

Mongolia's livestock in danger after drought, harsh winter

By Grace Brown
The Associated Press

ULZIIT, Mongolia — The Mongolian herder gazed out of his felt tent at the half-eaten carcass of what was his riding horse, now lying in blood-stained snow and being devoured by hungry dogs.

"I had 700 head of cattle," Huyag Tserennyam said while staring out into the white wilderness in the remote mountainous area of Ulziit. "I've lost 150 so far."

It has been a harsh winter in Mongolia following an especially dry summer — a weather pattern unique to the country and known as a *dzud* (pronounced "dzuhd") — decimating tens of thousands of livestock and prompting the Mongolian government to formally launch a dzud appeal, seeking foreign aid, for the first time in six years.

There were indications in the summer that it would be a difficult year, and Tserennyam said he prepared extra grass in anticipation of a rough winter. He has used up all of the animal feed he received as aid from his local government, and has nearly used up his grass reserve.

"I really tried, but I still lost — and I keep on losing — my herd," the 60-year-old said, feeding his one remaining horse. That horse is now his only mode of transport; it carried his wife to a recent doctor's visit. Supplies are running low, and the couple's milk tea is watery.

More than 10,000 head of livestock have



DZUD DESPAIR. Huyag Tserennyam, a herder, stands with his lone surviving horse in the Ulziit district of Bayankhongor in Mongolia. It has been a harsh winter in Mongolia following an especially dry summer — a weather pattern unique to the country and known as a dzud — decimating tens of thousands of livestock and prompting the Mongolian government to formally declare a dzud emergency, which would draw significant foreign aid. (AP Photo/Grace Brown)

perished across Tserennyam's province of Bayankhongor this winter, said Col. Munkhbaatar Togoo, head of the province's Emergency Management Division.

Temperatures have dipped as low as -51° Fahrenheit, about 29° F lower than normal. Snowfall in some mountainous areas reached 28 inches, he said.

"Compared to recent years, this is unusually cold. It's had big effects on herding lifestyles," Togoo said.

The summer drought meant cattle had less to graze on, failing to fatten up sufficiently before winter. In addition to

those that have died, many of the survivors are so thin that their meat is not of high enough quality to sell if they perish, Togoo said.

Mongolia's government announced its dzud appeal in late February. This winter is worse than the last dzud in 2009-2010, and a greater part of the country is affected. Only 45,000 livestock have died so far this year compared to the 9.7 million attributed to the 2009-2010 winter, but the vast majority of losses typically take place in the spring before the grass grows back in May.

The Asian Development Bank is contributing U.S. \$3 million in assistance toward local infrastructure and risk management plans, including helping districts prepare shelters for herders, as well as emergency training.

Further assistance is coming from Red Cross societies of Britain, Japan, and Finland, said Purevjav Jambalragchaa, a coordinator with the Mongolian Red Cross Society.

Many herders are struggling to supply themselves with food because the snow is often too thick for horses or motorbikes to pass through. The Red Cross Society is preparing donations of food and cash, including \$160,000 of aid coming in from abroad.

In a largely nomadic country where animals provide meat, dairy, and textiles, it is difficult to lose so much livestock.

"Our lives depend on them," Tserennyam said, looking away from a pile of dead goats sheltered behind a steep rock by the mountain's edge. "Because of them, we get our flour and rice. Without them, we're nothing."

Cambodia's Kampot pepper wins coveted EU protection

By Sopheng Cheang
The Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Cambodia's Kampot pepper, a go-to spice for chefs around the world, has been added to an elite group of gourmet food items whose names are protected by the European Union (EU), joining products such as Gruyere cheese from France and Parma ham from Italy.

The coveted designation, known as Protected Geographical Indication, or PGI, works like a trademark protection that certifies the origin of regional foods. It means that any product sold in EU countries calling itself "Kampot pepper" must come from a designated region in southern Cambodia that includes Kampot and neighboring Kep province.

The recognition was awarded to Kampot pepper on February 18, making it the first Cambodian product to receive the label, the EU office in Cambodia said in a statement late last month.

The peppercorns, which come in white, red, and black, are described by gourmet chefs as having a complex flavor with floral overtones. Cambodian farmers from the seaside region on the Gulf of Thailand say the area's microclimate and mineral-rich soil give the pepper its unique taste.

Like so many industries in Cambodia, Kampot pepper's production collapsed in the 1970s during the Khmer Rouge era, when an estimated 1.7 million people died at the hands of the brutal regime and the country's farmland was largely replaced by rice paddies.

The pepper industry's revival came in the 1990s, after peace was restored in Cambodia following the Khmer Rouge's 1975-1979 reign of terror and years of subsequent civil war.

In 2010, Cambodia's Commerce Ministry took a first step toward protecting Kampot pepper by giving it a domestically issued geographical indication status. The government applied to the EU in 2014 to expand the status to the European bloc.

"It is the first Cambodian product to



CAMBODIAN TREASURE. A vendor holds a handful of Kampot pepper at a market in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Cambodia's Kampot pepper, a go-to spice for chefs around the world, has been added to an elite group of gourmet food items whose names are protected by the European Union, joining products such as Gruyere cheese from France and Parma ham from Italy. (AP Photo/Heng Sinith)

receive this status in the EU, a single market of more than 500 million consumers and 28 countries," Alain Vandersmissen, charge d'affaires of the EU's delegation to Cambodia, said in an e-mail.

"From now on, (Kampot pepper) will benefit from a very high level of protection on the EU market," he said.

The pepper is also known in Khmer as Mrech Kampot and in French as Poivre de Kampot.

Ngun Lay, president of the Kampot Pepper Promotion Association, sees the PGI designation as a seal of quality that will boost sales of the spice, which is currently grown by 342 families on 455 acres of land in Kampot and tiny Kep province.

In 2015, the region produced 60 tons of Kampot pepper, of which 70 percent was exported, mostly to the EU, the United States, and Japan.

"We are delighted that our production has finally been recognized by the world's biggest market, the EU," Ngun Lay said. "The status will help improve our living standard as more and more customers become impressed with our Kampot pepper."

Associated Press writer Jocelyn Gecker in Bangkok contributed to this report.

2015 Exemplary Community Volunteer Award Recipient: Philippine Nurses Association of Oregon & Washington



The Philippine Nurses Association of Oregon & Washington (PNAOW) was founded in September 2002 by a group of Filipino nurses who sought to assist other nurses by creating a strong and cohesive group that fostered continued personal and professional growth while also supporting the community. With the work of its more than four dozen members, PNAOW has funded travel for medical relief missions; granted educational scholarships; helped feed the hungry through the Faith Café in Beaverton; raised funds for the organization's International Outreach Program for a housing project in the Philippines; and volunteered to review immunization records and administer immunizations on behalf of the Oregon Department of Health. PNAOW members have also introduced "Taste of the Philippines" to the community by serving authentic Filipino dishes. To support its outreach programs, PNAOW holds fundraising events, including garage sales, dinner dances, bowling events, and more. To learn more, visit <www.pnaow.org>.

The Asian Reporter Foundation is accepting nominations for its 2016 "Exemplary Community Volunteer" awards.

The recognition banquet will be held Thursday, April 21, 2016 at northeast Portland's TAO Event Center. Nomination forms and award guidelines are available for download at <www.ARFoundation.net>.

The nomination deadline is Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at 5:00pm.

The Asian Reporter Foundation's 18th Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet features:

- Most Honored Elder Awards
- Cultural entertainment
- Exemplary Community Volunteer Awards
- Ethnic dinner
- College Scholarship Awards
- Silent auction