CACCI
Food & Agriculture Newsletter

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Chairman's Message

The need for agriculture productivity has never been greater than today as the world's population expected to grow from 7 billion today to 9 billion by 2050. Stimulation of innovation and breakthrough technology in agriculture and food technology is one obvious method to increase the productivity. The innovation scope should focus on breeding new crop varieties, to sustainable crop-protection and post-harvest technologies, livestock health, feed solutions, aquaculture, soil-less agriculture, and on to irrigation technologies and precision agriculture.

Agriculture industry landscape is witnessing far-reaching changes due to the influences of nature such as climatic condition changes and scarcity of natural resources and shift in the needs of developing nations in the world. All these conditions will continue to exert their influence not only on crop production, but also on the increasingly valuable harvest.

These challenges urge us to invest in new and improved technology and systems especially on diverse post-harvest systems, crops or products and the different stages of activity involved.

Recently concluded Agritech Israel 2015, the 19th International Agricultural Technology Exhibition, is one of the world's most important exhibitions in the field of agricultural technologies, presented some of the ground breaking technologies and insights into post-harvest methods and processes to tackle the challenges of post-harvest food losses.

Israel as a country instills in us many lessons in agriculture industry evolution. Despite the fact that Israel geography is not conducive to agriculture, the country is a major exporter of fresh produce and a world-leader in agriculture technology. Based on its accumulated experience, Israel is poised to play a major role in supplying the world with cutting-edge agriculture solutions which possess the world's most developed irrigation methods, world's highest reused wastewater rate and the most advanced agriculture technologies on the international market for water heating and electricity generation

Our chamber, the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, plans to strengthen the relationship with Israel and to bring the modern technology specially the post-harvest methods to increase the agriculture productivity in the region..

My Best Wishes

Mr. Samantha Ranatunga
Chairman, Asian Council on Food and Agriculture

CACCI Members Invited to Attend the Breakout Session on Food and Agriculture in Hong Kong

In conjunction with the 29th CACCI Conference, Asian Council on Food and Agriculture (ACFA) will organize its annual meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Samantha Ranatunga from Sri Lanka. The 29th CACCI Conference will be held on October 29-30, 2015 in Hong Kong.

As part of the program of the 29th CACCI Conference, the host - the Kowloon Chamber of Commerce - is requesting the various CACCI Product and Service Councils, including the ACFA, to organize break-out sessions that will feature panelists who will share their views on trends and developments, problems and issues, and prospects for growth in the sectors concerned.

In this regard, ACFA Chairman Mr. Ranatunga encourages representatives of the food and agriculture sectors in the region to join the break-out session on food and agriculture to share their best practices and valuable experience. An active participation in the session will certainly contribute to a meaningful and productive discussion of the issues at hand.

For more information on the ACFA, please visit the following link at http://cacci.biz/?page_id=175.

ASEAN leaders launch tieup to boost food security, farm productivity

By Paulo Cuento

Leaders in business and government of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) launched Grow Asia partnership at the ongoing World Economic Forum on East Asia in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The partnership, involving over 100 organizations, aims to reach 10 million farmers by 2020 to help them increase productivity, profitability and environmental sustainability by 20%.

The Philippines, along with Vietnam, Indonesia and Myanmar, already launched initiatives to support Grow Asia, mobilizing 28-value chain projects reaching over 100,000 farmers. The partnership will provide support to encourage more countries in the region to participate in the said program.

Rice farmers at work / Photo by IRRI Images (organic) [CC-BY-2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Noting the significance of the private sectors role in the implementation of Grow Asia, Samdech Techno Hun Sen, prime minister of Cambodia, said: "We need to increase the productivity of existing land and provide opportunities for farmers. The private sector has a role to play in bringing development to agriculture through market mechanisms."

Present in the forum were farmer leaders from the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA). Estrella Penunia, secretary-general of the AFA, cited the importance of bringing opportunities to the grassroots level.

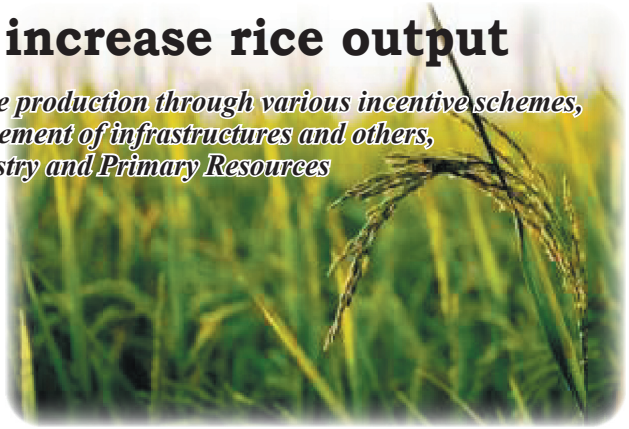
The governments of Canada and Australia have expressed their support for Grow Asia by providing financial assistance totaling $9.5 million for three years.

"As the ASEAN region's close neighbor, Australia believes this unique partnership will benefit local communities and contribute to broader regional food-security goals," said Simon Merrifield, Australian ambassador to ASEAN.

Source: Manila Bulletin, April 21, 2015

Brunei takes steps to increase rice output

Brunei's efforts are already in place to increase rice production through various incentive schemes, such as buy-back programmes, improvement of infrastructures and others, according to Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources



Deputy permanent secretary at the ministry Hajah Hasnah binti Haji Ibrahim said that the self-sufficiency level in rice production in 2014 was four per cent. He added that the department of agriculture and AgriFood has been already spearheading the efforts by coordinating with various public and private entities to employ agro-industrial research and development efforts, such as selective breeding, tissue culture and cross breeding.

"One of the most significant results of these efforts in terms of food security is the development and cultivation of new, more productive rice varieties."

The first successful project in the southeast Asian nation was the local Laila rice variety, which was first introduced in April 2009 and could yield as much as five tonnes per hectare, according to the department. This was later followed by another locally developed hybrid rice Titih, which could increase yields from an average of less than two tonnes per hectare to an average of five to six tonnes per hectare.

Haji Ibrahim also revealed that the agriculture is relatively small compared to those in other Asean member countries and the country has put the agriculture and fisheries sectors as leading sectors in achieving a comfortable level of self-sufficiency in food production.

The availability and accessibility of edible foods also fits into the country's national development plan of Vision 2035, the deputy secretary noted.

Source: Far Eastern Agriculture, 24 April 2015

PARC introduces 11 new high-yielding rice varieties

The Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) approved 11 new high-yielding rice varieties including seven hybrid and four open-pollinated seed for cultivation in various ecologies.

The Variety Evaluation Committee (VEC) on Rice was held here at PARC headquarters under the Chairmanship of Member Plant Sciences Division Dr Muhammad Shahid Masood.

In total, 19 rice varieties were presented before the VEC including 14 hybrid and five OP varieties, out of which 11 were approved and eight were rejected due to Bacterial-Leaf-Blight (BLB) disease susceptibility and poor grain quality performance. The approved varieties have been recommended to the National Seed Council.

Details show that the hybrid varieties approved by the VEC have yield potential up to 92 mound per acre whereas the OP rice varieties have potential to produce much yield than the existing IRRI-6 and KSK-133 varieties.

The OP varieties have been developed from the Green Super Rice (GSR) germ-plasm provided by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Philippines to PARC and National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering (NIBGE).

These OP varieties have high yield potential and also submergence, salinity and water stress tolerance characters.

"With the addition of new recommended hybrids of rice in the national system of the country, it is expected that there will be a significant improvement in rice production in Pakistan," VET Chairman Dr M Shahid Masood said.

He appreciated the role of stakeholders for taking interest in rice research and development and working in close collaboration with the public sector.

The VEC meeting, among others, was attended by 20 technical members of the committee from National Agriculture Research System (NARS) of the country including rice breeders, agronomists, entomologists, pathologists, seed experts, policy-makers, private seed companies' representatives and provincial seed cooperation representatives.

It is pertinent to mention here that the VEC on wheat recently released four new rust resistant wheat varieties including a bio-fortified variety having 50 percent Zinc (Zn) contents. The bio-fortified variety is the first-ever such introduction in the list of recommended varieties for farmers' choice in any agro-ecology.

Meanwhile, Chairman PARC Dr Iftikhar Ahmad lauded the efforts of the scientists and other stakeholders for introducing new rice varieties.

"I expect that the introduction of new rice varieties would not only produce promising crop yield but would also help farmers to raise their incomes to improve their livelihood and ultimately play role in building of overall economy of the country," he remarked.

Source: Pakistan Today, May 4, 2015

Australia's 'five strong pillar economy': agriculture

By

Peter J. Batt, Adjunct Professor
Curtin Business School at Curtin University

In his 2013 election campaign, Tony Abbott promised his government would build a world-class "five pillar economy", encompassing manufacturing, agriculture, services, education and mining. Two years later, as his government prepares its second federal budget, just how are these sectors faring?

Agriculture has always been and is likely to remain for some time, an important component of the Australian economy. While agriculture contributes just 2.3% of GDP, its diminishing importance is not the result of any reduction in output but rather to the growth in manufacturing and the service-based sectors of the economy.

Today, more than 307,000 people are employed in agriculture. Agriculture is the biggest employer in rural and regional communities, but if we consider all those employed in the input and output sectors, food manufacturing and processing, distribution and retail, agriculture provides employment for more than 1.6 million Australians.

Today, Australia's 135,000 farmers produce enough food to feed 80 million people. Not only do they provide 93% of the domestic food supply, but it supports an export market valued at more than A$41 billion per annum – that's over 13% of export revenue, according to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES).

By value, ABARES figures show the major commodities are grains and oilseeds (29.8%), meat (24.0%), the industrial crops (sugar, cotton and wine)(13.5%), wool (7.0%), dairy (6.6%) and horticulture (4.5%).

With population growth and rising personal income, the emerging middle class in Asia provides the major market for over 60% of Australian agricultural exports. Not surprisingly, China (22.0%) is Australia's single most important market, but sales to Japan (9.4%), Indonesia (7.3%), Korea (5.8%), Malaysia (3.0%) and Singapore (2.8%) continue to grow.

Trade agreements and protection

However, in supplying the increasing demand for food in the region, Australia faces some serious competition and some major institutional impediments. While Australia accounts for just 1% of global agriculture production according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOStat), despite the emergence of the World Trade Organisation in 1995, the majority of sovereign states have sought exemptions for agriculture and food.

Agriculture remains a major employer in Australia but the challenges of competition, food security and climate change are on the horizon. AAP image/supplied by Graincorp.

Rather than to rely on global markets, most of the world's most wealthy industrialised countries have sought to protect their farmers from competition through maintaining high import tariffs, import quotas and direct price support mechanisms.

Today, the OECD estimates that producer support estimates amount to more than US$257 billion per annum. While European farmers receive the bulk of the support (US$116 billion), and farmers in Japan, the US and Korea receive US$54 billion, US$31 billion and US$22 billion respectively, farmers in Australia receive just US$960 million in government support.

Recently negotiated bilateral free trade agreements will provide some relief in the mid to long-term, but the sector continues to struggle with falling commodity prices and declining profitability. Perhaps more than any other sector of the economy, agricultural productivity in Australia is highly dependent on seasonal variations in rainfall.

Challenges to the industry

Climate change is influencing both the intensity and duration of rainfall and thus redefining the suitability

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Australia's

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of many areas for farming. For some farmers, this will inevitably mean surrendering their farms as the level of farm indebtedness becomes unsustainable.

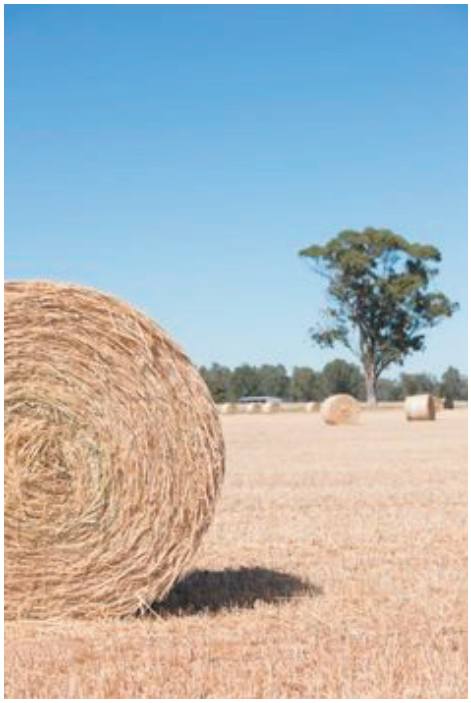
For others, significant investments in infrastructure and technology will provide the key, but as agriculture is and will always remain a high risk industry, the sector often fails to attract the required investment capital. Historically, farmers have responded to their eroding terms of trade by increasing productivity. For many farmers, consolidation provided immediate gains from the economies of scale, but over the last decade, productivity has begun to decline.

Today, agriculture in Australia faces an acute shortage in skilled labour. Our farmers are ageing and the uncertainty in returns associated with year-to-year variations in rainfall and price volatility present an image that too few university graduates find appealing.

While commodity prices are trending downwards, increasing costs are putting more pressure on profit margins. However, it's the cost escalation post farm-gate that continues to put most pressure on Australia's international competitiveness.

The Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre (AEGIC) recently estimated that bulk handling charges, freight and port charges amounted to 25-30% of the costs of grain production. The high value of the Australian dollar hasn't helped either.

Dairy accounts for 6.6% of Australia's exports. www.shutterstock.com



Less rainfall is affecting the agricultural industry. www.shutterstock.com

Holding onto our advantage

Recent falls relative to the US dollar have provided some relief, but a low dollar will inevitably result in an increase in input costs for chemicals, fertilisers and farm machinery.

But as a commodity, food is fundamentally undervalued. The FAO suggests that as much as 35% of the food produced is wasted along the food chain. As a society, we need to ensure that the prices we pay at a retail store truly reflect all the costs of production including our environmental footprint.

Australian farmers are world leaders in dryland farming, natural resource management and sustainable agriculture, but it's hard to be green when you're in the red.

Consumers are showing much greater interest in food quality, and food safety is paramount. In this respect, Australia has an enviable reputation. However, to protect that reputation, a whole of supply chain approach must be adopted.

While many lament the Australian government's rigid approach to "fortress Australia", biosecurity must prevail to protect Australia's clean and green image and our reputation for producing safe, nutritious food.

Source: The Conversation, April 27, 2015

Organic foods for sustainable food safety in Bangladesh

Perception plays an important role in food habits. Now-a-days consumers perceive organic foods safer and healthier than regular foods. Apparently, the demand for organic food is more than natural food because organic food sales are guaranteed and monitored by the government in many countries.

By: M S Siddiqui

Foods should be suitable for human consumption and free from poisoning, or without foreign bodies. Maintaining food safety is a legal requirement, and is an important part of providing safe, quality foods to the consumers. Hazards are harmful substances that when found in food can cause food-borne diseases. Hazards can be: Chemical, Physical, Microbiological etc.

Food is the major source of human exposure to pathogenic agents, both chemical and biological (viruses, parasites, bacteria), from which no individual is spared. The importance of food safety stems from food being the primary mode of transmission of infectious disease.

The nation is struggling with about 17 laws for food safely but could not ensure safe foods for its citizens, while other nations are encouraging natural foods and the organic foods at last.

Organic food has been analysed from many perspectives and in many countries. It contributes to an emerging paradigm for food production which relies on biology, ecology and sociology rather than more one-dimensional chemical and physical management approaches. Other issues taken in to consideration are taste, texture, health, nutrition, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), food borne illness and chemical exposure.

There exist certain perceptions and potential misconceptions about the organic food and the organic food market. There is also a gap among those consumers who have a positive attitude toward organic food and their relatively low level of actual purchases. Again, there is a general consensus that the price is higher for limited availability of organic food. But the Organic food demand has been growing by 15-25 per cent yearly in many European countries over the years and is the fastest growing high value food market globally. It is gaining popularity in developing countries as well.

The very presence of natural food in the market shows growing acceptance of organic and natural foods. There is difference between organic and natural foods. Organic food refers to food items that are produced, manufactured and handled using organic means defined by certifying bodies of the country under relevant laws. Bangladesh does not have such law or policy yet. Natural food, on the other hand, generally refers to food items that are not altered chemically or synthesised in any form. These are derived from plants and animals. Thus a natural food item is not necessarily organic and vice versa.

Organic food is priced higher than non-organic food (natural and processed) and natural food is priced higher than processed food. The shelf life of organic food is more than that of natural food while natural food contains high water because of a subsequently short shelf life. On the other hand processed food may have more shelf life due to application of chemicals etc. The foods with eco-labels, no-pesticide, no-antibiotics, etc can indicate organic, as per law of the country.

Organic food, also referred to organics, is grown under a production system that, in addition to the avoidance of synthetic chemicals, also promotes soil health, biodiversity, low stress treatment of animals and sound environmental practices.

Organic is not an end product in itself, but rather refers to the way food is grown, processed and handled. Organic farmers boost soil fertility by enhancing biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. In other words, they "feed the soil, not the plant." The cultivated without synthetic pesticides, synthetic fertilisers, and not from genetically engineered crops.

Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products must come from animals that have free access to the outdoors, are fed only organic feed and receive no antibiotics or growth hormones. The processing, handling, shipping and selling of organic food must maintain the integrity of these products without the use of artificial ingredients, preservatives or irradiation. The hazardous residues in organic food are restricted to the lowest amount possible. Organic food is based on very precise standards of production, and its non-pesticide requirements are an integral part of the identification and labelling of such products.

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Organic foods

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Modern organic agriculture is based on principles for improving soil fertility through incorporation of legumes and compost (fertilisers from natural plants), strengthening nutrient recycling and ecological support functions and using natural regulation and diversity to prevent pests and diseases in crops and livestock.

The fact that organic food exists and is available for consumers is a result of a long series of events generally thought to have commenced during the 1940s and 1950s. There were separate initiatives in different countries. The development of the organic movement continued during the 1960s and 1970s when there was increasing consumer activism associated with concern about manmade changes to the natural environment. During this time, the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) was formed, and continued to provide a forum for the global coordination of the movement. However, it was not until the 1990s that organic received formal recognition as a food production system by many national governments. There were separate initiatives in different countries. These included 'ecological agriculture' in Switzerland, 'biodynamic agriculture' in Germany and 'organic farming' in the UK. During this time, numerous organisations were formed, many of which still exist today. These include charities such as Garden Organic and the Soil Association, the latter being the largest certifier of organic products in the UK. For example, in 1990, US Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA), authorising the USDA (department of agriculture) to develop a set of national standards assuring that only food grown, processed and handled according to these standards could be labelled as organic. Under this Act, a National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) was established - consisting of 15 people representing organic farmers, consumers, processors, and retailers - to assist in development of the standards.

The USDA created a National Organic Programme (NOP) office in October 2002. The NOP assures that all food labelled as organic comes from farms or processors certified by the USDA (department of agriculture) accredited agent and is consistent with the provisions of the National Organic Programme. Any farm or operation that produces or handles agricultural products intended for sale as '100 per cent organic', 'organic', or 'made with organic ingredients' must be certified. There are 56 US private organisations or state government agencies, and 41 foreign groups that are 'USDA accredited certifying agents'. If a farmer or processor wants to sell food as organic, the growing or handling practices must be certified by one of these certifying agents.

Food safety threats in Bangladesh are arsenic, Genetically Modified Foods, human induced food adulteration during farm production, industrial production, marketing, and street good vending. Bangladesh has numerous food manufacturers; processors are producing, processing and preparing foodstuffs in serious unhygienic environments. There is no supervision and monitoring of these activities.

Many fruits, fishes and other things sold in markets are preserved with formalin, a dangerous chemical liable for various types of cancers. Poisonous Dichloro Diphenyl Trichloroethane (DDT) powder is unrestrainedly used in the dry fish, which can cause cancer along with various other reproductive problems. Foods are prepared with various toxic colours that are generally used as textile dyes. Consumption of these toxic textile dyes can form indigestions, allergies, asthmas, cancer and so on. Besides, manufacturers often use urea commercially to adulterate 'moodi' (puffed rice). Sick, or infected and poisonous dead chickens are used in soup preparation; suppliers and retailers sell date expired energy drink, biscuits randomly. Metals, such as lead and mercury, cause neurological damage in infants and children. Any exposure to cadmium can also cause kidney damage, usually seen in the elderly.

Bangladesh has long way to produce organic foods and change perception of consumers. By this time let us promote chemically pure, natural and limited number of organic foods in Bangladesh. The consumers, society and right organisations must work with consumers, farmers and businesspersons to develop the source and market of organic food with active legal and policy support from the government.

The writer is a legal economist. He can be reached at shah@banglachemical.com .

Source: The Daily Observer, 2014-10-31
http://www.observerbd.com/2014/10/31/51797.php

Hunger for Organic Foods Stretches Supply Chain

Nature's Path buys cropland, while Chipotle provides financing for farmers

By Ilan Brat

Last year, executives at organic cereal maker Nature's Path Foods Inc. grew so frustrated with organic-grain shortfalls that they took a radical step: They bought a farm.

The three-decade-old Canadian company plunked down more than $2 million for 2,800 acres of Montana cropland, part of an effort to seize greater control of its supplies of wheat, oats and other ingredients. "We just want to secure our own future," said founder Arran Stephens.

Nature's Path is among a number of organic-food purveyors taking steps to tackle supply constraints that are hampering the growth of one of the hottest categories of the U.S. food industry. Companies including soup maker Pacific Foods of Oregon Inc. and publicly traded burrito chain Chipotle Mexican Grill Inc. CMG 0.98 % are digging deeper into the supply chain with such moves as financing farmers, offering technical training and hiring full-time headhunters to recruit organic growers.

The efforts are aimed at ramping up organic-food output that has failed to keep pace with surging consumer demand, due in part to the significant costs and risks that U.S. farmers face in converting from conventional to organic farming. Longer-term, the steps could help bring down organic-food prices that have been bolstered by tight supplies, companies say.

U.S. retail sales of organic food more than tripled to $32.3 billion over the decade through 2013, according to the Organic Trade Association. Certified-organic farm acreage climbed about threefold as well, federal data show. But production of some crops, such as organic soybeans, is so small that many U.S. food makers have to import supplies from overseas, which can raise costs and make monitoring quality more difficult.

Organic food is label-certified by an independent third-party organization and regulated by the U.S. government. The label is intended to ensure that crops and livestock are grown and raised according to certain standards, including generally eschewing synthetic pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and genetically modified seeds.

Among the starkest symbols of the problem in recent years are signs posted frequently at dairy cases at major U.S. supermarkets, apologizing to consumers for tight organic-milk supplies.

"You can have great brands and great products, but if you don't have supply of [agricultural] products, you're going to be in trouble," said Irwin Simon, chief executive

Chuck Eggert, founder and CEO of Tualatin, Ore.-based Pacific Foods, predicts that large packaged-food makers seeking to bring out organic product lines will face supply headaches. PHOTO: LEAH NASH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

of publicly traded Hain Celestial Group Inc., HAIN -1.45 % a maker of organic and natural brands such as Earth's Best and Health Valley with more than $2 billion in annual sales.

Mr. Simon said Hain three years ago sought to counter ingredient shortfalls for its Garden of Eatin' tortilla chips by promising farmers in Texas, Minnesota and elsewhere that it would buy organic blue and yellow corn for up to three to five years.

Other organic-food makers are finding they need to provide farmers with greater assurances—and in some cases financial support—because high land costs make starting an organic farm expensive, and switching to one is onerous. Conventional cropland and dairies can become certified as organic after a one-to-three-year transition period in which farmers generally eschew most pesticides, genetically modified seeds or feed and synthetic fertilizers and hormones.

Organic farmers also often have greater trouble securing bank loans, and organic crops don't have forward or options markets, which ease the risks of wide swings in input costs and prices for many conventional farmers. While organic produce and livestock can command prices as high as three or four times that of conventional food, farmers generally have to sell their food for conventional prices during the transition.

The price of feed-grade organic corn averaged $13.01

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Hunger for Organic Foods

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a bushel over the last 90 days, according to Mercaris Inc., a new market-data service and online trading platform for organic and other certified commodities. Conventional corn for animals, fuel and other uses for May delivery on the Chicago Board of Trade, by contrast, settled at $3.865 a bushel on Thursday. Costs for organic farming generally are sharply higher than conventional farming, partly because organic can require more weeding and other more intensive management.

Nature's Path, a closely held company based in British Columbia, began wrestling with acute supply shortages in the late 2000s that forced it to import some ingredients on short notice from Sweden and other overseas markets, driving up its costs. It also squeezed margins because the company didn't pass on those costs to consumers, said Mr. Stephens, who founded Nature's Path in 1985.

The company's purchase of Montana farmland last year is likely to become a trend, he said. Nature's Path plans to dedicate at least $2 million each year to purchase additional conventional farmland that it can then convert to organic production in order to fill a quarter of its grain needs over the next decade. The company contracts with farmers to manage the land, takes one third of the crop at no cost and buys the rest at market price, Mr. Stephens said.

Two years ago, Chipotle, which said it seeks to purchase as many organic ingredients as practical, began providing financial incentives to help farmers of black beans in Oregon and Washington transition from conventional to organic production. In 2014, the fast-casual chain paid higher-than-conventional prices for about 500,000 pounds of beans grown on farmland shifting to organic—equal to more than 10% of its organic black-bean purchases—even though it wasn't able to market those to consumers as organic, a spokesman said. In January, the company said it would suspend sales of pork in about a third of its stores after it discovered a supplier wasn't complying with its animal-welfare standards.

Pete and Gerry's, a small but fast-growing New Hampshire-based organic egg brand that has struggled to keep up with demand for its eggs, several years ago decided to engage more with suppliers.

In the past four years, it has provided its new organic egg farmers architectural blueprints and lists of contractors and manufacturers for new organic-friendly henhouses, guaranteed their bank loans or directly financed their equipment purchases at zero interest. The company also added an employee who travels throughout the Northeast full time trying to recruit farmers to produce organic eggs for it. Jesse LaFlamme, one of the company's founders, said the efforts have helped boost its 80-farmer supplier base by 55 farms since 2009 but cost at least $200,000 each year.

"It's definitely above and beyond what would be needed for normal commodity agriculture," he said.

In the late 2000s, Chuck Eggert, founder and CEO of Tualatin, Ore.-based Pacific Foods, worried his organic chicken supply could run short as the organic boxed-soup firm grew 20% yearly on average. Chicken broth accounts for half the company's sales, and he had become dependent on a handful of organic chicken suppliers on the East and West coasts. So in 2010 he started building the company's own chicken-raising sheds near headquarters. He also sought additional conventional farmers who could run organic chicken-raising operations, sweetening the deal by agreeing to pay for all the feed and equipment and assume any losses if they didn't meet production targets.

Organic livestock processed into meat sold to consumers must meet certain animal-welfare standards, only consume organic feed and remain free of hormone or antibiotic treatments.

Mr. Eggert predicts that large packaged-food makers increasingly seeking to bring out organic product lines will face similar supply headaches.

"Supply growth isn't something that happens overnight," Mr. Eggert said.

Source: Wall Street Journal, April 3, 2015

Joint venture to boost Philippines farm mechanization

By Zac Sarian

The chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food cited the entry of Yanmar Philippines in the local market as a big boost to the farm mechanization efforts in the country.

Sen. Cynthia Villar was one of the main speakers during the launching of the farm machines from Yanmar of Japan that include tractors for land preparation, mechanical rice transplanters and combine harvesters. These were launched last March 17 at the Sofitel Hotel in Pasay City.

Yanmar of Japan has partnered with Ropali Group of Companies for the local distribution of the farm machines. Ropali, founded by Roberto P. Alingog, is a diversified company with a wide distribution network and banking facilities. It is also into manufacturing and real estate.

The availability of the farm machines will enable the Filipino farmers to increase their productivity at less cost, and become more efficient and competitive. With Yanmar here, our farmers and agricultural workers will be exposed to advanced and state-of-the-art Japanese technology and machineries, according to Sen. Villar.

The lady senator observed that the implementation of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) seems slow. AFMA calls for the allocation of at least P20 billion a year for agriculture modernization programs and projects, yet the country lags far behind its regional neighbors in farm mechanization. It is a far fifth placer to Japan, South Korea, China and Thailand, according to her.

She is glad, however, that the Department of Agriculture is already strengthening mechanization efforts in the agriculture sector. She said that recently, she was with the DA during the distribution of farm machines and the launch of projects worth P1.1 billion in Regions 11 and 12 in Mindanao.

MANGOSTEEN IN TERESA, RIZAL – Mangosteen does not only grow in Mindanao, it will also grow well and bear fruit in places in Luzon like Teresa, Rizal. Photo shows the developing fruits of a seven-year-old seedling tree (not grafted) in Teresa. Seedling trees grow taller and with more branches than grafted ones. Since fruits are borne at the tip of each branch, seedling trees produce more fruits than grafted trees.

NEW LAW, AFMECH – Sen. Villar expressed optimism that the new Agriculture and Fisheries Mechanization (AFMECH) law will help promote the development and adoption of modern, appropriate, cost-effective and environmentally safe agricultural and fisheries machinery and equipment. This will enhance farm productivity and efficiency to achieve food security and increase farmers' income.

SMALL RICE TRANSPLANTER MODEL – Photo shows the smaller model of the Yanmar rice transplanting machine showcased during the launching of the Yanman Philippines products last March 17 at the Sofitel Hotel. A bigger model was also showcased which is recommended for use in large rice farms. The rice transplanting machines can make transplanting faster and with uniform distancing for easier farm management.

She revealed that no less than NEDA, the National Economic and Development Authority, has acknowledged also that we need to invest in research and development (R&D), and that we can increase the productivity of agriculture and boost job creation in the industry through science and technology. This is expected to fast track the growth of the agriculture, fisheries and forestry (AFF) sector, she said.

Sen, Villar cited the need to improve the global competitiveness of our farmers and the country's agriculture sector as a whole. The country's integration into the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) starting December this year will bring about cutthroat competition, thus we have to be globally competitive, she concluded.

CESAR E.A. VIRATA – The other speaker at the product launching was former Finance Minister Cesar E. A. Virata. He stressed the need for more investments in agriculture for a number of very good reasons.

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Joint venture

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For one, the Philippines imports a lot of agricultural products, which means there is a ready market for as long as the local produce is competitive. Aside from rice, our big agricultural imports include coffee, cacao, milk and others. Another reason is that there are wide unutilized or under-utilized areas which could be harnessed for crop and livestock production.

There is also plenty of local capital that is just lying idle. He pointed out there is a lot of savings but these are not invested in agriculture.

He hinted that the land reform program should not be extended because after all these years, the poor farmers have remained poor if not poorer. What

YANMAR TRACTOR – Yanmar Philippines will also distribute farm tractors locally. Tractors make land preparation faster and more thoroughly than the use of farm animals. Because plowing and harrowing are faster, the farmer is spared of the back-breaking chore of preparing his fields with animal power. Yanmar of Japan is more than 100 years old and is one of four major Japanese firms manufacturing agricultural machineries that are distributed in the Philippines.

he advocates is that the experts should come up of a model of development for each crop that will produce commercial quantities of quality agricultural products.

Clustering of production of certain products could be an approach to commercial production. This could lead to value-adding through the establishment of processing plants. However, in order for processing plants to prosper, there should be continuous supply of raw materials that will ensure their year-round operation.

Virata, for instance, lamented the establishment of a tomato processing plant in Bukidnon that did not prosper because there was lack of raw materials for processing.

DAIRY BUFFALO FIESTA – A three-day "Pistang Kalabaw" will be held at the Philippine Carabao Center's national headquarters in Muñoz City on March 25-27.

This is under the auspices of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Reseaqrch and Development (PCAARRD) now headed by its new executive director, Dr. Rey Ebora. The event is in pursuit of its on-going program called Farms and Industry Encounters Through the Science and Technology Agenda (FIESTA).

The activities during the Pistang Kalabaw will include exhibits, essay writing contest, cooking competition, technology to people (T2P), and technomart for silage production. Aside from conducting or promoting products and technologies, the event aims to improve milk production of the dairy buffalo as well as the processing and development of competitive milk-derived products.

Source: Manila Bulletin, March 20, 2015 ■

Taiwan launches cloud-based tea traceability system

By Yang Shu-min and Y.F. Low

The government has launched a cloud-based traceability system for domestic tea, which will allow consumers to trace the source and production of tea, the Council of Agriculture (COA) said on April 21, 2015.

The system was completed in 2014 and the COA started in January to invite the participation of tea farmers, according to Tsai Hsien-tzung, a section chief at the COA's Tea Research and Extension Station.

The COA aims to include 400 hectares of tea farms in the system by the end of this year and expand to 1,000 hectares by the end of next year, Tsai said.

The ultimate goal is to have all 15,000 tea farmers and 12,000 hectares of tea farms in the country included in the system, he said.

The traceability of tea has come under the spotlight since it was found recently that a rose tea drink, sold at a well-known tea store chain, contained traces of DDT, a long-banned insecticide that is known to cause environmental damage.

The dried rose petals were imported from Iran, but the label on the packaging showed them as being imported from Germany.

Source: Central News Agency (CNA), April 22, 2015 ■

Myanmar farmers dream of making Asia's rice bowl

By Jerome Taylor and Nan Tin Htwe

Dressed in Chelsea soccer shorts and a wide-brimmed hat, Than Tun toils away in his paddy fiezld on the outskirts of Yangon, sweat pouring down his sinewy arms.

Grueling work that once helped Myanmar become the world's largest rice exporter is today a Herculean and often lonely job for farmers striving to return the impoverished nation to its former grain prowess.

"No one comes here and asks about the difficulties we face," the 40-year-old tells AFP during his break, citing voracious insects, crumbling irrigation channels and greedy middlemen as just some of the challenges preventing him making a profit.

For much of the early 20th century Myanmar was Asia's rice bowl. But after a nominally socialist junta seized power in 1962, decades of mismanagement shattered the agriculture industry in a nation where 70 percent of inhabitants still live in the countryside.

The quasi-civilian reformist government, which took over from the military in 2011, is determined to resurrect the country's reputation as a rice producer.

But rotting stocks, creaking infrastructure, heavily indebted farmers and minimal foreign investment are among the hurdles it faces.

Yet many economists believe helping farmers like Than Tun offers Myanmar one of the fastest ways to both alleviate poverty and turn around the country's fortunes.

In this picture taken on April 6, a farmer works in his golden-and-green paddy field on the outskirts of Yangon. (AFP)

'Low hanging fruit'

"Improvements in agriculture are one of the genuine 'low hanging fruit' of reforms that could do much, remarkably quickly," said Sean Turnell, an expert on Myanmar's economy at Australia's Macquarie University.

"This is not just theory — we can see Vietnam as a wonderful example of what is possible. A country that could barely feed itself in the 1980s now dominates various food and commodity categories," he added.

Sergiy Zorya, a Bangkok-based expert on rice production at the World Bank, agrees it is high time Myanmar and the international community did more to invest in rice farmers.

"A significant increase in rice productivity and yields over the next decade would offer a major opportunity to drive GDP growth, increase farming incomes, increase exports and reduce poverty," he said.

Rice is a good poverty alleviation tool, he explains, because money actually filters down to poor farmers rather than resting in the hands of corporations or middlemen.

He points to Cambodia, which has heavily invested in improving rice production and exports. Over the past 10 years each one percent increase in GDP has resulted in reducing the country's poverty rate by 5.2 percent.

In this picture taken on April 6, a vendor works on his rice stall at a market in Yangon. (AFP)

"But in Laos, an economy dominated by hydro-power and mining, a one percent growth in GDP results in just a 0.5 percent poverty reduction," he adds.

Myanmar is fortunate to have both huge natural resources and farming potential. But it is the former that has piqued the interest of foreign investors scrambling to access the sector as the country opens up.

Foreign Investment

On the northwestern outskirts of Yangon lies Shwe Pyi Tar, a dusty suburb of wooden shacks overshadowed by huge warehouses, where most of Myanmar's rice harvest is milled.

Kyaw Win, who owns one of the area's larger processing plants, is desperate for the government to clear the hurdles for foreigners to invest in the rice industry.

"Our farmers need more knowledge about how to harvest more efficiently. At the moment we are creating

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Myanmar farmers .... *Continued from page 12*

a lot of waste," he says, as workers haul heavy sacks of unmilled rice behind him.

Lack of good storage facilities means most farmers are forced to sell their rice shortly after the harvest — when prices are at their lowest.

Meanwhile, Myanmar's mills are notoriously inefficient — some are still steam-powered — and produce low-quality rice that is hard to export and sold on the cheap.

In one of Kyaw Win's warehouses a group of Japanese technicians install a gleaming new US$3-million mill controlled by a complicated bank of computers.

The rice wholesaler is one of the few businessmen with hard cash to buy new equipment in an industry where most find restrictive financial rules prevent them investing in modern mills.

Kyaw Win says the largest loan he can access locally is around US$1.5 million, which he would need to pay off within a year. But the entrepreneur is among the luckier ones already expanding his business.

"We have plans for a bigger plant, which we've already ordered. That will cost US$5-6 million," he said, adding that foreign investment would help other companies like his bring Myanmar's rice production back on track.

Than Tun is also dreaming of a better future, but he has smaller goals, starting with decent irrigation.

The system for his paddy fields, only 20 kilometers (12 miles) from fast developing downtown Yangon, was built in his grandfather's time while his village Htaw Bo still lacks electricity.

"The government is not helping the farmers much. We have to take care of the irrigation system ourselves," he says, admitting he has never voted and taken little interest so far in the landmark election slated for later this year.

"From what I can tell there's nothing offered for us," he concludes. "We just have to be on our own."

And with that he returns to his field.

Source: Agence France-Presse (AFP), April 13, 2015 ■

Pakistan aiming to boost halal export business

By Guillaume Lavallie

Fruity sweets and packets of chicken soup that fall foul of halal laws are disappearing from Pakistan's shop counters as the country looks to clean up its Islamic food credentials to boost exports to rich Gulf states.

At the start of the year the government published a list of around 20 imported food products it said were not halal, or permitted under Islamic law.

Shops in Pakistan, an Islamic republic where 97 percent of the population are Muslims, already do not stock pork or alcohol — with a few extremely rare exceptions for foreigners and the small Christian minority.

This photograph taken on April 10 shows a Pakistani butcher cutting meat at a shop in Lahore.(AFP)

Now the government wants to crack down further on products using alcohol and pork derivatives as ingredients.

So amongst other things, Pop-Tarts are off the shelves in many stores, along with imported jelly, sweets and several European brands of chicken soup.

They have been found to contain ingredients banned in Islam such as wine or gelatine derived from pork, or extracts from chickens not killed in accordance with Quranic doctrine.

There is so far no extra obligation on shopkeepers to pull products from the shelves, but some have decided to act.

"We heard about the new rules and decided not to take any chances," one Islamabad shopkeeper told AFP.

Other shopkeepers are putting up signs warning customers to check the ingredients of imported products carefully before buying.

Some are even quietly telling customers not to buy certain products over fears, sometimes misplaced, that they contain banned substances.

Halal Certification

A draft law seen by AFP and due to be scrutinized by lawmakers in the coming months plans to sort out which products are halal and which are not, and set up an inspection service.

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Pakistan aiming .... *Continued from page 12*

The aim is to create a Pakistani Halal Authority with the goal of boosting food and agricultural exports to wealthy Gulf states.

Pakistan has been undergoing a process of Islamization since the late 70s, but it is a late arrival to the international market for halal products that has been growing in recent years and is estimated to be worth up to US$700 billion (NT$21.5 trillion) worldwide.

"Now there is awareness about (halal), people go through the composition, the contents. Earlier, the awareness was not there, nobody was aware of this non-halal contents," Mian Ijaz, a senior official at the Ministry of Science and Technology, told AFP.

The science ministry is taking the lead on the bill as it has laboratories for testing products.

One of the architects of the proposed federal halal authority, retired judge Khalil-ur-Rehman Khan, said the plan would mean products were clearly labeled and should give Pakistani shoppers peace of mind.

"Anyone importing for instance chicken from sources that are dubious or which people have doubt, like from (mainland) China ... will have to have accreditation from the authority working under the Pakistan Halal authority," he told AFP.

However the main aim of the project is not to restrict imports, but to boost exports.

Lying at the crossroads of the increasingly wealthy Muslim countries in Central Asia and the rich Gulf states, where demand for halal imports has boomed in the last decade, Pakistan is well-placed geographically to increase its export in, for example, meat.

"Pakistan has all these markets available ... as far as shariah compliance is concerned credibility of Pakistan is already there — what we have to ensure is only the quality," Khan said, calling for the creation of a recognizable Pakistani halal-certified logo.

Zubair Mughal of Pakistan's Halal Research Council agreed, saying the country has the products and a strong Islamic reputation but needs better "halal branding."

"The top 10 exporters to the Middle Eastern market, the main halal market, they are not from Muslim countries," he said.

"Among the top 10 there is no Muslim country," he added, noting that Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Brazil, Russia, France, India and Thailand are all among the top exporters.

Under the proposed law, all food exports will be tested by certification agencies under a national halal authority — partly a way of undercutting clerics who have set themselves up as lucrative halal-checkers.

Inspectors will be set up to make sure no-one produces fake halal logos or sells products that do not conform to the new legislation, with wrongdoers facing six months in jail or fines of up to US$6,000.

Source: Agence France-Presse (AFP), April 27, 2015 ■

Saudi Arabian initiative brews business success

By Ian Timberlake

Lateefa al-Waalan just wanted to make Arabic coffee simple: no more laborious mixing of ingredients and careful attention to boiling.

Supported by a Saudi program to foster, or "incubate," technology-based businesses with high growth potential, she developed a machine to produce Arabic coffee at the push of a button — the first of its kind.

In the process, Waalan and her Yatooq company became emblematic of efforts to diversify the oil-dependent kingdom's economy and employ more Saudis, particularly women.

Yatooq is one success story from the business incubation program, known as Badir (meaning "to initiate"), but it's not the only one.

After hitting the market in 2013 Yatooq has grown to employ 15 people with another 75 on contract.

"The factory is completely run by women," Waalan said at the Riyadh plant where she directs operations from her laptop and telephone in a spartan office.

Women covered from head-to-toe in black, as is the custom in Saudi Arabia, handle administrative tasks in an adjoining office while the coffee is roasted and ground on large machines in another room.

Lateefa al-Waalan, a Saudi woman who founded the Yatooq company and developed a machine to produce Arabic coffee, works at her factory in the capital Riyadh on Dec. 11, 2014.(AFP)

Her business was driven by one idea: "I love coffee but it's very complicated. I want to make it simple."

John Mercer, an Australian consultant to Badir, calls

Continued on page 15

Saudi Arabian

. . . . *Continued from page 14*

Waalan's success story "quite stunning."

Badir helped Walaan create a prototype in its industrial lab and provided legal, accounting and other advice as well as valuable connections.

Traditional Arabic coffee blends the ground beans with cardamom and saffron, giving the liquid a yellowish hue.

It takes about 30 minutes to brew in a home kitchen before it can be savored, typically accompanied by dates.

Yatooq's innovation was a type of electric kettle that uses patented computerized technology to brew with consistent quality a ready-made blend of ingredients.

"We wanted to make a machine that you can press a button and then make the coffee without you needing kitchen equipment and so on," said Waalan, 30, who comes from a computer science and information technology background.

She declined to discuss revenues but said the machine is now available in about 80 percent of electronic retailers, is moving onto the shelves of more supermarkets and exported to neighboring Gulf countries as well as the United States.

'Massive impact'

Badir is also proud of Ahmed Khalaf and his Stability Laboratory, which last August became the first private lab accredited by Saudi Arabia's Food and Drug Authority to test pharmaceuticals, along with other products.

His license is posted proudly on the door of his lab at Badir's biotech incubator on the sixth floor at King Fahad Medical City in Riyadh.

British-educated Khalaf said Badir gave him "full support in many, many things" including idea-development and problem-solving.

The Stability Laboratory already employs four staff with masters degrees and is turning a profit.

It is among 82 businesses at various stages of incubation with Badir, from start-up to revenue-producing.

Several others including Yatooq have "graduated" and are operating on their own, Mercer said.

Incubation also includes help for budding enterprises to develop their business models, install the right management teams and get funding.

Badir offers free laboratories, office space and even support for prototype development from its own workshop with three-dimensional printers and more traditional tools like a lathe.

With four incubators throughout the kingdom now, Badir plans to expand and broaden its focus from the current sectors of advanced manufacturing, biotechnology and information technology.

Its economic role in the world's biggest oil exporter is, for the moment, tiny but Badir is focused on longer-term impact, said Mercer.

Lateefa al-Waalan pours coffee into a cup at her factory in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh on Dec. 11, 2014.(AFP)

"It's only a small part but it has a massive impact over time," he said. "Because what you've done in incubation is set a foundation for that company to grow."

The fall by roughly 50 percent in global oil prices last year has left Saudi Arabia projecting its first budget deficit since 2011.

This has emphasized the need for economic alternatives, and the diversification effort is expected to continue under new King Salman who acceded to the throne in January.

'Things are changing'

Badir "is probably the best example" of a local effort to tap the dynamism of dedicated and talented Saudis, belying stereotypes which said they are lazy or only want to work for government, a diplomatic source said.

The program was set up five years ago by King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, the national science agency.

The government has since intensified efforts to bring into the workforce more Saudis — including women who have traditionally faced cultural barriers to employment in a conservative Islamic country where the sexes are strictly segregated and women are not allowed to drive.

Millions of foreigners in Saudi Arabia still do everything from management to construction.

Analysts say government efforts have boosted the employment of locals.

But Saudi Gazette columnist Khaled Almaena has blamed rampant "bureaucracy, red tape and complacency" for limiting the role that small and medium-sized businesses can play.

"In most countries these businesses constitute 80 to 85 percent of the economy," though not in Saudi Arabia, he wrote.

But some things are changing, said Waalan, who sees in the kingdom a growing recognition of business people.

"Now more than ever, it's very cool to be an entrepreneur," she said.

Source: Agence France-Presse (AFP), February 17, 2015 ■

Asia Suffers as Iran Stops Rice Imports

By Biman Mukherji and Benoît Faucon

Iran has clamped down on imports of rice to protect the country's farmers and reduce a stockpile, traders say, sending shivers through Asia because the Middle East is one of the region's biggest export destinations.

The move is especially painful for India, the world's top rice exporter, as it has stepped up production of drought-resistant rice this year while Pakistan has also been seeking to send more to sanctions-hit Iran.

Thailand, the second-largest rice exporter, has also been trying to restart exports to Iran, which were halted after a private rice exporter defaulted on its delivery commitment in 2011.

"We got to know of this decision only two to three weeks back. All our supplies have come to a halt," said Rajan Sundaresan, executive director of All India Rice Exporters Association.

Iran accounts for about a third of India's exports of top-end basmati rice. India's production of the premier grade of rice is expected to increase by 20% this year to eight million tons, as farmers were lured to sow more because of higher returns and drought-resistant characteristics.

The halt to Iranian buying is likely to lead to a large surplus of the recently harvested grain, pressuring prices downward and throwing into uncertainty a growing new segment of the rice market.

Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh, Iran's minister of Industries, Mines and Trade, couldn't be reached for comment.

"The import [of foreign rice] is banned till January and will resume" afterward, said Mostafa Pakzad, an Iranian financial expert who advises the country's commodities traders.

Typically, Iran raises import duties between September and November, when arrivals of rice from overseas peak, but a complete ban is unprecedented, traders say.

Many Asian exporters usually chose to pay higher duties and continue their supplies to the Middle East nation though profits are slimmer. The duties are usually

lowered every year after December, paving the way for higher exports.

Traders said they aren't sure whether normal trade with Iran will resume in January as political leaders have been clamoring for consumption of domestic stockpiles before imports are allowed to resume as well as advocating greater self-sufficiency.

Still, Iran is expected to import soon as its domestic production is expected to be around half of its demand of about 3.45 million tons.

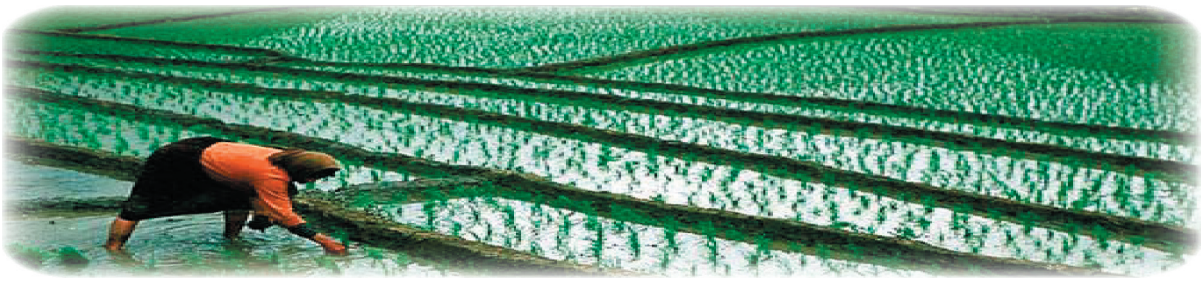
Rafique Suleman, chairman of the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan, said the group is in talks with Iran to widen the export channel to the country, which has virtually dried up ever since Western sanctions due to the lack of a payment mechanism.

Mr. Suleman said an Iranian delegation had recently visited Pakistan to hold talks on the issue but didn't give details of the outcome.

India and Iran created what is essentially a barter system two years ago to skirt Western sanctions for Iran' s disputed nuclear program. In exchange for Iranian oil, India sells Iran a range of goods, including rice, although complications mean payments are delayed.

The hurdles in trading with Iran officially have given rise to covert channels wherein shipments are often routed through neighboring countries, traders say.

Source: The Wall Street Journal, December 9, 2014 ■



City-bred guy rents land for farming in Philippines

By Zac Sarian

Three years ago, Jay visited us in our farm for some advice on farming. He was born in Manila Chinatown and had first worked in the family's textile store and later in their hardware store. The business was financially rewarding but in his own words, the daily routine was simply boring.

On January 29, 2015, Jay, now 50, visited us in our office. And what did he report? The piece of advice we gave him, he said, was the best ever advice he had received in his life. He is now growing vegetables on a 2.9-hectare rented farm in Cavite and he is enjoying every minute of it.

One profitable crop he planted is DMax tomato from East-West Seed. From September 8-12, 2014, he planted 14,800 Farm Ready seedlings he bought at P2.04 per seedling from East-West. Exactly two months later on November 8, he picked his first harvest of 33 kilos which earned him P2,315. The large size fetched R30 per kilo. The harvest was sold at the Kadiwa Market in Dasmarinas, Cavite.

Jay harvested every three or four days. The second harvest totaled 205 kilos which brought in P5,730. The harvest increased significantly from there on. On the third harvest, they picked 709 kilos worth P21,000. The big size fetched P30 per kilo.

By the fourth harvest, they picked 794 kilos with the big size fetching P34 per kilo. This harvest brought in more than P25,000. The harvest kept on increasing. By November 20, the harvest had increased to 1,121 kilos with the big size fetching P30 per kilo.

The harvest on Nov. 22 was 1,105 kilos. By this time, the price had gone down a bit –P26 per kilo. Then all of a sudden the price had gone down to P14 per kilo by November 25. By the last and final harvest on January 29, the price had gone down to P10 per kilo. As a whole, however, that particular tomato crop was profitable. Ampalaya has been planted in the same spot before the final harvest was made.

Total harvest from this tomato crop is 20,091 kilos. This means that each plant yielded an average of 1.35 kilos.

By the way, Jay did not buy his own farm because farmland is too expensive now. What he did was to look around for land for rent. He was fortunate to locate a

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JAPANESE SALUYOT SALAD – Angelina Veneracion (left) has come up with a salad concoction using the tender leaves of the Japanese saluyot as the main ingredient. Her husband, Art (middle), is one of the first to plant the seeds of the special Japanese saluyot produced at a nursery in Teresa, Rizal. The couple grew the seeds in their organic farm in Baliuag, Bulacan and came up with the recipe for a unique saluyot salad. At right is Dr. Ed Paningbatan who also planted the Japanese saluyot in soda bottles using his own special growing medium and nutrients. Japanese saluyot seedlings and seeds will be available at the AANI Agri-Bazaar which will be held at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City from February 13 to 15.

FIELD IN TAYUG, PANGASINAN – Allied Botanical Corporation will hold a field day on February 12 in its experimental farm in Brgy. Lichauco in Tayug, Pangasinan. This is a yearly undertaking for the company to showcase its latest varieties of vegetables, herbs, flowering plants, corn, sorghum and other crops. The company is a leading distributor and breeder of "pinakbet" type vegetables as well as leafy greens for the highlands. Photo shows a group of visitors during the field day in Tayug last year. This year's visitors are expected to come from all over the country.

City-bred guy

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land for rent within the compound of a religious group's seminary in Cavite at a rental of P20,000 per hectare per year. The term is for four years but it could be renewed. He said that the officials of the seminary are very reasonable to deal with.

It does not mean, however, that farming for Jay has always been smooth sailing. There were birth pains during the first year. At first, he got the wrong farm workers who were all men. The first farm workers' leader had made the farm house a "virtual motel." Many of the workers spent the nights in beer houses so they could not work properly during the daytime. This problem has been solved, however, by recruiting two "Manangs" or responsible women to join the work force of ten.

Jay also plants ampalaya, sweet pepper, hot pepper and eggplant. He says he does not have any problem marketing his harvests. Two regular buyers from the Kadiwa Market buy all his harvest. To get a better price, he texts each of the two dealers asking what's the price on a particular day. The one who quotes the better price gets the deal.

Source: Manila Bulletin, February 5, 2015 ■

WHITE IVORY WAXY CORN – Photo shows the big ears of the White Ivory, a hybrid waxy corn developed by Allied Botanical Corporation which will be showcased during the company's field day in Tayug, Pangasinan on February 12. It is a high-yielding variety with a potential marketable yield of 9 tons of fresh ears per hectare. The ears which have good husk cover have straight 14 to 16 kernel rows. The opaque white kernels have very good eating quality. The plants are sturdy and vigorous, resistant to Rhizoctonia and Sheath Blight diseases. Green corn for boiling can be harvested 60 days from emergence.

In This South Korean Town, Seaweed Is a Superfood

By In-Soo Nam

If there's such a thing as a mecca for seaweed lovers, it's in South Korea.

At the recent international seaweed expo in the small fishing town of Wando in southwestern Korea there was plenty of the slimy stuff to eat, spread on one's body or even use as a fuel for cars.

One of the biggest draws was a kiosk for sea

Children use seaweed to make the signature Korean dish bibimbap.

mustard-infused green ice cream, topped with extra helpings of dried kelp.

Sea mustard, a type of seaweed, isn't just there for the taste. "Unlike other ice creams that normally start to melt in 15 minutes, this one lasts for almost an hour," explained vendor Kim Sung-hee. "The secret is an edible ingredient that can't be disclosed plus sea mustard."

On the opening day, more than 2,000 people were treated to miyeokguk, a brown-seaweed soup. Organizers said it was designed to mark the year 2014, in which Wando played host to the world's 'first' algae expo.

"As far as I know, it is true," said Adam Butcher, an official at Sea Flora Co., a Canadian wild organic seaweed skin-care company. "We travel a lot for beauty shows around the world."

Algae remain something of a global novelty as a daily diet, but in Korea seaweed (also called marine microalgae) is taken seriously as an elixir. Sea-mustard soup is traditionally a must-have for mothers after giving birth. The abundant iodine in it helps women restore blood and it heals wounds, Korean doctors say. It is also

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In This South Korean Town

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customarily eaten on birthdays for Koreans of all ages.

South Korea is the world's fourth-largest producer of edible seaweeds, with an annual output of 850,000 tons, and Wando accounts for almost half of it.

"Wando is the heaven of algae," said Kim Jong-sik, governor of Wando and chief organizer of the expo. " For many years, seaweed has been known for its various health and beauty benefits. I want to see all Koreans eat a dish or two of seaweed at every meal."

Wando County officials said the island also commercialized dried laver seaweed for the first time in Korea about 160 years ago. Called 'gim' in Korean, dried laver seaweed has for decades been the No. 1 gift bought by Japanese tourists.

Atsushi Futakami, a Japanese businessman and an expo fanatic, was among the first group of visitors who enjoyed the seaweed soup on the first day.

"I came here at 2 a.m. So, I waited for over six hours in front of the main gate. It was fun," said the Japanese tourist, who has traveled to more than 150 expositions in Japan and other parts of the world.

Also on the first day of the expo, eight Japanese companies signed a $36 million deal to import sea mustard and other dried seaweed products from Korean manufacturers.

Wando is also the hometown of K.J. Choi, one of Korea's best-known pro golfers. He no longer lives in the town but says he has seaweed and other seafood shipped over from Wando when he is on tour.

"I tell the students at my golf school to eat a lot of seafood for health reasons," he said.

The wife of Mr. Choi's former coach also runs a seaweed restaurant in Wando.

On the second day of the expo, more than 100 people got together to make a 100-meter-long seaweed-and-rice roll. There was also a mass preparation of bibimbap, a signature Korean dish that is usually a bowl of rice mixed with seasoned vegetables. Wando had it a different way —stuffed mostly with abalone, fusiform [spindle shaped] seaweed and other edible greens, instead.

Another less known commercial use of seaweed is as ethanol fuel.

"Bioethanol produced from algae is about 4% more efficient than that from fossil fuel, and it can be used in combination with traditional energy sources," said a Wando County official at an exhibition hall, where Kia Motors put an ethanol-powered Soul Flex compact car on display.

Kia, the country's second-largest auto maker, unveiled the Soul Flex that runs purely on ethanol or a mixture with gasoline at a Brazilian auto show in 2010. The car maker plans to produce more clean cars.

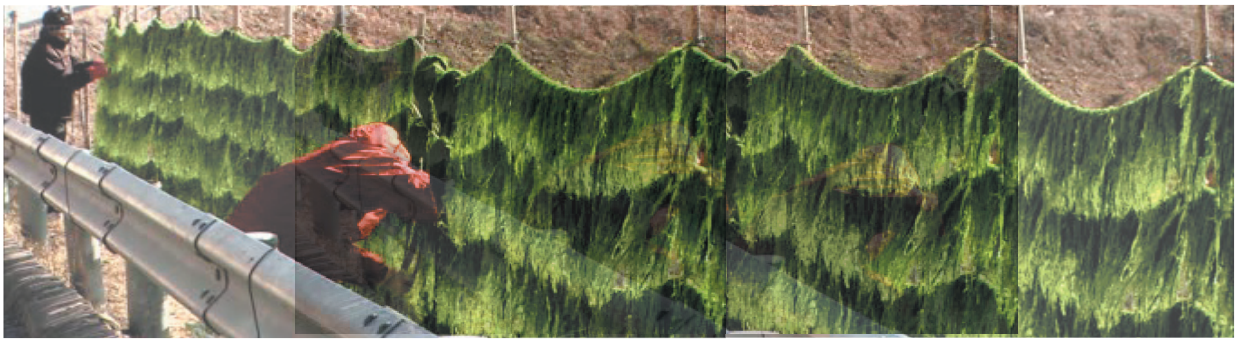
For the small fishing town of Wando, with a population of 53,820, seaweed isn't just a source of income. It is a source of rejuvenation.

With incomes rising among seawood growers on Wando, young people who left looking for decent jobs in neighboring cities are returning.

People in their 20s and 30s now account for more than a fifth of the island's population—in contrast to other rural communities in South Korea, where residents' average age is 60 and children have moved to the city.

"I would say seaweed is the future of mankind given its versatility. For Wando, it's like a lifeline," said Gov. Kim.

Source: The Wall Street Journal, September 14, 2014 ■



Two strategies to make Philippine coconut farms profitable

By: Zac Sarian

The Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) is taking a two-pronged approach to increase coconut farmers' income and to make coconut farming sustainable.

This was learned in an exclusive interview with Sec. Francis Pangilinan of the Department of Agriculture who serves as the Presidential Assistant for Food Security and Agricultural Modernization. He has been tasked to oversee four important agencies that include PCA, National Irrigation Administration, Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority and the National Food Authority (NFA).

INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY – One approach, according to Pangilinan, is to increase productivity so the farmers will make higher incomes. And this can be achieved through proper fertilization, replanting and intercropping.

The farmers should not only depend on coconut for their source of income. They can increase revenues by planting in between the coconut trees high value crops like cacao, coffee, banana and in some places abaca.

A diversified source of income will make the farmer gainfully occupied throughout the year. His cash flow could be well distributed all throughout so that he does not experience any lean season.

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT – The second approach, according to the food czar, is enterprise development in the countryside. This means encouraging investors to develop processing hubs that will undertake value-adding of coconut byproducts.

Pangilinan cites as example the commercial production of coconut coir, coco peat, coconut water, coconut sugar and others. The Secretary would like to see an active role of the private sector to come up with processing facilities in strategic areas that will convert the traditional waste products into products of value. Processing the coconut husk into coconut coir and coco peat, for instance, could provide job opportunities in the countryside. The coconut fiber which could be made into coconet for erosion control has ready market in the Department of Public Works and Highways as well as in the National Irrigation Administration. Not to mention the export market.

In this connection, the PCA will conduct a coconut industry summit sometime in February where businessmen, cooperatives, local government units, NGOs and other groups will participate in coming up with a road map for the industry.

Pangilinan is very hopeful that with the release of the over P70 billion Coco Levy Fund, new initiatives could be undertaken to jumpstart development of the coconut industry. The Supreme Court, he said, has already decreed that the Coco Levy Fund is a tax and therefore it belongs to the government. The condition is that the Fund will have to be used only for the benefit of the coconut farmers and the coconut industry.

The big amount, according to Pangilinan, could go a long way in boosting the farmers' income and in making coconut farming sustainable.

Pangilinan envisions clusters of coconut farmers producing the raw materials for processing in facilities put up by private investors or by farmers' cooperatives themselves. Pangilinan cites a community that he

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JANE AND SWEET BALIMBING – Jane Chen who accompanies farm tourists from Taiwan poses with a fruiting sweet balimbing grown in a container in a farm that she and a group of Taiwanese farm tourists visited in Teresa, Rizal. Sweet balimbing is highly suited for growing in a container. With proper care, the tree will produce full-sized fruits that are juicy and nice to eat.

HONDURAS BANANA – Jaden Tan, owner of a leisure farm in the Alishan Mountain in Taiwan, poses with a fruiting Honduras banana at the Sarian Farm in Teresa, Rizal. Tan and his group also visited the Aztec FoodGrowers farm which produces Spirulina in Cainta, Rizal. Today, January 15, his group will be visiting the Costales Nature Farms in Majayjay, Laguna and a virgin coconut oil factory in San Pablo City. The Honduras banana produces a big bunch and is a favorite of visitors for posing to have their pictures taken.

Two strategies

. . . . Continued from page 20

FARM TOUR DESTINATION – The Aztec FoodGrowers' Spirulina farm in Cainta, Rizal will be the first destination of the participants in the AANI Farm Tour on Sunday, January 18. It was also visited last Sunday by some members of the Taiwan Leisure Farms Developers Association led by Jaden Tan of Long Yun Leisure Farm. Aztec FoodGrowers put up by Napoleon 'Pol' Puente, is the first commercial producer of Spirulina in the Philippines. It boasts of high-tech facilities that enable it to produce high-grade Spirulina that contains as much as 72 percent protein. Spirulina is considered the most complete food in the world. Photo shows the group led by Jaden Tan of Taiwan being briefed by Patricia Puente-Suanino about the company's operations.

visited in Thailand. There, a cluster of 32 farm families are producing the requirements of five exporters of crops like basil, asparagus, kangkong and others.

The same idea could be adopted in the coconut producing areas. A cluster of coconut farmers could produce the raw materials for processing such products as coco coir, coco peat, virgin coconut oil and so on. Pangilinan said that a well known foundation in Quezon City is willing to buy virgin coconut oil and coco sugar which it can sell to a big supermarket chain in the United States.

Cooperatives will also be encouraged to undertake value-adding activities. That could create new employment among family members of the cooperative. With employment opportunities available in the countryside, there will be less people flocking to Metro Manila in search of greener pasture.

Oh yes, there are benefits not only for the coconut farmers themselves but for the country as a whole if only the coconut farmers are given a chance to increase their farm incomes. There will be less migration to the crowded cities, for one.

Source: Manila Bulletin, January 14, 2015 ■

Turkey, the top agricultural producer of Europe

Blessed with vast fertile lands and a climate suitable for growing anything from hazelnut to tobacco, Turkey is rightfully rising in the ladder of the world's largest agricultural producers. Ranked 1st in Europe and 7th in the world by agricultural production, the country also has a fast-growing food market which is also ripe for foreign investors.

The gross value of Turkey's agricultural production reached USD 62 billion in 2013 figures, according to figures from the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock. The minister Mehdi Eker who spoke at the World Food Day event organized by the Turkish Food & Beverage Industry Association (TUGIS) said that the gross value of Turkey's agricultural production rose from USD 23 billion to USD 62 billion in the last 12 years, taking the top spot in Europe. "Exports of Agricultural and food product exports saw USD 18 billion in 2013" , said Eker, adding that feeding a population of 75 million and 35 million tourists who visit Turkey annually demonstrated that food security was not an issue for Turkey.

Turkey's agricultural product exports have already reached USD 11.6 billion in the first 8 months of 2014, up by 5.6 percent y-o-y. More than 1600 varieties of Turkish agricultural products reach 180 countries worldwide. Around 40 percent of the country's total land area consists of arable land, offering a wide range of products such as grains, pulses, oil seeds, fruits and vegetables, cut flowers, poultry, milk and dairy products, honey and tobacco.

As part of its targets set for the agriculture sector by the year 2023, the centennial of the Republic, Turkey aims to be among the top five agricultural producers globally with a gross production value of USD 150 billion and USD 40 billion of agricultural exports.

Source: Turkey Prime Ministry Investment Support and Promotion Agency, October 22, 2014 ■

Turkey: Agriculture and Food

With its favorable geographical conditions and climate, Turkey is considered to be one of the leading countries in the world in the field of food and agriculture.

The restructuring efforts that began in the early 1980s, alongside a series of reforms including privatizations and the reduction of trade barriers in the agriculture sector, resulted in a domestic market that is an integral part of the world economy today.

Turkey has a large and growing food and agriculture industry that corresponds to 9 percent of the overall gross value-added (GVA) and 25 percent of the employment levels in the country.

The strengths of the industry include the size of the market in relation to the country's young population, a dynamic private sector economy, substantial tourism income and a favorable climate.

Turkey has a population of 76 million people and is growing with rising income levels. This makes Turkey one of the largest markets in its region, and the changing consumer habits of the younger generation boost domestic consumption.

Consequently, Turkey's food industry has registered steady growth in recent years, with Turkish consumers becoming increasingly demanding, driven by the multitude of choices offered by mass grocery retail outlets. Rising disposable income and changing consumption patterns, along with the increase in the number of females in full-time employment, have all led to an increase of interest in packaged and processed food, such as ready-to-eat meals and frozen food.

Turkey is the world leader in the production of dried figs, hazelnuts, sultanas/raisins and dried apricots. It has the largest milk and dairy production in its region. In addition, Turkey has an estimated total of 11,000 plant species, whereas the total number of species in Europe is 11,500.

While Turkey is becoming one of the largest markets for baked goods with its bread - an important element of the Turkish diet - subsector dairy products including milk, yoghurt, cheese, kefir and ayran (a drink made of yoghurt and water) form an integral part of the traditional Turkish diet. Traditionally, artisan, unpackaged products have dominated the Turkish dairy market, holding back widespread growth but also offering potential to investors.

This potential positions Turkey to be among the top options for being the regional headquarters and supply center of top global players. In its region, Turkey has a strong dominance in production and exportation of many agricultural products such as hazelnuts, dried apricots, sultanas and dried figs. In addition, Turkey's food industry is much better developed than that of neighboring countries. Given these factors, the country is one of the largest exporters of agricultural products in the Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa (EMEA) region, while its trade balance is significantly positive. With growing exports, the Turkish agrofood industry has recorded USD 5 billion of trade surplus.

Turkey offers a set of enablers for potential agrofood investors; the Turkish government's support mechanism includes favorable regulations, tax structure, competitive and low-cost labor force and investment incentives.

According to McKinsey and Co., Turkey offers significant investment opportunities especially in the agribusiness subsectors such as fruit and vegetable processing, animal feed, livestock, poultry, dairy and functional food, aquaculture, and enablers (in particular cold chain, greenhouse, irrigation, and fertilizer).

As part of its targets set for the agriculture sector, by 2023 Turkey aims to be among the top five producers globally. Turkey's ambitious vision for 2023 envisages other grandiose targets including:

* USD 150 billion gross agricultural domestic product
* USD 40 billion agricultural export
* Becoming one of the top five countries in terms of agricultural production
* 8.5 million hectare irrigable area (from 5.4 million)
* Ranking number one in fisheries as compared with the EU

Source: Turkey Prime Ministry Investment Support and Promotion Agency ■

ABOUT CACCI

The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) is a regional grouping of apex national chambers of commerce and industry, business associations and business enterprises in Asia and the Western Pacific.

It is a non-governmental organization serving as a forum for promoting the vital role of businessmen in the region, increasing regional business interaction, and enhancing regional economic growth. Since its establishment in 1966, CACCI has grown into a network of national chambers of commerce with a total now of 29 Primary Members from 27 Asian countries. It cuts across national boundaries to link businessmen and promote economic growth throughout the Asia-Pacific region. CACCI is a non-governmental organization (NGO) granted consultative status, Roster category, under the United Nations. It is a member of the Conference on NGOs (CoNGO), an association of NGOs with UN consultative status.

Among the benefits of membership in CACCI are the following:

1. Policy Advocacy - CACCI aims to play a strong policy advocacy role in order to establish a business environment conducive to creating better opportunities for CACCI members.

2. Wide scope for networking - Participation in the various projects of CACCI will provide members the opportunity to expand their reach in Asia-Pacific by establishing contacts with the business communities of the region.

3. Participation in CACCI Annual Conferences and Training Programs - Members are invited to participate in the annual Conferences and various training programs which CACCI regularly conducts either on its own or in cooperation with other international organizations and member chambers.

4. Interaction in Product and Service Councils - Membership in CACCI allows participation in the activities of the various Product and Service Councils (PSCs) of the organization. PSCs are business groupings organized along product or service lines with a primary objective of promoting business cooperation, personal contacts, and technology transfer.

5. Access to CACCI publications – CACCI publishes the CACCI Profile, its monthly newsletter, and the CACCI Journal of Commerce and Industry, a bi-annual publication which features papers, speeches, and other articles pertaining to issues affecting the regional economy.

For more information, please visit www.cacci.biz

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