

Effect of Industrialized Animal Production in the Livestock Industry of the Philippines and to the Livelihood of Marginal Farmers

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Philippines is an archipelagic country located in Southeast Asia. The population is almost 89 million and farming is the main source of income for 75% Filipinos. Mostly of the marginal farmers is practicing crops and livestock system of farming. The livestock that they raise help to augment farm income to send their children in school.

The pig industry is mainly dominated by exotic breeds. In the need to increase the production to meet with the increasing demand of the population, the government persuaded the farmers to raise these breeds of pig. Massive trainings and seminars were conducted to teach the farmers on how to raise the introduced breeds.

Proliferations of white breeds were so very fast that in the last few decades. These white breeds were almost found anywhere in the country. As of 2006 data showed that out of 13, 046, 700 total population of exotic breeds about 74.57%² of it is reared by backyard raisers. The situation is directly inversely correlational with the population of native pigs and seldom that this native pig can be found in the lowland areas. Remaining heads can be found in mountainous areas where the exotic breeds cannot thrive well. There was no established data in regards to the population of native pigs.

Production

Introduced breeds of pigs will not produce quality meat if the requirements for growth will not meet. It needs an intensive management and big capitalization. The country doesn't have enough resources to supply the need of these animals. Majority of the raw materials for feeds, antibiotics, vaccines, and others were imported. In return, the costs of pig production inputs were higher.

The increasing trends of inputs cost limits the production to farmers with ample financial resources. They can sustain the requirements of this animal to produce a quality meat. Marginal farmers who raise exotic breeds resort to the use of whatever they had on hand. Agricultural and kitchen left-over were the common feeds for their pig. Insufficiency of nutrients found on this kind of feeds produces a low quality meat. This was resulted to lower market value of animals.

Occurrence of new pig diseases is observed anywhere in the country. These diseases are hog cholera, foot and mouth, swine dysentery, and others. This July an outbreak of Hog Cholera was observed in Bulacan. This place is noted to be the pig producing area of the country. About 5% of mostly backyard raisers were infected³. The occurrence was partly attributed to the dry spill in the region. Foot and mouth is also threatening other parts of the country.

There was no occurrence of the above-mentioned diseases when the native pig is still raised by farmers. The disease was mild and not as fast to spread as experience today. It was tough, resistant to diseases, and able to survive even under minimal care.

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² Swine industry performance report from January – December 2006. Retrieved July 1, 2007 from <http://www.bas.gov.ph/> & Swine inventory for 2006. Retrieved July 1, 2007 from http://www ldc da gov ph/swine_inventory.htm

³ DA assures hog cholera outbreak to have no effect on meat prices. Retrieved July 24, 2007 from <http://www.da.gov.ph/>

The increasing cost of production and the threat to new pig diseases push the marginal farmers from stopping their production. Income derived was not enough to cover the expenses in growing or fattening the said animal. Moreover, the presence of intermediaries further decreases their income.

Marketing of products

This is another big threat on the part of swine industry in the country. Since the Philippines joined the World Trade Organization in January 1, 1995⁴, its market was open to any member countries who wanted to sell their meat products in the country. It was in April 1, 1997 when the US accused the Philippine to the WTO for the tariff-rate quotas for pork and poultry⁵. Few years' later bulk of pork and poultry meat saturated the market. Given the high cost of production and low landing cost of imported meat, several backyard and commercial raiser closed their operations because of bankruptcy.

Those farms who were able to survive were not earning a competitive return over their competitor from other countries whose production were highly sophisticated and run by few individuals. Livestock production in the country is lag behind than developed countries. If the competition will be brought in this place, local livestock raisers could not compete with the price of imported meat.

In the incoming Trade Liberalization in 2009, is another big threat to the pig industry in the country. Government does not give any subsidies to the marginal pig raiser. It was the artificial insemination (AI) offered on some small-scale raisers but very seldom when it comes to marginal farmers. The trade liberalization is a big threat to our livestock raiser who has financial resources, how about to the marginal farmers.

Conclusions

Given the premises above, the use of exotic breeds of pigs could not bring advantages among our marginalized farmers. It gradually destroys the industry and teaching our consumers to be dependent and advocate on the consumption of low cost imported pork. Trade liberalization further worsens the scenario because it does not only affect the marginal farmer but even the other livestock keepers. How the local high costs of animal production could competes with the low landing cost meat?

In order for the country to compete with the world market, it is important is to promote the use of local breeds and available resources. Researches must be geared toward to the potentials of native pigs and how to improve its production. There is a potential on it if given appropriate attentions.

⁴ Philippines and the WTO. Retrieved August 12, 2007 from http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/countries_e/philippines_e.htm

⁵ Dispute settlement: DISPUTE DS74. Philippines – Measure affecting pork and poultry. Retrieved August 12, 2007 from http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds74_e.htm