

Arms industry expects gun law amendments to unlock growth

FIREARMS manufacturers and dealers said they support amendments to an 11-year-old law to unlock growth in the industry.

“By amending Republic Act (RA) No. 10591, we are not simply adjusting regulations, we are empowering an industry that can generate significant economic returns, provide employment and support innovation,” said Alaric Alexander J. Topacio, comptroller for the Association of Firearms and Ammunitions Dealers, during a House of Representatives hearing.

RA 10591 is also known as the Comprehensive Law on Firearms and Ammunition.

The House public safety and order committee held its first hearing on bills seeking to rationalize RA 10591, which regulates the manufacturing, import, and export of firearms.

Sta. Rosa City Rep. Danilo S. Fernandez, who heads the House public safety panel, formed a technical working group to consider the possibility of consolidating three separate bills seeking to amend the firearms law.

“We must support industries that can offer stability and growth. The firearms sector, with its potential to expand domestically and internationally, should be recognized as a key player in

our economic strategy,” Mr. Topacio said.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed into law in October the Self-Reliant Defense Posture Act, which seeks to “fully harness the potential of the defense industry.”

“This (firearms) industry has the capacity to generate thousands of jobs... and contribute to our economic development,” Mr. Topacio said.

He urged legislators to amend the law in a manner that effectively “addresses the root causes of illegal firearms trafficking, while supporting responsible gun ownership.”

The Philippines is among the least gun restrictive countries in Southeast Asia partly due to cultural influences from the American occupation. The national police, which regulates gun ownership in the country, allows Filipinos to own high-powered rifles.

Police General Ericson D. Dalig said there are about 2.7 million registered firearms in the country, while the count for “loose firearms” is more than 545,000.

“We have around 545,742 firearms that can be categorized as loose firearms (as they cannot be renewed anymore because (their permits) were revoked,” he told legislators. — **Kenneth Christiane L. Basilio**

Exporters urged to develop underserved markets in EU

EXPORTERS need to maximize the potential of electronic equipment, machinery, electricity, precious metals, and fruit exports to Europe, according to the Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. (Philexport).

Citing the International Trade Centre’s (ITC) Export Potential Map, Philexport said these product categories have unrealized potential in the European Union (EU) and Western Europe.

The map identified electronic integrated circuits (ICs) and IC processors as the products with

the most export potential, valued at \$4 billion.

Actual exports of ICs amounted to \$1.7 billion and \$1.5 billion, respectively, with unrealized potential of about \$493 million and \$653 million, respectively.

Gold exports amounted to \$1.3 billion with \$497 million in further export potential.

Storage for data-processing machines had exports valued at \$1.3 billion and unrealized potential worth \$753 million.

Other products with top export potential are coconut oil, static

converters, printers and copying machines, semi-manufactured gold, and parts of automatic data-processing machines.

Nelli Hajdu, ITC EU Market Access Expert, said that several regulatory and policy developments in the last five years have impacted business opportunities in the EU market.

These include climate change and its global response, supply chain vulnerability and changing geostrategic perception of the food trade, and greening initiatives.

“The shift from sanitary and phytosanitary and food safety to sustainability points to the EU trade agenda,” Ms. Hajdu said.

In the agriculture and food and beverage sector, the top products include bananas, crude coconut oil, pineapples (fresh or dried), and prepared or preserved tunas.

Other top products are desiccated coconuts, pineapples (prepared or preserved), mucilages and thickeners derived from vegetable products, edible parts of plants, and frozen yellowfin tuna. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

LANDBANK expects to boost credit support for sugar farmers

SUGAR FARMERS are expected to have expanded access to credit under the revised implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the Sugarcane Industry Development Act’s (SIDA) Social Credit Program, Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK) said.

In a statement, LANDBANK said it recently signed the revised IRR of the Social Credit Program, alongside the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA), which will expedite credit applications by sugarcane farmers.

“The streamlining of the program’s processes aims to provide more accessible and affordable credit support, in line with the Bank’s commitment to empowering sugarcane farmers and boosting the agriculture sector,” it added.

SIDA, also known as Republic Act 10659, seeks to raise the competitiveness of the sugarcane industry and improve incomes of farmers and workers.

Currently 50% of SIDA funds go to the construction of farm-to-market roads. The remaining funds are allocated to research and mechanization, socialized credit, and block



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farm development, with 10% dedicated to scholarships.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona did not immediately reply to a Viber message seeking comment.

As of the end of November, LANDBANK had approved P1.32 billion for the Social Credit Program, benefitting over 4,000 farmers, including six block farms and four common service centers. — **Adrian H. Halili**

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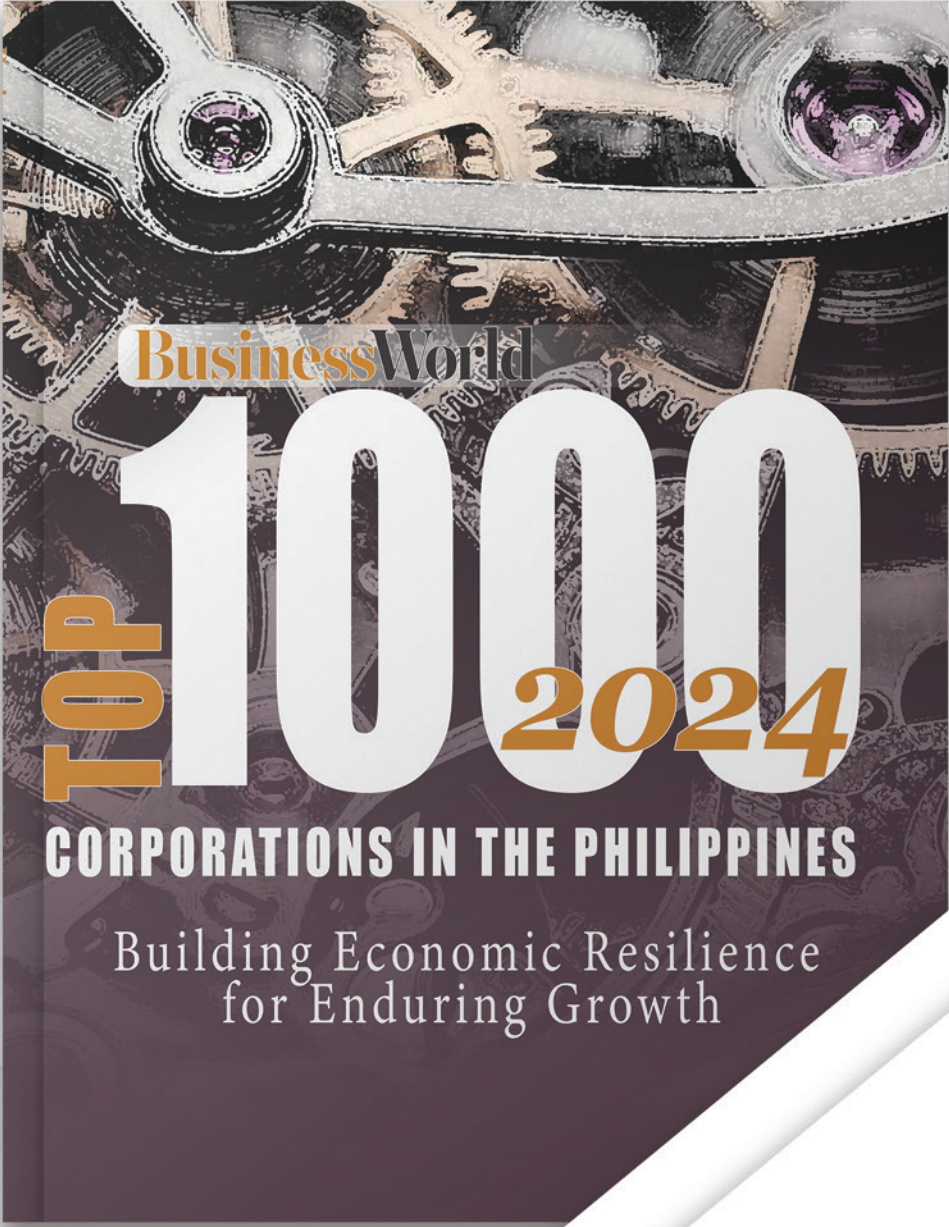
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