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Camarines Sur cold storage complex up and running by Dec.

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said a P500-million cold storage facility is set to open in Camarines Sur in December.

The proposed facility in Pili is expected to "enhance food security, generate jobs, spur agri-investments, and significantly boost farmers' incomes in Bicol and nearby regions," the DA said in a statement.

DA PRESS OFFICE

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. and Camarines Sur Governor Luis Raymund Villafuerte inspected the ongoing construction of a P500-million cold storage facility.

It is designed to store a wide range of agricultural commodities including vegetables, meat, chicken and fish, the DA added.

The cold storage complex will have six refrigerated warehouses, each capable of storing approximately 224 tons of agricultural products.

With a total capacity exceeding 1,300 tons, the facility is designed to serve not just Camarines Sur, but also other parts of Bicol, the Visayas, and even Mindanao, whose products pass through the province on their way to Metro Manila and other major markets.

The DA said the facility features a solar power system to help cut electricity costs, a blast freezer, and a processing and packing area to support value-adding services for farmers.

"It will allow them to preserve their harvest longer, reduce spoilage, and access new markets," Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

The DA said sites in Taguig City, Cabanatuan City, Occidental Mindoro and Isabela are set to open starting next year.

"In addition, over 100 modular cold storage units will be deployed to various farming communities across the country," it added. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

Brazil's FRIGON sees PHL demand for beef growing with middle classes

A BRAZILIAN beef processor and exporter said the Philippines' growing middle class will fuel demand for high-quality protein.

FRIGON (Irmãos Gonçalves Comércio e Indústria Ltda.), currently exports mainly grass-fed Nelore cattle to the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

"The Philippine market represents an exciting opportunity," the company told *BusinessWorld*.

"We see the country as a dynamic economy with a growing demand for high-quality protein, where beef consumption continues to expand alongside a rising middle class," it added.

The company said it is "confident" of servicing Philippine market requirements for "safe, reliable, and premium Brazilian beef," citing its "strong capacity, international certifications, and flexibility in adapting our products to the clients' demand."

"We are looking forward to building long-term partnerships in the Philippines and to supporting the development of stronger trade relations between our countries," FRIGON said.

FRIGON has the capacity to slaughter 2,000 head of cattle per day, with an expansion underway to double capacity by 2026 in response to growing global demand.

In 2024, the Philippines was the 5th largest destination for Brazilian beef, accounting for 92,200 metric tons or 3.19% of Brazil's total exports. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

US tariffs behind arabica price surge, Brazilian exporters say

SAO PAULO — The global arabica coffee market has surged in August with prices gaining more than 30% on the ICE exchange, driven mainly by steep tariff hikes from the US, the head of Brazil's coffee exporters council, Cecafe, said.

The 50% tariff imposed on Brazilian coffee by the Trump administration since Aug. 6 has made exports to the US unviable and disrupted markets, Cecafe President Marcio Ferreira said in an interview.

"In meetings I had with the American side, I made it clear that the tariff hike created an environment of uncertainty and drove coffee prices up globally — and there may be no ceiling," Mr. Ferreira said.

"The market can't read where the price peak is," he added.

Arabica coffee futures on ICE, traded in New York, were quoted around $3.74 per pound on Friday, up from about $2.80 at the end of July.

Crop performance in Brazil, the world's largest producer and exporter of coffee, will not help anytime soon, Mr. Ferreira said.

The 2025 arabica crop collection, nearing completion, has yielded about 10% less than expected, he said, adding that frosts this month are likely to reduce next year's output.

As a result of the tariffs, importers are turning to other origins like Central America and Colombia, but are facing higher premiums compared with ICE futures contracts, Mr. Ferreira said.

"This uncertainty and insecurity attracts funds to buy on the exchange, and it's natural for funds to enter on the buying side — the market becomes favorable from a speculative standpoint," he said.

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However, Brazilian coffee is currently seeing "a substantial increase" in European and Asian demand, which is "well above expectations," Mr. Ferreira added.

That growth isn't necessarily due to higher consumption in Europe, he said, citing the role of countries like Germany in re-exporting processed coffee to the US, which applies lower tariffs on European goods. — ***Reuters***

WTO committee backs Indonesia in EU biodiesel dispute

GENEVA — A World Trade Organization (WTO) panel backed Indonesia on several key claims in its complaint over countervailing duties imposed by the European Union (EU) on biodiesel imports originating in the country.

Indonesia brought the dispute to the WTO in 2023, alleging the EU's imposition of duties on imports of biodiesel from the Southeast Asian nation broke the body's rules.

"We recommend that the European Union bring its measures into conformity with its obligations under the SCM Agreement," the panel said in its conclusion, referring to a WTO agreement on subsidies and countervailing measures.

The EU is Indonesia's third-largest destination for palm oil products and is an important market for its biodiesel, a product made from palm oil. Indonesia is the world's biggest palm oil producer.

Indonesia appreciates the ruling and is preparing for its implementation, chief economic minister Airlangga Hartarto told Reuters on Saturday, without providing further details.

The finding can be appealed, but no final ruling is possible since the WTO's top appeals court is no longer operational.

The WTO Appellate Body ceased functioning in 2019 due to repeated blockages of judge appointments by the first administration of US President Donald Trump. — ***Reuters***

PHL sees niche in climate-resilient cacao

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is updating the cacao industry roadmap to focus on global branding and climate-resilient varieties to address the impact of climate change in the main supplier countries.

The cacao strategy will focus on "increasing production, developing processing facilities, and expanding markets while promoting sustainable and ethical sourcing practices," the DA said in a statement.

Cacao accounted for P1.78 billion of the crop sector last year by value of production.

"The roadmap also encourages greater private sector investment to solidify the Philippines' position as a global supplier of quality cacao," it added.

The DA said cacao should be a "driver of rural employment, farmer income, and sustainable investment."

It said it is developing a globally recognized "Bicol Cacao" brand, "one that's rooted in quality, climate-smart practices, and community empowerment."

The DA said the global market context "adds urgency and opportunity," as the cocoa bean market is valued at approximately $14 billion and is projected to grow to $17 billion by 2030.

It noted that supply disruptions caused by climate change and new European regulations banning beans from deforested land have led to soaring prices of cocoa — the fermented version of cacao and main ingredient to making chocolate — peaking at over $12,000 per ton last year from $3,200 two years earlier.

The bulk of the global supply comes from Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon.

These shifts open the door for naturally grown, climate-resilient cacao from the Philippines "to gain ground," the DA said.

"Our targets are bold: higher yields, better incomes, and a stronger global footprint," it said.

"But at the core is something deeper — empowering our farmers and inspiring the next generation to see cacao not just as tradition, but as a thriving, future-ready enterprise," it added.

"The surge in cacao's value reflects rising demand and improved farmgate prices, further underscoring its growing economic potential," the DA said. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

PHL elderly seen making up 20% of population by 2066

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) said pension reforms are needed to protect the elderly from falling into poverty, with the elderly expected to account for one-fifth of the Philippine population by 2066.

In a working paper released in July, the bank also estimated the 60 and above age cohort to make up 10% of the population by 2029.

"The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Philippines, and Timor-Leste will be the last three Southeast Asian economies to reach the milestone of older people constituting 10% of the population," it said.

The ADB said Singapore and Thailand hit the 20% milestone in 2020. Brunei Darussalam and Vietnam are expected to hit 20% by 2037.

"There is a clear need to strengthen social protection systems, particularly pension and healthcare services, to support the needs of the growing population of older people and minimize their risk of falling into poverty," it said.

Government Service Insurance System, the Social Security System, the Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens (SPISC), Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) health insurance, and senior citizen discount and tax incentives remain available, but the population still have low to minimal access, the ADB said.

"The healthcare infrastructure will face mounting pressure to expand long-term care services while managing the growing burden on the PhilHealth system and public health facilities," it said.

According to the 2026 National Expenditure Program, the government allocated P53.2 billion for PhilHealth in 2026 after granting it no subsidies this year.

The Department of Health was allocated P320.5 billion in next year's budget, up 29%.

With healthcare costs expected to surge, the ADB urged the government to focus on increasing access to affordable healthcare and improvements in preventive care.

"The existing PhilHealth health insurance coverage may not be sufficient to cover the healthcare costs of older people," the ADB said.

"With life expectancy projected to improve by 2050, healthcare systems are expected to experience increased demand, creating a need to strengthen existing infrastructure to ensure accessible care for older people," it added. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**