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MANILA BULLETIN:

Las Piñas, Pasay LGUs to hold 'Kadiwa ng Pangulo'

BY [JEAN FERNANDO](#)

May 29, 2024 06:01 PM



(Photo from Las Piñas LGU)

The city governments of Las Piñas and Pasay announced that the Kadiwa ng Pangulo program will be conducted again in their respective cities on May 30 and 31.

Las Piñas Mayor Imelda Aguilar said the Kadiwa ng Pangulo is a project of the President and the Department of Agriculture (DA) that seeks to provide consumers with access to quality and affordable goods and commodities.

Aguilar said the program will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in Barangays Almanza Uno, Almanza Dos, Pilar Village, CAA, Daniel Fajardo and Manuyo Dos on Friday, May 31.

The mayor said aside from special milled rice worth P39 per kilogram, consumers can also purchase sugar, vegetables, fruits, and other items at an affordable price.



(Photo from Pasay PIO)

In Pasay City, residents may visit the Pasay City Astrodome where the Kadiwa ng Pangulo will be held for two days on May 30 and 31 from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/29/las-pinas-pasay-lg-us-to-hold-kadiwa-ng-pangulo>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Farmers ask Senate to review PH performance under RCEP

BY [**BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT**](#)

May 29, 2024 04:08 PM

A group of farmers called on the new Senate leadership to review the country's trade performance during the first year of the country's membership in the mega trade deal Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

In a statement, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) expressed dismay on the moves by the economic managers to reduce tariffs on rice and other sensitive commodities. The group said this contradict their assurances during the RCEP Senate hearings that these products would not suffer any tariff reduction.

Recently, Finance Secretary Ralph Recto floated a proposal to cut rice tariffs from 35 percent to 17.5 percent, purportedly to lower rice prices.

"We call on Senate President Francis Escudero to immediately reorganize and convene its RCEP Oversight Committee. We need to know if the government lived up to its promises to the agricultural sector. Have the promised gains from RCEP materialized?", said Raul Montemayor, FFF National Manager and member of the *Bantay* RCEP Coalition which was formed by civil society groups last May 2023 to monitor RCEP.

The FFF also challenged Congress to honor its commitment to significantly increase the budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"A large part of the proposed increase in the DA's 2025 budget is placed in Tier 2, where it will have to compete with proposals from all other government agencies. How the DA budget is finally configured will show whether the Senators were really serious in their commitments when they approved RCEP," said Montemayor.

The RCEP is a consolidation of trade agreements between and among the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) - which includes the Philippines - and China, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

Senate Resolution No. 42 dated Feb. 21, 2023 ratified Philippine accession to RCEP. The agreement entered into force for the country on June 2, 2023.

Responding to concerns about the preparedness of Filipino farmers to compete against imports and take advantage of export opportunities, the Resolution included a list of government's commitments to assist the agricultural sector. It also created an Oversight Committee to regularly monitor and review such commitments and their impact on farmers.

FFF noted that a scheduled meeting of the Committee last May 22 was cancelled following the change in Senate leadership and the resignation of Senator Loren Legarda as Oversight Committee head.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/29/article-2334>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Sugar Council calls for transparent import program

BY **GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG**

May 29, 2024 02:31 PM

Supporting the Philippine Sugar Millers Association's (PSMA) suggestion to set aside importation, the Sugar Council called for a computed and transparent importation program so that locally produced sugar is not prejudiced.

In a statement on Wednesday, May 29, the Sugar Council said that while importation is vital to keeping sugar stocks up and stabilizing retail prices during the off-milling season, they want to seek active consultation with farmer groups and other sugar stakeholders before issuing out any import orders.

The PSMA declared that the Philippines has ample supply in the sugar inventory. This is said to last until the end of the crop year, recommending a pause on importation activities.

The total physical stock in sugar recorded by the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) last May 12 totaled 531,838 metric tons (MT), higher by 26.37 percent compared to 420,866 MT last year.

"The latter includes over 135,000 tons or 2.7 million bags of imported refined sugar brought in last year that have not even been withdrawn or used," the Sugar Council noted.

The council consists of three sugarcane producers, including the Confederation of Sugar Producers Association (CONFED), the National Federation of Sugarcane Planters (NFSP), and the Panay Federation of Sugarcane Farmers Inc. (PANAYFED).

Three federations account for 67 percent of the affiliated sugar output, while the consolidated sugar volume produced by the PSMA millers went up to 65 percent.

"[We] found equally disturbing the allegation that withdrawals for imported refined sugar shot up by 16 percent while withdrawals for locally refined sugar plummeted by over 7 percent," the council said in a statement.

"Since locally refined sugar comes from the local farmers' raw sugar, demand for raw sugar also dropped by over 4 percent much to the disadvantage of local farmers," they added.

Meanwhile, refined sugar sold in the local wet markets are averaged at P73 to P100, according to the Department of Agriculture price watch Wednesday.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/29/sugar-council-calls-for-transparent-import-program-1>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Stricter price controls on retail goods needed, says Romualdez

BY [ELLSON QUISMORIO](#)

May 29, 2024 02:06 PM

AT A GLANCE

- House Speaker Martin Romualdez is calling for stricter price controls in the retail market in a bid to prevent price manipulation and protect consumers.
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(MANILA BULLETIN)

House Speaker Martin Romualdez is calling for stricter price controls in the retail market in a bid to prevent price manipulation and protect consumers.

“Our goal is to lower food prices while protecting local farmers and producers. We hope to do this by increasing local procurement and adjusting import tariffs,” said Romualdez, who recently met with Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr.

The meeting focused on balancing the interests between consumers and food producers, such as farmers.

Romualdez echoed Laurel's suggestion to bring low-priced fresh fish, chicken, and other agricultural produce to the market, particularly in Kadiwa centers.

The Speaker also called for "a whole of nation approach" in solving the rice crisis.

Romualdez, who represents Leyte's 1st district, noted that this approach requires the cooperation of relevant government agencies, market players, and local producers.

"DA should talk to traders to avoid hoarding and price manipulation," he stressed.

The Speaker said the House of Representatives is fully committed to supporting President Marcos' goal of significantly reducing rice prices.

The commitment includes addressing market challenges through collaborative efforts and strategic interventions, ensuring that every Filipino has access to quality but affordable rice.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/29/stricter-price-controls-on-retail-goods-needed-says-romualdez>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Romualdez thanks Recto for helping reduce rice prices

BY ELLSON QUISMORIO

May 29, 2024 01:41 PM

AT A GLANCE

- House Speaker Martin Romualdez has thanked on Wednesday, May 29 Department of Finance (DOF) Secretary Ralph Recto for making good his promise to reduce rice tariffs.



House Speaker Martin Romualdez (left), DOF Secretary Ralph Recto (Speaker's office, Facebook)

House Speaker Martin Romualdez has thanked on Wednesday, May 29 Department of Finance (DOF) Secretary Ralph Recto for making good his promise to reduce rice tariffs.

The move is meant to help lower the price of rice--the country's staple food--to below P50 per kilo.

Romualdez commended Recto for advancing their earlier agreement between House leaders and the secretaries of finance and agriculture.

This initiative aims to address the spike in rice prices that was driven by unscrupulous traders, the impacts of El Niño, and high global costs, he said.

Last week, the House leader met with Recto, Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., Bureau of Customs (BOC) Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio, and House Appropriations Committee Chairman Ako Bicol Party-list Rep. Zaldy Co to craft practical solutions to mitigate the financial strain on consumers while securing fair compensation for local rice farmers.

Romualdez, who goes by the moniker 'Mr. Rice', said the group looked at the temporary reduction in rice tariffs to lower traders' costs.

This is expected to help make rice more affordable without undermining local farmers' livelihood.

Despite the planned tariff reduction, Romualdez said farmers will continue to receive support from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), as funded by taxes collected under Republic Act (RA) No.11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law.

As of April, DOF data indicate that rice tariff collections has already reached P16 billion-- enough to cover the P10-billion minimum requirement to assist farmers under RCEF.

Recto was the erstwhile Batangas 6th district congressman and deputy speaker in the current 19th Congress.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/29/romualdez-thanks-recto-for-helping-reduce-rice-prices>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos says Jollibee's success in Brunei shows potential for Halal industry, agri-business

BY [**BETHEENA UNITE**](#)

May 29, 2024 01:05 PM

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Brunei—The success of Jollibee, a popular Filipino fast food chain, in Brunei shows the "incredible potential" of Halal industry development and other sectors, President Marcos said.



President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. (Photo courtesy of Malacañang)

Marcos said in his speech during the Philippine business forum on Wednesday morning, May 29, that the success of Jollibee in Brunei, which has 19 outlets in the foreign country, exemplifies the commitment of the Philippines and Brunei to regional economic integration on multiple fronts."

"Our shared passions are exemplified by Jollibee, a Philippine company with a remarkable success story in Brunei," Marcos said.

"Their 19 Halal-certified outlets, established since 1987, reflect the Bruneians' appreciation for Filipino brands. This forum is a platform to further strengthen business ties and foster economic growth within the ASEAN nations," he added.

With the success of Jollibee, the President said that he sees an "incredible potential" in Halal industry development and other sectors such as agribusiness and renewable energy.

"I am delighted to share the positive developments from the Philippines and to discuss how we can advance and strengthen our collaboration with Brunei, leveraging the benefits of our partnership through ASEAN, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement or RCEP, and the Brunei Darussalam- Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area, BIMP-EAGA, for a prosperous shared future," he said.

"And through this forum, we stand firm in strengthening the business relations between the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam. Our partnership is a symbol of the shared aspiration to foster economic growth and shape a more vibrant ASEAN community," he added.

Meanwhile, the President also urged business leaders in Brunei Darussalam to seriously consider the Philippines as a prime investment country.

"I enjoin the business leaders of Brunei to seriously consider the Philippines as your prime investment destination," he also said in his speech.

The forum showcased the Philippine economy's strength and facilitated trade and investment partnerships focused on agriculture, renewable energy, halal development, among other opportunities in the Brunei Darussalam Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) region.

It was organized by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in partnership with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Brunei Economy Program with the support of the Philippine Embassy in Brunei.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/29/marcos-says-jollibee-s-success-in-brunei-shows-potential-for-halal-industry-agri-business>

MANILA BULLETIN:

PH commits to stronger business ties with Brunei

BY [ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS](#)

May 29, 2024 12:57 PM

AT A GLANCE

- The Philippine Business Forum in Brunei is part of the government's efforts to showcase the Philippine economy's strength and facilitate trade and investment partnerships focused on agribusiness, renewable energy, halal development, and opportunities in the BIMP-EAGA region.

President Marcos said that the Philippine government has committed to strengthening its business ties with Brunei Darussalam and fostering economic growth within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).



President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. (Bongbong Marcos/Facebook)

Marcos said this as he attended a business forum on the sidelines of his State Visit to Brunei Darussalam on Wednesday, May 29.

In his speech, the President reaffirmed the Philippines' unwavering commitment to regional economic integration on multiple fronts, leveraging the benefits of its partnership through ASEAN, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP), and the

Brunei Darussalam- Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA).

Marcos said the Philippines sees vast potential in sectors such as agribusiness, renewable energy, and Halal industry development.

“We stand firm in strengthening the business relations between the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam,” he said.

Our partnership is a symbol of the shared aspiration to foster economic growth and shape a more vibrant ASEAN community,” he added.

According to the President, the trade and investment policy framework of the Philippines, established through the ASEAN and RCEP, is fundamental to the country’s agenda for regional economic integration.

He is optimistic that the government’s efforts “will be further supported by additional policy measures designed to strengthen” the supply chain integration in the Philippines, boosting foreign direct investment.

The Philippine Business Forum in Brunei is part of the government’s efforts to showcase the Philippine economy’s strength and facilitate trade and investment partnerships focused on agribusiness, renewable energy, halal development, and opportunities in the BIMP-EAGA region.

It is organized by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in partnership with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Brunei Economy Program with the support of the Philippine Embassy in Brunei.

[**https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/29/ph-commits-to-stronger-business-ties-with-brunei**](https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/29/ph-commits-to-stronger-business-ties-with-brunei)

MANILA BULLETIN:

Philippines inks 2 deals with Brunei on agri-business, trade

BY **BETHEENA UNITE**

May 29, 2024 01:30 PM

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Brunei—Deals on agriculture and economic cooperation were signed during the two-day state visit of President Marcos here.

Marcos concluded his visit in Brunei Darussalam with the signing of the two agreements after leading the Philippine business forum here on Wednesday, May 29.

The first agreement signed was the memorandum of understanding (MOU) for Partnership in Agriculture and MSMEs Development between the ASEAN Business Advisory Council and the Bruneian ASEAN Business Advisory Council Philippines.

It establishes partnership for agriculture and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) development aimed at enhancing economic integration, promoting sustainable agribusiness practices and fostering inclusive business model within the ASEAN region.

It also outlines cooperation in conducting studies, mentorship programs and identifying trade and investment opportunities in the agriculture sector.

The second deal was signed between the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Brunei Darussalam and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI). It aimed at strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries.

The MOU focuses on exchanging information, organizing trade and investment missions, and supporting different industries such as information and communications technology, Halal food, smart agriculture, manufacturing, franchising, tourism, services and micro-small and medium enterprise development.

It also establishes the business councils in both countries to facilitate joint initiatives and outlines dispute resolution mechanisms.

“Through this forum, we stand firm in strengthening the business relations between the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam. Our partnership is a symbol of the shared aspiration to foster economic growth and shape a more vibrant ASEAN community,” Marcos said in his speech during the business forum.

Marcos also urged Bruneian business leaders to invest in the Philippines and consider it as their prime investment destination.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/29/philippines-inks-2-deals-with-brunei-on-agri-business-trade>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA: Lower tariffs to slash rice prices by P5

Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas - The Philippine Star

May 30, 2024 | 12:00am



Photos show workers unloading sacks of rice from a truck along Dagupan St. in Manila on February 7, 2024.

STAR / Ernie Penaredondo

MANILA, Philippines — Rice prices could go down by as much as P5 per kilo if tariffs on rice imports would be further reduced, according to government estimates.

Reducing the rice tariffs below 35 percent would result in retail prices of the staple decreasing by P4 to P5 per kilo, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said.

Finance Undersecretary Domini Velasquez said the government is looking at further reducing rice tariffs to around 15 to 20 percent compared to the already lowered present rate of 35 percent.

“If we are going to lower the tariffs to 17.5 percent, there would be a huge reduction (in retail prices of rice). Our estimate is about P4 to P5 (per kilo) reduction,” De Mesa said at a forum yesterday.

De Mesa was referring to the tariff rate earlier floated by Finance Secretary Ralph Recto. Earlier this week, Recto disclosed that the government wants to cut rice tariffs further to pull down retail prices of the staple faster.

The government already extended the lower tariff rates of 35 percent on rice imports until the end of the year as part of its counter-inflation measures.

The Department of Finance is willing to forego the estimated revenue losses of “less than P10 billion” arising from the rice tariff reduction in exchange for slowing down the country’s inflation, Velasquez pointed out.

“(The foregone revenues) would not matter much if we are able to bring down the prices (of rice by) P4 to P5,” she said.

De Mesa, meanwhile, said prevailing farmgate prices of palay would not be impacted much by the tariff reduction because of the higher buying price being offered by the National Food Authority (NFA).

Rice imports account for about 20 percent of the country’s total staple supply.

Rice inflation softened to 23.9 percent inflation in April from 24.4 percent in March, based on PSA data.

‘Ill-timed’

Raul Montemayor of the Federation of Free Farmers said reducing rice tariffs further could be “ill timed” since the rice competitiveness enhancement fund (RCEF), which depends on tariff collections, is being amended and improved.

Lawmakers and officials are keen on raising the guaranteed earmark budget of RCEF to P15 billion from the present P10 billion since annual tariff collections have been more than P20 billion in recent years.

All rice tariffs collected are used by the government to bankroll various programs aimed at making local rice farmers more competitive since the RTL law was passed in 2019.

“Let the private sector service the non-poor consumers at market prices. No need to touch tariffs. If we reduce tariffs, we lose revenues and funds for farmers, depress palay prices with no guarantee that retail prices will go down,” he said.

Palay procurement up

Palay procurement has tripled, totaling to 2.8 million bags equivalent 126,000 metric tons of rice, but still short of the NFA target of nine-day consumption of 300,000 MT, NFA Administrator Larry Lacson said.

The NFA has started buying palay for as high as P30 per kilo in the latter part of April 2024 after the NFA council has approved higher procurement in a bid to boost the government's rice buffer stock.

The dry and clean palay ranged between P23 and P30 per kilo, depending on the prevailing market price in a given province.

Previously, the NFA bought dry and clean palay for P19 to P23 per kilo.

For wet and fresh palay, the NFA's buying price ranged from P17 to P23 per kilo from the previous P16 to P19 price level.

Meanwhile, Lacson said the NFA is ready to supply rice to concerned government agencies and local government units amid the threat of the La Niña in the country.

According to Lacson, the bulk of the rice stocks is in the hands of the private sector and the household.

RTL amendment

Sen. Cynthia Villar said the Senate will pass the amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) or Republic Act 11203 in August after the House of Representatives approved a similar measure on third and final reading.

In a chance interview in Las Piñas City, Villar, who chairs the Senate committee on agriculture and food, maintained that she is against the version of the lower chamber which aims to bring back the power of the NFA to import as well as sell the staple in the market.

“The Department of Agriculture will be given the power (to import rice). They can import free of tariff which can be used to help the poor and the victims of calamities,” Villar said.

Rep. Mark Enverga, chairman of the House committee on agriculture and food security, earlier assured the senators and the public that they definitely have “safeguards” in restoring the power of the NFA in helping stabilize the price of rice.

Meanwhile, Villar said the proceeds from the RTL will be based on the percentage collection instead of the present fixed amount.

She said under the amendments of the RTL, the allocation from the tariff collections to the farmers will be based on percentage of the collection.

According to Villar, aside from the budget allocation for mechanization, inbred seed production, loan for farmers and training, funding for water impounding facilities

with solar power, composting machine and emergency fund for rice importation will be added.

Agricultural smugglers

The Agricultural Sector Alliance of the Philippines lauded the passage of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act imposing severe penalties, including life imprisonment on smugglers, hoarders, profiteers and cartels of agricultural and fishery products.

AGAP party-list Rep. Nicanor Briones said the measure aims to protect farmers' livelihood as well as the state from the manipulative scheme of economic saboteurs.

The measure imposes a penalty of life imprisonment, three times the recommended fine and will be non-bailable.

A private citizen can also file a case.

Under the bill, a tipster or whistle blower will receive at least P1 million to P20 million or 20 percent as reward.

Briones said the measure protects the agricultural producers and welfare of consumers and the economy as a whole and plugs leakages in tax and duty collection.

He said President Marcos' order to pursue and hold accountable those involved in the smuggling of agricultural products in the country is meaningless if the Bureau of Customs is still in the council of the new law and no case has been filed against smugglers and economic saboteurs. – **Bella Cariaso**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/30/2358986/da-lower-tariffs-slash-rice-prices-p5>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

It's official: Rainy season is here

Romina Cabrera - The Philippine Star

May 30, 2024 | 12:00am



Pedestrians cross Aurora Boulevard in Quezon City under light rain. The state weather bureau has officially declared the start of the rainy season.

Miguel De Guzman

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) declared the start of the rainy season as Typhoon Aghon exited the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) at noon yesterday.

PAGASA administrator Nathaniel Servando said the passage of Aghon and the prevalence of the southwest monsoon signify the onset of the wet season.

“The occurrence of scattered rainshowers, frequent thunderstorms, the passage of Typhoon Aghon and the southwest monsoon over the past few days have brought significant rains over the western sections of Luzon and the Visayas signify the start of the rainy season in the country,” he said in an advisory.

He warned of the high chance of La Niña developing in the next few months, which could bring adverse effects with above-average rainfall.

“Moreover, the high chance of La Niña conditions to develop by the July-August-September period increases the likelihood of above-normal rainfall conditions in some areas of the country, especially towards the end of the year,” Servando added.

Still, PAGASA said there are expected monsoon breaks in rainfall that could extend over a few days or even weeks at a time.

State weather forecasters said they are continuously monitoring weather and climate situations in the country and advised the public to take measures against the adverse impacts of the wet season.

Aghon exits

The state weather bureau said Aghon left the northern boundary of the PAR at around noon yesterday but will partially influence the southwesterly wind flow, bringing rains over parts of the country.

Aghon was monitored 1,205km northeast of extreme Northern Luzon yesterday at 3 p.m. It was carrying winds of 120 kph near the center and gustiness of up to 150 kph.

Meanwhile, the southwesterly windflow partially influenced by the typhoon will still bring moderate to heavy rains over the western portions of Northern Luzon, Central Luzon and MIMAROPA until today.

It will also bring occasional gusty conditions in the next three days over Batanes, Ilocos Region, Zambales, Bataan, Lubang Islands and Kalayaan Islands.

The southwesterly windflow is currently bringing scattered rains over Metro Manila, Ilocos Region, CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, Western Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi.

Scattered rains due to the frontal system are also expected over Batanes and Babuyan islands. The rest of the country may see isolated rains due to localized thunderstorms

Agriculture damage hits P57 million

The damage of Typhoon Aghon to the agriculture sector has ballooned to P57.5 million affecting 729 hectares of rice, corn and high value crops, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

In its latest bulletin, the DA said the total volume of production loss was at 1,995 metric tons (MT) affecting 1,145 farmers. Bulk of the damage came from high value crops with P29.34 million covering 206 hectares of plantations; followed by rice with P24.86 million damage covering 489 hectares of farms.

Meanwhile, at least P1.52 million corn were damaged affecting 34 hectares; agricultural infrastructure, P965,000; livestock and poultry, P448,300.

On the other hand, agriculture assistant secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said the figure will still increase with reports from the field offices on the extent of damage in Eastern Visayas and Bicol.

The DA is ready to distribute at least P23.06 million worth of seeds, planting materials to the affected farmers.

Also available is the P1 billion Quick Response Fund and the P25,000 in the Survival and Recovery loan program under the Agricultural Credit Policy Council, de Mesa said.

DSWD aid

Around 3,000 families from two areas in Quezon province that have been badly hit by Typhoon Aghon have received family food packs from the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

“The brunt of the typhoon was in Quezon, but if we isolate it some more, it’s in Mauban and Pagbilao (towns). The affected families there were about 2,000 to 3,000 near Polilio island,” Secretary Rex Gatchalian said during the distribution of aid.

The DSWD chief acknowledges, however, that these numbers are expected to rise to as many as 10,000 because some areas in the province don’t have communications yet.

Social workers have not extended any financial assistance yet, according to Gatchalian, because their list of beneficiaries is not yet complete. – **Delon Porcalla, Bella Cariaso**

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/30/2358997/its-official-rainy-season-here>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DENR to work with ombudsman after Bohol officials' suspension

Bella Cariaso - The Philippine Star

May 30, 2024 | 12:00am



Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

STAR / File

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will work closely with the Office of the Ombudsman following the preventive suspension of Bohol Gov. Aris Aumentado and 68 other local officials for six months without pay in connection with the investigation into the construction of Captain's Peak Resort at the foot of Chocolate Hills.

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga gave the assurance yesterday.

"Upholding integrity and accountability in environmental governance is paramount to our mission of protecting, conserving and regenerating our natural heritage. We take these matters seriously and are committed to ensuring that those responsible for any violation, whether intentionally or inadvertently, are held accountable," Loyzaga said.

In its complaint, the ombudsman field investigation office (FIO) charged the public respondents with “grave misconduct, gross neglect of duty and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service relative to the construction, operation and expansion of Captain’s Peak Resort in Canmano, Sagbayan, Bohol, an establishment nestled in the middle of the iconic Chocolate Hills National Monument (CHNM), a declared protected in Bohol.”

“Likewise, the Department is actively supporting and advocating for policy and legislative reforms that strike a balance between conservation efforts, the need for sustainable livelihoods and the promotion of responsible ecotourism in protected areas,” Loyzaga added.

Aside from Aumentado, also ordered preventively suspended were chief executives of several towns in Bohol, namely: Sagbayan mayor Restituto Suarez III, Batuan mayor Antonino Jumawid, Catigbian mayor Elizabeth Pace, Clarin mayor Eugenio Ibarra, Bilar mayor Norman Palacio, former Bilar mayor Manuel Jayectin, Bilar vice mayor Ranulfo Maligmat, Sierra Bullones mayor Michael Doria, Sierra Bullones vice-mayor Simplico Maestrado Jr., Valencia mayor Dionisio Neil Balite, Carmen mayor Conchita Delos Reyes and former Carmen mayor Ricardo Toribio.

Also ordered suspended were DENR-Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) regional director Ma. Victoria Abrera and DENR Region 7 Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) regional director Gilbert Gonzales.

Likewise ordered suspended were several barangay officials as well as regional officials of the Office of the Civil Defense, Department of Science and Technology and Department of Agriculture.

The office of Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr. was tasked to implement the suspension order.

The Chocolate Hills Natural Monument in Bohol is a legislated protected area, while the entire Bohol Island is also declared a UNESCO Global Geopark, the only tourism area in the country.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/30/2358999/denr-work-ombudsman-after-bohol-officials-suspension>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Bird flu detected in alpacas in US for the first time

Agence France-Presse

May 29, 2024 | 9:23am



Stock image of an alpaca

Image by Ralph from Pixabay

WASHINGTON, United States — Cases of bird flu have been detected in alpacas at a US farm, authorities said Tuesday, as the disease spreads widely among dairy cattle and has infected two humans.

The National Veterinary Services Laboratories confirmed a highly pathogenic variant of bird flu virus known as H5N1 was detected at an Idaho farm, from which infected poultry were removed this month, the Agriculture Department said.

This detection is not surprising for several reasons, including the earlier infection at the farm, the department said. Still, it is the first time the virus has been found in alpacas -- members of the camel family that are native to the Andes and raised mainly for their fleece.

In recent weeks the H5N1 variant has been detected in more than 50 animal species in the United States, including dairy cows.

Two people working on farms have been found to have bird flu, albeit with only mild symptoms.

Last week the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said its risk assessment for the general public remained low but it did suggest it expects more cases.

Experts have said they are worried by the growing number of mammals infected by bird flu even if cases among people remain rare.

There is no evidence of human-to-human transmission at present but health officials fear that if the virus were to eventually spread widely it could mutate into a form that could pass between humans.

<https://www.philstar.com/world/2024/05/29/2358840/bird-flu-detected-alpacas-us-first-time>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

British Chamber looks forward to anti-agricultural economic sabotage act being signed into law

Philstar.com

May 29, 2024 | 2:31pm



A vendor at Balintawak Public Market in Quezon City peels newly delivered onions on December 13, 2022.

STAR/Michael Varcas

The British Chamber of Commerce Philippines supported the Senate's ratification of the bicameral conference committee report of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act on 22 May 2024.

The bill has been certified as urgent by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., which aims to protect the local farmers, consumers and the overall agricultural sector against hoarders, profiteers, cartels and smugglers.

BCCP Executive Director/Trustee Chris Nelson consistently promotes a more competitive Philippine agricultural sector, noting its contribution to the country's economic growth and ensuring food security.

"The passage of the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act remains a key priority. We know there have been some discussions that could be passed, hopefully before the Congress adjourns in June. We have some concerns in terms of the amendment of import entries that should be looked at but overall, the need is to pass this act."



CHRIS NELSON | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE PHILIPPINES

IN FOCUS: PH-UK TRADE TIES

Nelson also emphasized the need to continue to ease inflation, noting its upward trend reaching 3.8% in April 2024 from 3.7% the previous month. In line with this, he also noted its support for the full implementation of Executive Order No. 50—mandating the extension of lowered tariff rates on agricultural commodities including pork.

"I think inflation remains the key issue. And that has been remarked upon by Secretary Recto. If we get inflation low, that would certainly help GDP. In that context, I think that what could be done to help with inflation, we strongly advocate the full implementation of the Executive Order No. 50 on the lower tariffs particularly on pork. We work very hard to get quality pork from the UK here. I believe now there are opportunities for tariffs to be lowered on an overall basis, and again, on supporting the government, President Marcos issued an executive order on wanting to streamline import requirements. The numbers are still 5.7% is still a good growth rate. Obviously, everybody wants to see it higher. I think it's tracking the right way. The key is getting that inflation number particularly on food down."

In a recent Senate press release, Sen. Cynthia Villar, principal author and sponsor of the act, noted that, "This is also a protection of the State from tax evaders and non-payers of duties. This will ensure the well-being of our agricultural producers, consumers, and the whole economy."

The British Chamber fully supports the government's efforts to further boost local production by establishing a more competitive agricultural sector, ensuring the country's food security and modernizing the sector as one of the key drivers of the Philippine economy.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/biz-memos/2024/05/29/2358876/british-chamber-looks-forward-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage-act-being-signed-law>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

DBP ramps up support to local hog industry

INQUIRER.net BrandRoom / 07:24 PM May 29, 2024

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.

A portrait photograph of Philip G. Lo, DBP Chairman. He is a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. He is smiling and looking directly at the camera.

“DBP shall continue to advance meaningful programs and policies that benefit all essential stakeholders such as our farmers and food industry workers in line with President Marcos, Jr.’s vision of a food-secure Philippines.”

Philip G. Lo
DBP Chairman

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.

“

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.”



Michael O. de Jesus
DBP President and Chief Executive Officer

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.

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.



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 Sujipitham and Southern Leyte Governor Damian Mercado.

De Jesus reported that as of January 2024, DBP has approved P 2.72 billion in credit support under the said facility. “We fully expect that number to increase to P 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 a 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 P 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.



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 Limilingan, and DBP Director Atty. Jaime Paz.

“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.

This article is brought to you by Development Bank of the Philippines.

<https://business.inquirer.net/461375/dbp-ramps-up-support-to-local-hog-industry>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Romualdez wants stricter price control to avert rice crisis

By: [Luisa Cabato](#) - Reporter / [@luisacabatoINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 09:27 PM May 29, 2024



Speaker Martin Romualdez

MANILA, Philippines — Speaker Martin Romualdez called for a “whole of nation approach” to solving the rice crisis.

In a statement on Wednesday, Romualdez also urged stricter price controls in the retail market in order to prevent price manipulation and protect consumers.

He likewise echoed Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr.'s suggestion to sell low-priced fish, chicken, and other agricultural produce in Kadiwa centers.

"Our goal is to lower food prices while protecting local farmers and producers. We hope to do this by increasing local procurement and adjusting import tariffs," Romualdez said in a statement.

Meanwhile, he commended Finance Sec. Ralph Recto for "fulfilling their agreement" to reduce rice tariffs, which targets a P50 per kilo price.

Despite the planned tariff reduction, Romualdez assured the farmers that they would still receive support from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1946341/romualdez-wants-stricter-price-control-to-avert-rice-crisis>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Bird flu detected in alpacas in US for the first time

Agence France-Presse / 12:35 PM May 29, 2024



Alpacas roam a dirt field at a farm along Chalk Hill Road in Windsor, California on October 28, 2019. Cases of bird flu have been detected in alpacas at a US farm, authorities said on May 28, 2024, as the disease spreads widely among dairy cattle and has infected two humans. FILE PHOTO/Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON — Cases of bird flu have been detected in alpacas at a US farm, authorities said Tuesday, as the disease spreads widely among dairy cattle and has infected two humans.

The National Veterinary Services Laboratories confirmed a highly pathogenic variant of bird flu virus known as H5N1 was detected at an Idaho farm, from which infected poultry were removed this month, the Agriculture Department said.

This detection is not surprising for several reasons, including the earlier infection at the farm, the department said. Still, it is the first time the virus has been found in

alpacas — members of the camel family that are native to the Andes and raised mainly for their fleece.

In recent weeks the H5N1 variant has been detected in more than 50 animal species in the United States, including dairy cows.

Two people working on farms have been found to have bird flu, albeit with only mild symptoms.

Last week the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said its risk assessment for the general public remained low but it did suggest it expects more cases.

Experts have said they are worried by the growing number of mammals infected by bird flu even if cases among people remain rare.

There is no evidence of human-to-human transmission at present but health officials fear that if the virus were to eventually spread widely it could mutate into a form that could pass between humans.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/237900/bird-flu-detected-in-alpacas-in-us-for-the-first-time>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Farmers to kill 4.2 million chickens after bird flu hits Iowa egg farm

Associated Press / 09:25 AM May 29, 2024



FILE – Chickens stand in their cages at a farm, Nov. 16, 2009, near Stuart, Iowa. More than 4 million chickens in Iowa will have to be killed after a case of the highly pathogenic bird flu was detected at a large egg farm, the state announced Tuesday, May 28, 2024. (AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall, File)

DES MOINES, Iowa — More than 4 million chickens in Iowa will have to be killed after a case of the highly pathogenic bird flu was detected at a large egg farm, the state announced Tuesday.

Crews are in the process of killing 4.2 million chickens after the disease was found at a farm in Sioux County, Iowa, making it the latest in a yearslong outbreak that now is affecting dairy cattle as well. Last week, the virus was confirmed at an egg farm west of Minneapolis, Minnesota, leading to the slaughter of nearly 1.4 million chickens.

Overall, 92.34 million birds have been killed since the outbreak began in 2022, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Spread to cattle feared

Although bird flu has become somewhat common among poultry, its spread to cattle has added to worries about the disease. In May, a second dairy farmworker was diagnosed with bird flu, and the virus was detected in both beef and milk. It has been confirmed on dairy cattle farms in nine states.

Health and agriculture officials have said the risk to the public remains low. The U.S. Department of Agriculture said the meat from a single sickened dairy cow was not allowed to enter the nation's food supply and beef remains safe to eat.

Workers exposed to infected animals are at a higher risk. The only three human cases confirmed in the United States included two dairy workers and one man working to slaughter infected birds on a poultry farm.

<https://business.inquirer.net/461355/farmers-to-kill-4-2-million-chickens-after-bird-flu-hits-iowa-egg-farm>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Farmers seek Senate review of RCEP impact

May 29, 2024 | 8:33 pm



Farmers are seen in a rice field in Bustos, Bulacan, Oct. 17, 2023. — PHILIPPINE STAR/KJ ROSALES
FARMERS are calling for a review of the Philippines' performance under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade agreement.

"We call on Senate President Francis Escudero to immediately reorganize and convene the RCEP Oversight Committee. We need to know if the government lived up to its promises to the agricultural sector," Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) National Manager Raul Q. Montemayor said in a statement.

RCEP is a free trade deal involving the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Australia. It took effect in June 2023.

It allows minimal to zero restrictions in terms of quantities shipped, and seeks to minimize import taxes.

The Department of Trade and Industry has said that it plans to monitor potential import surges on commodity shipments enabled by RCEP.

"A scheduled meeting of the Committee last May 22 was canceled following the change in Senate leadership," the FFF said.

Additionally, the FFF declared its opposition to further cuts in tariff rates for rice, a move designed to bring down prices.

“(This) contradicts their assurances during the RCEP Senate hearings that these products would not suffer any tariff reduction,” it added.

Earlier, Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto said that tariff rates on imported rice could be slashed to 17.5% from the current 35%.

This would support the Finance department’s goals to lower rice prices by 20% by September.

Mr. Montemayor said that Congress should also commit to a significant increase in the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) budget.

“A large part of the proposed increase in the DA’s 2025 budget is placed in Tier 2, where it will have to compete with proposals from all other government agencies. How the DA budget is finally configured will show whether the Senators were really serious in their commitments when they approved RCEP,” he added.

The DA is proposing a budget of P513.81 billion for 2025 to support the construction of new irrigation and postharvest facilities. The national rice program will get P294.21 billion of the proposed budget. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/29/598354/farmers-seek-senate-review-of-rcep-impact/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Imported sugar being withdrawn more from reserves, Sugar Council claims

May 29, 2024 | 8:27 pm



BUREAU OF CUSTOMS FACEBOOK PAGE

SUGAR producers said on Tuesday that imported refined sugar has been given priority over domestic sugar in terms of inventory being released onto the market from reserves.

In a statement, the Sugar Council said it received reports of a 16% increase in imported refined sugar withdrawals, while domestically refined sugar releases dropped 7%.

“Since locally refined sugar comes from the local farmers’ raw sugar, demand for raw sugar also dropped over 4%, much to the disadvantage of farmers,” it said.

The group also declared its opposition to the Sugar Regulatory Administration’s (SRA) plan to allow sugar imports during the milling offseason.

The national sugar inventory rose 26% for raw sugar to 531,838 metric tons (MT), with refined sugar up 35% at 572,398 MT.

The council said the reserves include 135,000 MT or 2.7 million bags of imported refined sugar purchased last year, which have not yet been withdrawn.

“These numbers suggest that imported refined sugar is being prioritized over locally refined sugar,” it said.

It added that there should be a calibrated and transparent import program to ensure that domestic sugar is prioritized.

“This validates the call for active consultation with stakeholders, especially sugar farmers groups, to be conducted before any sugar importation order is issued,” it added.

On Tuesday, the Philippine Sugar Millers’ Association, Inc. said that there is no need for sugar imports due to higher domestic production.

Raw sugar production was 1.92 million MT as of May 12, exceeding the 1.799 million MT from a year earlier. Refined sugar output rose to 687,823 MT from 624,389 MT in the previous milling season.

The SRA has set inventories falling to the equivalent of three months’ demand as the trigger point for allowing sugar imports during the milling offseason.

The council is composed of the Confederation of Sugar Producers Associations, Inc., the National Federation of Sugarcane Planters, Inc., and the Panay Federation of Sugarcane Farmers, Inc. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/29/598351/imported-sugar-being-withdrawn-more-from-reserves-sugar-council-claims/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Wholesale price growth in PHL picks up in April

May 29, 2024 | 8:26 pm



PHILIPPINE STAR/ MICHAEL VARCAS

WHOLESALE price growth of general goods accelerated to a two-month high in April, driven by an uptick in prices of chemicals, including animal and vegetable oils and fats, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said on Wednesday.

According to preliminary data, the PSA said the general wholesale price index (GWPI) rose 2.6% year on year in April, against the 2.5% growth posted in March and the 4.3% a year earlier.

The April reading was the highest since the 2.8% growth recorded in February 2024.

The acceleration in prices was attributed to stronger price growth in chemicals including animal and vegetable oils and fats index at 2.3% in April from 1.3% in March.

Faster annual increases were also seen in the indices of crude materials, inedible except fuels (8.4% from 4.4%); mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials (4.8% from 2.7%); manufactured goods classified chiefly by materials (1.6% from 1.3%) and machinery and transport equipment (0.5% from 0.4%).

However, price growth in the following commodity groups decelerated: food (3.6% from 4%); beverages and tobacco (4.4% from 4.6%) and miscellaneous manufactured articles (2% from 2.2%).

By island group, the Visayas outpaced the national GWPI with a 6.7% reading in April, which accelerated from 6.0% in March and 3.6% in April 2023.

“The faster annual increase of chemicals including animal and vegetable oils and fats at 0.6% in April 2024 from an annual decline of 3.2% in the previous month primarily caused the higher annual growth rate of GWPI in Visayas,” PSA said.

GWPI in Mindanao decelerated to 1.1% from March’s 1.9% and April 2023’s 5.9%. — **Lourdes O. Pilar**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/05/29/598350/wholesale-price-growth-in-phl-picks-up-in-april/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

DoF estimates P10B in foregone revenues from lower rice tariffs

May 30, 2024 | 12:32 am



worker unloads a sack of rice at a warehouse in Tondo, Manila, May 7, 2024. — PHILIPPINE STAR/JOHN RYAN BALDEMOR

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance (DoF) proposal to further lower the tariffs on rice imports is estimated to bring down prices by as much as P5 per kilo, but also result in around P10 billion in foregone revenues.

“Our current estimate is less than P10 billion in (foregone) revenues if the (tariff cut) is implemented,” Finance Undersecretary and Chief Economist Domini S. Velasquez said in mixed English and Filipino at a forum on Wednesday.

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto earlier proposed to lower tariffs on rice imports to 17.5%, from the current 35%, to bring down prices of the staple.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de Mesa said the proposed tariff reduction could help bring down the price of imported rice by as much as P5 per kilo.

“If we lower the (tariff) to 17.5%, the reduction (in prices) will be big. Our initial estimates, we see about P4 to P5 reduction,” he said.

As of May 28, the average retail price of imported well-milled rice rose to P52-P54 per kilo from P40-P46 a year ago. Imported regular milled rice ranged from P49-P51 to P37-P38.

Meanwhile, local well-milled rice ranged from P48-P55 per kilo, higher than the P39-P46 band in the year-ago period. Regular milled rice averaged P45-P52 from P34-P42 previously.

Ms. Velasquez said the government generates some P30 billion in tariff revenues from the implementation of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL).

However, she said the potential drop in revenues is not an issue if the tariff reduction will help bring down prices of rice.

“On the DoF’s part, we’re willing to forego that tariff loss just to make sure inflation is down,” she added.

Ms. Velasquez said that the discussions on the tariff proposal are still in the early stages.

“I think (the proposal) is 15% to 20%. Before, when rice prices increased, there were even requests of 10%,” she said.

In December, the government approved the extension of the reduced most favored nation tariff rates on several commodities, including rice, until Dec. 31, 2024. Tariff rates for imports of rice were kept at 35% for shipments within the minimum access volume quota and for those exceeding the quota.

As of April, the government has collected P16 billion from rice tariffs.

The Philippines imported 1.89 million metric tons (MT) of rice as of early May, data from the Bureau of Plant Industry showed.

Ms. Velasquez said global rice prices are easing but there are still pressures due to the lean season.

“We saw that prices in the market this May are already easing from April... We hope that lowering the tariff will help, especially during the lean season.”

Mr. Recto earlier said the retail price of rice could drop by as much as 20% by September. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2024/05/30/598407/dof-estimates-p10b-in-foregone-revenues-from-lower-rice-tariffs/>

REMARTE:

P5 bawas-presyo sa bigas posible sa tapyas-taripa – DA

May 30, 2024 07:00



MANILA, Philippines – Maaaring magresulta ng P4 hanggang P5 piso kada kilo na pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas ang iminungkahing pagbabawas ng taripa ng bigas ng Department of Finance (DOF), ayon sa Department of Agriculture (DA).

Sa pagsasalita sa isang forum sa Maynila, sinabi ni DA Spokesperson Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa na ito ay maaaring makamit kung ang ibinaba nang 35 porsiyento ang tariff rate sa bigas na ipinapataw ngayon ay hihigit pa sa kalahati sa 17.5 porsiyento.

“Pag may nakita sa palengke na P40 level, say, P45 na bigas, eventually yung merkado susunod. It will correct itself,” ani De Mesa.

Ang pahayag ni De Mesa ay dumating ilang araw matapos sabihin ni DOF Secretary Ralph Recto na ang ahensya ay tumitingin na bawasan ang mga taripa sa pag-import ng bigas, habang pinapanatili ang pagsisikap na pataasin ang lokal na produksyon.

Sa forum noong Miyerkules, sinabi ni DOF Undersecretary Domini Velasquez na hinahangad ng ahensya na bawasan ang mga taripa sa pag-import ng bigas sa 15 hanggang 20 porsiyento, sa tamang panahon para sa lean season ng produksyon ng bigas sa Pilipinas.

“Kasi may lean season ka hanggang, I think, mid-September. So baka makatulong doon. Kasi kahit bumababa ang (rice) prices globally, may pressure pa rin sa lean season mo,” aniya.

Bagama’t magreresulta ito sa humigit-kumulang P10 bilyon na mga foregone revenue para sa gobyerno, sinabi ni Velasquez na ito ay isang presyo na handa nilang bayaran upang mapababa ang inflation.

Ngunit ayon kay Velasquez, kailangan munang magsagawa ng mga pampublikong pagdinig ang Tariff Commission sa usapin para makita kung paano makakaapekto ang panukalang patakaran sa kabuhayan ng mga magsasaka at iba pang stakeholder.

Naniniwala si De Mesa, sa kanyang panig, na ang bawas na taripa ng bigas ay hindi gaanong makakaapekto sa mga magsasaka sa pagkakataong ito dahil binibili na ngayon ng National Food Authority ang kanilang palay o unmilled rice sa mas competitive na presyo o aabot sa P30 kada kilo. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/p5-bawas-presyo-sa-bigas-possible-sa-tapyas-taripa-da/>

REIMATE:

556 magsasaka na apektado ng bagyong Aghon, inayudahan

May 29, 2024 19:30



MANILA, Philippines – Naglaan ang Department of Agriculture (DA) ng P23.06 milyong halaga ng ayuda para sa 556 magsasaka na apektado ng bagyong Aghon sa Calabarzon at Mimaropa.

Ayon sa DA – Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Operations Center Bulletin 6 na inilabas nitong Martes, Mayo 28, ang halaga ay inilaan para sa distribusyon ng agricultural inputs, katulad ng mga punla, planting materials, at bio-control measures.

Anang DA, inihanda rin nito ang loanable amount na P25,000 para sa bawat magsasaka na maaaring bayaran sa loob ng tatlong taon na walang interest sa pamamagitan ng Survival and Recovery (SURE) Loan Program.

Nauna nang sinabi ni DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa na available ang P1 bilyong halaga ng quick response funds para sa lahat ng mga kalamidad.

Ang pinsala sa agrikultura sa Calabarzon at Mimaropa dahil sa bagyong Aghon ay umabot na sa P22.8 milyon, kung saan pinakamalaki sa high-value crops sa P10.87 million.

Pinakanapuruan ang Laguna at Quezon sa P10.66 milyong halaga ng pinsala sa mga palayan.

Umabot naman sa P815,400 ang halaga ng pinsala sa agriculture infrastructures, katulad ng mga pigpen, greenhouses, at irrigation canals, sa Quezon.

Nasa P448,300 ang halaga ng pinsala sa livestock at poultry sa Laguna. **RNT/JGC**

<https://remate.ph/556-magsasaka-na-apektado-ng-bagyong-aghon-inayudahan/>

REIMATE:

Support programs sa sektor ng agrikultura, tiniyak na maipapasa

May 29, 2024 17:07



MANILA, Philippines - Tiniyak ng isang mambabatas na maipapasa ang lahat ng panukalang batas na naglalayong lumikha ng support program sa sektor ng agrikultura upang matulungan silang umunlad ang kabuhayan na magsusulong ng pambansang ekonomiya.

Sa pahayag, sinabi ni Senador Cynthia Villar, chairman ng Senate committee on agriculture na matutugunan ang pangangailan ng support program ang ilang batas na naipasa at nakatakda pang maipasa ng Senado.

Base sa kanyang talumpati sa ginanap na National Agricultural and Fisheries Month celebration sa Department of Agriculture sa Quezon City, tinukoy ni Villar ang Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) report na ipinakikita na 30 percent ng kahirapan ay nasa hanay ng mga magsasaka, 30.6 percent sa mangingisda at 25.7 percent sa rural areas.

Kinilala rin niya ang mahalagang ambag nila sa nation building.

“Farmers and fishermen tirelessly toil our land and seas in order to feed us, give employment to our rural communities and provide raw materials for our food processing industries,” ayon kay Villar.

Sanhi nito, sinabi ni Villar na patuloy ang kanyang pagsisikap na mapabuti ang kanilang kabuhayan. Binanggit din niya na ang poverty reduction ay adboksiya ng kanyang pamilya.

“I have taken steps as a Senator to improve their conditions through legislation. My agenda is through support programs to enable our farmers to lessen production cost and correspondingly increase their profits,” sabi pa ng chairperson ng Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food.

“One of these recent laws for the agriculture and fisheries sectors which she passed and a few which she hopes to pass until the end of her term in March 2025 is the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act which is now close to becoming a law. It is expected to be signed by the President into law soon,” dagdag pa niya.

Itinatakda sa batas na ito ang pagbuo sa Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Task Force, Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Court at Special Team of Prosecutors mula sa Department of Justice (DOJ) para mapabilis ang paglilitis sa agri-economic sabotage cases.

Inakda at inisponsor din ni Villar “An Act Strengthening the Livestock, Poultry and Dairy Development and Competitiveness para sa development, promotion at competitiveness ng ating Livestock, Poultry at Dairy Industries.

Ang iba pang batas ay ang Extension of the RCEF na lampas sa 2024 at pinapalawak ang mga benepisyo, kabilang ang iba pang programa.

“Under Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law, around PHP10 billion worth of appropriated tariffs from private rice importers farmers help,” ani pa Villar.

Tinukoy din niya ang Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act na naipasa noong March 2021 at ang 41 batas na nagtayosa legislated hatcheries sa may 57 lugar sa bansa at ang Republic Act No 11985 o An Act Strengthening and Revitalizing the Salt Industry.

“I will also aim to pass Corn Industry Development Law to support the livestock poultry and dairy industries. Corn is both for human consumption and for animals. In animals 70 percent of their feeds is from yellow corn,” paniniyak ng senador.

Kinilala ni Sen. Cynthia A. Villar ang mahalagang papel at kontribusyon ng mga magsasaka at manggingisda sa pagbuo ng bansa, sa pagtatapos ng selebrasyon ng National Farmers and Fisherfolks Month sa DA-Bureau of Soils and Water Management, sa Quezon City, noong Lunes, Mayo 27. Ang Senator ang espesyal na panauhin sa seremonya. ***Ernie Reyes***

<https://remate.ph/support-programs-sa-sektor-ng-agrikultura-tiniyak-na-maipapasa/>

REIMATE:

Suplay ng gulay sapat – DA

May 29, 2024 10:07



REIMATE
ANG DIARYO NG MASA
CRISMON HERAMIS

Sinabi ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na mayroong matatag na suplay ng mga gulay sa kabilang pinsalang dulot ng Bagyong Aghon.

Sa isang ambush interview, sinabi ni DA Assistant Secretary for Operations U-Nichols Manalo na mahigpit ding nagsasagawa ng monitoring upang maprotektahan ang mga mamimili mula sa mga walang prinsipyong vendor.

“Sa tingin ko okay pa naman ang supply sa merkado. Iyon nga lang ang babantayan natin iyong mga nagsasamantala kapag ganitong panahon” sinabi ni Manalo.

“We have daily monitoring in our regional field offices in our major markets. Dito sa Manila, alam natin na halos tuwing umaga, meron tayong price monitoring,” dagdag pa ni Manalo.

Sinabi niya na ang DA ay hindi pa nakakatanggap ng anumang ulat ng pagkaantala sa transportasyon ng mga gulay, kaya “ang mga

pagsasaayos ng presyo ay hindi dapat magsasangkot ng higit sa P5 na pagtaas.”

“Wala kaming nakikitang challenge in terms of the prices. Ang medyo may challenge in terms of the supply ay ang lowland kasi nga tapos na iyong peak ng harvesting,” dagdag niya. (*Santi Celario*)

<https://remate.ph/suplay-ng-gulay-sapat-da/>

ABANTE:

Bird flu naispatan sa US farm

- Abante News
- May 29, 2024



Nakitaan ng kaso ng bird flu ang ilan sa mga alpaca sa isang sakahan sa Estados Unidos.

Ito ay sa kabilang malawakang pagkalat ng sakit sa mga baka na kung saan nahawaan ang dalawang tao.

Kinumpirma ng National Veterinary Services Laboratories nitong Martes ang isang highly pathogenic na variant ng bird flu virus na kilala bilang H5N1 na nakita sa isang Idaho farm, kung saan inalis ang mga infected na manok ngayong buwan, ayon sa Agriculture Department.

Ang pagtuklas na ito ay hindi nakakagulat sa maraming kadahilanan, kabilang ang naunang impeksyon sa bukid, sinabi ng departamento.

Gayunpaman, ito ang unang pagkakataon na natagpuan ang virus sa mga alpaca, isang uri ng hayop na kapamilya ng mga camel.

Sa mga nakalipas na linggo, nakita ang variant ng H5N1 sa mahigit 50 species ng hayop sa United States, kabilang ang mga dairy cows. (V

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/05/29/bird-flu-naispatan-sa-us-farm/>

ABANTE:

Romualdez pinasalamat sa Recto sa bigas tapyas taripa

- Abante News
- May 29, 2024



Labis ang pasalamat ni Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez kay Finance Sec. Ralph Recto sa pagtupad nito sa kasunduan na ibaba ang ipinapataw na taripa sa bigas upang bumaba na ang presyo nito ng mas mababa pa sa P50 kada kilo.

Layunin ng pagbabawas sa taripa at upang matugunan ang mataas na presyo ng bigas na dulot ng mapagsamantalang trader, epekto ng El Niño, at mataas na halaga ng pandaigdigang gastos.

Noong nakaraang linggo ay nagpulong sina Speaker Romualdez at Recto, kasama sina Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., Customs

Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio, at House Appropriations Committee Chair Zaldy Co ng Ako Bicol Partylist para bumuo ng mga praktikal na solusyon para agad na maibsan ang mataas na presyo ng bilihin kasabay ng pagtiyak na kumikita ng tama ang mga lokal na magsasaka.

Isa sa mga napagkasunduan ay ang pansamantalang pagpapababa ng taripa ng bigas upang bumaba rin ang gastos ng mga trader.

Sa paraang ito, mas magiging abot kaya nag bigas ng hindi naman dehado ang kabuhayan ng mga magsasaka.

Sa kabilanaman aniya ng bawas sa taripa, siniguro ni Speaker Romualdez na patuloy na makatatanggap ng tulong ang mga magsasaka sa ilalim ng Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), ang pondo na mula sa buwis na sinisingil salig sa Republic Act 11203 (Rice Tariffication Law).

Hanggang nitong Abril, batay sa datos ng DOF, umabot na ang koleksyon ng taripa sa imported na bigas sa P16 bilyon, lagpas sa minimum na P10 bilyon na ilalagay sa RCEF.

Nanawagan din si Speaker Romualdez para sa paghihigpit sa price control sa retail market para maiwasan ang manipulasyon ng presyo ng bigas.

Sinuportahan din nito ang suhestyon ni Laurel na maibaba sa mga pamilihan, lalo na sa Kadiwa centers ang mura at sariwang isda, manok at iba pang produktong agrikultural.

“Our goal is to lower food prices while protecting local farmers and producers. We hope to do this by increasing local procurement and adjusting import tariffs,” sabi ni Speaker Romualdez.

Nanawagan din ang House Speaker para sa isang “whole of nation” na pagtugon sa krisis sa bigas.

Nangangailangan aniya ng pagtutulungan ng mga ahensya ng pamahalaan, market players at local producers para maisakatuparan ito.

“DA should talk to traders to avoid hoarding and price manipulation,” giit pa ng lider ng Kamara.

Makakaasa din aniya ng buong suporta mula sa Kamara de Representantes sa pagkamit ng hangarin ni Pangulong Marcos na maibaba ang presyo ng bigas at matiyak na sapat ang suplay nito.

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/05/29/romualdez-pinasalamat-an-recto-sa-bigas-tapyas-taripa/>

MANILA STANDARD

Speaker cites Recto for reducing rice tariffs to cut prices of staple

By Maricel Cruz

May 29, 2024, 11:05 pm

Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez on Wednesday expressed his gratitude to Finance Secretary Ralph Recto for fulfilling their agreement to reduce rice tariffs, a move intended to lower the price of rice to below P50 per kilo.

Romualdez commended Recto for advancing their earlier agreement between House leaders and the secretaries of Finance and Agriculture.

This initiative aims to address the rising rice prices driven by unscrupulous traders, the impacts of El Niño, and high global costs, he said.

Last week, Romualdez met with Recto, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Rubio, and House Appropriations Committee chairman Zaldy Co of Ako Bicol party-list to craft practical solutions to mitigate the financial strain on consumers while securing fair compensation for local rice farmers.

The House leader said the group looked at temporary reduction in rice tariffs to lower traders' costs.

He said this is expected to help make rice more affordable without undermining local farmers' livelihood.

Despite the planned tariff reduction, Romualdez said farmers will continue to receive support from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), funded by taxes collected under Republic Act 11203 (Rice Tariffication Law).

As of April, DOF data indicated that rice tariff collections has already reached P16 billion, enough to cover the P10-billion minimum requirement to assist farmers under RCEF.

Additionally, the Speaker called for stricter price controls in the retail market to prevent price manipulation and protect consumers.

He also joined Laurel's suggestion to bring low-priced fresh fish, chicken and other agricultural produce to the market, particularly in Kadiwa centers.

"Our goal is to lower food prices while protecting local farmers and producers. We hope to do this by increasing local procurement and adjusting import tariffs," Romualdez said.

The Speaker also called for "a whole of nation approach" in solving the rice crisis.

Romualdez said this requires the cooperation of relevant government agencies, market players and local producers.

"DA should talk to traders to avoid hoarding and price manipulation," he stressed.

The Speaker said the House of Representatives is fully committed to supporting President Marcos' goal of significantly reducing rice prices.

The commitment includes addressing market challenges through collaborative efforts and strategic interventions, ensuring that every Filipino has access to quality but affordable rice.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/314453079/speaker-cites-recto-for-reducing-rice-tariffs-to-cut-prices-of-staple.html>

P1.2-B feed mill to be built in Ilagan

By Leander C. Domingo

May 30, 2024

A P1.2-BILLION feed mill complex to be constructed by a private company will significantly benefit the corn industry of Ilagan, Isabela.

Located in Barangay Cabannungan 2nd in Ilagan, the future feed mill of Thailand-based Charoen Pokphand Foods and Kasetphand Group, and Sagittarian Agri Philippines Inc. will utilize corn grown by farmers in Ilagan as raw material.

Rose Mary Aquino, executive director of the Department of Agriculture (DA) Regional Field Office 2, said the facility will also enhance the integration of the corn and livestock industries of Isabela and Cagayan Valley (Region 2).



Photo shows the perspective of the feed mill complex to be constructed in Ilagan, Isabela, by a private company.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

"This is a very good move by our city officials headed by Mayor Josemarie Diaz that will enhance the corn-livestock integration and ensure the higher economic status of the people of Ilagan, especially our corn farmers," she said.

On May 17, 2024, Aquino attended the groundbreaking of the feed mill complex that was attended by Isabela Gov. Rodolfo Albano III and other regional and provincial officials who also gave their full support to the initiative.

"In addition to the assured market of corn, the complex will also benefit not only our livestock but our poultry raisers and shall strengthen the public-private partnership that the present administration is pushing," Aquino said.

She said that Ilagan has started providing interventions to establish a value chain for corn that is aligned with the priority activities of the DA in achieving food security. "The City of Ilagan may also become the Agri Processing Center of Cagayan Valley," Aquino added.

She gave assurance that the DA will continue to support farmers in producing good quality corn that is good agricultural practices or GAP-certified and aflatoxin-free, which will result in the production of high quality and safe feeds.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/30/business/agribusiness/p12-b-feed-mill-to-be-built-in-ilagan/1948998>

'Payao' to increase fish catch in Pamplona

By Leander C. Domingo

May 30, 2024

A PROJECT to install payao, or a fish aggregating structure, at the coastal waters of Pamplona, Cagayan, is expected to boost the fishery production of the municipality and increase the incomes of its fishers.

According to the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Region 2 (DA-BFAR2), the project materialized following the two-day Payao Design, Construction and Management training held at the Community Fish Landing Center in Pamplona on May 23 to 24.

DA-BFAR2 headed by Angel Balisi Encarnacio said the training was organized as part of the lined up activities for this year's celebration of farmers and fishers month.

"The celebration aims to recognize the vital roles of farmers and fisherfolk as the backbone of the country's food security," Encarnacion said.

The DA-BFAR2 explained that a payao is a floating structure that attracts fish, making it easier for fishermen to catch them.

"Payaos have a proven efficiency as a fish aggregating device and are crucial in enhancing the productivity, sustainability and economic stability of fishing activities in many coastal regions, particularly in the Philippines," Encarnacion added.

During the training, Nick Ranjo, Pamplona local government unit (LGU) representative, outlined three important factors such as time,

patience and hard work as factors for the project to become successful.

"This is our first time to accommodate such an offshore project from the fisheries bureau, and we are hoping that the payao will be made productive," he said.

Provincial fishery officer Jennifer Tattao thanked the LGU for its strong support for the project. She said that in addition to the payao project, the fishers will also receive fishing gear composed of 15 multiple handlines, 15 troll lines and 18 sets of gill nets.

Trainers from the DA-BFAR2 also instructed participants in preparing materials for payaos, including constructing concrete sinkers and using "habong" (attractants such as nipa leaves) to create shade and shelter for fish.

The deployment of the payao will be scheduled after the sinkers are seasoned and will depend on good weather conditions.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/30/business/agribusiness/payao-to-increase-fish-catch-in-pamplona/1948997>

PSU gets P90 million for salt research

By Philippine News Agency

May 30, 2024

THE Department of Science and Technology (DoST) provided the Pangasinan State University (PSU) P90 million for the university's research and development on salt production.

The grant was awarded by the Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development, an agency under the DoST, through the Niche Centers in the Regions for Research and Development for its Accelerating Salt Research and Innovation program after five attempts or proposals, PSU President Elbert Galas said.



Pangasinan is one of the major salt producers in the country. Photo shows the salt production site operated by the Pangasinan provincial government in Barangay Zaragoza in Bolinao. PANGASINAN LGU PHOTO

"It is proper that we claim that we are the salt center in the country since the province's name came from the word 'Panag Asinan,' or where salt is made," he said.

Galas said the western part of the province produces salt through the traditional way using solar drying and conventional cooking.

He said the main objective of getting a DoST grant is to increase salt production utilizing innovative equipment, which will be acquired using the initial funding.

"Traditional salt production halts during the rainy season. What we are doing, however, is we will invent or provide, or make a machine that can produce salt in any weather, climate and time, may it be 24 hours a day or seven days a week," he said.

Galas said their goal is to make a machine similar to those being used in Japan that can produce 400 metric tons of salt a day.

"We will collaborate with the provincial government of Pangasinan. We will be working with the engineering and information technology department of the PSU Urdaneta Campus," he said.

Once the research hits its target within the targeted three-year period, Galas said they will ask the government for a large-scale production of the machine.

Last year, the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources launched in Pangasinan "Oplan Asin" to develop the salt industry.

Oplan Asin aims to give continuous support to salt makers by giving them technology and equipment to increase production quantity and quality, and improve farmers' capabilities based on food safety standards and proper food handling to help them increase their income.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/30/business/agribusiness/psu-gets-p90-million-for-salt-research/1948995>

Quirino ube powder enters Japan market

By The Manila Times

May 30, 2024

A GROUP of entrepreneurs in Cabarroguis, Quirino, producing quality ube powder is making its way into the Japanese market.

The JaBes ube powder is a product of the Quirino Young Entrepreneurs Association (QYEA) based at the Quirino State University, Diffun campus.

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Provincial Director for Quirino Mary Ann Dy said the ube, or purple yam, powder of QYEA first entered Japan's market in 2023 and from then on, the group has been receiving bulk orders. A batch of 500 kilograms of ube powder has just been ordered from the group.



The JaBes ube powder of the Quirino Young Entrepreneurs Association is finding buyers in the Japanese market. PIA PHOTO

"This was made possible through strengthened convergent efforts between the DTI R2 (Region 2), DTI Provincial Office, QYEA, Quirino State University, the Provincial Government of Quirino and the Department of Agriculture-Cagayan Valley Integrated Agricultural Laboratory," Dy said.

She said DTI R2 and DA-RF02 (Regional Field Office 2) have joined forces to ensure the sustainability of raw material supply, particularly of the Ube Kinampay variety, which is preferred by the Japanese market.

"Also, we are currently working to expand Kinampay plantations in more municipalities of Quirino as well as look into possible alternative areas in Nueva Vizcaya," Dy added.

The provincial director further said that with the help of experts in the fields of design and food technology, the JaBes ube powder underwent a rigorous yearlong product development process.

Furthermore, Dy said a thorough evaluation of branding, packaging, labeling, quality standard certification and sensory product processes were undertaken to ensure the production of high-quality and export-ready ube powder products.

It can be recalled that JaBes Ube Powder was awarded "with special citation" in the Katha Awards during the International Food Exhibition in the Philippines in 2022.

The said award was given to minimally processed food using agricultural raw materials abundant in the locality, contributing to reduced waste, maximizing the use of plant-based resources and providing healthy/natural options in product development for market consumption.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/30/business/agribusiness/quirino-ube-powder-enters-japan-market/1948994>

Stale meat, plastic bags confiscated at Baguio

By Gaby Keith

May 30, 2024

BAGUIO CITY — A surprise inspection of "talipapa" or satellite markets in Barangay San Vicente, Kias, Loakan and Camp 7 in the Summer Capital yielded close to a hundred kilograms of alleged stale meat and fish being sold to consumers.

The Safe Meat Task Force composed of personnel from the City Veterinary and Agriculture Office (CVAO), City Health Services Office, City Mayor's Office (Permits and Licensing and Public Order and Safety Division), and City Treasury Office Market Division with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, and National Meat Inspection Service also confiscated a sack of plastic bags from stalls in all the markets for violating the city's ordinance for plastic- and styrofoam-free Baguio.

Confiscated were 72.85 kilograms of assorted meat products and 24.28 kilograms of assorted fish products deemed unfit for human consumption.

The goods and products were brought to the CVAO condemnation pit for proper disposal in accordance with safety protocols.

A total of 46 weighing scales were also inspected, with two defective scales confiscated from sellers at the Loakan satellite market.

Mayor Benjamin Magalang lauded the efforts of the task force to safeguard consumers against the health risks posed by unsafe food products and unfair trade practices.

He again called for the strict implementation of the regulation on the distribution, sale and use of plastic carry or shopping bags and styrofoam containers in the city.

Aside from spot inspections by the task force, daily inspections are conducted by the CVAO Meat Inspection Section on the newly slaughtered and post-slaughtered animal meat at different establishments.

Erring meat retailers are penalized P5,000 for each violation.

In addition, there are also other penalties for violators of zoning requirements, shop planning and design, electrical and lighting requirements, sanitation requirements and solid waste management consisting of fines ranging from P1,000 to P5,000 fine and closure of business.

The program is in compliance with Republic Act 9296 (Meat Inspection Code of the Philippines), RA 7394 (Consumer Act of the Philippines), RA 10611 (Food Safety Act) and the Department of Agriculture Administrative Order (AO) 5 that regulate the hygienic handling of newly butchered meat in the public market.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/30/regions/stale-meat-plastic-bags-confiscated-at-baguio/1949095>

‘Peaceful resolution to any conflict’

By Jocelyn Montemayor

May 30, 2024



Business Forum. President Marcos Jr. shares center stage with Filipino and Brunei officials and business leaders during the Philippine Business Forum in Bandar Seri Begawan on Wednesday. PCO PHOTO

Deal on handling disputes forged by Marcos, Bolkiah

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. and Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah have agreed to maintain open communications and endorse a peaceful resolution to any conflict between the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam and in the Indo-Pacific region amid threats to the international rules-based order.

The Philippines and Brunei are among countries with overlapping claims in the South China Sea (SCS). The other claimants are Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, and China which claims almost the entire sea.

China has issued new rules effective June 15 that would enforce a 2021 coast guard law and allow detention of foreigners suspected of trespassing.

China routinely accuses vessels of trespassing in areas of the South China Sea that fall inside the exclusive economic zones of its neighbors and has clashed repeatedly with the Philippines in the past year.

The President, in an interview before leaving Brunei yesterday, said maritime cooperation between the Philippines and Brunei were among topics he and Bolkiah discussed during their meeting on Tuesday.

The maritime cooperation covers various areas including pollution, skills training, research and information sharing. It was one of three memorandums of understanding (MOUs) signed last Tuesday.

The two other MOUs are on tourism cooperation and on Mutual Recognition of Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) certificates. The Philippines and Brunei also signed a letter of intent to renew an MOU on food security and agricultural cooperation.

Marcos said he and Bolkiah also talked about strengthening the partnership between the two nations, trade, and streamlining processes involved in the Brunei Darussalam Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) region.

“The closest we came to any kind of defense agreement was really a diplomatic document that expresses the understanding that we both endorse a peaceful resolution to any conflicts between our two countries and in the region,” he said.

The President added that he and the Sultan had agreed that the Philippines and Brunei should have an open line of communication to avoid any misunderstanding.

“On the diplomatic agreement between Brunei and the Philippines as to the resolution of conflicts and a mechanism between, a bilateral mechanism for us to have that line of communication so that there is very little room for misunderstanding or a mistake or the kinds of things that can cause problems between countries,” he said.

ESCALATING TENSION

The President, meanwhile, said China’s policy allowing its coast guard to detain foreign trespassers in the South China Sea is an “escalation” of the situation and “very worrisome” for the country.

Marcos was asked to comment on the four-month fishing ban imposed by China, which he said is not new and was actually being implemented based on the season.

He said observing a fishing ban in the South China Sea is actually one of the things that “we have actually agreed upon before.”

He said the detention of supposed trespassers, however, is a different matter.

“The new policy of threatening to detain our own citizens, that is different. That is an escalation of the situation. So, yes, it is now very worrisome,” the President said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs earlier this week said it has filed a diplomatic protest over China’s unilateral imposition of the fishing moratorium in parts of the South China Sea, saying the move violates international laws and raises tension in the disputed waters.

It said the fishing ban covers areas within the Philippine maritime zones over which Manila exercises sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction.

Marcos expressed belief there is a middle ground with China to ensure peace and stability in the disputed area.

He reiterated that the Philippine government is exhausting all remedies to bring progress in resolving the issues in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) in the South China Sea, WPS including putting an end to China's aggressive actions and to allow Filipinos to fish in the WPS.

He said the government is trying all mechanisms that will work for the Philippines including backchannel efforts.

"I've said it many times. You should try everything. You don't know what effort is going to be successful. So, as any point of contact that I can establish I will use it. And at every level, at the leaders' level, at the ministerial, sub-ministerial, private," the President said.

"As long as it gives us, brings us progress in terms of resolving these. And you know, first of all, number one, to stop the aggressive actions such as water-cannoning and lasers and barrier putting etcetera. And secondly, allowing our fishermen to fish. Let's start with that," Marcos added.

SINGAPORE TRIP

The President is expected to talk about the legal and geopolitical position of the Philippines on the WPS on Friday before the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

From Brunei, Marcos and his delegation arrived in Singapore at 4:52 p.m. yesterday. He will have private engagements and meetings today and address the 21st edition of the IISS Dialogue, which is expected to be attended by multiple stakeholders in defense, ranging from heads of governments, heads of states, and defense of ministers to industry players, from around 40 countries.

He will also meet with Singaporean President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Prime Minister Lawrence Wong on Friday and as part of the series of high-level exchanges between the Philippines and Singapore as well as invite them to visit the Philippines. He will also meet with former Prime Minister Lee Hsein Loong.

The President, in an interview before leaving Brunei, said his speech before the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue is highly important while the invitation to the forum itself is already "highly significant."

Marcos is the first Philippine president to deliver a keynote message for the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue.

"The fact that they asked the Philippine President to come and speak on that very subject is significant in the sense that it is a recognition that there are challenges that are facing the Philippines, specifically," he said.

"Not only the Philippines, this affects the region and it affects the world. So, what I will present in the Shangri-la forum [the] day after tomorrow is going to essentially try to explain the position of the Philippines for both legally and geo-politically and diplomatically. And how we see the ways forward for the Philippines and for the region," he added.

The President said the West Philippine Sea is important to international trade and the stakeholders involved are not limited to Southeast Asia, Asia, and even Indo-Pacific.

Marcos said it involves the global economy and the Philippines' position is "important in the decision-making of many of the policymakers around the world."

Philippine Ambassador to Singapore Medardo Macaraig, in an interview, said the President is expected to talk about the Philippines' defense and foreign policies before the IISS as well as state again the country's pitch for following rules-based international order.

LAWFARE

The Philippine Navy yesterday said is no indication that China is implementing a fishing ban in the WPS.

Commodore Roy Vincent Trinidad, Navy spokesman for the WPS, said Filipino fishermen are still able to freely fish in the area despite the ban May 1 to September 16.

"The feedback from our fisherfolk is that they are allowed to fish so long as they do not enter Bajo de Masinloc," Trinidad told a press briefing in Fort Bonifacio.

Bajo de Masinloc, also known as Scarborough Shoal and Panatag Shoal, is about 124 nautical miles from mainland Zambales.

China gained control of the shoal after a standoff with Philippine government vessels in 2012. Since then, the Chinese have prevented Filipino fishermen from going inside the shoal to fish.

As to why China was not implementing the ban, Trinidad said, "Today's warfare is more narrative, it's more of deception. It's part of the lawfare of China."

Trinidad, who earlier said the Navy does not recognize the ban, said the Navy has "sufficient contingency plans in place in the event that situations will escalate."

Trinidad said China's fishing ban is "illegal" and "against international law."

“China is out of tune, out of step, out of their minds,” said Trinidad.

“Lawfare is one of the instruments in their cook book. The ultimate objective of China is sea control of the South China Sea. They will use the different instruments of a national power to assert that,” he said.

China has been announcing the annual fishing ban in the South China since its Coast Guard Law took effect in February 2021.

“The pronouncement started in 2021 when the law was passed and each year there is a pronouncement. I have not come across any report that it was implemented,” said Trinidad.

‘DON’T BE AFRAID’

Trinidad urged Filipino fishermen to continue fishing in the WPS.

“Don’t be afraid, just continue (fishing). The AFP and the entire government is behind you,” he said.

Commodore Jay Tarriela, Philippine Coast Guard spokesman for the WPS, said China’s fishing ban is “illegal.”

He said China has no valid reason to enforce such regulation inside the 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone of the Philippines.

Citing accounts of Filipino fishermen, Tarriela also said China is not actually enforcing a fishing ban.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_news/peaceful-resolution-to-any-conflict/

PH, Brunei to promote MSMEs, agribiz

By **Jocelyn Montemayor**

May 30, 2024

Two agreements which are expected to boost trade and agribusiness as well as promote micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) between the Philippines and Brunei were signed yesterday in conjunction with the state visit to the latter of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Partnership in Agriculture and MSMEs Development signed between the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (Asean) Business Advisory Council and the Bruneian Asean Business Advisory Council Philippines, and MOU between the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Brunei Darussalam, and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry were presented yesterday during the Philippine Business Forum in Brunei.

The MOU on Agriculture and MSMEs development aims to enhance economic integration, promote sustainable agribusiness practices and foster inclusive business models within the Asean.

It also provides cooperation in conducting studies, mentorship programs and identifying trade and investment opportunities in the agriculture sector.

The MOU between the chambers of commerce aims to strengthen the economic cooperation between Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines as well as establish the business councils in both countries to facilitate joint initiatives and outline dispute resolution mechanisms.

It also provides for the exchanges in information, organizing of trade and investment missions, and supporting different industries such as information and communications technology, Halal food, smart agriculture, manufacturing, franchising, tourism, services and micro-small and medium enterprise development.

On Tuesday, the President witnessed the exchange of MOUs boosting tourism cooperation; a mutual recognition of Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping certificates of each country; and maritime cooperation; and a Letter of Intent renewing a previous MOU on food security and agricultural cooperation.

The President, in his speech during the forum invited Bruneian investors to look at agribusiness, halal and renewable energy industries as potential investment areas in the Philippines.

Marcos affirmed the Philippines' commitment to regional economic integration such as the Brunei Darussalam Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area region and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

The President also said the Philippines and Brunei are focused on developing two key economic corridors, namely the: West Borneo Economic Corridor which encompasses Brunei; and the Greater Sulu-Sulawesi Corridor that covers Palawan and parts of Mindanao.

Marcos said these two corridors are strategically designed to integrate production with supply chains, offering abundant opportunities for SMEs to flourish.

During the state banquet hosted by Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah for the President and his delegation on Tuesday night, Marcos emphasized the importance of keeping the bilateral ties between the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam strong to sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region especially amid the "many global challenges for which Brunei and the Philippines have very many common interests."

Marcos yesterday proceeded to Singapore for a three day working visit.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/ph-brunei-to-promote-msmes-agribiz/

P10B loss from tariff cut

By **Angela Celis**

May 30, 2024



Taming inflation. The DOF is willing to forego the P10-billion revenue if the reduction in duties can cut rice prices by P4 to P5 per kilogram. (DA File Photo)

The government is estimated to lose less than P10 billion in revenues should the proposed tariff rate reduction on rice imports push through, according to the Department of Finance (DOF).

Domini Velasquez, finance undersecretary, said in a forum yesterday the agency is willing to forego the tariff loss "just to make sure that inflation, also, is down."

Last year, tariff collection from rice imports reached around P30 billion.

"That P10 billion that (the government) will lose, it won't matter much if we will be able to bring down the prices (of rice) by P4 to P5 (per kilogram)," Velasquez said.

DOF Secretary Ralph Recto earlier said he is in favor of lowering the tariff rate for rice imports.

Recto told reporters the rate could be reduced from the current 35 percent, to support the expected reduction in rice prices by September.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) reduction of tariffs on rice and other sensitive commodities contradicts their assurances in Senate hearings on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Cooperation (RCEP) these products would not suffer any tariff reduction.

FFF called on Senate President Francis Escudero to immediately re-organize and convene its RCEP oversight committee. We need to know if the government lived up to its promises to the agricultural sector...," said Raul Montemayor, FFF national manager, in a statement.

The group said the Senate must verify if the promised gains from RCEP materialized. It said Congress must honor its commitment to significantly increase the budget of the Department of Agriculture.

Senate Resolution No. 42 dated February 21, 2023 ratified Philippine accession to RCEP but the agreement was entered into force for the country on June 2, 2023.

FFF said the resolution included a list of government's commitments to assist the agricultural sector in order to allay concerns about the preparedness of Filipino farmers to compete against imports and take advantage of export opportunities. – **With Jed Macapagal**

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/p10b-loss-from-tariff-cut/

‘High for long’ rates, food and fuel tracked

Cai U. Ordinario

May 30, 2024

THE Financial Stability Coordination Council (FSCC) is closely monitoring “high for long” global interest rates and expensive food and fuel as these could affect debt servicing and the country’s economic growth.

In a statement on Wednesday, FSCC Chairman and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Dr. Eli M. Remolona Jr. said this despite “reassuring indicators” that point toward the country’s efforts to have greater control over its macro-financial path.

“The volatility in the price and supply of energy-related products can affect economic activity, while a high-for-long global interest rate situation will weigh on debt servicing in general. These are issues that the FSCC will closely monitor and may address in due course if warranted,” Remolona said.

The FSCC is an interagency council composed of the BSP, the Department of Finance, the Insurance Commission, the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the Securities and Exchange Commission as member institutions.

It started as a voluntary body right after the Global Financial Crisis and has since been institutionalized under Executive Order No. 144.

The Council said global indicators of market volatility have remained low but there was volatility in global oil prices. Further, citing the US Federal Reserve, the FSCC said the US inflation rate remained “stubbornly high.”

“This suggests a high-for-long policy rate environment, which will likely affect the global economy. In addition, geo-political risks have been protracted and, in recent cases, escalated,” the statement read.

Nonetheless, the FSCC noted that reassuring indicators include the country's economic growth. It has remained strong and is considered among the highest globally.

The FSCC also noted that inflation remains in check and is unlikely to breach the upper end of the 2 to 4 inflation target this year.

Risks

IN the Monetary Policy Report, the BSP said risks to the inflation outlook remain tilted to the upside. This was reflected in the central bank's new risk-adjusted inflation forecast for 2024 and 2025.

In May 2024, the risk-adjusted inflation forecast for this year was adjusted downward to 3.8 percent from the 3.9 percent estimate in February. However, for 2025, the risk-adjusted inflation forecast was adjusted upward to 3.7 percent in May 2024 from the 3.5 percent recorded in February.

"The upside risks to the inflation outlook could emanate from higher transport charges and toll rates, food prices, electricity rates, and global oil prices. Meanwhile, no downside risk was identified," the report stated.

The BSP also said there was still a high probability that inflation will breach the high end of the target band in 2024 and 2025.

"Nevertheless, the latest probability distribution shows a slightly higher likelihood of inflation settling within the target range for 2024 compared with the previous round due to the downward adjustment in the baseline forecast. Meanwhile, the probability of inflation breaching the low end of the target range for 2024 and 2025 remains low," the BSP said.

There was an upward adjustment in BSP's inflation expectations due to the impact of higher domestic food prices, higher transport charges and global oil prices, removal of the measures to mitigate El Niño and implementation of higher toll rates.

BSP noted there are several petitions for transport fare hikes. This included the P1 increase in jeepney fares for both traditional and modern jeepneys as well as the petition to increase to P15 the minimum fare for traditional jeepneys.

The report also said there was a petition filed to increase the minimum fare of the rail line to P16 from the current P13 and the proposed increase in the taxi flag down rate to P70 if gasoline prices reach P66 to P70 per liter. In October, taxi flag down rates were granted a provisional increase of P5.

The central bank expects there is a medium probability for the jeepney fare hike to materialize while there was a high probability that railway fares will be increased in the second quarter of the year.

As for taxi flag down rates, BSP said there was only a low probability that this petition will be granted give the expected increase in oil prices.

The BSP also noted toll rate adjustments for the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX), and sections of the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) were approved for staggered implementation starting in June 2023.

“The scenario assumes that the second tranche of the toll adjustments in the said expressways will be implemented in Q2 2024, while the third tranche of the adjustment in SCTEX will be implemented in Q1 2025,” the BSP said.

“As said toll adjustments have been approved by the Toll Regulatory Board, a high probability is assigned to this. An overall medium probability is assigned to the risk of higher transport charges based on the CPI [Consumer Price Index] weights of the various transport items considered,” it also said.

Meanwhile, the country still faces supply constraints on key food items such as local rice and corn production which have been affected by the severe dry spell.

The African Swine Fever (ASF) and Avian Flu, the BSP said, continue to threaten pork and poultry growth, while high oil prices have reduced fishing activities.

The BSP also noted a deficit in sugar and onion supplies due to the “absence of sufficient import programs.”

“Under this risk scenario, elevated prices are assumed to persist until Q3 2024 for rice and until Q4 2024 for the rest of the commodities identified. An overall medium probability is assigned to this risk, given the relative weights of the commodities in the CPI basket,” BSP said.

Nonetheless, BSP said, these upside risks were partly offset by the lower impact of higher electricity rates. This was despite the high probability that electricity prices would increase.

This high probability is largely due to expectations that the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) will release an order to authorize the collection of the power generation cost.

BSP noted that the risk scenario assumes that an estimated P15.77 billion worth of power generation cost will be passed on to consumers with the adjustment spread equally over the next three years starting in June 2024.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/30/high-for-long-rates-food-and-fuel-tracked/>

Govt to lose ₱10-B revenue from rice tariff cut—DOF

Reine Juvierre S. Alberto

May 30, 2024

THE proposed reduction on rice tariffs would cost the national government to potentially lose around P10 billion in revenues to break-even with the farmers and consumers, according to a Department of Finance (DOF) official.

Office of the Chief Economist Undersecretary Domini SD. Velasquez said in a forum on Wednesday that the government is looking to have the Tariff Commission conduct a public hearing to discuss if lowering the tariff rates would be beneficial for the farmers, consumers and the government.

“The government collects around P30 billion in revenues from the [Rice Tariffication Law] RTL. So, to bring down the prices, it would be alright to offset those losses so that everyone would benefit from the lower tariff,” Velasquez said in a mix of English and Filipino.

This, after Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto floated the idea that the government could reduce rice tariffs to as low as 17.5 percent to 20 percent from 35 percent to bring down rice prices by September.

Under the RTL, rice importers must pay a 35-percent tariff imposed on imports within Southeast Asia. This, Recto said, would be lowered but not down to zero percent.

“You have to strike a balance between the farmers and the consumers...Mas maganda ’yung hating-kapatid [A fair share would be ideal],” Recto told reporters on the sidelines of the recent Philippine Economic Briefing (PEB).

Velasquez added that the government has already collected P16 billion in rice tariffs as of April this year to assist farmers, more than the required P15-billion appropriation to the Department of Agriculture’s (DA) agencies and programs under the Rice Competitiveness and Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

“On the DOF’s part, we are willing to forego that tariff loss just to make sure that inflation [is also] down,” Velasquez noted.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said that rice tariffs lowered to 17.5 percent would be a big reduction.

“If the RTL would be passed, we are looking at importing rice at lower prices, with the 25 percent broken, so that the private sector would be pressured to import rice at lower prices,” de Mesa said.

De Mesa added that local farmers are contented with the National Food Authority’s (NFA) decision to increase the buying price of palay from P19 to P23, while clean and dry palay from P23 to P30.

Even if the tariffs would be slashed to 15 to 20 percent, de Mesa said that their initial computation showed it would go down by P4 to P5.

“The rice prices versus the palay priced at P30 will not affect the farmers that much with the current farmgate prices that we have,” de Mesa said in a mix of English and Filipino.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/30/govt-to-lose-%e2%82%b110-b-revenue-from-rice-tariff-cut-dof/>

BUSINESS MIRROR

Govt eyes 30% hike in cold storage capacity to help farmers

Ada Pelonia

May 30, 2024

THE government wants to increase the country's cold storage capacity by 30 percent to bolster farmers' productivity, according to an official from the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"We really have to increase the number of cold storages in the country to be able to encourage more farmers to plant and to be able to store our products better...my ratio for that is a 30-percent increase in storage capacity," DA Assistant Secretary Dannie Atayde told the BusinessMirror.

Atayde added that once this pans out, the government could move forward in having the DA's proposed food hub near the trackways, referring to the "farm-to-market digital logistics integrated backbone" (FMDLIB) system proposed by the Philippine Trackway Corp. (Philtrak) consortium.

The decommissioned Philippine National Railways (PNR) and Panay Railways Inc. (PRI) railways would be optimized to create the FMDLIB system that would serve as a freight and passenger transit line transporting agricultural commodities and people in Luzon and Panay Island.

According to Atayde, they were tapped for the project because of the department's plan to build food hubs and cold storage facilities.

"They want to communicate with DA because they heard about the food hubs and our plans and cold storage facilities so they want to be near us as well so they can plan it better," he said.

Atayde expressed his support for the project, saying the FMDLIB system would fast-track the delivery of products, making it efficient for the supply chain.

“It will improve the income of the fisherfolks and farmers...in terms of logistics it will be faster and efficient,” he said.

However, Atayde said the country’s archipelagic nature would be a challenge.

“The challenge is the Philippines is an archipelago so it’s not straight. There’s a break...we have to correct the water port system for the agriculture so that food hubs can be set up near the port area,” he said.

“Now from our food hubs that would be near the ports and near the trackways, that has to be planned,” he said.

The department earlier created a technical working group (TWG) to craft policies regarding the development and operation of deep-water ports. (See: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/04/18/da-begins-effort-to-develop-deep-water-ports/>)

The TWG’s objective lies on the efficient cargo handling and distribution, reduced postharvest losses, enhanced fish ports, and provision of efficient logistic systems for both input and output production.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/30/govt-eyes-30-hike-in-cold-storage-capacity-to-help-farmers/>

BPI: Imported rice arrivals hit 1.8 MMT in May

Ada Pelonia

May 30, 2024

More than 1.88 million metric tons (MMT) of imported rice arrived in the Philippines as of May 16, according to the latest data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

Figures from the attached agency of the Department of Agriculture (DA) showed that Vietnam accounted for 1.38 MMT of imports, followed by Thailand with 287,167.19 metric tons (MT) and Pakistan with 139,823.50 MT.

The country's other rice suppliers were Myanmar (64,040 MT), China (5,460 MT), and Japan (2,166.59 MT).

Orison Free Enterprise Inc. led the 150 rice importers with a total import volume of 125,904.35 MT, followed by BLY Agri Venture Trading with 118,744.99 MT and Macman Rice and Corn Trading with 96,425.80 MT.

Other top importers during the period were River Valley Distribution Inc. and Vitram Marketing Inc. which brought in 69,360 MT and 64,983.88 MT, respectively.

The BPI issued 3,992 SPSICs that would cover the importation of 4.66 MMT of rice. In January, the issued 979 SPSICs were issued for 2.25 MMT, 703 in February for 554,718.97 MT, and 1,025 in March for 815,750.10 MT. In April and May, the BPI issued 895 and 390 SPSICs for 687,671.53 MT and 353,164.62 MT, respectively.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) adjusted upward its rice import forecast for the Philippines at 4.2 MMT in 2025. The USDA attributed this to the country's need to feed its growing population and the increasing number of tourists set to visit the country.

“The Philippines imports are forecast up to a record 4.2 million tons on continued growth in consumption. The Philippines is expected to again be the largest global rice importer,” the latest monthly report on global grains trade read.

The country imported nearly 3.6 MMT of rice last year, lower than the USDA’s forecast of 3.9 MMT.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that unmilled rice in the first quarter fell by 2 percent to 4.685 MMT, from the previous year’s 4.77 percent due to the adverse impact of El Niño.

In December 2023, the DA said the government will reduce the country’s reliance on rice imports by boosting the production of white corn and promoting its consumption.

The DA said it will craft an industry roadmap to prop up the production of white corn, which is widely consumed in some parts of the country.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. issued Special Order 1488 that authorized the creation of a technical committee that would oversee the creation of the white corn industry roadmap.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/30/bpi-imported-rice-arrivals-hit-1-8-mmt-in-may/>

BUSINESS INSIGHT

Luzon farmers get a chunk of LandBank loans for rice sector

Manuel Cayon

May 30, 2024

Davao City—The state-run Land Bank of the Philippines (LandBank) said it extended a total of P2.5 billion loans to rice farmers by the end of April.

Of the amount, LandBank figures showed that majority of the farmers who obtained credit came from regions in Luzon.

The bank said the loans were extended “amid the devastating impact of El Niño on local harvests.”

“The Land Bank of the Philippines remains aggressive in extending financial support to rice farmers as total loans released through the Expanded Rice Credit Assistance under the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund [ERCA-RCEF] reached P2.5 billion as of 30 April 2024,” it said in a statement.

Majority of loan borrowers came from the rice producing provinces of Region 2, particularly the provinces of Cagayan, Nueva Vizcaya, and Quirino. The bank said it released P612.4 million to 4,945 borrowers in the region.

LandBank also released P840.3 million to 2,243 borrowers from Region 3.

Rice farmers in the Visayas and Mindanao, including the provinces of Capiz and Leyte in the Visayas and the provinces of Agusan del Sur, Bukidnon, North Cotabato, and Zamboanga del Sur in Mindanao obtained loans from LandBank.

“In partnership with Department of Agriculture, Landbank has been successful in fully disbursing the P500-million allocated annual fund under ERCA-RCEF from 2019 to 2023,” said Lynette V. Ortiz, president and CEO of Landbank.

She said, “LandBank makes loans available to rice farmers and their cooperatives at affordable interest rates with minimum documentary requirements.”

“Landbank support to the agriculture sector is crucial to ensuring food security in the country. We are committed to providing continued financial assistance to our rice farmers to help them sustain their operations and improve productivity, especially in the face of challenges including the El Niño phenomenon.”

The Landbank said the P2.5-billion loans benefitted more than 15,400 individual rice farmers and 270 cooperatives with more than 21,300 member-beneficiaries. The loan amount was channeled to support palay production, milling and trading, re-lending, and acquisition of farm machineries.

Under the program, 98 percent of Landbank’s direct borrowers were individual rice farmers.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/30/luzon-farmers-get-a-chunk-of-landbank-loans-for-rice-sector/>

Local cane planters tell govt to calibrate sugar imports

Ada Pelonia

May 30, 2024

The Sugar Council, a coalition of three sugarcane producers' federations in the Philippines, is asking the government to put in place a "calibrated and transparent" importation program.

"While the Sugar Council admits that sugar importation is needed to maintain stability of retail prices during off-milling season, a calibrated and transparent importation program must be in place to ensure that locally produced sugar is not prejudiced," it said in a statement.

"This validates the call for active consultation with stakeholders, especially sugar farmers groups, to be conducted before any sugar importation order is issued."

The Sugar Council issued the statement after the Philippine Sugar Millers Association (PSMA) said the Philippines recorded a production surplus. This, PSMA said, should prompt the government to carefully review its sugar importation plan.

Data from the Sugar Regulatory Administration's (SRA) latest report showed that as of May 12, raw sugar output reached 1.921 million metric tons (MMT), higher than last year's 1.799 MMT.

Raw sugar stock went up by 26.37 percent to 531,838 metric tons (MT) from last year's 420,866 MT. Refined sugar stock was also up by 35.53 percent to 572,398 MT from 422,332 MT recorded in the same period last year.

PSMA noted that about 135,675 MT of refined sugar in the inventory were imported stocks brought in last year that are still unwithdrawn and unused.

However, the council said the supposed withdrawals for imported refined sugar shot up by a “disturbing” 16 percent while withdrawals for locally refined sugar plunged by over 7 percent.

“Since locally refined sugar comes from the local farmers’ raw sugar, demand for raw sugar also dropped by over 4 percent, much to the disadvantage of local farmers,” the council said.

“These numbers suggest that imported refined sugar is being prioritized over locally refined sugar,” it added.

Last March, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said El Niño damaged sugarcane crops in top sugar-producing areas like Negros and Batangas.

SRA Administrator Pablo Luis Azcona said the current El Niño episode affected sugarcane that will be harvested in October, or a month after the start of crop year 2024-2025.

“This El Niño hit from November 2023 to present has greatly damaged the planted cane for the October 2024 harvest, and so far in Batangas, South Negros, and Mindanao, the October 2024 harvestable cane is suffering,” Azcona said in a statement.

“We are hoping for the rains to come soon, so that the 2024 to 2025 season will be as good as well.”

The Inter-Agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook said local production of key commodities, including sugar would fail to meet domestic demand this year following the decline of sugarcane production in 2022.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/05/30/local-cane-planters-tell-govt-to-calibrate-sugar-imports/>

ABANTE TONITE

Food security mahirap abutin – Agri Usec Balagbag

May 29, 2024



Inamin ng isang opisyal ng Department of Agriculture (DA) na mahirap abutin ang food security para sa buong bansa.

Ayon kay DA Undersecretary Alvin John Balagbag, kada taon nadadagdagan ang bilang ng mga tao sa Pilipinas at tumataas din ang pangangailangan sa pagkain ng bansa kaya hindi maaabot ang food security.

Ang kanila umanong target ay matigil na ang pag-angkat ng fertilizer at iba pang kailangan sa pagsasaka at pangingisda, upang dito na mismo sa Pilipinas makapag-produce ng mga produkto at hindi nakasandal sa pag-import.

Sinabi pa ni Balagbag na “moving target” ang food sufficiency program ng gobyerno kaya mahirap maabot o hindi kaya na maisakatuparan dahil habang ginagawa ang pag-abot sa sapat na pagkain ay dumadami ang kumakain dahil sa pagdami ng tao sa buong bansa kada taon.

Ginawa ni Balagbag ang pahayag na ito sa isang press conference sa Puerto Princesa City sa Palawan kung saan ginaganap ang 2nd National Cluster Summit ng mga empleyado at kasamang magsasaka at mangingisda mula sa ibat-ibang rehiyon na dinaluhan ng nasa 700 katao. Magtatalag ang kumperensiya hanggang sa Biyernes. (Romy Luzares)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/05/29/food-security-mahirap-abutin-agri-usec-balagbag/>

ABANTE TONITE

Ratipikasyon sa Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, pag-asa ng magsasakang Pinoy

May 29, 2024

Nagkakaisang nagpasalamat ang mga magsasakang Pilipino matapos ratipikan ng Kongreso at Senado ang Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act noong Miyerkules, Mayo 22.

Sinabi ni AGAP Party-list Rep. Nicanor Briones, na siyang may akda sa Anti- Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act, na lagda na lang ni Pangulong Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos, Jr. ang hinhintay at magiging ganap na itong batas.

Umaasa na matatapos na ang paghihirap ng mga magsasakang Pilipino at consumers sanhi ng cartel, smuggling at iba pang katiwalian.

Layunin ng bagong batas na ipawalang-bisa ang Republic Act No. 10845, o ang “Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act,” at magpataw ng matinding parusa para sa smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, at pagbuo ng mga kartel ng mga produktong pang-agrikultura at pangisdaan.

Mapapangalagaan ng bagong batas ang estado mula sa mga economic saboteurs at mapoprotektahan ang kabuhayan ng mga magsasakang Pilipino.

“Ito ang sinabi natin na kahit anong gawing batas, ayuda, pondo ibigay sa magsasaka walang mangyayari kung patuloy na pagsasamatalahan ng smugglers, hoarders, cartel at profiteers,” ani Briones.

“At sa ating bill isinasaad ang pagkakaroon ng National Council under the office of the President na kasama sa council ang pitong sector ng magsasaka, may enforcement group na NBI, PNP at Coast Guard. May special prosecutors, at lifetime imprisonment ang parusa, 3x ang multa at nonbailable ito. Pwede rin mag-file ng kaso ang private citizen. Merong rewards sa tipster o whistle blower mula P1M hanggang P20M o 20% whichever is higher.” dagdag ng mambabatas.

Binigyan diin pa nito na hindi maaaring isama ang Bureau of Customs (BOC) dahil walang saysay ang batas na ito tulad sa Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act, dahil may mga probisyon ito na pabor sa mga smuggler, hoarder, profiteer, at cartel kung saan ang customs ang nangunguna sa nasabing batas.

Walang saysay aniya ang utos ni PBBM na habulin at panagutin ang mga sangkot sa smuggling ng agricultural products sa bansa kung nariyan pa rin sa council ng bagong batas ang BOC, at walang nasasampolan na sampahan ng kaso.(Mina Navarro)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/05/29/ratipikasyon-sa-anti-agricultural-economic-sabotage-act-pag-asa-ng-magsasakang-pinoy/>