

PHL coffee import forecast downgraded 7.9%

THE US Department of Agriculture (USDA) downgraded its projection for Philippine coffee imports by 7.9% to 5.8 million 60-kilogram (kg) bags in the 2024-2025 marketing year (MY), which ends in June.

The USDA's December forecast for Philippine coffee imports compares with the June estimate of 6.3 million bags. It is also lower than the expected 5.85 million bags of coffee imports for MY 2023-2024.

According to the report, the USDA expects the Philippines to import 5 million

bags of soluble coffee in MY 2024-2025, down 9% from the June estimate but level with the 5 million bags of soluble imports in MY 2023-2024.

The Philippines typically imports the majority of its coffee needs as domestic production cannot meet demand. Philippine-grown coffee can service about 38% of market requirements.

The Philippines is the fourth-largest coffee importer after the



European Union (45 million 60 - kg bags), the US (23.9 million bags), and Japan (7.25 million bags). Meanwhile, the USDA maintained its MY 2024-2025 projection for Philippine coffee production at 450,000 60-kilogram bags. This was also the projection for MY 2023-2024.

The USDA also downwardly revised its projections for Philippine coffee consumption to 6.55 million bags from 7.05 million bags previously estimated for MY 2024-2025.

The USDA reported that world coffee production will be 6.9 million bags higher than the previous marketing year to 174 million bags in MY 2024-2025 due to higher output in Vietnam and Indonesia.

"World exports are forecast (to be) modestly higher as gains in Vietnam and Indonesia more than offset reduced shipments from Brazil," it said.

According to the report, Vietnam production is estimated to rebound by 2.6 million bags to 30.1 million in MY 2024-2025. Vietnam's bean exports are also expected to rebound by 1.8 million bags to 24.4 million due to higher available supply.

The Philippines imports most of its coffee requirements from Vietnam.

Meanwhile, the USDA said global consumption is expected to rise to 168.1 million bags due to increasing demand in the EU, the US, and China. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

NZ confident H7 bird flu confined to single farm

WELLINGTON — New Zealand (NZ) officials said that testing showed they had contained the strain of highly pathogenic H7N6 avian flu that infected a farm this month.

Mary van Andel, chief veterinary officer at the Ministry of Primary Industries, said in a statement the government had tested farms connected with the first property with the virus and is confident it had been contained to that farm.

"We are on track to stamp out this disease," said Ms. Van Andel.

The positive test for the virus in December on a chicken

farm in Otago, in the South Island was New Zealand's first.

The strain is different from the H5N1 strain, which has spread globally and raised fears of human transmission.

Ms. Van Andel said the farm that reported the virus remains under a strict bio-security lockdown while it undergoes cleaning and decontamination.

New Zealand suspended all poultry exports following the virus's discovery.

Ms. Van Andel said the government was in close contact with trade partners and an agreement has been reached with Australia to continue exporting some poultry products. — **Reuters**

Pasteurizers, rubber sheeters scarcest agricultural equipment at barangay level

PASTEURIZERS and rubber sheeters were among the least available equipment in barangays as of 2022, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

In a census report posted on Saturday, the PSA said that only 511 barangays own pasteurizers, which are used in milk and juice processing, while only 541 barangays own rubber sheeters.

The 2022 Census of Agricultural and Fisheries Availability of Agricultural, Aquaculture, and Fisheries Machinery, Equipment, and Services in Barangays also revealed that threshers are the most available piece of equipment in barangays.

"Threshers were present in 19,583 (46.6%) barangays, or nearly half of all barangays covered in the 2022 Census of Agri-

cultural and Fisheries," the PSA said.

According to the PSA, the province of Ilocos Sur had the highest thresher coverage at 88.7%, or 681 out of 768 barangays.

Following threshers are transplanters, which were present in 17,813 barangays, and rice mills, present in 12,376 barangays.

"On the other hand, the availability in barangays of feed mills for livestock, poultry, and aquaculture grew significantly by 35.1% during the same period," it added.

The most common facilities were traditional fish landing centers, which were found in 9,130 barangays, followed by layer farms (5,080 barangays) and nurseries (4,402 barangays).

"Between 2013 and 2023, there has been considerable growth

in the presence of agriculture, aquaculture, and fishing facilities across barangays. This expansion is particularly pronounced for fish landing centers, which significantly grew by 159.2%," the PSA said.

"Similarly, an increase in facilities to improve volume of poultry and fishery species was observed, particularly the poultry layer farm and aquaculture hatchery, which surged by 77.7%," it added.

As of 2023, stores or sellers of feed for livestock and poultry were found in 22,727 barangays, while fertilizer and pesticide stores were found in 11,730 and 10,469 barangays, respectively.

The census also revealed an increased availability of rental services for farm machinery and veterinary and para-veterinary

services, which grew 22.3% and 13%, respectively.

Meanwhile, individual money lenders, which were present in 20,020 barangays, emerged as the primary providers of financial credit assistance to farmers and fisherfolk in 2023.

The census showed that the number of agricultural households hit 7.07 million in 2022, up 32% from 2012.

Of the total, 3.38 million households were engaged in crop farming, 1.39 million families were engaged in livestock or poultry farming, and 2.31 million households were engaged in both.

The number of agricultural operators also increased 33.3% to 741 million in 2022, almost half of which were exclusively involved in crop farming. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Weather issues to crush Indian hopes of raising sugar production, exports

MUMBAI — Sugarcane yields in India are declining due to last year's drought and this year's excessive rains, which could reduce the country's sugar production below consumption levels for the first time in eight years, farmers and industry officials said.

Lower-than-expected output by the world's second-largest sugar producer could

eliminate the possibility of India allowing exports in the current season ending in September 2025, supporting global sugar prices.

Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh account for more than 80% of the country's total sugar production, with lower cane yields in these states prompting trade houses to reduce their output estimates for the 2024/25 season.

The production could fall to around 27 million metric tons from the last year's 32 million tons and below annual consumption of more than 29 million tons, said India head of a global trade house, who declined to be named.

"During the summer months, the cane crop faced prolonged stress due to the lack of water," B.B. Thombare, president of the West

Indian Sugar Mills Association told Reuters.

"When the monsoon season began, there was excessive rainfall and limited sunshine, which also adversely affected the crop's growth."

The adverse weather curtailed cane yields by 10-15 tons per hectare, Mr. Thombare said.

The western state of Maharashtra and neighboring Karnataka, which together

produce nearly half of India's sugar, received lower-than-average rainfall in 2023, bringing down reservoir levels.

"Usually, we harvest 120 to 130 tons of cane from one hectare of land, but this year yields have fallen to 80 tons despite all our efforts," says Shrikant Ingle, who

cultivated cane on five acres of land in Maharashtra's Solapur. — **Reuters**

Trump asks Supreme Court to pause law that could ban TikTok

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald J. Trump has urged the US Supreme Court to pause implementation of a law that would ban popular social media app TikTok or force its sale, arguing he should have time after taking office to pursue a "political resolution" to the issue.

The court is set to hear arguments in the case on Jan. 10.

The law would require TikTok's Chinese owner, ByteDance, to sell the platform to an American company or face a ban. The US Congress voted in April to ban it unless ByteDance sells the app by Jan. 19.

TikTok, which has over 170 million US users, and its parent have sought to have the law struck down. But if the court does not rule in their favor and no divestment occurs, the app could be effectively banned in the United States on Jan. 19, one day before Mr. Trump takes office.

Mr. Trump's support for TikTok is a reversal from 2020, when he tried to block the app in the United States and force its sale to American companies because of its Chinese ownership.

It also shows the significant effort by the company to forge inroads with Mr. Trump and his team during the presidential campaign.

"President Trump takes no position on the underlying merits of this dispute," said D. John Sauer, Mr. Trump's lawyer who is also the president-elect's pick for US solicitor general.

"Instead, he respectfully requests that the Court consider staying the Act's deadline for divestment of January 19, 2025, while it considers the merits of this case, thus permitting President Trump's incoming administration the opportunity to pursue a political resolution of the questions at issue in the case," he added.

Free speech advocates separately told the Supreme Court on Friday the US law against TikTok evokes the censorship regimes put in place by the United States' authoritarian enemies.

The US Justice Department has argued Chinese control of TikTok poses a continuing threat to national security, a position supported by most US lawmakers.

Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen led a coalition of 22 attorneys general on Friday in filing an amicus brief asking the Supreme Court to uphold the national TikTok divest-or-ban legislation. — **Reuters**

Chinese Salt Typhoon cyberespionage targets AT&T, Verizon but networks secure, carriers say

THE Chinese-linked Salt Typhoon cyberespionage operation targeted AT&T and Verizon's systems, but the wireless carriers' US networks are now secure as they work with law enforcement and government officials, the companies said on Saturday in their first acknowledgment of the attacks.

"We detect no activity by nation-state actors in our networks at this time. Based on our current investigation of this attack,

the People's Republic of China targeted a small number of individuals of foreign intelligence interest," an AT&T spokesperson said.

While only a few cases of compromised information were identified, AT&T was monitoring and remediating its networks to protect customers' data, and continues to work with authorities to assess and mitigate the threat, the spokesperson said. — **Reuters**

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