

Extended RCEF needs to be less rigid — analysts

By Adrian H. Halili Reporter

ANY EXTENSION of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) should make the farm modernization fund more flexible, analysts said.

“The current design of RCEF is too rigid and may not address the actual or changing needs of farmers in particular localities,” Raul Q. Montemayor, national manager of the Federation of Free Farmers said in a Viber message.

The House of Representatives is seeking to amend the Rice Tar-

iffication Law of 2019 to extend RCEF beyond its original term. The amendments also include and the expansion of the National Food Authority’s regulatory powers. Last week its agriculture and food committee approved an extension for another six years and an increased annual take from rice import tariffs of P15 billion from P10 billion originally.

“We need to track whether RCEF and the whole (Department of Agriculture) rice program is achieving its targets (if there are) in terms of farmer productivity, profitability and competitiveness, and not just

how many machines or bags of seed have been doled out,” Mr. Montemayor added.

The Rice Tariffication Law, or (Republic Act No. 11203) funds RCEF from rice import tariffs. It liberalized rice imports but made traders pay a 35% tariff on the grain.

Under the proposed amendments, 53% of RCEF will go to mechanization, 28% to rice seed, and the rest to farm credit, and extension services.

“The increased budgets for crucial public goods necessary to improve the productivity of rice farming and agriculture more generally are welcome and crucial,”

Monetary Board member V. Bruce J. Tolentino said in a Viber message.

“However, such increased support will be for naught if trade restrictions are not eased to ensure that Philippine agriculture is made more competitive for the benefit of both farmers as well as consumers,” he added.

The US Department of Agriculture projects Philippine rice imports of 3.9 million metric tons (MT) this year, downgrading its initial 4.1 million MT estimate.

Rice imports have hit 1.6 million MT as of early May, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

Leonardo A. Lanzona, Jr., economics professor at the Ateneo de Manila, said that the RCEF extension was initially implemented to address a “market failure” due to the divergence between farmer and social interests caused by the imports.

“This additional P15 billion seems to have no underlying rationale. Unless the government can identify what exact market failure it is addressing, there is no reason for this added expense, especially as other programs are already correcting these other market failures,” Mr. Lanzona said in a Facebook messenger chat.



RACON, STUDIO-FREEMK

Greece to bring in Egyptian farm workers amid labor shortage

ATHENS — Greece will start bringing in workers from Egypt this summer to take on temporary farming jobs under a deal between the countries to tackle a labor shortage, the migration ministry said.

After a decade of pain, the Greek economy is forecast to grow nearly 3% this year, far outpacing the euro zone average of 0.8%. But an exodus of workers during Greece’s economic crisis, a shrinking population and strict migration rules have left the country struggling to find tens of thousands of workers to fill vacancies in farming, tourism, construction and other sectors.

Greece will take in around 5,000 seasonal farm workers under the 2022 deal signed with Egypt. The countries have discussed expanding the “mutually beneficial” scheme to the Greek construction and tourism sectors, the Greek Migration Ministry said in a statement.

Migration has long been a divisive issue in Europe, but the plan had won broad sup-

port from employers groups keen to find workers.

Greek Migration Minister Dimitris Kairidis met Egyptian Labor Minister Hassan Shehata in Cairo this week and said the countries should also step up cooperation to fend off illegal migration flows in the region.

Egyptian officials have said their country deserves recognition for largely stopping migrants setting off from its northern coast across the Mediterranean to Europe since 2016.

The European Union this year announced a multi-billion euro funding package and an upgraded relationship with Egypt, part of a push to cut down on the number of migrants crossing over from North Africa.

Rights groups have criticized Western support for Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who came to power a decade ago after leading the overthrow of Egypt’s first democratically elected leader. — Reuters

US to provide nearly \$200 million to contain bird flu spread on dairy farms

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration said it will provide nearly \$200 million to fight the spread of avian flu among dairy cows, in the government’s latest bid to contain outbreaks that have fueled concerns about human infections with the H5N1 virus.

The virus has been detected among dairy cattle in nine states since late March. Scientists have said they believe the outbreak is more widespread based on US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) findings of H5N1 particles in about 20% of retail milk samples.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) will make \$98 million available to provide up to \$28,000 per dairy farm for efforts to contain the spread of the virus between animals and humans and for testing milk and animals for the virus, the agency.

“USDA is doing the work to track and eliminate H5N1 in the dairy cattle

herd,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on a call with reporters.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said it will provide \$101 million through the FDA and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to protect public health and the nation’s food supply.

“The risk to the public from this outbreak remains low,” HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said on the call.

The money includes \$34 million through the CDC for testing efforts and supporting public health labs, \$8 million for vaccines, and \$3 million for wastewater surveillance.

While the CDC has said the public health risk is low, scientists are closely watching for changes in the virus that could make it spread more easily among humans.

The FDA also will provide \$8 million to ensure the safety of the commercial milk supply. “At this stage

there’s no concern about the safety of the commercial milk supply or beef supply,” Mr. Vilsack said on the call.

Health experts have cautioned against the consumption of raw milk but said pasteurization appears to kill the virus.

One dairy farm worker in Texas tested positive for the virus and reported conjunctivitis, commonly known as pink eye.

To limit transmission in cattle, the USDA on April 29 started requiring lactating dairy cows to test negative before being shipped across state lines.

In the first week of the order, USDA laboratories reported 905 tests, of which 112 were presumptive positives, said an agency spokesperson.

The figure could include samples that were tested more than once or those collected for other purposes like research studies, the spokesperson said. — Reuters



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

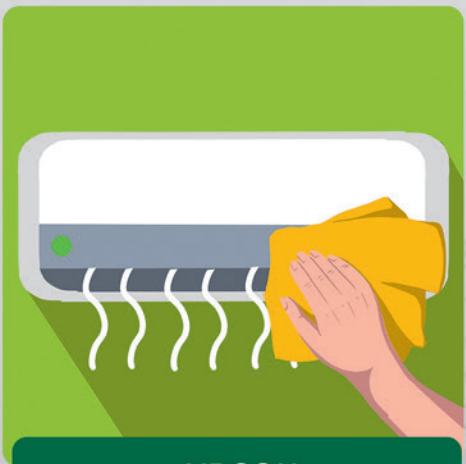
Tipid Tips

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.