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MANILA BULLETIN:

El Niño's damage to Philippine agri reaches P9.50 B—DA

BY [JEL SANTOS](#)

May 21, 2024 03:37 PM



The impact of the El Niño phenomenon on Philippine agriculture has now resulted in P9.50 billion in damage, the Department of Agriculture (DA) disclosed on Tuesday, May 21.

The agency said that 13 regions across the country have been affected by the dry spell, including the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Central Mindanao, Davao Region, and Soccsksargen.

According to the DA, a total of 175,063 farmers and fisherfolk have been devastated by El Niño.

The agricultural areas affected by the phenomenon total 163,694 hectares, the agriculture department said.

“The increase in reported values include additional reports from Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Central Mindanao, Davao and Soccsksargen regions,” the DA noted.

The agriculture department reported that production losses from the impacted agricultural areas are estimated at 185,561 metric tons (MT) for palay (rice), 180,807 MT for corn, 48,949 MT for high-value crops, and 147 MT for cassava, amounting to a total loss of 426,798 MT.

Per the DA, the affected rice area of 83,862 hectares represents 3.91 percent of the total target area of 2,137,046.77 hectares.

Meanwhile, the production loss of 185,561 MT is about 2.01 percent of the target production of 9,218,358.28 MT.

“As for corn, the area affected by the dry spell is at 66,950 hectares or 6.08 percent of the total target area planted of 1,101,695.90 hectares, while the production loss of 180,807 MT is 4.02 percent of target production of 4,493,026.90 MT,” the agency added.

The DA noted that they have provided P9.71 billion worth of interventions for fishers and farmers affected by the El Niño phenomenon.

Gearing for La Niña

Recently, the DA said it is now preparing for the La Niña phenomenon and has ordered its field offices across the country to prepare for adverse effects of heavy downpours, which it said, is expected to cause greater agricultural damage than the El Niño.

“Mas malaki yung damage ng La Niña [kumpara sa damage ng El Niño] (The damage caused by La Niña is bigger compared to the damage caused by El Niño),” DA Assistant Secretary for Operations U-Nichols Manalo said, citing past episodes of the two weather phenomena.

According to him, the agency has been coordinating with farmer groups for drainage water management for farms.

The DA is now looking into areas that have been affected by La Niña in its past 16 episodes in the country, he added.

Rice harvest declined

DA spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said the rice harvest in the first quarter of the year declined by 100,000 MT due to the wrath of the El Niño phenomenon.

But the agriculture department said this is not bothersome as this is only less than one percent of the DA’s 20.4 million MT target harvest this year, noting that importation can “easily” augment the loss.

In a radio interview on May 5, De Mesa stated: “Bumaba nang bahagya ‘yung ating harvest noong first quarter by 100,000 metric tons. Pero ‘yun ay napakaliit, less than one percent. Kasi ‘yung ating harvest is 20.06 million MT last year (Our harvest decreased slightly in the first quarter by 100,000 metric tons. But that is very small, less than one percent. Because our harvest was 20.06 million MT last year).”

“Inaasahan natin ngayong taon ay mga 20.4 million metric tons so ‘yung nawala ay napakaliit na bahagi, mga one percent lamang and can be easily augmented by importation natin, 1.6 million metric tons na ‘yung pumasok (We expect this year’s harvest to be about 20.4 million metric tons so what was lost is a very small part, only about one percent and can be easily augmented by our importation, 1.6 million metric tons that came in),” he added.

Despite the havoc wreaked by El Niño on the country’s agriculture, De Mesa said the DA remains hopeful, foreseeing a bountiful harvest this year as a result of expanded seed variety distribution and government interventions.

The DA assured the public that the supply of the country's primary staple is still enough.

On April 3, Agriculture Secretary Francisco "Kiko" Tiu Laurel Jr. said rice prices may not go down due to the agricultural damage caused by the El Niño phenomenon.^[1]_[SEP]

He said world rice prices are currently going down but due to the "lingering effects" of the phenomenon, it is unlikely for rice prices to decrease in the Philippines.

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<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/21/el-nino-s-damage-to-philippine-agri-reaches-p9-50-b-da>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Farmers urge sustained crop insurance support

BY [BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT](#)

May 21, 2024 05:31 PM

A farmers' group has urged the government to sustain its support for crop insurance in view of El Nino and La Nina and likelihood of more severe weather disturbances in the coming years. The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) issued this statement following the recent issuance of Executive Order No. 60 by President Marcos reinstating the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) to its original status as an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA). FFF Chairman Leonardo Montemayor expressed the farmer group's gratitude to President Marcos and DA Secretary Francisco Tiu- Laurel, Jr. for heeding farmers' clamor to return PCIC to the DA. With that, the group further urged the government to sustain its support for crop insurance in view of El Nino/La Nina and the likelihood of more severe weather disturbances in the coming years.

It could be recalled that in 2021, then President Rodrigo Duterte issued EO 148 moving the PCIC from the DA to the Department of Finance upon the recommendation of the country's economic managers, who had raised concerns about the large subsidies and operating costs of the agency. Aside from designating the DoF Secretary as Chairman of the corporation, EO 148 reduced the number of small farmers representatives in the PCIC Board from three to only one.

"Crop insurance is an important component of the DA's support program for farmers, and it is only logical that the PCIC be part of the DA family," said Montemayor.

Earlier, the FFF had expressed concerns about delayed payments of claims and reduced benefits to farmers.

"Government support to the agency should not be considered primarily as a subsidy to farmers but more importantly as a means to ensure adequate food supply for the country," said Montemayor.

PCIC was originally created by President Ferdinand Marcos in 1978 through Presidential Decree 1467 and later amended by Republic Act 8175 in 1995. The corporation compensates insured farmers if their produce are damaged by calamities, pests and/or diseases. PCIC's operations are funded from premiums from farmers, lending institutions, and the government.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/21/farmers-urge-sustained-crop-insurance-support>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DBP ramps up support to local hog industry

BY [MB BUSINESS](#)

May 21, 2024 11:55 AM



DBP Director Atty. Jaime Paz (third from left) shakes hands with Charoen Pokphand Food Philippines Corporation (CPFPC) Chairman Sakol Cheewakoset during the groundbreaking ceremony of a livestock farm in Tomas Oppus, Southern Leyte. Also in photo are (from left) CPFPC Vice President Nattakorn Sujipittham and Southern Leyte Governor Damian Mercado.

State-owned Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) is stepping up its efforts to finance the strategic initiatives of the Marcos Administration to ensure food security in the country through a lending facility aimed at revitalizing the local hog industry, a top official said.

DBP President and Chief Executive Officer Michael O. de Jesus said that the Bank's Swine Repopulation, Rehabilitation, and Recovery (Swine R3) Credit Program, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture (DA), assists in the establishment of bio-secured swine farms across the country.



“The SWINE R3 Program is a tangible manifestation of DBP’s support to the vision of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. of ensuring food security in the country as it provides financial assistance to local hog raisers with the objective of strengthening the entire pork production chain,” de Jesus said.

DBP is the eighth largest bank in the country in terms of assets and provides credit support to four priority economic sectors – infrastructure and logistics; micro, small and medium enterprises; the environment; and social services and community development.

De Jesus said the SWINE R3 also complements the DA’s Integrated National Swine Production Initiatives for Recovery and Expansion (INSPIRE) program which seeks to provide a calibrated approach to hog repopulation and swine livelihood enterprises, leading to intensive and modernized pork production.



Exploring possible areas of cooperation. DBP Chairman Philip G. Lo (fourth from left) leads the DBP Board of Directors during a meeting with key officials of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to discuss possible areas of cooperation to push forward with the common mandates of the two government agencies, particularly in the areas of food security and sustainability. Also in photo are (from left): DBP Executive Vice President George Inocencio, DBP Director Roberto Antonio, NIA Deputy Administrator Robert Victor Seares, Jr., NIA Administrator Ed Guillen, DBP President and CEO Michael O. de Jesus, DBP Director Atty. Emmeline David, DBP Director Victor Limlingan, and DBP Director Atty. Jaime Paz.

Through the SWINE R3 Program, DBP grants credit assistance to small businesses and local government units in setting up bio-secured wean-to-finish facilities or engaging in contract growing agreements with a partner integrator such as Charoen Pokphand Food Philippines Corporation, the local subsidiary of the Thai food conglomerate.

De Jesus reported that as of January 2024, DBP has approved ₱ 2.72 billion in credit support under the said facility. “We fully expect that number to increase to ₱ 5.57 billion by year-end, and more importantly, to significantly boost domestic pork production,” he noted.

DBP's assistance to the hog industry has already increased annual hog production in the country by an estimated 59,501 heads, translating to an additional 5.95 million kilos of available pork and pork products, while existing projects that include 2,400-sow farm in South Cotabato and a 6,000-sow farm under construction in Negros Occidental are expected to contribute 686,400 heads or 75.504 million kilos annually.

De Jesus said the Bank is also allocating ₱ 700 million for the establishment of a 3,000 sow-breeder farm and wean-to-finish farm in Palawan that would produce 84,000 piglets annually from the breeder farm and 72,000 heads from the wean-to-finish facility.



“DBP is eager to ramp up its assistance to local hog raisers as it firmly believes that a robust and competitive agribusiness sector is crucial to achieving a food-secure Philippines,” de Jesus said..

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/21/dbp-ramps-up-support-to-local-hog-industry>

MANILA BULLETIN:

New Senate leadership, new hope for the nation

BY [MANILA BULLETIN](#)

May 22, 2024 00:36 AM



The sudden change in the Senate leadership isn't something new. It had happened in the past, the most controversial of which was the ouster of then Senate President Jovito Salonga in 1991.

On Monday, May 20, 2024, Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri stepped down as Senate president, paving the way for Senator Francis Escudero to take over the helm of the Upper Chamber's leadership.

As the new Senate president, Escudero faces the daunting task of steering the Senate during a critical period for the nation.

Now, as he assumes the presidency, he must focus on economic progress as the country continues to face rising prices as we recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Under his leadership, the Senate could collaborate with the Marcos administration in driving economic growth.

Crucial here is championing legislation that encourages domestic and foreign investments. Streamlining bureaucratic processes, providing tax incentives, and ensuring a business-friendly environment will attract investors and stimulate economic activity.

Another key action area is infrastructure development. He should shepherd the Senate into supporting infrastructure projects that enhance connectivity, such as roads, bridges, ports, and airports. These investments not only create jobs but also improve logistics, trade, and overall economic efficiency.

The new leadership should also zero in on human capital development. Education and skills training must be prioritized. A well-educated workforce is essential for sustained economic growth. Investments in education, vocational training, and research and development will pay huge dividends in the long run.

With Metro Manila and suburbs already highly congested, it's important to focus on agriculture and rural development. The Senate can work closely with the administration to modernize agriculture. Supporting small farmers, promoting sustainable practices, and investing in rural infrastructure will boost productivity and reduce poverty.

The Senate under the new dispensation should also advocate for policies that bridge the wealth gap. Social safety nets, healthcare access, and affordable housing are crucial for an inclusive economy.

Energy security is another vital need that should be addressed. The new Senate leadership can collaborate with the executive branch to ensure stable energy supply. Diversifying energy sources, promoting renewable energy, and addressing power shortages are vital for sustained growth.

Also crucial is fiscal responsibility. Escudero must oversee responsible budgeting. Balancing economic stimulus with fiscal discipline is essential to prevent excessive debt and inflation.

With Escudero's political savvy, the new Senate leadership presents an opportunity for collaboration between the legislative and executive branches. By aligning their efforts, they can create a conducive environment for economic growth.

The administration's goal of improving the economy requires a united Congress committed to progress, transparency, and the welfare of all Filipinos. Let us hope that the new leadership in the Senate will be marked by visionary policies, effective governance, and tangible results for the nation without necessarily being subservient to the powers that be.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/22/new-senate-leadership-new-hope-for-the-nation>

MANILA BULLETIN:

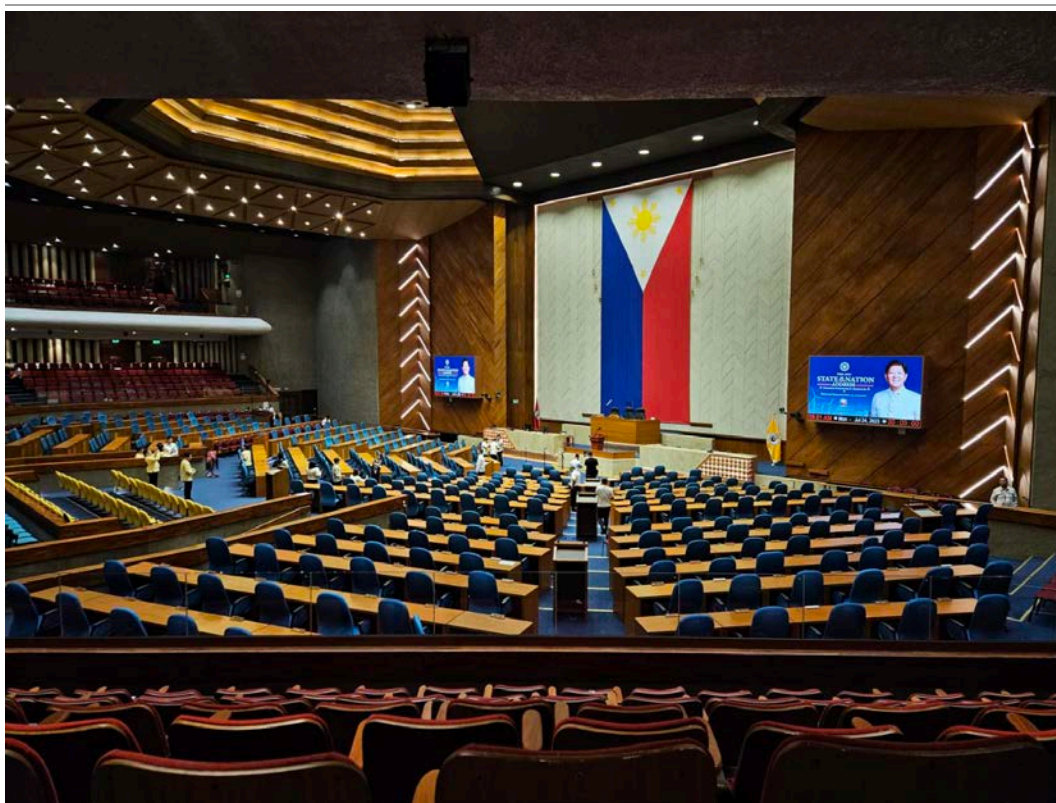
It only took 3 weeks: Rice Tariffication Law amendments bill hurdles House

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

May 21, 2024 07:25 PM

AT A GLANCE

- On just its third week in the legislative mill, the measure seeking to provide the public with cheaper rice by tweaking the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) has been approved on third and final reading in the House of Representatives.



The House plenary hall (Contributed photo)

On just its third week in the legislative mill, the measure seeking to provide the public with cheaper rice by tweaking the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) has been approved on third and final reading in the House of Representatives.

Garnening 231 "yes" votes during plenary session Tuesday night, May 21 was House Bill (HB) No.10381, or the proposed Act seeking to amend Republic Act (RA) No. 11203, or the RTL.

There were only three "no" votes and one abstention against the bill, which no less than House Speaker Martin Romualdez began to push for in early May.

A key revision to RTL that's being pursued is the restoration of the National Food Authority's (NFA) power to directly sell relatively cheaper rice to the market. This will pave the way for the return of "NFA rice".

By May 7, the House Committee on Agriculture and Food chaired by Quezon 1st district Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga approved the substitute bill for the measures seeking the RTL amendments.

A week later, May 14 the consolidated measure, now known as HB No.10381, was passed on second reading after the conduct of plenary debates. The next day, May 15,, the measure was momentarily recalled to plenary for minor revision, and then re-approved on second reading.

"We are committed to ensuring that rice—our staple food—remains affordable and accessible to all. By refining the RTL, we address its shortcomings and provide our farmers with the support they need to thrive in an increasingly competitive market," Romualdez said last week.

With its third reading passage in the House Tuesday, the proposed statute now awaits its fate in the Senate, which is the other legislative chamber.

The five-year-old RTL originally banned the NFA from buying and selling rice in a bid to pull down rice prices, But since the RTL's enactment, rice prices have continued to increase.

Under the bill, the NFA will be allowed to buy local milled rice as needed to maintain a rice buffer stock. In emergency cases, it will even be allowed to directly import rice with authorization from the President.

Some senators have been lukewarm to resforing old powers of the NFA due to reported corruption in the agency.

Well-milled to premium rice varieties retail anywhere from P50 to P60.

The House of Representatives under the Marcos administration has sought to give poor Filipinos better access to affordable rice.

The leader of the chamber, Romualdez, has even earned the moniker "Mr. Rice" because of his preference to make rice the centerpiece of his aid distribution programs.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/21/it-only-took-3-weeks-rice-tariffication-law-amendments-bill-hurdles-house>

MANILA BULLETIN:

PCCI bats for agri cooperation with Brunei

BY [BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT](#)

May 21, 2024 05:24 PM

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) is set to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with its private sector counterpart in Brunei for the promotion of more agricultural trade and investments, and agriculture technology during the state visit of President Marcos on May 28-29.



PCCI President Enunina "Nina" Mangio

PCCI President Enunina "Nina" Mangio told reporters that the MOU between PCCI and National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) of Brunei will provide a framework for possible collaboration in the area of agriculture and agriculture technology.

"We are looking at new technologies from Brunei that can help our farmers, more of technology partners because they have very advanced agriculture water technology," said Mangio, who also cited the successful irrigation system of Brunei for their farms.

The Philippines is bigger in size compared to Brunei, but Mangio said that Brunei has rapidly advanced its technologies, making its agriculture sector very successful.

While the Philippines is exporting fruits and electronics to Brunei, Mangio emphasized that the PCCI interest will be focused in agriculture and manufacturing. She expressed hopes to bring a bigger business delegation just like the previous visits of the President to other countries, such as Vietnam and Indonesia.

She also sees more opportunities for collaboration between Filipino and Brunei companies in the agriculture and agriculture processing ventures.

As Brunei is a predominantly Muslim country, Mangio mentioned that PCCI will be mounting a Halal Trade and Investment Forum next month under the umbrella Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines (BIMP) East ASEAN Growth Area (EAGA). According to Mangio, BIMP countries are expected to send 20 delegates each to the forum.

She cited the huge potential of halal industries among EAGA countries, which have huge Muslim population. “The business of halal amounts to billions of dollars, including its supply chain,” Mangio said.

She noted that the Philippines needs to have halal certifying agency that is also recognized internationally to ensure that domestic halal suppliers can participate in the global supply chain.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/21/pcci-bats-for-agri-cooperation-with-brunei>

MANILA BULLETIN:

CTA denies NFA's petition to suspend collection of P143M real property tax levied by Cabanatuan City

BY [CZARINA NICOLE ONG KI](#)

May 21, 2024 02:26 PM

For lack of jurisdiction, the Court of Tax Appeals (CTA) has denied the petition filed by the National Food Authority (NFA) which sought to suspend the collection of the P143 million real property tax (RPT) levied against it by the Cabanatuan City government in Nueva Ecija.

The NFA filed its Petition for Prohibition on June 9, 2022 before the regional trial court (RTC).

It told the RTC that it is exempt from payment of all taxes under Section 6 of Presidential Decree No. 4. It also invoked the case of Manila International Airport Authority vs. Court of Appeals, et al. (MIAA case), stating that it is similarly situated with MIAA which the Supreme Court declared as exempt from RPT.

However, the petition was denied by the RTC on July 26, 2022. NFA's motion for reconsideration was denied by the RTC on Aug. 18, 2022. The denial prompted the NFA to file a petition before the CTA on Oct. 24, 2022.

In dismissing the petition for lack of jurisdiction, the CTA's special third division said that NFA had 30 days from receipt of the assailed resolution within which to file its petition for review.

While the NFA alleged that it received the resolution on Sept. 23, 2022, the records of the case are "bereft" of any document showing that it was indeed received on the said date, the CTA said. In fact, the resolution would show that it was signed and received on Sept. 5, 2022, it also said.

Thus, it said, the filing of the petition for review on Oct. 24, 2022 was beyond the 30-day reglementary period.

"Finding that this Court has no jurisdiction to entertain the present petition, it could not decide the case on the merits thereof, and its only jurisdiction is to dismiss the same," the CTA's decision stated.

The nine-page decision was written by Associate Justice Corazon G. Ferrer-Flores with the concurrence of Associate Justices Ma. Belen M. Ringpis-Liban and Maria Rowena Modesto-San Pedro.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/21/cta-denies-nfa-s-petition-to-suspend-collection-of-p143-m-real-property-tax-levied-by-cabanatuan-city>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

El Niño agriculture damage climbs to P9.5 billion

Romina Cabrera - The Philippine Star

May 22, 2024 | 12:00am



A farmer checks a portion of a dried rice field along Pulilan-Baliuag Bypass Road in Bulacan on February 26, 2024.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — Damage to agriculture due to the strong El Niño has ballooned to P9.5 billion, the Department of Agriculture reported yesterday.

The DA said 163,694 hectares of agricultural land as well as 175,063 farmers and fisherfolk were affected.

Rice remains the most affected commodity, accounting for 48.47 percent or P4.6 billion of the damage.

Damage to corn was pegged at P3.17 billion and high-value crops at P1.65 billion.

Losses incurred by the fishery sector were placed at 57.72 million; livestock and poultry, P10.47 million, and cassava, P3.42 million.

The DA said it provided P8.59 billion worth of aid to affected farmers under the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance program aside from P658.22 million in agri-inputs, fertilizers, planting materials, pumps and engines, among other paraphernalia.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said the El Niño phenomenon continues to weaken and is expected to transition to neutral from April to June.

PAGASA said 74 provinces have been affected by El Niño as of April, 46 of which had experienced drought.

State of calamity eyed in Bohol

Meanwhile, the Bohol Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) has recommended to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan to place the entire province under a state of calamity due to the effects of El Niño.

Damage to agriculture due to drought in the province has reached P420.8 million, according to the provincial agriculture office.

Rice crops incurred 92.4 percent of the damage; corn, four percent; high-value crops, 1.42 percent, and cassava, 2.09 percent.

Damage to livestock was pegged at P433,294, based on the report of seven towns.

Fisheries incurred damage amounting to P756,900 in nine towns.

Grass fires have affected parts of the Chocolate Hills in Carmen town and mountains in nearby areas.

Gov. Aris Aumentado has reportedly given the go-signal for an emergency meeting of the PDRRMC to discuss the effects of drought.

Cebu, Iloilo, Occidental Mindoro, Antique, Sultan Kudarat, Basilan, Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, South Cotabato and Negros Oriental are the provinces earlier placed under a state of calamity due to extreme heat.

The entire Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is also under a state of calamity due to drought. — Ric Obedencio

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/05/22/2357037/el-nio-agriculture-damage-climbs-p95-billion>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Government infrastructure spending rises to P220 billion in Q1

[Louise Maureen Simeon](#) - The Philippine Star

May 22, 2024 | 12:00am



Workers are seen performing their duties at a construction site in Taguig on February 7, 2024.

STAR / Ernie Penaredondo
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MANILA, Philippines — The government increased its infrastructure spending to almost P220 billion in the first quarter, mainly to finance road and defense projects, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said.

Based on the latest national government disbursement performance report of the DBM, state infrastructure expenditure and other capital outlays went up by more than 10 percent to P216.8 billion from January to March compared to last year's P196.7 billion.

The DBM said this is due to the implementation of road infrastructure projects of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and defense modernization projects of the Department of National Defense.

This was also driven by the higher local development fund of local government units (LGUs), which is equivalent to 20 percent of the national tax allotment shares.

“This helped sustain the robust expansion of public construction in the first quarter economic performance where general government-led construction grew by 12.4 percent,” the DBM said.

This contributed 2.9 percentage points to the 6.8 percent growth of the construction sector and about 0.4 percentage points to the overall 5.7 percent economic growth.

Meanwhile, overall government spending for the quarter reached P1.21 trillion, up by nearly 11 percent from last year’s P1.09 trillion.

Broken down, personnel services expenditures rose by five percent to P312.5 billion mostly due to the personnel benefits requirement of newly hired teaching personnel of the Department of Education.

Several positions in other agencies were also filled up, as well as the pension and retirement benefits of military and uniformed personnel were covered.

Combined allotment and capital transfers to LGUs grew by 13 percent to P259.9 billion on higher tax allotments following the Mandanas Ruling.

The tax revenue base, from which the tax allotment shares of LGUs this year is determined, was the actual tax collections in 2021— at a time when tax revenues were slowly recovering from the pandemic.

The government also recorded higher maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) to P198.4 billion due to assistance and subsidies for social services.

Interest payments likewise expanded by 36 percent to P193 billion due to coupon payments for domestic securities, downward adjustment to last year’s interest payments and larger foreign interest payments.

As of end-March, the remaining program balance amounted to P968.8 billion or roughly 17 percent of the record P5.768 trillion budget for the year.

The DBM said disbursements are expected to gradually increase in the current quarter as the DPWH and other agencies with capital outlay projects capitalize on the summer season for their construction activities.

It added that substantial MOOE requirements are also programmed this quarter for the implementation of banner social, employment, health, education and agriculture programs of the government.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/22/2356878/government-infrastructure-spending-rises-p220-billion-q1>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

NFA in the spotlight anew

Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas - The Philippine Star

May 22, 2024 | 12:00am



File photo shows a store selling rice for up to P70 per kilo. STAR / File

As government moves forward with liberalized trade

The open secret

MANILA, Philippines — Aside from the National Food Authority's (NFA) scheme of buying high and selling low, pundits have emphasized that the agency has another problem – its sole authority and discretion over the rice industry.

Pre-Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), the agency had the power to allocate import permits among participating traders and importers.

That power, sources said, leaves the bureaucracy prone to corruption. It has been an open secret that rice import licenses and quotas issued by the NFA back then were being sold by smaller importers to bigger players.

The NFA, sources said, could also favor a few in securing these rice import licenses.

Some say that unscrupulous officials at the NFA also made a killing from the rice importation programs that it had undertaken in the past. Sources note that a margin of P1 per kilo of imported rice could mean millions.

That is why under the RTL, the power to oversee rice imports in the country was transferred to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

The BPI's lone mandate in relation to rice imports is to ensure that shipments arriving in the country are safe for human and plant health.

It cannot limit the volume and timing of the rice to be imported by private entities. It must not delay the issuance of necessary documents for the importation of rice. It must approve import applications within seven days if applicants have complete documents and requirements.

Today, seeking a license from the NFA is no longer needed to sell rice. Today, the NFA does not have the power to inspect warehouses unlike before. Today, the government does not have a single power to intervene in the market at times of price spikes.

But this is a situation that government officials and legislators are seemingly trying to reverse as the country moves forward with its liberalized rice trade regime.

The warning

In 2019, agriculture stakeholders warned that tinkering with the regulatory and commercial functions of the NFA could leave the government powerless in times of emergency or crisis.

And in the eyes of agriculture officials, that is what is happening now. With rice prices skyrocketing past P55 per kg, the Department of Agriculture (DA) believes that the government must be able to sell rice lower than the prevailing market prices to temper price upticks and hopefully pull them down.

In Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.'s own words, "dapat puwedeng sumundot."

Rice price today has been hovering between P55 and P59 per kg as a result of higher prices of staple in the world market caused by India's export ban of non-Basmati rice.

The DA is pushing for the restoration of certain government powers, most of which previously belonged to the NFA, in regulating the country's rice industry as part of the deliberations on the amendments to the RTL law.

First, the government must have the commercial powers to sell rice at cheaper prices.

Second, the government must be able to inspect warehouses to determine the country's rice stock situation and ensure that they are compliant with food safety standards.

Third, the government must be allowed to import rice as a last resort during an emergency or crisis to ensure the country's supply availability and affordability.

In short, the DA wants to restore the commercial and regulatory powers of the NFA.

“The real intention is not to give full power back to the NFA but use NFA as a conduit to operationalize in certain moments of interventions maybe once or twice a year. But not through the authority of anybody in the NFA,” Tiu Laurel said.

The House of the Representatives adopted the DA's proposals, taking cognizance of the current market situation following the absence of the NFA.

The sticking point

But the Senators were quick to express their opposition after learning about the proposal to restore the lost powers of the NFA. They are worried that the NFA would return to its debt-ridden and corruption-clouded past.

The Senators, led by Villar, told the DA outright about their apprehensions with the department's proposal during its recent hearing on the achievements of the RTL law.

Sen. Imee Marcos was frank about it: nobody trusts NFA anymore – not the farmers and not the senators. But the DA contingent, spearheaded by Tiu Laurel, remained firm in their proposal.

Moments later during the hearing, a seemingly middle ground was within the agriculture officials and senators' reach. The DA officials said they are amenable to removing the NFA out of the picture as long as the powers that they are seeking – to import rice and sell commercially – be given back to the government, whether it is the DA or even the President himself.

The Senators expressed openness to the idea. They were willing to give those emergency powers as long as NFA is not involved. The Senate is yet to tackle the Senate Bills filed that seek to amend the RTL law.

Rice industry groups, meanwhile, are divided with regards to restoring certain powers of the NFA. Some support it while some don't. Some economists too opposed bringing back the old powers of the grains agency.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) supports the proposal of expanding the procurement options of the NFA including purchases of rice from local farmers and cooperatives, buying a certain portion of imported rice by private traders at declared import price and direct importation as last resort.

“Lets amend the law so that the NFA would have options when the situation gets worse,” FFF national manager Raul Montemayor said.

“The NFA should have two different buffer stocks for its calamity response and price stabilization purpose. The two stocks should not be mixed to ensure that the NFA would have stocks when there is a calamity,” Montemayor added.

Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura (SINAG), meanwhile, bucked any proposals that would involve the NFA.

“We're already allergic to NFA. The NFA should focus on buying from local farmers and in case there are shortages then the powers of the President or the Secretary can be used,” SINAG president Rosendo So said.

Industry sources note that everything feels like a déjà vu of 2019. The government is talking again about rice, NFA and whatnots as the sticking points.

Today, rice prices are still high at P57 per kg.

Only time will tell which version of the amendments would prevail.

In the meantime, Filipinos will have to continue grappling with higher rice prices.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/22/2356882/nfa-spotlight-anew>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Agriculture losses due to El Niño reach P9.5 billion

Philstar.com

May 21, 2024 | 5:46pm



A farmer checks a portion of a dried rice field along Pulilan-Baliuag Bypass Road in Bulacan on February 26, 2024.

STAR / Michael Varcas

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) reported on Tuesday that the ongoing El Niño phenomenon has caused around P9.5 billion in damage to the agriculture sector.

El Niño's wrath has affected 175,063 farmers and fisherfolk, and devastated 163,694 hectares of agricultural land, according to the DA.

Regions most affected were Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, MIMAROPA, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Central Mindanao, Davao Region and Soccsksargen.

The agriculture department also reported that El Niño has caused an estimated 426,798 metric tons (MT) in production losses across various crops, including

185,561 MT for palay, 180,807 MT for corn, 48,949 MT for high-value crops, and 147 MT for cassava.

The impacted area accounted for 3.91% of the targeted planting area, while the production loss was equivalent to 2.01% of the production target for this year's dry cropping seasons

Meanwhile, corn losses represent 6.08% of the targeted planting area and 4.02% of the production loss.

The DA said that it has provided financial assistance of around P8.59 billion and P658.22 worth of aid for production support.

El Niño, a climate pattern associated with extreme heat and drought, continues to weaken, but its impacts are expected to persist until June.

There is around 60% chance of La Niña, a cooling climate pattern, developing in the June-July-August season. — Gaea Katreena Cabico

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/21/2356847/agriculture-losses-due-el-nio-reach-p95-billion>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DA eyes disposal facility for smuggled farm goods

By: **Jordeene B. Lagare** - @inquirerdotnet

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 03:06 AM May 22, 2024



FILE PHOTO

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) is proposing the establishment of a condemnation facility to avoid the resale of smuggled agricultural goods seized by local authorities.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. made such a suggestion as the DA is currently investigating the alleged diversion of food items that had entered the country illegally.

“It would be better for the DA to condemn all agricultural products seized from the pier that are illegal, carry animal diseases or contrabands to ensure no irregularities will happen,” Tiu Laurel said.

All forfeited and abandoned goods taken from piers are transferred to a condemnation facility where they are disposed of, shredded, or destroyed.

Tiu Laurel said the DA had received reports that some of the seized agricultural products were being diverted. Its enforcement unit has started looking into the matter.

Diverting smuggled goods

“That is our initial findings, but as far as the products for condemnation are concerned, all of these [have been] condemned properly in the last few months,” he added.

Early in February this year, the DA formed a technical working group to craft and provide inputs to the anti-agricultural economic sabotage bill that would classify acts of hoarding, profiteering and operating a cartel of agricultural products as economic sabotage.

According to Special Order No. 227, the committee will provide inputs that will balance the diverse interests of producers and legitimate businesses in the agricultural value chain.

It is also responsible for developing concrete recommendations to address identified issues and enhance the effectiveness of the proposed legislation.

Economic sabotage

The draft bill defines economic sabotage as “any act or activity that disrupts the economy by creating an artificial shortage, promoting excessive importation, manipulating prices and supply, evading payment or underpaying tariffs and customs duties, threatening local production and food security, gaining excessive or exorbitant profits by exploiting situations, creating scarcity, and entering into agreements that defeat fair competition to the prejudice of the public.”

In December last year, the Senate passed on the third and final reading this bill, which aims to impose severe sanctions—life imprisonment and a fine thrice the value of the smuggled agricultural product.

The House of Representatives also passed House Bill No. 9284, or the Anti Agri-Fishery Commodities and Tobacco Economic Sabotage Act, in September last year, which aims to impose steeper penalties on smugglers of agricultural products.

Aside from imprisonment, it seeks to impose a fine of six times the fair market value of the agricultural commodities and the total amount of taxes, duties, and other charges avoided, plus interests. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/459864/da-eyes-disposal-facility-for-smuggled-farm-goods>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Farmers' group calls for sustained crop insurance support from gov't

By: [Zacarian Sarao](#) - Reporter / [@zacariansINO](#)
INQUIRER.net / 04:25 PM May 21, 2024



(INQUIRER FILE PHOTO / VILLAMOR VISAYA JR.)

MANILA, Philippines — The Federation of Free [Farmers](#) (FFF) on Tuesday asked the government to continue its efforts to support and sustain crop insurance programs amid the effects of El Niño and the looming La Niña.

The group made the appeal after the reinstatement of the [Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation \(PCIC\)](#) as an [attached agency of the Department of Agriculture \(DA\)](#).

“Crop insurance is an important component of the DA’s support program for farmers, and it is only logical that the PCIC be part of the DA family,” FFF Board Chairperson Leonardo Montemayor said in a statement.

With this development, the FFF expressed its gratitude to President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu-Laurel, Jr., further urging the government to “sustain its support for crop insurance because of El Niño or La Niña and the likelihood of more severe weather disturbances in the coming years.”

According to Montemayor, the PCIC was originally created by President Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr. in 1978 through Presidential Decree 1467 and later amended by Republic Act 8175 in 1995.

The corporation compensates insured farmers if their produce is damaged by calamities, pests and, or disease — funded from premiums from farmers, lending institutions, and the government.

But the FFF previously sounded the alarm on delayed payments of claims and reduced benefits to farmers, allegedly due to the Department of Finances' cutting costs and enhancing the financial profile of the agency.

“Government support to the agency should not be considered primarily as a subsidy to farmers but more importantly as a means to ensure adequate food supply for the country,” said Montemayor.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1943082/fwd-farmers-sustain-crop-insurance-amid-el-nino-la-nina>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

House amendments to rice tariff law approved on 3rd reading

By: [Gabriel Pabico Lalu](#) - Reporter / [@GabrielLaluINQ](#)
[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:48 PM May 21, 2024

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives has approved a proposal amending Republic Act No. 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) to restore some of the National Food Authority (NFA) functions.

House Bill (HB) No. 10381 was approved during Tuesday's plenary session, with 231 lawmakers voting in the affirmative, three in the negative, and one abstaining.

If signed into law, NFA will have the “authority to oversee and ensure compliance with all pertinent standards and regulations, leveraging its established expertise and nationwide network to uphold the national interest, in rice buffer stocking and food security,” by placing a new Section 5 in R.A. No. 8178.

R.A. 8178 is the Agricultural Tariffication Act, amended by the RTL in 2019.

Also, the Agriculture secretary can now declare, based on the recommendation of the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) or Local Price Coordinating Council (LPCC), a food security emergency due to the following reasons:

- Shortage in the supply of rice
- Sustained increase in the price of rice
- Extraordinary increase in the price of rice

During a food security emergency, the NFA could intervene and sell rice directly by purchasing grains from local farmers, with importation as a last resort.

The [bill was approved on second reading on May 14](#), but it was [brought back to the plenary a day later](#) for further amendments. It was again approved on second reading on May 15.

The House leadership, including Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, believes that the amendments can lower rice prices by P10 to P15 per kilogram.

However, the bill faces opposition in the Senate amid fears that giving back some of NFA's mandates might lead to corruption again.

According to the House Committee on Agriculture and Food chairperson and Quezon 1st District Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga, reinstating certain NFA powers would not expose the agency to corruption because the agency will have a limited role in terms of importation.

Enverga also said that they also want to brief the senators about their proposed amendments to the RTL, adding that he understands where Senate members like Senator Cynthia Villar are coming from.

Villar, the principal author of the RTL, is one of the several senators who have warned against amending R.A. No. 11203 as the law specifically barred NFA from importing and selling rice due to rampant corruption in the agency.

But Enverga said [the bill contains safeguards](#), noting that NFA's role with their proposed amendments would now be more focused on monitoring the rice industry to ensure cheaper rice prices.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1943126/house-amendments-to-rice-tariff-law-approved-on-3rd-reading>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Joel Villanueva considers joining Senate minority bloc

By: [Charie Abarca](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)
INQUIRER.net / 10:25 PM May 21, 2024



Resigned Majority Leader Joel Villanueva —Bibo Nueva España/Senate PRIB

MANILA, Philippines — Following the change in Senate leadership, former Majority Leader Joel Villanueva said he is carefully studying the possibility of joining the chamber’s minority bloc, but he remains undecided to date.

In an ambush interview on Tuesday, Villanueva said he already talked to Minority Leader Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III about the matter.

“Ang daming options available for us. Especially for me. On my end, I could only speak for myself of course na pwede eh, pwede akong mag-minority. Pinag-usapan din namin ni Sen. Koko yan,” he said.

(There are many options available for us. Especially for me. On my end, I could only speak for myself, of course, that I can— I can join the minority bloc. Sen. Koko and I already talked about that.)

Former Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri earlier coined the term “Magic 7,” pertaining to the group of people that stood by his side amid the ouster plot against him.

These senators include Villanueva, Senators Sonny Angara, Nancy Binay, JV Ejercito, Loren Legarda, and Sherwin Gatchalian.

“If others will join me, what’s gonna happen and also I think we have enough time to decide on it. We have enough time,” he added.

According to Villanueva, there were also “committees being offered” to him by the new leadership. He did not elaborate on this, but prior to the former majority leader’s disclosure, newly-instated Senate President Pro Tempore Jinnigoy Estrada said he already offered the chairmanship of the chamber’s panel on labor to Villanueva.

Villanueva, for his part, emphasized that he is still “studying [his] option[s].”

“At the end of the day, I will always choose to serve our people. It is my sworn duty. This is the reason why God brought me here in the Senate. And that is to serve the best interest of our people,” he said.

Quoting Zubiri, Villanueva said members of the “Magic 7” remain “independent senators as of this time.”

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1943196/joel-villanueva-considers-joining-senate-minority-bloc>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

House bill seen to lower rice prices passed on 3rd reading

By: **Jeannette I. Andrade** - Reporter / @jiandradeINQ

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:46 AM May 22, 2024



Farmers from Guimba town in Nueva Ecija province harvest palay. — contributed photo

MANILA, Philippines — The House of Representatives passed on third and final reading on Tuesday the measure amending Republic Act No. 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), which would restore the National Food Authority's (NFA) functions in stabilizing rice prices and extend the rice industry fund for another six years.

A total of 231 lawmakers voted in favor of House Bill No. 10381, with three against and one abstention. The bill is seen as a remedy to the widening gap between rice retail and farm-gate prices, which has seen the market cost rising to over P50 a kilo.

But Camarines Sur Rep. Gabriel Bordado Jr., the only one who abstained from voting, said he was not convinced that reinstating the NFA's functions was the right move to bring down rice prices.

He noted that even before the RTL was enacted in 2019, the agency was already struggling to “effectively regulate the rice sector and protect Filipino consumers and farmers.” When its function was reduced NFA to ensuring that the country had a sufficient buffer stock for emergencies, the NFA continued to be faced with allegations of irregularities, he added.

“Given the agency’s troubled past, it is difficult to have confidence in its ability to fill this role effectively,” Bordado said.

Gabriela women’s party list Rep. Arlene Brosas, who voted against the bill, explained that she wanted RA 11203 repealed, blaming the law for the country’s low rice production and dependence on importations to meet local demand.

Brosas said that millions of metric tons of rice have been imported since 2019, making the Philippines the world’s top rice importer, a ranking that the US Department of Agriculture had predicted would be maintained until 2025.

HB 10381 authorizes the NFA to require the registration and inspection of all grains warehouses to ensure compliance with standards related to rice quality and supply. It also restores the agency’s price stabilization and supply regulation functions.

The bill further empowers the NFA to regulate foreign investment in the rice and corn industry and maintain a sufficient buffer stock with rice bought from local farmers. Importation will be done only when authorized by the agriculture secretary.

HB 10381 also extends by another six years the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) and raises the allocation from P10 billion to P15 billion. The RCEF coverage is likewise expanded to include irrigation and soil health development as well as pest and disease management.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1943210/house-bill-seen-to-lower-rice-prices-passed-on-3rd-reading>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Palawan officials to gov't: Clarify China rule on WPS

By: [Geraldford Ticke](#) - @inquirerdotnet

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:38 AM May 22, 2024



Inquirer files

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, PALAWAN, Philippines — With China’s trespassing in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) already a local concern besides being a national issue, the city council here has invited national government officials to explain China’s new regulation directing its coast guard to detain “foreigners” crossing areas of Philippine waters it has occupied.

During the council’s regular session on Monday, Councilor Elgin Damasco noted in a privilege speech the concern of residents about how China’s regulation may affect fishermen venturing into the West Philippine Sea.

He said “our fishermen have expressed fears” over China’s threat to detain what it regards as foreigners crossing their occupied area for as long as 60 days.

Damasco requested officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the military's Western Command (Wescom) to attend the council's next regular session, so they could clarify to the council China's regulation.

“Are we affected by this, especially our fishermen? So I want to hear their opinion and reaction about this regulation. I believe that this is another form of intimidation to discourage Filipinos from sailing in the West Philippine Sea,” said Damasco, chair of the council's committee on agriculture and fisheries.

Edca sites

Councilor Victor Oliveros, for his part, said, “I think they (the Chinese) are serious about it and I think they are going to do what they said. And if ever, what's going to happen? Are we also going to impose or detain Chinese intruders?”

Councilor Jimmy Carbonell noted that Puerto Princesa, the provincial capital of Palawan, hosts the Antonio Bautista Air Base, which is among the nine locations in the country that had been selected for the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (Edca).

Manila's 2014 agreement with Washington allows the positioning of US troops in these so-called Edca sites, including the said air base and the island municipality of Balabac, also in Palawan.

“When worse comes to worst, God forbid, help will be available,” Carbonell said. “Because I can see only two ways that this can be resolved. One is through diplomatic process, and the other one, which is the worst, is war.”

Chinese warships

Meanwhile, four Chinese warships have been spotted in the vicinity of Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal following a civilian supply mission there last week, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said on Tuesday.

Before the four People’s Liberation Army Navy ships seen from May 14 until just this Monday, there were two Chinese warships that tried to block the civilian supply mission on May 15, according to the “Atin Ito” (This Is Ours) Coalition which led that convoy.

But there were many more Chinese vessels scattered in different areas of the West Philippine Sea. The AFP said a total of 128 ships were in those waters, compared with 98 vessels a week before.

Given China’s continued presence in the West Philippine Sea and the damage it is likely to inflict on its marine environment, fisherfolk group Pamalakaya urged the government to sue Beijing for reparations.

House hearing

At the House of Representatives, top officials of the previous administration of Rodrigo Duterte denied that it had entered into a gentleman’s agreement with China.

Instead, they claimed that there were earlier agreements by their predecessors to maintain the “status quo” at Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal and allow the provision of food and water to troops stationed at the BRP Sierra Madre, the grounded vessel which serves as the Philippines’ military outpost there.

On Tuesday’s continuation of the joint inquiry by the House committees on national defense and on the West Philippine Sea, former Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea said, “The status quo at Ayungin Shoal... was in a 2013 commitment of former defense chief [Voltaire] Gazmin to Chinese ambassador Ma Keqing that he would only deliver food and water to the Marines stationed at [BRP Sierra Madre].”

Duterte, “being a lawyer knew fully well that it was foolhardy to enter into an agreement, especially a gentleman’s agreement at that, with the President of the People’s Republic of China on matters involving sovereign rights,” Medialdea said further.

For his part, Bases Conversion and Development Authority Chair Delfin Lorenzana, who was Duterte’s defense secretary, cited a conversation with Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian who claimed that the Philippines had consented in 1999 to take the BRP Sierra Madre out of Ayungin.

Former National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr., who headed the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea, also said, “There was no secret agreement as far as I know and as far as I remember.” He added that Duterte only “maintained” earlier commitments by his predecessors. —with reports from Jeannette I. Andrade, Nestor Corrales and Jacob Lazaro

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1943206/palawan-officials-to-govt-clarify-china-rule-on-wps>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Agri dep't sees need for facility to condemn seized farm products

May 21, 2024 | 9:28 pm



PHILSTAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is considering setting up a facility to condemn seized farm goods to prevent them from leaking out onto markets.

“It is better that the DA condemn all the products caught at the pier that are illegal, or probably diseased, or contraband,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. told reporters.

He added that there have been reports of condemned good being diverted to unauthorized uses.

“But as far as the last few months are concerned all condemned goods were (handled) properly,” Mr. Tiu Laurel said.

Separately, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said that the Secretary is proposing to give the DA regulatory powers to condemn smuggled agricultural goods.

“That is to avoid the problem of (the goods) being diverted to the markets,” he added.

“To keep it from happening again, let the DA handle the condemnation,” he said.

Mr. De Mesa added that agricultural goods which have been apprehended should be handled by the Agriculture department.

“Right now there is a third party that’s condemning and (disposing) of the seized goods,” he said. — Adrian H. Halili

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/21/596662/agri-dept-sees-need-for-facility-to-condemn-seized-farm-products/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

El Niño farm damage hits P9.5 billion

May 21, 2024 | 9:25 pm



REUTERS

AGRICULTURAL damage caused by El Niño has been estimated at P9.5 billion, with rice and corn the most affected crops, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In its 11th El Niño bulletin, the DA said crop damage by volume as of May 16 was 426,798 metric tons across 163,694 hectares of farmland, with 175,063 farmers and fisherfolk affected.

Damage to rice was estimated at P4.6 billion or 48.5% of the total. The volume of rice lost was 185,561 MT spanning 83,862 hectares.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said damage to the rice crop remained below the DA's estimates.

"The total area affected is 83,000 (hectares)... Still below is our expected total area of 150,000 hectares to be affected," he told reporters on Tuesday.

The DA said that 71.22% of the affected farmland was partially damaged, with the remainder suffering total losses.

"Most of the damage and losses involved rice in the reproductive and maturing stages," it added.

Damage to corn was estimated at 180,807 MT valued at P3.17 billion. This made up 33.42% of total damage brought on by El Niño.

It added that high value crops lost amounted to 49,949 MT across 12,856 hectares of farmland. The losses were valued at P1.65 billion, or 17.36% of the total.

Damage to fisheries was estimated at P57.72 million, affecting 2,261 fisherfolk, while livestock and poultry damage was estimated at P10.47 million.

“Malaking inakyat nito from the last bulletin. Kasi last bulletin 6.3 billion. So ito na siguro ’yung mga huling papasok ng mga report. (Damage estimates have gone up a lot since the last bulletin (which was) P6.3 billion. So these are probably the last reports to come in),” he added.

Mr. De Mesa said that Mimaropa had suffered the most damage with crop losses valued at P2.6 billion.

This was followed by Cagayan Valley with P2.1 billion and the Western Visayas P1.7 billion.

In a May 6 bulletin, the government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), said El Niño is weakening and the likelihood of La Niña to occur is 60% between June and August.

The hotter and drier conditions from El Niño are also expected to persist.

On Monday, the DA said that it had begun monitoring prices of farm goods as the climate transitions to La Niña. — Adrian H. Halili

[bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/21/596660/el-nino-farm-damage-hits-p9-5-billion/](https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/21/596660/el-nino-farm-damage-hits-p9-5-billion/)

BUSINESS WORLD:

Sugar farmers seen benefiting from higher demand after biofuel ruling

May 21, 2024 | 9:24 pm



VICTORIAS MILLING COMPANY, INC. FACEBOOK PAGE

A GOVERNMENT order to increase the biofuel content in diesel and gasoline may benefit the sugarcane industry, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said.

“It will bring more opportunity for our sugarcane farmers, as there will be bigger demand for cane or molasses,” SRA Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona said via Viber, referring to two ingredients in bioethanol production.

According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Philippine fuel ethanol consumption is expected to increase by 8% this year, amounting to 682 million liters.

On Monday, the Department of Energy (DoE) required oil companies to offer gasoline with 20% bioethanol content.

“The increase in blend will also allow ethanol plants to maximize production using local feedstock,” Mr. Azcona added.

The USDA also projected fuel ethanol imports into the Philippines to increase to 280 million liters, servicing about 42% of demand.

“Also, the increase in blend will lower the price of gasoline and diesel. The five million people dependent on the sugarcane industry use fuel for farming and in their daily life,” he added.

The DoE said that the increase in the bioethanol blend could bring down gasoline pump prices by P3.21 per liter.

The SRA reported that milled sugarcane amounted to 21.45 million metric tons (MT) during the 2023-2024 milling season.

The USDA also estimates that sugarcane production will hit 21.5 million MT this year.

However, Mr. Azcona said earlier that El Niño has affected the sugarcane planted for the next harvest season.

It added that the supply of molasses was 1.08 million MT, higher than the 961.9 thousand MT the previous year.

The DoE will also begin increasing the biodiesel blend to B3 (3% coco oil content) by October. This begins the government’s plan to raise the blend to B5 (5%) in the next five years. — Adrian H. Halili

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/21/596658/sugar-farmers-seen-benefiting-from-higher-demand-after-biofuel-ruling/>

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL:

DOST SETUP MSME marks significant invention in the Abaca Industry

Wednesday, May 22, 2024 Journal Online

To upgrade the technological capabilities and improve the productivity and efficiency of MSMEs in the country, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) is taking a notch higher in strengthening its scientific and technological initiatives through its Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP).

The SETUP program provides appropriate technologies and assistance to micro and medium enterprises, such as the provision of innovation funds, technology transfer and commercialization assistance, consultancy, packaging assistance, technology training, and laboratory and testing services.

Additionally, the program capacitates MSMEs to increase sales and development, restructure, and increase overall company operations. This will further improve their product and service quality, comply with national and international standards of excellence, and be competitive in their respective fields.



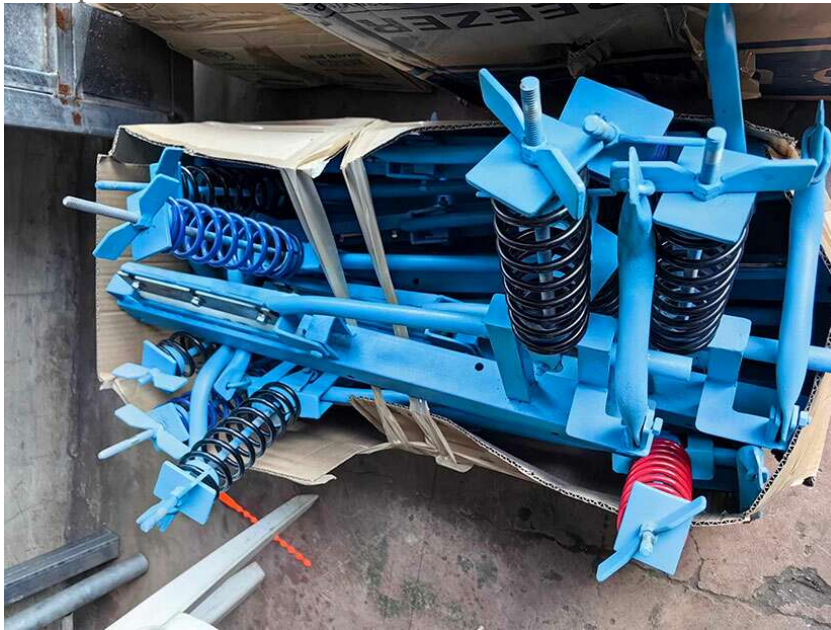
In the Bicol Region, a total of 4,380 S&T interventions were provided for MSMEs from 2019 to 2023 to upgrade their technological capability and improve productivity in their operations.

One of its successful beneficiaries in the Bicol Region is the Livelihood and Agricultural Machinery Fabricator in Sipa, Batao Catanduanes, owned by Mr. Ramon T. Manlolo.

His ongoing agreements underscore the excellence of his inventions in supporting local markets and academic research, especially in the development of the Abacca industry in the country. Mr. Manlolo's transformation from a graduate in nutrition and dietetics to a fabricator and machine inventor is a testament to his keen observation and curiosity.

Moreover, his firm recently engaged in applied research and technology development with an emphasis on additive manufacturing and metal processing through modification and

solidification. Mr. Manlolo was able to fabricate and modify the Abaca stripping machine and knife provided to abaca farmers in Catanduanes.



As the sole agricultural and food machinery fabricator in the province, the cooperator doesn't take advantage of the situation of not having huge competitors within the province. He still sets the price of his work according to the standard cost and value. He also guarantees the materials are ethically sourced before delivery to the client.

With the increasing number of food processors and the given number of farmers in Catanduanes and in other provinces, the owner aims to provide quality and efficient equipment and machinery that will definitely aid and improve their processes.

This will not just address the potential of his business but will also help improve the production of his clients, which will definitely increase employment and profit. Also, the proponent was able to provide employment to students, especially during an influx of demand. In addition, the owner is continuously learning and doing research that would help his creation become more competitive, efficient, and eco-friendly.

Mr. Manlolo's success not only defies societal norms regarding career paths but also serves as a testament to his father's legacy, showcasing that his accomplishments speak louder than conformity to predetermined roles.

Further, the said firm was visited today by the DOST Undersecretary for Regional Operations, Engr. Sancho A. Maborang, together with DOST Region V Regional Director Rommel Serrano, among others.

Through different agencies and DOST SETUP, the provision of such equipment is possible. It helps foster competitive innovation as it gives opportunities for creating better products and services. It also increased competitiveness, which improved brand recognition and value.

<https://journal.com.ph/dost-setup-msme-marks-significant-invention-in-the-abaca-industry/>

Recto lauds AO enhancing import monitoring with digital verification

By Manila Standard Business

May 21, 2024, 8:25 pm

Finance Secretary Ralph Recto on Tuesday lauded the issuance of Administrative Order (AO) No. 23, saying this would significantly enhance the monitoring of imported commodities entering the Philippines through electronic means.

Recto vowed to protect the country's borders from dangerous imports as chair of the committee implementing the said initiative.

“This initiative is another significant step towards achieving a fully digitalized border protection system in the country where no import goes by unnoticed and unaccounted for. This will certainly go a long way in putting an end to smuggling, misdeclaration, and undervaluation. I thank the President for his support in ensuring that the Bureau of Customs is well-equipped with the necessary technology and support needed to protect our people from illegal and hazardous imports,” he said.

AO 23 was issued by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on May 13, 2024 to expedite the inspection of all imported commodities entering the Philippines through digital and integrated pre-border technical verification and cross-border electronic invoicing.

It is intended to strengthen national security, safeguard consumer rights, and protect people against substandard and hazardous imported goods.

AO 23 will be applied to all imported commodities in three phases: First, for agricultural goods; second, for non-agricultural goods with health and safety issues; and third, for other goods with misdeclaration to avoid duties and taxes.

The AO has created the Committee for Pre-border Technical Verification and Cross-border Electronic Invoicing chaired by the Secretary of Finance.

The committee members include the Secretaries of the Department of Agriculture (DA); Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); Department of Energy (DOE); Department of Health (DOH); Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT); the

Commissioner of the Bureau of Customs (BOC); the Director General of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA); and two non-voting representatives from recognized industry associations.

The DOF will lead the formulation of guidelines and implementing rules and regulations for the Pre-Border Technical Verification of all commodities to be conducted by accredited Testing, Inspection, and Certification (TIC) Companies prior to their export to the Philippines.

TIC Companies are qualified third-party companies that have legal, financial, and technical capabilities to implement the Pre-border Technical Verification and Cross-border Electronic Invoicing System for the certification of all commodities bound for the Philippines.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314449553/recto-lauds-ao-enhancing-import-monitoring-with-digital-verification.html>

MANILA STANDARD

House gives final OK to bill allowing NFA to sell rice to bring down prices

By Maricel Cruz

May 22, 2024, 1:15 am

The House of Representatives led by Speaker Martin Romualdez on Tuesday night approved on third and final reading a bill amending the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) to enable the government to provide the public with cheaper rice.

The proposed amendments were approved by a 231-3-1 vote.

The changes are designed to stabilize rice prices by reducing the influence of unregulated rice importation and curbing the ability of middlemen to inflate prices excessively.

Among others, the amendments restore the National Food Authority's role to sell rice directly to public markets.

Under the current law, the NFA's mandate is limited to ensuring buffer stocks for disasters.

“By adjusting the framework for rice importation and enhancing the role of the National Food Authority in the market, we can better protect our rice prices from the volatility caused by international markets and the predatory practices of some traders,” Romualdez earlier said.

“This will lead to more stable and predictable pricing for consumers while ensuring farmers receive a fair price for their produce,” he added.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314449709/house-gives-final-ok-to-bill-allowing-nfa-to-sell-rice-to-bring-down-prices.html>

MANILA STANDARD

Angeles City pound renews BAI certificate

By Butch Gunio

May 21, 2024, 10:05 pm

ANGELES City—The Dog Pound and Animal Shelter here has renewed its certification from Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) until May 2027 giving the city government authority to ensure animal welfare and to monitor backyard pet breeders.

The accreditation ensures adequate care and shelter for the animals and prevent the abuse, maltreatment, cruelty and exploitation of animals.

The facility is also the only no-kill animal pound in Pampanga and the second in Central Luzon which is operating with BAI certification.

“We continue to implement animal care programs,” Mayor Carmelo Lazatin Jr. said.

Lazatin’s chief adviser IC Calaguas had exerted efforts to push for the accreditation with executive assistant Reina Manuel, City Veterinary officer-in-charge Dr. Christian Xyric Arcilla, and the late city engineer Donato Dizon since Mayor Lazatin took office in 2019.

<https://manilastandard.net/lgu/314449626/angeles-city-pound-renews-bai-certificate.html>

El Niño agri damage nears P10B – DA

By Janine Alexis Miguel

May 22, 2024

AGRICULTURAL damage caused by the El Niño phenomenon has surged to P9.5 billion, with potential production losses from 163,694 hectares of crop areas, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Tuesday.

In its latest bulletin, the department said drought has affected 175,063 farmers and fishers in 13 regions.

The higher damage estimates were based on additional reports from the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Central Mindanao, Davao and Soccsksargen regions.

Affected crop areas increased to 163,694 hectares, with 71.22 percent of land still potentially recoverable.

Production losses, meanwhile, were estimated at 426,798 metric tons (MT). Of this, 185,561 MT was rice, representing about 1.4 percent of the target production of 9.22 million MT this year. Corn losses accounted for 180,807 MT, while high-value crops accounted for 48,949 MT of lost production.

To address the effects of the weather phenomenon, the Agriculture Department has provided various interventions amounting to P9.71 billion for affected farmers and fishers.

This includes P658.22 million for production support, including agricultural inputs and equipment, and P8.59 billion distributed through the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance program.

Mimaropa, which posted the largest loss in terms of value at P1.7 billion, received almost P460 billion in aid, including rice machinery, loans, coconut seedlings, composting facilities, irrigation projects and marine equipment.

The DA said five towns in Mindoro were recently declared under a state of calamity as a result of the dry spell. This includes Mansalay and Bulalacao in Oriental Mindoro and Looc, Magsaysay and San Jose in Occidental Mindoro.

Moreover, the DA said cloud seeding was ongoing in Southern Cagayan, Northern Isabela, Quirino corn areas, and Magat Reservoir in Cagayan Valley.

To enhance water supply, the government also installed 616 water pumps in seven regions, including Ilocos, Cagayan, Central Luzon, Mimaropa, Western and Central Visayas, and Davao.

The Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. has also indemnified farmers in CAR, Regions 1, 2, 3, 4A, 4B, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 with a total amount of P176.52 million.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/22/news/national/el-nio-agri-damage-nears-p10b-da/1947793>

El Niño damage to agri nears P10B

By **Jed Macapagal**

May 22, 2024

Damage to agriculture of the effects of El Niño phenomenon has reached P9.5 billion as of May 16, according to the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center.

The DA attached agency in its advisory said the weather phenomenon has affected 163,694 hectares (ha) of land tended by 175,063 farmers in Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Central Mindanao, Davao and Soccsksargen.

Total volume loss is pegged at 426,798 metric tons (MT): 185,561 MT of rice worth P4.6 billion; 180,807 MT of corn, P3.17 billion; 48,949 MT of high value crops, P1.65 billion; P57.72 million lost to fisherfolk; 2,403 heads of livestock and poultry, P10.47 million; and 147 MT of cassava, P3.42 million.

The DA said it has so far provided P8.59 billion worth of assistance to affected farmers through the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance nationwide.

The biggest assistance valued at P658.22 million came in the form of production support including inputs, fertilizers, planting materials, pumps and engines, hose, drugs and biologics provided by the agency's regional field offices.

The Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. also indemnified farmers with a total amount of P176.52 million.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/el-nino-damage-to-agri-nears-p10b/

DA: El Niño-hit farmers get indemnity checks

[Ada Pelonia](#)

May 22, 2024

Thousands of farmers have received indemnity checks amounting to P214 million from the Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) as compensation for the damage caused by El Niño, according to an official from the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“The amount is for the insurance claims of 28,084 farmers all over the country,” Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesman Arnel de Mesa told the BusinessMirror in an interview last Monday.

De Mesa also said farmers should apply for PCIC’s insurance cover as their inclusion in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) does not mean that they are automatically insured.

“Hindi ibig sabihin na registered ka sa RSBSA eh automatically insured ka so kailangan magpa-insure ka rin talaga. [Being registered in the RSBSA doesn’t automatically mean you’re insured, so you should still register for crop insurance],” de Mesa said.

“Though ’yung three hectares and below ay libre ‘yung premium so for those three hectares and above kailangan pa rin nila magbayad ng certain amount [Premium is free for those tilling three hectares and below, but for those tilling more than three hectares, they will have to pay a certain amount],” he added.

In the DA’s latest report, the damage caused by El Niño has climbed to P9.5 billion, affecting 175,063 farmers and fishers in 163,694 hectares of agricultural areas.

Marcos recently issued Executive Order 60 which reverted the PCIC to the DA, citing the need for “a strong organizational link between the PCIC and DA...with policies and programs aimed at ensuring food security and modernization of agriculture.”

PCIC, established in 1995 as a government-owned and -controlled corporation (GOCC), was originally attached to the DA, compensating farmers against losses from natural disasters, pests, and diseases.

In September 2021, former President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the transfer of the PCIC to the Department of Finance (DOF) following the recommendation of the Governance Commission for GOCCs to “rationalize and centrally monitor the insurer’s operations as well as for policy and program coordination.”

“We are pleased that the PCIC is back under the wings of the DA. This gives us the scope to assure farmers, livestock and poultry raisers, aquaculturists, and others in production side so we could shield them from losses that may be caused by disasters, pests, and diseases,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said in a statement.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/22/da-el-nino-hit-farmers-get-indemnity-checks/>

Farm damage by El Niño climbs to P9.5 billion, says DA

Ada Pelonia

May 22, 2024

THE agricultural damage caused by the El Niño phenomenon has climbed to P9.5 billion, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In its latest report, the DA said the volume of production losses reached 426,798 metric tons (MT). Palay sustained the most damage at 185,561 MT; corn, 180,807 MT; and 48,949 MT for high-value crops.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel De Mesa said the production losses are equivalent to P4.6 billion for rice, P3.1 billion for corn, and P1.6 billion for high-value crops.

“Actually malaki ang inakyat nito from the last bulletin kasi ang last bulletin P6.3 billion so ito na siguro yung mga huling papasok na report. [Actually, the increase is higher from the previous bulletin which recorded P6.3 billion. This is probably the last incoming report],” De Mesa told reporters on Tuesday.

According to de Mesa, Mimaropa remained the most affected region, with damage reaching P2.6 billion; Cagayan Valley, P2.1 billion; and Western Visayas, P1.7 billion.

The DA spokesperson also said the total affected area for rice reached 83,862 hectares (ha), of which 24,132 ha were totally damaged. However, de Mesa maintained that this was still below their projected 150,000 hectares of area that would be affected by the weather phenomenon.

The agency showed in its report that the rice production loss of 185,561 MT is equivalent to around 2.01 percent of the target production of 9.22 million MT (MMT), both for the dry cropping season this 2024. Also, the corn production loss of 180,807 MT is 4.02 percent of the 4.49 MMT target production in the same cropping season.

“Most of the corn and rice damaged are in the reproductive and maturity stages,” the DA said.

The report also revealed that the dry spell affected 163,694 ha of agricultural areas and 175,063 farmers and fishers.

The DA said it provided P9.71 billion worth of assistance for farmers and fisherfolks, among which were production support (agri-inputs, fertilizers, planting materials, pumps and engines, HDPE hose, drugs, and biologics), 616 water pumps, 847.8 kilometers of concrete irrigation canals, and ongoing conduct of cloud seeding operations.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) reported that El Niño weakened but its impacts continue. Meanwhile, the state weather bureau added that the country is moving into the wet season.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/22/farm-damage-by-el-nino-climbs-to-p9-5-billion-says-da/>

BUSINESS MIRROR

When ‘the incubator’ works truly well, even small businesses will survive: a pandemic success story

Mila M. Lumactao

May 22, 2024



The Dumapay Farms Exhibit at the IFEX showcasing its best sellers: Zumigui virgin coconut oil and coco vinegar.

IN the worst days of Covid-19, the economic impacts rippled ruinously across communities throughout the Philippines. Such was the case of an entire farming community in barangay Zumigui in Luna, Apayao, which struggled as selling prices of their traditional monocrop product—rice—kept dropping.

The Dumapay family, rooted in the community, enjoined their relatives, lifelong friends, and neighboring farmers to revisit another product naturally abundant in the area but largely ignored: coconuts.



The enterprising Dumapay couple, Judith and Rey, stand in front of their IFEX booth, proud visionaries for a progressive Cordillera.

Fast forward to April 2022, and Dumapayao Farms Corporation (DFC) was born: with a company brand fusing family name and their treasured Apayao heritage, and the proponents and co-founder Reynold and Judith Dumapay envisioning, “to honor God as we enable farmers in the countryside to experience a better life through sustainable secondary crops.” Regionally, DFC has effectively pioneered high-value coconut-based production and processing in Apayao; over the long-term, DFC seeks to establish Apayao as the “Coconut Capital of the North.”

Enter the incubator

Bucking twin challenges—the typical attrition rate of Philippine MSMEs, and the cumulative economic effect of the pandemic and lockdown measures—Dumapayao Farms found a wholistic enabling environment. First to throw support was the local government, led by the office of Mayor Josephine Bangsil of Luna, Apayao; Rep. Eleanor Bulut-Begtang, the lone congresswoman of the province, and the Provincial Government of Apayao, led by Gov. Elias Bulut Jr.

Because the company was new to its first and flagship product, Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO), national government representatives filled in crucial gaps.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) provided the list of accredited suppliers of the VCO cold processed machines, and assisted DFC’s participation in the 2023 Philippine Food Expo Exhibition.

An attached corporation of the DA, the Philippine Coconut Authority spearheads the development of the country's coconut and other palm oil industry to their full potential. The Dumapays' firm, now registered under the PCA, has a suite of benefits, including access to important updates (especially trade trends and policies) on the local and global coconut markets, and support in terms of endorsement to potential domestic and foreign buyers.

For its part, the Department of Trade and Industry's DTI-Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) office offered robust support, including intellectual property training to protect the firm's corporate and product brands (Dumapayao Farms Corp. and Zumigui Gracefield, respectively).

For actual product development, marketing, and distribution support, the DTI backed DFC via three programs in the agency's extensive assistance ecosystem: DTI Apayao's ONE TOWN, ONE PRODUCT (OTOP) Philippines, a priority stimulus program for that endeavors to capacitate MSMEs—"OTOPpreneurs"—to innovate and produce market-ready products and services; ARISE Plus Philippines, which aims to foster inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in the through improved international trade performance and competitiveness; and, through efforts of the Export Marketing Bureau. The DTI also brought in DFC to form part of the CAR contingent in regional, national, and international-scale events, the most recent being the International Food Exhibition (IFEX) Philippines held last May 10-12.

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST), meanwhile, provided technical assistance: earlier, on DFC's coconut vinegar production, and most recently, for the development of the Zumigui Gracefield all-natural coconut flour product. DOST funneled the latter grant through its Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP).

Equally important, the agency, particularly through its DOST Apayao office, also provides training and mentoring for the DFC farming and production team, the majority of whom are members of Apayao's local Indigenous People (IP) community.

From 'crab mentality' to 'coconut mentality'

Even with multi-agency and LGU support, however, a number of businesses fail to thrive due to unfair practices of direct competitors: another example of the notorious Filipino "crab mentality" of pulling others down. However, DFC's Reynold and Judith Dumapay discovered to their relief and surprise that the Philippines' main trade group for VCO, Virgin Coconut Oil Producers and Traders Association of the

Philippines Inc. (or VCO Philippines), were, in their own experience, “incredibly supportive, and we received a lot of mentoring, and even practical tips such as the distinctions between [VCO centrifuge] machine types and brands.”

Also a welcome partner in the entire growth journey for MSMEs such as DFC: large enterprises and their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arms that invest in other forms of capability building. In DFC’s case, BPI Foundation, Inc sponsored mentoring sessions through its BPI Sinag Synergy business challenge for social enterprises. DFC emerged as one of the top 25 out of the initial field of 59 finalists, and thus qualified for the program’s Online Bootcamp.

Luna’s local brand meets global markets

AS a relatively new social enterprise rooted in the second-class municipality of Luna, Apayao, DFC further benefited from the two-pronged support from DTI—through the agency’s on-ground, grassroots business development support, and through DTI’s Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM). As the DTI’s export promotion arm, CITEM counts IFEX Philippines 2024 as just one in its wide roster of promotional programs and activities.

CITEM focuses on developing, nurturing, and promoting globally competitive small and medium enterprises (SMEs), exporters, designers, and manufacturers by implementing an Integrated Approach to Export Marketing in partnership with other government and private entities.

As DFC’s case demonstrates, CITEM fills this very vital link for the company, and many other community-based and social enterprises in the Philippine regions: a fast track to connect with key players in the export markets.

All these illustrate how a well-rounded approach in government support—with strategic synergies between and among agencies, regional offices, and the local government units, plus highly-targeted and relevant interventions from large enterprises—can go a long way in ensuring that embryonic businesses can get their footing, become stable, and thrive with resilience.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/22/when-the-incubator-works-truly-well-even-small-businesses-will-survive-a-pandemic-success-story/>

The Philippines' reliance on imported food and its pursuit of agricultural exports

BusinessMirror Editorial

May 22, 2024



Philippine agricultural exports in the first quarter went up by 10.7 percent to \$1.72 billion from \$1.56 billion recorded in 2023.

The Philippines has been relying on food producers from other countries for decades. It continues to import rice in huge quantities years after the El Niño episode of 1997-1998 that ravaged swaths of ricelands. The country also purchases millions of kilos of meat products to prop up its domestic supply of pork as well as beef.

The latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) attest to the fact that the country remains reliant on foreign farmers for its food supply. Even as millions of local farmers and workers depend on the farm sector for their livelihood, the country's food imports accounted for nearly 72 percent of agricultural trade in the first quarter. (See, "Report: PHL agri imports reach \$4.34B in Q1," in

the BusinessMirror, May 20, 2024). As expected, cereals (including rice and wheat), topped the list of food items that the country imports, followed by residues and waste from the food industries, miscellaneous edible preparations, and meat and edible meat offal.

Despite this, the latest PSA record also gives us hope that the Philippines is progressing toward its goal of becoming an export powerhouse by 2028. This is because agricultural exports in the first quarter went up by 10.7 percent to \$1.72 billion from \$1.56 billion recorded in 2023. PSA said the Philippines's top exports include edible fruits and nuts and preparations of vegetables, fruit, butts or other parts of the plants.

There is a lot of room for growth for the Philippine farm exports given the world's increasing need for more food to feed an expanding population. Of the \$6.07-billion agricultural trade recorded in January to March, exports accounted for only 28 percent. Given the right resources and support, local producers can expand outward shipments and eventually tilt the balance of agricultural trade in favor of the Philippines.

For one, food producers need assistance in hurdling the stringent sanitary and phytosanitary requirements and other nontariff barriers of importing countries. Those who wish to export more food items to countries in Europe would have to deal with a new law that aims to prevent the shipment of products linked to deforestation. The Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. noted that the EU Deforestation Regulation or Regulation 2023/1115, which will enter into force in December, applies to entities exporting cattle/beef, soy, coffee, coco, palm oil, rubber and wood. **(See, "Brace for EU deforestation law, exporters told," in the BusinessMirror, April 8, 2024).**

The Philippines is a party to a number of free trade agreements, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The country should help its producers take full advantage of the benefits offered by these free trade deals to expand their food shipments. In particular, the government should step up efforts to encourage micro, small and medium enterprises to participate in free trade deals that will not only enhance their viability but also allow them to create more jobs in rural areas.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/22/the-philippines-reliance-on-imported-food-and-its-pursuit-of-agricultural-exports/>

Pinsala ng El Niño sa agrikultura, P9.5 bilyon — Department of Agriculture

[Angie dela Cruz](#)

May 22, 2024 | 12:00am



Locals walk over the dry part of Intang Lake in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija on April 22, 2024.

MANILA, Philippines — Umaabot na sa P9.5 bilyong halaga ang pinsala ng El Niño sa agrikultura.

Ayon sa Department of Agriculture (DA), ang palayan ang may pinaka malaking pinsala ng tagtuyot na umaabot sa P4.6 bilyon, pataniman ng mais na may pinsala na aabot sa P3.1 bilyon at ang iba pang higit na napinsala ay ang mga high-value crops tulad ng repolyo, carrots gayundin ang palaisdaan at manukan.

Umaabot naman sa 175,000 magsasaka ang naapektuhan ang hanap buhay sa pagtatanim dahil sa kawalang ulan dulot ng El Niño habang nasa 164,000 ektarya ng pataniman ang nasira.

Umaasa naman si DA Spokesperson Arnel De Mesa na hindi na madaragdagan pa ang epektong dulot ng El Niño sa mga magsasaka dahil sa pagpasok ng panahon ng tag-ulan sa bansa.

<https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2024/05/22/2356981/pinsala-ng-el-nio-sa-agrikultura-p95-bilyon-department-agriculture>