Poultry, dairy output expand in Q3, hog production declines

POULTRY and dairy output expanded in the third quarter, while hog, cattle and goat production contracted, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The PSA said hog production in the three months to September slipped 1.4% to 408,940 metric tons (MT) on a liveweight basis.

Hog output has now declined for seven consecutive quarters, following the industry's slow recovery from African Swine Fever (ASF) and elevated feed costs.

Despite weaker production, the swine inventory as of Sept. 30 rose 0.1% to 9.11 million head, with smallhold farms accounting for 75.8% of the herd. Commercial farms accounted for 22.6%, while semi-commercial farms made up 1.6%.

The 9.11-million head population, however, is still significantly lower than the 15 million before the ASF outbreak.

Cattle production fell 2.7% in the third quarter to 50,870 MT (liveweight).

The PSA said the cattle inventory as of the end of September was 2.54 million head, down 1.6% from a year earlier.

Goat production fell 7.7% year on year to 15,700 MT (liveweight), marking a second straight annual decline in the third quarter. The PSA said 99.7% of the goat herd of 3.61 million head was held by smallhold farms.

Dairy posted the fastest expansion among major commodities, with output surging 34.7% year on year to 10,950 MT in the third quarter.

Meanwhile, the poultry subsector posted significant growth. Total chicken production jumped 12.4% to 553,650 MT (liveweight) in the third quarter.

Total chicken inventory, however, fell 0.3% as of the end of September to 221.19 million birds.

Chicken egg production expanded 7.7% to 212,680 MT. The total chicken laying flock as of the end of September increased 9.3% to 78.22 million birds, with layer chickens making up 61.6% of the total.

Duck meat production edged up 0.6% to 6,670 MT (liveweight). The duck inventory as of Sept. 30 rose 0.8% to 14.56 million birds, over 70% of which were raised in smallhold farms.

On the other hand, duck egg production contracted, slipping 4.3% to 12,090 MT as nine regions posted declines in output. — **Vonn Andrei E. Villamiel**

US will soon announce details of farmer payments

WASHINGTON — The administration of President Donald Trump will soon announce details of payments to farmers hurt by low crop prices and trade disputes, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said.

US farmers have been saddled this year with record harvests and lost billions of dollars in soybean sales to China when the nation turned to South American suppliers this fall during stalled trade talks.

The administration had been expected to announce a farm bailout totaling as much as $15 billion in October. Ms. Rollins previously said the 43-day federal government shutdown delayed the rollout.

"There's no doubt that the farm economy for a lot of reasons is really, really struggling right now," Ms. Rollins said on NewsNation, adding that resumed soybean purchases from China and other agricultural trade deals have improved conditions.

"We'll soon be announcing a potential bridge payment for those who are still facing losses," Ms. Rollins said.

Stephen Vaden, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) deputy secretary, told reporters in a call on Monday that the agency is in the process of calculating how recent trade deals with countries including Pakistan and Japan could affect the farmer payments.

Bloomberg reported on Wednesday that details of the payments will be announced in early December, citing an interview with Ms. Rollins. The USDA did not immediately respond to questions about the timing.

Ms. Rollins also said on NewsNation that the USDA will be making an announcement about "structural changes" to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, the week after Thanksgiving.

Ms. Rollins has said all SNAP recipients will need to reapply to the program to ensure the benefits are going to eligible recipients as part of an agency effort to address fraud in the program.

The country's nearly 42 million SNAP recipients are already required by federal law to regularly recertify their eligibility with state agencies, typically every 6 to 12 months.

During the shutdown, SNAP benefits lapsed for the first time ever, forcing recipients to make sacrifices like forgoing medication to afford groceries.

A USDA spokesperson said that since February 2025, the agency has made 127 arrests for SNAP fraud, which resulted in 63 convictions and more than $16.5 million in fines and fees. The agency did not provide further details of the arrests or charges. — ***Reuters***

FREEPIK

Brazil fears loss of US instant coffee market share after Trump keeps tariffs

SAO PAULO — Brazil risks losing its market share in instant coffee sales in the US after President Donald Trump retained 50% tariffs on the product while cutting duties for green coffee, the Brazilian Instant Coffee Association (ABICS) said.

On Thursday, Mr. Trump removed his 40% tariffs on Brazilian food products, including beef and green coffee — which covers most coffee beans — as well as cocoa and fruits, that took effect in August to punish Brazil over the prosecution of its former president, Mr. Trump ally Jair Bolsonaro.

Thursday's move followed a similar US order last Friday to remove 10% tariffs on several agricultural products from other countries as the White House makes a U-turn on some tariffs that have increased the cost of food in the US.

Yet Brazilian instant coffee will continue to face tariffs, a blow to the sector because the US accounts for 20% of Brazil's instant coffee exports, according to the ABICS.

"Instant coffee was not included in the exemptions specified in the annexes to the Executive Orders," ABICS said in a statement. "This contrasts with the overall progress in bilateral negotiations and represents a continuing challenge for the sector."

Maintaining the tariffs against Brazil's instant coffee means the sector risks being permanently replaced by other suppliers, ABICS added.

"Once that market share and consumer loyalty are lost, future recovery will be an extremely difficult mission, with lasting losses for the entire national production chain," ABICS said.

Other sectors of Brazil's coffee industry that are now exempt from the tariffs expressed relief on Friday.

The Brazilian Specialty Coffee Association (BSCA) welcomed the news, adding that tariffs between August and October contributed to exports of specialty coffee falling 55% to 190,000 60-kilogram bags versus the same period in 2024.

"This new order corrects the distortion created by tariffs between the main buyer and consumer market for coffee, the US, and the main global producer and exporter, Brazil," the BSCA said in a statement. — ***Reuters***

Japanese seafood caught up in escalating diplomatic dispute with China

TOKYO/BEIJING — China has indicated it will ban all imports of Japanese seafood, two government officials in Tokyo said, in what appears to be the latest salvo in an escalating diplomatic dispute between Asia's top two economies.

Tensions between the two countries ignited after new Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said this month that a Chinese attack on Taiwan threatening Japan's survival could trigger a military response.

China has demanded she retract the remarks and urged its citizens not to travel to Japan, resulting in mass cancellations that could deal a sizable blow to the world's fourth-largest economy.

Asked about the seafood restrictions at a press conference, China's foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said: "Under the current circumstances, even if Japanese seafood were to be exported to China, it would find no market."

She reiterated that if Takaichi did not retract her remarks, China would have to take "stern and resolute" countermeasures.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara told reporters Tokyo had not received any official notification from the Chinese government about a ban on seafood.

Beijing just months ago partially eased restrictions on Japanese seafood that had been imposed due to Tokyo's decision two years ago to release treated wastewater from its Fukushima power plant, the site of a 2011 nuclear meltdown that followed a massive earthquake and tsunami.

China informed Japan's ministry of agriculture, forest and fisheries on Wednesday that current import procedures were not sufficient, indicating a likely re-imposition of the blanket ban, Japanese government officials said, requesting anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

China said the move was due to concerns about Japan's screening method, the officials said, adding they believe it was likely further retaliation for Takaichi's remarks.

Facing a wave of vitriolic responses by a Chinese diplomat in Japan and Chinese state media aimed at Takaichi, Japan warned its citizens in China to step up safety precautions and avoid crowded places.

Tokyo has said Takaichi's remarks in parliament are in line with the government's position, suggesting no breakthrough is imminent.

China said in June that it would resume importing Japanese seafood products from all but 10 of Japan's 47 prefectures.

The re-imposition will be a painful blow for many companies eager to re-enter a market that previously accounted for more than a fifth of all Japan's seafood exports.

Nearly 700 Japanese exporters had applied to re-register for shipments to China, Agriculture Minister Norikazu Suzuki told reporters on Tuesday. However, only three had been approved to date.

Before the 2023 ban, China was Japan's top scallop buyer and a major importer of sea cucumbers.

More immediately, China's travel boycott could have far-reaching consequences for Japan's shaky economy.

Tourism accounts for around 7% of Japan's overall gross domestic product, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council, and has been a major driver of growth in recent years.

Visitors from mainland China and Hong Kong account for around a fifth of all arrivals, official figures show.

More than 10 Chinese airlines have offered refunds on Japan-bound routes until Dec. 31, with one airline analyst estimating that around 500,000 tickets have already been canceled.

A person at a state-owned Chinese bank said staff were informally told by managers that requests to travel to Japan would not be approved for the time being. The person declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

An annual meeting of academics from both countries in Beijing has been postponed, China's foreign ministry said, citing the political fallout.

Another event promoting Japan–China friendship in the western Japanese city of Hiroshima has also been canceled.

Japanese artists have been caught up in the furore.

Performances by Japanese comedians at an upcoming festival in Shanghai have been canceled due to "unavoidable circumstances," entertainment firm Yoshimoto Kogyo said.

Screenings of upcoming Japanese films in China have also been suspended, while a Japanese boy band canceled a fan event in Guangzhou earlier this week citing "force majeure."

Other Japanese celebrities popular in China have tried to head off potential backlash with messages showing their support for China.

"China is like my second homeland to me and all my friends in China are my cherished family — I will always support One China," Japanese singer MARiA wrote on Weibo. — ***Reuters***

Biodiesel group urges caution on proposed biofuels act

THE Philippine Biodiesel Association (TPBA) recommended caution on proposed changes to Republic Act (RA) No. 9367, or the Biofuels Act of 2006, particularly on the suspension of the coco-biodiesel program when blended diesel hits certain price triggers.

In a statement over the weekend, the group said that while it acknowledged the intent of House Bill (HB) No. 4151 to protect consumers, the proposed measure needs to be evaluated "with a complete understanding of its wider implications."

RA 9367 requires that all liquid fuels contain locally sourced biofuel components.

HB 4151, otherwise known as the Murang Langis Act, seeks to grant the president the authority to suspend the program if the price of blended diesel is at least 5% higher than that of pure diesel.

TPBA said blended diesel "is not always more expensive" and in fact, at par or cheaper than pure diesel, particularly during global oil volatility.

Citing studies by the Department of Energy (DoE) and the University of the Philippines' National Center for Transportation Studies, TPBA said that although higher biodiesel blends cost a little more per liter, they promise mileage gains that translate to consumer savings.

The group said that the DoE is already ensuring energy security and balancing stakeholder needs, which it hope to "preserve that momentum."

"Our contribution to the discussion is simply to highlight additional considerations to help ensure that all angles are fully evaluated. We believe this approach supports the spirit of HB 4151 and the broader goals of government," TPBA Executive Director Ramon Taniola said.

TPBA said that millions of Filipinos depend on the coconut industry, and the biodiesel mandate has become one of the most stable domestic markets supporting farmers at a time of global commodity uncertainty.

"Any potential changes to the mandate... should take into account how stability affects replanting, modernization, and long-term productivity programs," the group said.

The government started ordering the increase of the coco methyl ester (CME) blend in diesel to 3% (B3) in October last year, in a bid to reduce pump prices and support the local industry. CME is a biodiesel component derived from coconut oil.

Oil firms are due to increase the coco biodiesel blend to 4% by Oct. 1, 2025, and to 5% by Oct. 1, 2026.

The implementation, however, has been suspended due to the high cost of coconut oil.

This week, oil industry analysts are projecting a possible increase of P0.80 to P1 per liter for diesel. Since January, the price of diesel has increased by P24.05 per liter. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

House bill seeks to arrest ageing trend in farm workforce

A BILL seeking to inject more youth in the agricultural workforce was filed at the House of Representatives last month.

House Bill No. 5291 seeks to establish a national program to attract and train the young to take up farming, offering education and technical training, livelihood support and access to credit to develop their farm lots.

"The Philippine agriculture sector is on the edge of collapse," Iligan City Rep. Celso G. Regencia said in the bill's explanatory note, which was filed on Oct. 8. "The average age of a Filipino farmer is now 56 years old, and within a few years, many of them will no longer be able to plant the fields or fish the waters."

"At the same time, there is no sufficient influx of young people to take their place, (and) unless decisive action is taken, the nation's food production chain will break down," he added.

The next decade could see crippling labor shortages in farming as young people increasingly migrate to city jobs.

"There remains a narrow window to avert this outcome," according to Mr. Regencia, adding that authorities must develop a pipeline that will draw the young into agriculture and provide support to help them succeed.

The proposed "national pathway" for young farmers will be overseen by the Department of Agriculture (DA), with the departments of Agrarian Reform, Education and Trade and Industry among those also steering the program.

Under the bill, potential farmers aged 15 to 40 will be granted access to technical training, startup capital, and credit to help them get established.

"Not less than 10% of all credit facilities and financing windows administered by the government financial institutions and credit programs of the DA are to be reserved for young farmers and fisherfolk," according to the bill. — **Kenneth Christiane L. Basilio**

Hydro investment demand estimated at $3.9 trillion

THE PHILIPPINES will need around $3.9 trillion in investment to unlock the potential of its hydropower resources, according to the PhilHydro Association, Inc.

Speaking to reporters last week, PhilHydro President Gertrude V. Roque said the country's potential hydropower capacity has been estimated at 650 gigawatts.

Ms. Roque said, however, that not all sites are accessible, making hydropower development "very costly, difficult, risky."

She said that developing a facility that could generate one megawatt (MW) of capacity costs between $5 million and $6 million.

Hydropower facilities generate electricity from the natural flow of moving water. The type varies depending on the capacity, water resources, and design of harnessing electricity. This includes impounding hydro, run-of-river hydro, and pumped storage hydro.

Ms. Roque cited the need for a balance of hydropower technologies to effectively support and stabilize the grid.

"We really need to look into the capacities that we need to build for each type of these hydro projects," she said.

The Philippines is also banking on hydropower to increase the share of renewable energy in the national power mix to 35% by 2030 and 50% by 2040. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**