

Batangas municipalities to get ASF vaccine faster if emergency declared

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday that Batangas municipalities may need to declare an emergency to facilitate the release of funds to obtain African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccines.

"Local government units may need to declare a state of emergency to enable the DA to respond swiftly to the situation and release funds for the urgent purchase of vaccines," Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement.

House think tank says 2024 revenue target within reach

THE National Government is on track to achieve its revenue target of P4.27 trillion, judging from the pace set by first-half collections, a Congressional think tank said.

The Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department (CPBRD) noted, however, that first-half revenue was driven by non-tax collections, casting doubt on the sustainability of recurring tax collections.

"The revenue performance for January-June 2024 suggests that the government is on track to meet its full-year revenue target," the CPBRD said in a report.

"The first half performance, however, shows a notable divergence between tax and non-tax collections when compared to programmed targets," it added.

Total government revenue for the first half of 2024 amounted to P2.15 trillion, according to Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto's Monday presentation to the House of Representatives appropriations panel.

Of the first-half collections, P1.83 trillion came from tax revenue, up 10.8% from a year earlier. The total missed by 2.8% the first-half revenue target.

"Tax revenue underperformed, with the actual collection of P1.83 trillion falling short of the P1.86 trillion goal. This shortfall was primarily due to (the performance of) BIR collections (P1.36 trillion as against P1.40-trillion target)," the CPBRD said.

The Bureau of Customs, whose collections are also classified as tax revenue, exceeded its first-half target with P455.5 billion collected in the first half, beating its target by 3%.

Non-tax revenue generated P314.2 billion during the same period, 46% higher than target. The surge in non-tax collections is due to higher collections by the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) and other revenue streams, the CPBRD said.

The BTr said income rose 76% to P163.9 billion in the first half of 2023.

"Bureau of the Treasury income... is P71 billion higher compared to the same period in 2023; and other non-tax revenues... doubled from P62.1 billion to P121.1 billion in the same period," the CPBRD said.

The CPBRD noted that the BTr took in more dividends from government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), after the Department of Finance ordered an increase in GOCC dividend payouts to the government to 75% from 50%.

The remittance of unutilized funds from GOCCs also boosted the BTr's holdings, it added.

In May, the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. and Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. remitted P20 billion and P30 billion respectively to the BTr.

"The government's fiscal strategy to optimize existing financial resources through the mobilization of non-tax revenue represents a pragmatic approach to fiscal management and aligns with its commitment to increase funding for priority programs without enacting new taxes or resorting to additional borrowing," it said.

While unutilized funds from GOCCs could be a potential source of funding for the government, it should address potential tax collection issues, the CPBRD said. "Sustained revenue growth is largely contingent on brisk growth in tax revenue."

The CPBRD report was prepared by Novel V. Bangsal, David Joseph Emmanuel Barua Yap, Jr., Jhoanne E. Aquino, Rutherford M. Lacaza, Edrei Y. Udaundo, Pamela Diaz-Manalo, Julius I. Dumangas, Ricardo P. Mira, Arlene L. Tuazon, Lawrence B. Dacucuy, Byron M. Bicenio, Christine Marie A. Mendoza-Walog, Noel Belarmino H. Sempio, Ray Leonard D. Denolo, Alexia S. Taaca, and Romulo E.M. Miral, Jr. — Kenneth Christiane L. Basilio

The DA noted that active ASF cases have been recorded in Lobo, Lian, Rosario, Calatagan, and Lipa City, Batangas.

Constance J. Palabrica, assistant secretary for Poultry and Swine, said that the DA estimates the need for vaccines at about 10,000 doses.

The DA's Bids and Awards Committee and Bureau of Animal Industry will draft the resolution which will set in motion the emergency procurement process, shortening the regular

procurement period to around two weeks.

The DA is currently collaborating with local officials in enforcing movement restrictions to prevent the spread of infected animals.

The DA has said that it is planning a limited rollout of the AVAC ASF Live Vaccine from Vietnam by the third quarter.

It has allocated P350 million for the trial, funding about 600,000 vials. — Adrian H. Halili

Gen Z now seen as heavily favoring online shopping

ONLINE RETAILERS will need to rethink how they advertise to Gen Z consumers, who are emerging as their most enthusiastic users, according to the results of a study.

In a joint study, The Fourth Wall and Uniqueorn Strategies concluded that Gen Zs (born between 1997 and 2012) are now solidly in favor of online shopping.

"Almost all the respondents (92%) use their own mobile phones for purchases and prefer cashless methods (53%)," they said.

The study, which surveyed 400 people, found that three out of four Filipino Gen Z consumers in urban areas shop online because they believe they deserve it, which the study referred to as the "Deserve *ko* *to*" mentality.

"The young generation is rapidly becoming a significant portion of the consumer market and is already shaping market trends, especially in the e-commerce space," according to John Brylle L. Bae, research director at The Fourth Wall.

"This self-rewarding behavior among Filipino Gen Zs stems from their growing self-awareness, driving them to seek rewards that affirm that sense of self-worth," he added.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) estimates that Gen Zs account for 38% of the population, or 41 million.

Uniqueorn Strategies founder and CEO Dean Bernales said that it is important for retailers to "pay close attention to the shopping

desires and needs of Filipino Gen Zs."

"Brands need to reassess their supply chain strategies and enhance their social commerce platforms to build trust, create personal connections, and develop a relatable image to capture the young market," he added.

According to the study, brands face challenges in establishing trust due to the prevalence of scams and paid endorsements, in establishing personal affinity, and in creating an immersive customer experience.

The study concluded that brands must develop tailor-fit marketing strategies.

The study said partnering with podcast creators may help boost brand awareness and conversion, describing podcasting as an emerging medium for sharing more "personal yet credible brand reviews."

It added that brands could also encourage thorough and well-crafted reviews left by customers to build trust and drive conversion.

The study said that brands need to focus on the Gen Zs' entrepreneurial mindset, "Deserve *ko* *to*" mentality, and emotions.

"Emphasize how your products can support Gen Zs in their side hustles or hobbies, which some also turn into their side businesses," according to the study.

"For local brands, highlight the process or journey of how the products were sourced, crafted, and transported to reach consumers," it added. — Justine Irish D. Tabile

Sugar industry wants other sweeteners to be regulated

SUGAR PRODUCERS said on Wednesday that the Department of Agriculture (DA) needs to regulate imports of other sweeteners that compete with cane sugar.

In a statement, the United Sugar Producers Federation of the Philippines (UNIFED) said the entry of glucose, sucrose, maltose, dextrose, maltodextrin and lactose is currently unregulated.

UNIFED added that the volume of other sweeteners being shipped amounts to 100,000 to 200,000 metric tons per year.

"This volume of sugar premixes (is equivalent to) about 4 million bags of sugar (valued at) roughly P10 billion, and the continued lack of regulation for these sugar-based products is highly detrimental to the sugar industry," UNIFED President Manuel R. Lamata said.

Mr. Lamata added that the increased shipments of these

products may have caused the stagnation in sugar prices.

"This is probably why demand for sugar has remained constant in the last 10 years or so despite the growth of the population," he said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. has ordered an investigation after meeting with the sugar industry.

He ordered the Sugar Regulatory Administration to look into the actual volumes of other sweeteners and, if warranted, require them to acquire clearances as well.

"If this is not addressed, then the sugar industry will be paying a hefty price along with the five million Filipinos dependent on the industry," Mr. Lamata said.

Code 17.02 of the ASEAN Harmonized Tariff Nomenclature sets tariffs only for high fructose corn syrup. — Adrian H. Halili

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