

Hog output gains seen cutting pork import demand by 10%

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it expects a swine repopulation program to raise output by about 60,000 metric tons (MT) this year, potentially reducing demand for pork imports by about 10%.

In Memorandum Circular No. 28, the DA said it will push for the recovery of the hog industry via the establishment of multiplier and production farms employing artificial insemination under the Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (INSPIRE) program.

“There is a need to enhance and refocus the implementing strategies of the repopulation program, to achieve the targets of the project,” it added.

During the first quarter, hog production declined 4.3% to 419.37 thousand MT, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority. This was a reversal from the 5.1% growth posted a year earlier.

Imports of pork, on the other hand, rose 11.9% to 128.51 million kilos in the first quarter, according to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

The DA said the INSPIRE program will focus on areas that are free of African Swine Fever (ASF).

“This will ensure the sustainable supply of breeders, feed, semen, access to markets, and overall logistical and technical support,” it said.

The DA added that beneficiaries will be adopting modern climate-controlled building systems or conventional facilities compliant with Biosecurity Level 1.

It said piglets produced by multiplier farms would be distributed to participating hog raisers engaged in contract growing or finishing.

“It is expected that this approach will reduce the possibility of ASF infection, facilitate sustained production of piglets, provide of technical support to beneficiaries, and enable efficient monitoring organized by the farmer cooperatives and associations (FCA),” the DA said.

It added that beneficiaries may opt to avail of a production farm package worth P5.5 million to P16.2 million.

As of June 21, 10 provinces had active cases of ASF across 21 municipalities, according to the BAI. — **Adrian H. Halili**



DTI planning to cut down items on SRP list

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said on Wednesday that it will reduce the number of items on the suggested retail price (SRP) bulletin.

In a statement, the DTI said that the proposal was presented to a special meeting of the National Price Coordinating Council last week.

“Our goal with this proposal is to improve the usability and relevance of the SRP Bulletin, making it a more effective tool for consumers to make informed purchasing decisions,” Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said in the statement.

“By aligning the SRP with essential daily and emergency items, we are taking a significant step towards better price stability and consumer protection,” he added.

The DTI is proposing to reduce the number of stock keeping units (SKUs) being monitored from the current 217 SKUs.

It proposed to delist condensed milk, evaporated milk, coffee refills, candles, salt, bottled water, condiments, and batteries, among others.

The proposed streamlined SRP will focus on sardines, powdered milk, bread, laundry soap, instant noodles, processed and canned pork, beef, poultry meat, and toilet soap.



DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual leads the monitoring and enforcement of school supplies, including rice prices, at Divisoria in this Aug. 17, 2023 file photo.

The proposal follows consultations with the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Also consulted were the Philippine Amalgamated Supermarkets Association, Inc., the Philippine Association of Stores and Carinderia Owners, and various retailers.

“Additionally, the DTI considered data from the Family Income and Expenditure Survey, consumer price index basket commodities, and top-selling items in sari-sari stores,” the DTI said.

The DTI is organizing a technical working group to finalize the list of SKUs within each category.

The DTI, under the Price Act, is empowered to issue SRPs for any or all Basic Necessities and Prime Commodities, to guide producers, manufacturers, traders, retailers, and consumers.

Undersecretary Jose Edgardo G. Sunico said that the streamlined SRP list is targeted for release within the month. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Prices of back-to-school items largely steady, Trade dep’t says

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said on Wednesday that 68% of the school supplies covered by its buyers’ guide were unchanged in price.

The DTI is set to release the “Gabay sa Pamimili ng School Supplies” (guidance on purchasing school supplies), which covers specific brands of notebook, pad paper, pencil, ballpoint pen, crayon, eraser, sharpener, and ruler.

According to the DTI’s Consumer Affairs and Legal Services group, the list will indicate the price changes and will be presented at the Plan Balik Eskwela (back to school) event of the Department of Education.

This year, 173 stock keeping units (SKUs) of school supplies were submitted, representing a 53 SKU increase from the previous year.

“Compared to last year’s set of SKUs, 68%, or 80 SKUs, of the 117 SKUs recorded no price movement, while 8%, or 9 SKUs, had decreased prices. In addition, only 24%, or 28 SKUs, showed an increase in prices,” the DTI said.

For this year, notebook prices range from P11.80 to P52, Grade 1-4 pad paper sold for P9.50 to P61, and intermediate pad paper prices fetched between P13.80 and P48.75.

Prices of pencils and ballpoint pens ranged from P11 to P33 and P3 to P33, respectively.

Sharpener and rulers were priced at P15 to P69 and P16 to P29, respectively. Meanwhile, erasers fetched P4.50 to P20.

With classes resuming on July 29, the DTI urged consumers to check the labels of school supplies for the name and address of the manufacturer or importer and the number of leaves in notebooks and papers, among others.

“I urge consumers to buy school supplies from companies that comply with labeling requirements and use the price guide when shopping,” Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said.

The DTI will also be posting the “Gabay sa Pamimili ng School Supplies” on its website, it said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Spot power prices decline in June

ELECTRICITY spot prices declined in June due to the decreased demand, the Independent Electricity Market Operator of the Philippines (IEMOP) said.

The IEMOP reported that the average power price at the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) system-wide fell 25.2% to P6.15 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) in June from P8.22 per kWh a month earlier.

Supply fell 0.1% to 19,638 megawatts (MW). Demand dropped 6.2% to 14,710 MW.

For Luzon, the spot price fell 27.9% to P5.97 per kWh.

Supply on the main island fell 1% to 13,860 MW, while demand dropped 6.2% to 10,664 MW.

Last month, the average spot price in the Visayas fell 2.9% to P8.56 per kWh.

Supply was 2,322 MW, down 3.6%, while demand hit 2,002 MW, down 7.6%.

For Mindanao, the average WESM price fell 36.6% to P4.61 per kWh.

Supply increased 6.8% to 3,457 MW. Demand fell 5% to 2,044 MW.

IEMOP operates the WESM, where energy companies can buy power when their long-term contracted power supply is insufficient for customer needs. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

OPINION

Hybrid work: From ‘new’ to ‘now’ normal

After the public health emergency was lifted in May 2023, the ensuing digital transformation pushed many companies and professionals to seek out more opportunities for digitalization and innovation.

Companies have been investing more and more in digital technologies to operate more efficiently while professionals are placing an increased premium on skills growth to become more competitive. The emergence of technological developments has not only transformed business operations but also heightened the competition across industries.

In the Philippines, many organizations have adopted flexible work arrangements that allow their people to work either in a fully remote or hybrid setup. According to PwC’s 2024 Global Workforce Hopes & Fears Survey which was launched in the last week of June, 52% of the 1,000 respondents from the Philippines said that they are currently doing hybrid work, i.e., having a mix of in-person and remote working. This is in contrast to the 27% who do full-time remote work (having no in-person contact at all with colleagues, teammates, managers, suppliers or customers) while 21% work full-time and in-person. Clearly, hybrid work has become the popular choice.

FLEXIBILITY: THE CORE OF HYBRID WORK

Flexibility may come in various forms such as flexible working hours and schedules, and through output-based performance. Companies may also explore the feasibility of a four-day workweek to give employees more time to rest and recharge.

In her article, “Overcome the caveats of hybrid working,” PwC Netherlands Director Marlene de Koning highlighted some notable insights from a survey conducted by PwC among the employees of a multinational construction company. The survey aimed to identify the right balance and suitable hybrid arrangements for its diverse workforce. The survey results revealed that older workers tend to feel well and connected with their colleagues when they work apart, while engineers work best when they are close to each other. Those working from home showed better work-life balance, but long travel times to project sites led to higher absenteeism. In essence, this example shows that when opting for a hybrid setup, groups and individuals may require different forms of flexibility.

BENEFITS OF HYBRID WORK SETUP

Nowadays, employees prefer a hybrid work setup. It allows them to work partly in a physical workspace and

partly at home or from anywhere else, and to only report to the office on specific days or when necessary. They get to save time, energy and money from their reduced daily commute and meal expenses. This arrangement can significantly reduce employee burnout as commuting, particularly in congested areas, can be challenging. In addition, differently abled individuals may find hybrid work more convenient. Hybrid work for employees could mean work-life balance or work-life integration, depending on how one views it.

According to a November 2023 Cisco survey, “From mandate to magnet: The race to reimagine workplaces and workspaces for a hybrid future,” employees in the Philippines perceive that working in a hybrid setup has a positive impact on their office productivity (73%), cost savings (73%) and well-being (74%). Employers shared similar perceptions, with 78% noting increased productivity, 77% acknowledging cost savings, and 75% seeing improved employee well-being.

Employers stand to gain from hybrid work, too. With fewer employees working on site, overhead costs such as office space, utilities and supplies can be reduced. The resulting savings can be reallocated to other business-development and people-engagement activities.

Hybrid work arrangements may also increase job satisfaction, work productivity, company loyalty and talent retention. In turn, a flexible workforce is more likely to stay with the company longer, lowering the costs associated with high turnover. Additionally, this setup is also advantageous for business continuity as it allows operations to resume outside the confines of a traditional office, reducing the impact of sudden disruptions such as natural disasters or public health crises.

HOW CAN BUSINESSES CONTINUE TO REAP THE BENEFITS OF HYBRID WORK?

Businesses must fully embrace this “now” normal. Office facilities and technologies, such as virtual communication tools and equipment, should be readily available to support employees, whether working remotely or onsite. Office space, according to the employees’ expectations in a similar Cisco survey, should be used to promote teamwork and collaboration while individual tasks might be done at home or remotely.

Cybersecurity measures must be in place to prevent data breaches and cyberattacks. These include regular training for employees on data security and



IT infrastructure that can secure the company’s sensitive data, wherever employees are accessing them from.

It’s also crucial to maintain company values and culture, and to keep employees engaged and included. Remote work can sometimes lead to feelings of isolation, so it’s important to find ways to keep the team connected. Regular virtual meetings and team-building and social activities can help build a strong sense of community.

A successfully managed hybrid workplace can foster diversity, equity and inclusivity, benefitting both employees and employers.

EMBRACING THE FUTURE OF WORK

Amid an ever-evolving business environment, hybrid work is here to stay. Companies must be ready for its challenges and opportunities. The future of work may still be unclear but one thing is for sure: Embracing this setup can lead to a more satisfied and productive workforce, while also enabling organizations to be more resilient and adaptable in the face of change.

The views or opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Isla Lipana & Co. The content is for general information purposes only, and should not be used as a substitute for specific advice.



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JOB OPENING	
2 Business Operations Analyst	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate must possess at least Bachelor's/College Degree At least 2 to 3 years Working Experience Provide accounting and financial services for the company and its worldwide clients. Native speaker of Bahasa Indonesia and Malay dialect Fluency in English and Mandarin 	
1 Business Operations Lead	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate must possess at least Bachelor's/College Degree in Finance/Accountancy or equivalent. At least 2 to 4 years Working Experience Assist the Section Head with daily operations. Must be a native speaker of at least two of the ff languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Vietnamese, Malay, Mandarin, Hookien, Cantonese, Hakka, Min Nan and Thai) 	
1 Assistant Business Operations Manager	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate must possess at least Bachelor's/College Degree At least 3 to 5 years Working Experience Must be a native speaker of at least two of the ff languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Vietnamese, Malay, Mandarin, Hookien, Cantonese, Hakka, Min Nan and Thai) 	
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