Lu, whose company that is based in Marikina City supplies raw materials for leather goods. “A high-quality leather product, if taken care of, can withstand decades of use and can be passed down to multiple generations.”

Durability remains an issue with most synthetics, he pointed out.

Mr. Lu said the Trade department should help local businesses automate their manufacturing processes to keep up with international competition.

It can do so through loan grants or by creating facilities that “can speed up production and keep up with demand,” he added.

Most leather goods manufacturers are considered micro, small and medium enterprises, according to the Board of Investments (BoI).

The Philippine leather goods industry increased its gross value added (GVA) to P11.8 billion in 2022 from P7.1 billion in 2014, according to BoI data.

GVA, which measures the contribution of a company or sector to the economy, provides a dollar value for goods and services produced in a country, minus the cost of inputs and raw materials.



PAIRS OF HIGH-QUALITY SHOES made in Marikina City are shown to members of the media during a tour of C Point Manufacturing’s shoe factory in Barangay Concepcion Uno on Aug. 7, 2019.

PHILIPPINE STAR / BOY SANTOS

The US was the Philippines’ top export market for leather goods last year, accounting for 66.3%, followed by Japan at 8.5% and China at 4.6%.

Leather goods are among Philippine products that enjoy zero tariffs under the European Union’s Generalized System of Preference Plus.

A House of Representatives special committee on the creative industry in October 2022 formed a technical working group that would firm up measures to revive the Marikina shoe industry.

“It is a challenge to keep on top of trends and maintain an inventory of popular items,” Mr. Lu said, noting how the demand for leather supplies is affected by fashion trends.

Tony Tony Leather Crafting, which started as a manufacturer of metal heels in the 1960s, has since evolved into a supplier of leather and other related accessories for manufacturers and crafters.

“Leather crafting was among the many hobbies people picked up in quarantine during the coronavirus pandemic,” Mr. Lu said. “Most were interested in re-

placing their worn down leather goods... or customizing new ones to fit their needs.”

He said hobbyists usually turn into entrepreneurs when friends and family offer to buy their leather projects. They end up catering to orders of bespoke leather goods.

Local leather businesses face stiff competition from imported mass-produced products, Mr. Lu said. “If government programs can be made to support local businesses, I’m optimistic that they can catch up,” he added. — **Patricia B. Mirasol**

### Index, from S1/1

“Despite some progress, corruption continues to undermine long-term economic development,” it said. In the Philippine context, corruption is both a “regulatory capture problem and a systemic issue,” said Emy Ruth Gianan, who teaches economics at Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

One of the best recourse in addressing corruption would be to give the anti-graft court Sandiganbayan “sharper teeth to investigate,” she said in a Facebook Messenger chat.

“We also have to invest in community-based watchdogs as well as improve our whistleblower protection schemes,” she added.

For government size, the country scored 78.2 in tax burden, lower by 0.1 point from last year. Its score for government spending decreased by 2.1 points to 79.2. An 18.9-point decrease was seen in its fiscal health score, which was at 40.5 in the 2024 index.

The top individual income tax rate was at 35% in the Philippines, while its top corporate tax rate was at 25%, the think tank said.

“The tax burden equals 18.1% of gross domestic product (GDP). Three-year government spending and budget balance averages are, respectively, 26.3% and -5.8% of GDP.”

For regulatory efficiency, the country scored 69.7 in business freedom, up by 3.6 points compared with last year and above the global average. Its score for labor freedom increased by 0.3 point to 57.8, while its score for monetary freedom declined by 2.5 points to 65.8.

### Spending, from S1/1

BofA Global Research said easing inflation, reduced unemployment, and higher minimum wages would likely support private consumption that would be a key driver of economic growth.

Headline inflation sharply slowed to an over three-year low of 2.8% in January from 3.9% in December and 8.7% a year ago, marking the second straight month it fell within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas’ (BSP) 2-4% target range.

The country’s unemployment rate fell to a record low of 4.3% in 2023, translating to 2.19 million jobless Filipinos.

Lawmakers are currently considering bills to hike minimum wages in the private sector by P100, despite warnings that this could fan inflation.

BofA Global Research said investments may rise this year amid easing interest rates and

continued implementation of infrastructure projects.

For 2023, gross capital formation rose by 5.4%, slower than 13.8% a year ago.

To tame inflation, the BSP hiked borrowing costs by a total of 450 basis points from May 2022 to October 2023, bringing the key rate to a near 17-year high of 6.5%.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. earlier said the Monetary Board may consider cutting borrowing costs this year, but not within the first half amid risks to inflation.

### TAX CUTS

Meanwhile, the research firm said tax cuts on passive income meant to deepen financial markets may have to wait until 2028 amid lack of fiscal space.

“The government now proposes to defer tax reform on passive income to 2028, which may have



THE Philippines inched up one spot to 88th out of 176 countries in a global ranking on economic freedom by The Heritage Foundation.

PHILIPPINE STAR / MICHAEL VARGAS

The business regulatory environment in the Philippines “has generally been streamlined,” the think tank said, adding that the “time and cost involved in dealing with licensing requirements have been reduced.”

The Heritage Foundation noted the regulatory environment is relatively well institutionalized but lacks efficiency.

While the labor market remains structurally rigid, “regulations are not particularly burdensome,” it added.

For market openness, the Philippines scored 74.4 in trade freedom. It received a score of 60.0 each for investment freedom and financial freedom. These scores remained unchanged.

“Foreign investment is generally welcome, and the Investment Code treats foreign investors the same as domestic investors,” the think tank said.

helped deepen debt and capital markets in the near term. There is less fiscal space in 2024 than there was pre-pandemic, when these tax cuts were first proposed,” it said.

Senators have yet to approve the Passive Income and Financial Intermediary Taxation Act, which the lower chamber passed on third and final reading in 2022.

The Department of Finance has since proposed to the Senate to adjust the timing of implementation of Package 4 of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program, as these reforms were proposed before the pandemic when the government had fiscal space to accommodate the revenue loss.

“The debt-to-GDP ratio has since increased from 42% in 2019 to nearly 63% in 2023. The proposed tax cuts on passive income and financial transactions would have eroded government revenue

While the financial sector is dominated by banking and is relatively stable, it noted capital markets are underdeveloped.

The index considered aspects that also prevent foreign investors from setting up a business in a country — a thing that Philippine policy makers should consider as they push for amendments to the economic provisions of the 1987 Constitution, said Enrico P. Villanueva, who teaches money and banking at the University of the Philippines - Los Baños.

“The index notes that overall rule of law is weak, property rights score is below average, judicial effectiveness and government integrity are also average,” he said via Messenger chat.

“It is better that the government focuses on improving index scores rather than tinkering with the Constitution.”

The failure of institutions in the country is the main cause of low foreign investments, an economist said.

“The index recognizes that reforms have been made but the institutional challenges continue as the balance of power remains skewed,” Leonardo A. Lanzona, an economics professor at the Ateneo de Manila University, said via Messenger chat.

Weak Philippine institutions, as reflected in the country’s low score in government integrity, breed corruption and lead to specious reforms, he noted.

“The increasing numbers of Filipino households migrating to other countries is a testament to these institutional failures.”

further,” BofA Global Research said.

On the other hand, the government seems to be able to fund its budget deficit with both domestic and foreign borrowings, the research firm said.

It also noted that government revenue growth has been healthy despite no new taxes. This makes the fiscal deficit on track toward its 2028 deficit-to-GDP goal of 3%.

The government’s outstanding debt as a share of GDP further eased to 60.2% at the end of 2023 from 60.9% at the end of 2022. It was also below the 61.2% target under the government’s Medium-Term Fiscal Framework.

Meanwhile, the government’s budget deficit as a share of GDP stood at 5.71% in the third quarter. During the first nine months, the budget deficit narrowed by 2.89% to P983.5 billion. — **Keisha B. Ta-asan**

### JOB VACANCY

**Job Title:** Recruitment Manager (US Recruitment)

**Job Qualifications:**

- Proven experience as a Recruitment Manager or similar role with a focus on US staffing for more than 10 years.
- Understanding and experience in US staffing for Non-IT, Professional, Healthcare and Light Industrial Industry
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- Excellent leadership and team management skills.
- Ability to design and implement effective recruitment strategies and training programs.
- Proficient in conducting research and analysis in the staffing industry.
- Excellent communication, interpersonal, and decision-making skills.
- Ability to work independently and in a team environment.
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- Oversee the entire recruitment lifecycle, encompassing hiring, performance management, expansion initiatives, training programs, and industry research.
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- Conduct interviews and participate in the selection of candidates.
- Implement performance metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) for the team.
- Design and implement training programs for recruiters to enhance their skills and knowledge.
- Conduct market research and analysis to identify potential areas for improvement and innovation.
- Identify new markets and opportunities for growth in the US staffing industry.
- Develop and execute expansion plans in alignment with company objectives.

**Services Salary:** Open

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**NOTICE TO STOCKHOLDERS**

To all stockholders of SOCResources, Inc. (the “Corporation”):

In accordance with the Corporation’s Revised Code of Corporate Governance, please take notice that the floor for the nomination of candidates for the following vacancies on the Board of Directors is now open:

1. Two (2) Independent Directors
2. One (1) Regular Director

Nominations for Two (2) Directors in waiting will also be received, their election of which shall be subject to the SEC approval of the Corporation’s Amended Articles of Incorporation, increasing the number of Directors from five (5) to seven (7).

The nominee(s) should hold under his/her name at least one (1) share of the share of stock of the Corporation.

All stockholders are hereby invited to submit their nominations to the Corporate Secretary via email at [socinfo@socres.com.ph](mailto:socinfo@socres.com.ph) or through personal delivery at 4th Floor Enzo Bldg. 399 Sen. Gil Payat Avenue Makati City, in written form, containing the (a) nominee’s full name, (b) nominee’s qualifications, and (c) position being nominated for i.e., Independent Director, Regular Director, or Director in Waiting. The nomination period is set from February 26-29, 2024.

Makati City, 22 February 2024.

MAGILYN T. LOJA  
Corporate Secretary