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**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# **USDA: Philippine rice imports set to grow after tariff cuts**

**BY CHINO S. LEYCO**

Jun 17, 2024 02:17 PM

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The Philippines is poised to retain its position as the leading global rice importer this year and the next, according to the latest forecasts from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The USDA now expects that the country's rice imports will reach up to 4.6 million metric tons this year, with a further rise to 4.7 million metric tons in 2025.

These figures represent an upward revision from the USDA's earlier estimates in May, which had pegged imports at 4.1 million metric tons for this year and 4.2 million metric tons for 2025.

The surge in rice consumption is primarily attributed to reduced tariffs on the commodity, according to the USDA.

Data from the Bureau of Plant Industry revealed that as of June 6, rice imports totaling 2.17 million metric tons had already been recorded, with the majority (1.59 million metric tons, or 73 percent of the total) originating from Vietnam.

Government projections suggest that the retail price of imported rice is expected to see a decrease of P6 to P7 per kilogram starting in August, following the implementation of reduced tariffs on the staple.

Shipments of rice with reduced tariffs are scheduled to arrive in the country in July.

Forecasts for the retail prices of imported rice are based on estimates provided by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Monitoring conducted by the Department of Agriculture in public markets in Metro Manila indicated that well-milled rice is currently priced between P48 and P55 per kilogram, while regular rice ranges from P45 to P52 per kilogram.

Imported well-milled rice is priced between P52 and P55 per kilogram, while imported regular rice falls within the range of P48 to P51 per kilogram.

Special variety imported rice is sold for P57 to P65 per kilogram, and premium imported rice is priced at P50 to P62 per kilogram.

In comparison, domestically grown rice is available at P56 to P65 per kilogram for the special variety and P50 to P58 per kilogram for the premium variety.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/6/17/usda-rice-imports-set-to-grow-as-philippines-cuts-tariffs>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

## **P6.2 trillion budget for 2025 to be House priority – Speaker**

[Delon Porcalla](#) - The Philippine Star

June 17, 2024 | 12:00am



Speaker Martin Romualdez answers questions during a press conference at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City on November 23, 2023.

Photo courtesy of House Press and Public Affairs Bureau

MANILA, Philippines — After lawmakers have approved all of the priority bills of President Marcos, the next order of business for the House of Representatives will be the proposed P6.2-trillion national budget for 2025, Speaker Martin Romualdez disclosed yesterday.

“After the President delivers his State of the Nation Address (on July 22), of course the executive department will submit to us in Congress their proposed budget for 2025, and that will be our priority (when we resume sessions),” Romualdez told reporters.

“That will be our priority legislation,” the Speaker added, referring to July, after the 19th Congress (2022-2025) opens its third and last regular session, prior to the filing of certificate of candidacy by October this year, and before the May 2025 senatorial elections.

The leader of the 300-plus-strong House, who is also the president of the ruling Lakas-CMD political party, said the national spending program is the most important piece of legislation Congress passes each year.

Romualdez was interviewed at the Agriculture Convergence event in Tiaong, Quezon province over the weekend, after witnessing the distribution by the

Department of Labor and Employment of financial aid under the agency's Tulong Panghanapbuhay para sa ating Disadvantaged at Displaced Workers (TUPAD).

He said Congress would continue to fund the workers' assistance program.

## **Near agreement on RTL amendments**

In a related development, Romualdez said the House and the Senate are close to an agreement on the amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) following his first official meeting with Senate President Francis Escudero.

“The meeting and collaboration is ongoing, and it seems the House and the Senate are almost in agreement. We might have a good resolution (on RTL),” the Speaker said when interviewed by reporters on the sidelines of the event.

Aside from the TUPAD payout to workers, the event marked the launch of the Farmers Assistance for Recovery and Modernization program.

As guest of honor and keynote speaker during the event organized by Deputy Speaker and Quezon 2nd District Rep. David Suarez, Romualdez cited the ongoing efforts to amend the RTL to provide further support to farmers and relief to consumers grappling with high rice prices.

The leader of the 300-plus-strong House emphasized the chamber's support for the National Food Authority and its initiative to sell rice purchased directly from farmers to the public.

Romualdez underscored that these efforts, including the proposed amendments to the RTL, reflect the unwavering commitment to support Marcos' vision of revitalizing the agricultural sector and uplifting the lives of Filipino farmers.

The discussion on RTL amendments was a focal point in Romualdez's first official meeting with Escudero at the Aguado Residence in Malacañang on Thursday last week.

The amendments aim to ensure food security and economic stability for farmers by providing affordable quality rice to Filipinos, and increasing farmers' incomes.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/06/17/2363428/p62-trillion-budget-2025-be-house-priority-speaker>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Helping workers through upskilling and entrepreneurship



[GO NEGOSYO PILIPINAS ANGAT LAHAT!](#) - [Joey Concepcion](#) - The

Philippine Star

June 17, 2024 | 12:00am

Poverty is often tied to low wages. Every administration has had to grapple with the problem of labor and wages. It's a tough balancing act. How do you expect lives to improve if people subsist hand-to-mouth? On the other hand, how can businesses, especially the SMEs, continue to operate when they are faced with higher costs of doing business? The conflict always threatens to lead to instability, something which the Philippines simply cannot afford if it is to reach its goal of becoming an upper-middle income country in the near future.

Is a mandated increase in wages the only way to unshackle people from poverty? Because if it is, it implies that the Filipino worker is powerless over his fate – that another person is in control of the situation.

I would like to think that there are always alternative pathways. Among these are upskilling and entrepreneurship.

Workers can have a better chance at asking for higher wages if they upskill themselves. This is what the Jobs Group of the Private Sector Advisory Council is working on. When our workers are upskilled, they have a powerful bargaining chip with which to negotiate higher wages.

They can even parlay that new skill into another entirely different income stream. Janitors can learn how to drive even without ever owning a vehicle by enrolling in the free training offered by government organizations like TESDA. Busboys can learn to cook, gardeners can learn to landscape and waiters can learn to manage a

restaurant through practical experience. I learned how to sell fire extinguishers and used clothes on my own initiative; over the years I learned how to navigate sales and marketing by observing and learning on the job and it has helped me immensely.

During our free public entrepreneurship mentoring events at our non-profit, Go Negosyo, we meet people who found success by developing other skills. Some discovered that they have a talent for online live selling, while some found that they can actually earn more by being content creators on topics that are close to their hearts. Some discovered that their practical skills – say in cooking meals or organizing events – could even be spun off into a business and turn them into entrepreneurs. Coupled with the correct entrepreneurial mindset, experienced workers can parlay their skills into a business.

Entrepreneurship, however, is not as simple as it sounds, but it is not impossible to succeed in it if one has the patience and discipline to approach it with purpose. In all our programs at Go Negosyo, we always emphasize that in order to succeed in entrepreneurship, one needs access to the three M's, that is, money, mentorship and markets. Entrepreneurs need capital, a coach and a market for their goods or services. Without access to these three, it will be very difficult to succeed.

Fortunately, there are programs that make these three M's accessible even to aspiring entrepreneurs. Our regular 3M on Wheels has been stepped up this year so we can reach more people in the provinces. With the help of the First Lady's LAB for All initiative, we were able to expand 3M on Wheels' reach so that our volunteer entrepreneurship mentors can reach smaller communities across the country. It was also the First Lady who approached us to help the displaced employees of Sofitel Philippine Plaza, which is to cease operations by the end of June. A lot of these employees are veterans in the tourism industry and I am sure they will have a lot to contribute when they start their own businesses, given their real-world experiences in hospitality.

MSME development and worker upskilling has to be a whole-of-government approach, and it becomes even greater than the sum of its parts when it is supplemented by the resources and vigor of the private sector.

We try and mimic this by connecting the private sector to help with key growth areas such as agriculture, tourism, the youth, women, digital technology and our OFWs.

With agriculture, we integrate small farmers into the value chain of big agri companies so they can benefit from their mentorship by learning best practices and new technologies, access ready markets for their products and realize better income from economies of scale.

With our program with the Department of Education, we teach entrepreneurship and business fundamentals to senior high school students to introduce them to alternative pathways to income generation. It ties in with our advocacy in agriculture as it supports the Pampaaralang Taniman ng mga Agribida (PTA), and the inclusion of agripreneurship in the K-12 curriculum.

We teach financial literacy and self-sufficiency through micro-entrepreneurship to the beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP). We do the same at the barangay level with our work with the Development Center for Future Leaders and the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

However, one of the most difficult M's to access is money, or capital. Without it, MSMEs will find it hard to realize their full potential as the backbone of the economy. Recent data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas show that the overall compliance ratio of the banking sector to lend to MSMEs is at 4.41 percent – still below the 10 percent required by the Magna Carta for SMEs. With hope, increasing access to digital technology can help this by making loans more accessible to people who have been discouraged by the bureaucratic and physical limitations of borrowing from brick-and-mortar banks.

MSMEs comprise almost all of the enterprises in the country and account for more than half of the jobs that are being created. This is true even in the whole ASEAN region. In my work in the ASEAN Business Advisory Council – the ASEAN businessmen who provide guidance to the ASEAN on private sector concerns – I see time and again how critical the MSME sector is to each of the economies that make up the region. Without these millions of small and medium businesses, even the large companies will have a hard time.

I wish for a future where every worker will have it in his or her power to pull themselves up because they have upskilled or have become successful entrepreneurs. Our job now is to create the environment that can make this possible.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/06/17/2363363/helping-workers-through-upskilling-and-entrepreneurship>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Meat imports to further rise this year

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

June 17, 2024 | 12:00am



The FAO projected that the country's total meat imports this year would reach 1.09 million metric tons (MT), slightly higher than last year's estimated volume of 1.045 million MT.

STAR / File

**MANILA, Philippines** — The Philippines' meat imports are expected to further increase this year as lower tariffs attract more foreign supplies to meet the country's growing demand for cheaper meat products, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The FAO projected that the country's total meat imports this year would reach 1.09 million metric tons (MT), slightly higher than last year's estimated volume of 1.045 million MT.

“The extension of reduced tariffs on pig meat until end-2024 and increased demand for poultry and bovine meats will likely cause imports to grow in the Philippines,” the international agency said in its recent biannual report on global food markets.

President Marcos, through Executive Order 50, extended the lower tariffs on imported pork products until the end of the year as part of his administration's efforts to stabilize meat prices and temper the country's inflation.

Under EO 50, pork imports within the minimum access volume (MAV) are levied with a 15-percent tariff while shipments outside the MAV are slapped with a 25-percent tariff until the end of the year. The country's pork imports this year are expected to increase to 393,000 MT from last year's 388,000 MT, according to the FAO.

Meanwhile, bovine meat imports by the Philippines are expected to climb to 205,000 MT from 192,000 MT.

"Global trade in meat will likely rebound as demand is expected to exceed domestic supplies in leading meat-importing countries," the FAO said.

The Philippines is the fourth biggest importer of pork in Asia, based on the FAO report.

Furthermore, the international agency noted that the Philippines would contribute to higher world poultry meat trade as local consumers seek more affordable meat alternatives.

The global poultry meat trade is projected to increase by 1.5 percent this year to 16.312 million MT from 16.078 million MT last year, according to FAO.

"Much of the import demand is expected from the United States, Malaysia, Iraq, the Philippines, the European Union and South Africa due to increasing domestic demand and relative affordability of poultry meat compared to other meats," it said.

Meanwhile, the FAO estimates that the Philippines' dairy imports will increase by 7.19 percent year-on-year to 2.49 million MT from 2.323 million MT. The FAO attributed the increase to higher demand from the food service sector coupled by lower international skim milk prices.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/17/2363329/meat-imports-further-rise-year>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Palay harvest likely fell by 8 percent in Q2

[Jasper Emmanuel Arcalas](#) - The Philippine Star

June 17, 2024 | 12:00am



Workers arrange sacks of National Food Authority (NFA) palay or unmilled rice inside their warehouse in Balagtas, Bulacan on May 22, 2024.

STAR / Miguel De Guzman  
ADVERTISEMENT

MANILA, Philippines — The country's palay production in the second quarter likely tumbled by 8.4 percent to 3.9 million metric tons (MT) as farms reeled from the ill effects of the dryer weather conditions.

In its latest production forecast, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said that palay or unmilled rice harvest from April to June likely declined to 3.89 million MT, 360,000 MT lower than the actual 4.25 million MT output in the same period last year.

Furthermore, the PSA's new estimate for the second quarter was lower than its earlier forecast of 3.91 million MT palay output.

The national statistics agency's latest production outlook is based on the standing crops nationwide as of May 1.

The PSA noted that the estimated palay harvest area during the reference period contracted by 7.12 percent year-on-year to 892,400 hectares from 960,870 hectares.

More so, the PSA said there is an expected drop in the average yield of palay to about 4.39 MT per hectare in the second quarter from 4.42 MT per hectare a year ago.

“As of May 1, 2024, about 568,030 hectares or 63.7 percent of the 892,400 hectares updated harvest area of standing crop have been harvested. This translates to palay output of 2.54 million metric tons,” the PSA said.

“Of the total area of 324,370 hectares of standing palay yet to be harvested as of May 1, 2024, 38.6 percent were at the reproductive stage and 61.4 percent were at the maturing stage,” it said.

Industry groups attributed the projected decline in palay production to the impact of the El Niño phenomenon on farms, especially since the dryer than usual weather conditions peaked in the second quarter.

“We don't have water irrigation from our dams. We were told Pantabangan Dam will not be operational this season due to lack of water,” said Danilo Fausto, president of the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc.

“It's difficult to rely on rain water for rice planting. Others who can afford it were forced to spend on irrigation pumps. Others will not be planting,” Fausto said.

Raul Montemayor of the Federation of Free Farmers said some farmers opted to plant early in anticipation of the dry spell. As a result, more farmers harvested in the first quarter, contributing to the decline in the second quarter output.

In a related development, the country's total rice stocks as of May 1 expanded by 10 percent year-on-year to 2.075 million MT on the back of bigger commercial inventory driven by higher imports.

Latest PSA report showed that the nationwide rice inventory was 193,000 MT higher than the 1.882 million MT recorded stocks in the same month of last year. On a monthly basis, total rice stocks grew by almost 12 percent from 1.856 million MT recorded in April.

“This month's rice stocks inventories registered an annual increase from the commercial sector by 45.0 percent,” the PSA said.

“On the other hand, annual decreases were noted from the NFA (National Food Authority) depositories by 30.7 percent and from the households by 13.1 percent,” the PSA said.

Rice stocks in commercial entities during the reference period reached 1.142 million MT versus the 787,970 MT recorded inventory last year. Commercial rice stocks accounted for more than half of the nationwide inventory of the staple.

Meanwhile, rice inventory in households and NFA warehouses reached 863,770 MT and 69,350 MT, respectively.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/06/17/2363343/palay-harvest-likely-fell-8-percent-q2>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

# **Analysts: Huge rice imports won't burden weak peso**

By: [Ian Nicolas P. Cigaral](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:07 AM June 17, 2024

There's a minimal risk that the projected increase in inbound shipments of rice as a result of lower tariffs on the commodity would bloat the country's total import bill and add pressure on the already volatile peso, analysts said.

**This, while the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) assured the public that it has enough reserves to defend the currency from “temporary” weakness.**

Robert Dan Roces, chief economist at Security Bank, said the government was expected to ensure that the higher arrivals of imported rice would not trigger major dollar outflows and weigh on the peso, which has been trading at 19-month lows in recent weeks.

“The increase in imports will technically put pressure on the Philippine peso by raising the import bill, boosting demand for foreign currency, and potentially widening the trade deficit,” Roces said.

“While factors such as global rice prices, domestic production and the overall health of the economy may mitigate some of the impact, the national government is expected to minimize the risk of the increased rice imports adversely affecting the peso and the broader economy,” he added.

## **Top importer**

The government earlier announced its decision to further slash tariffs on imported rice to 15 percent from 35 percent until 2028, a measure that state statisticians said could cut the domestic prices of the staple grain by P6 to P7 per kilogram.

For that reason, the US Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service estimated the Philippines' rice imports would reach 4.6 million metric tons (MT) in 2024, up by around 27 percent from the 3.6 million MT that arrived in 2023 and cementing the country's spot as the world's top rice importer.

The projected hike in rice imports could boost local demand for dollars, which would pressure an already bearish peso.

At a press conference last Friday, BSP Senior Assistant Governor Iluminada Sicat said the country has enough dollar reserves to soothe any volatility in the foreign exchange (FX) market.

Latest forecasts by the BSP showed the country was expected to end 2024 with a dollar surplus of \$1.6 billion, higher than the previous projection of a \$700-million windfall.

"So meaning to say we are anticipating more supply of FX in 2024 than what is being demanded," Sicat said.

Aris Dacanay and Lenny Jin, analysts at HSBC Global Research, said the risk to the Philippines' import bill was "minimal, which in turn, leads to minimal impact on the peso."

"Rice only accounts for 1.2 percent of the country's imports so the increase in the import bill shouldn't be much," Dacanay and Jin said.

"Nevertheless, we need to look at the policy holistically as well. The tariff rate cut can also lead to a significant reduction in inflation and free up 2 percent of household budgets to be spent elsewhere—thus, bolstering growth," they added.

Miguel Chanco, economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, shared the same view.

“Looking ahead, there will be quite significant downward forces on the total import bill, in particular the ongoing correction in global oil prices and the broad slowdown in Philippine domestic demand,” Chanco added. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/464096/analysts-huge-rice-imports-wont-burden-weak-peso>



**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# Four irrigation dams in Cavite to supply potable water to Maynilad

June 16, 2024 | 8:02 pm



THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it has cleared four irrigation dams in Cavite to be tapped for potable water.

Undersecretary Carlos Primo C. David said the dams controlled by the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) will supply Maynilad Water Services, Inc.

“One of the dams is already online and we are getting water from that dam, supplying water to Cavite residents. The three others will be supplying within the next few months,” Mr. David said at a seminar hosted by Maynilad last week.

The NIA manages 22 dams in Cavite, where farms are dwindling due to the conversion of much of the land to residential development.

“A small policy innovation that we have signed was to convert all these dams into multi-purpose use. And therefore, companies like Maynilad can now access that water to provide water to their residents,” Mr. David said.

Last year, the DENR announced that it will offer 135 water projects to private investors in 2024 hoping to “increase the number of persons with access to drinking water and generate inexpensive hydropower.”

Mr. David has said that the water projects involve water rights held by NIA.

In February, he said that the department has opened up 112 more water projects for public-private investment involving combined capacity of 100 to 170 million liters per day.

Maynilad serves the city of Manila, except portions of San Andres and Sta. Ana. It also operates in Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay City, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas, and Malabon.

It supplies the cities of Cavite, Bacoor, and Imus, and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta, and Rosario, all in Cavite province.

Metro Pacific Investments Corp., which has a majority stake in Maynilad, is one of three Philippine units of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd., the others being Philex Mining Corp. and PLDT Inc.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has an interest in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/06/16/602175/four-irrigation-dams-in-cavite-to-supply-potable-water-to-maynilad/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# NFA palay procurement currently equivalent to 4 days' consumption

June 17, 2024 | 12:04 am



PHILSTAR FILE PHOTO

THE National Food Authority (NFA) said its procurement of palay (unmilled rice) has hit 3.37 million 50-kilogram bags as of June 13, sufficient to meet about four days' consumption for the rice equivalent.

In a statement, the NFA said: "This translates to approximately 168,262 metric tons (MT) of palay. The total inventory is now sufficient to cover four days of national consumption in case of emergencies or disasters," it said.

The NFA added that the higher than target purchasing was due to the higher palay buying price approved by the NFA council in April.

The NFA Council approved a buying price for palay of P23 to P30 per kilogram (kg) for dry and clean palay and P17 to P23 per kg for fresh palay, depending on location.

“We are very pleased with the outcome of the NFA Council’s decision to raise palay procurement prices. We will continue with this program to ensure our rice farmers enjoy the fruits of their hard work,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

The previous purchase price for dry and wet palay was P19-P23 and P16-P19 per kg, respectively.

“We continue to scour the countryside for additional palay that we can buy to bolster the national buffer stock,” NFA Administrator Larry R. Lacson said.

The agency added that P17 billion was allocated for rice procurement this year, including funds rolled over from 2023.

“The NFA still retains around P12 billion for palay procurement in the second half of the year, despite significant purchases at higher prices in recent weeks,” it said.

Mr. Lacson has said that 60% of the NFA’s requirements will be bought during the second half.

The NFA is targeting a rice reserve of 495 thousand MT by the end of the year. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/06/17/602134/nfa-palay-procurement-currently-equivalent-to-4-days-consumption/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# PHL milled rice production seen at 13.3 million MT by 2025 — FAO

June 17, 2024 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

PHILIPPINE milled rice production is expected to hit 13.3 million metric tons (MMT) next year, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In a report, the FAO said “record crops” are expected for the Philippines in 2025 due to improved climate conditions and government support.

“Within the region, Bangladesh, India, and the Philippines are all seen gathering record crops,” it said.

The Philippines produced about 20.06 million MT of unmilled rice in 2023, equivalent to about 13 million MT in milled rice.

The effects of El Niño lead to a decline in palay production during the first quarter.

Palay output fell to 4.69 MMT for the first quarter, from 4.78 MMT a year earlier, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Agricultural damage due to El Niño was estimated at P9.89 billion, with rice and corn as the most affected crops, the Department of Agriculture reported.

The government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), announced the end of El Niño, and estimated the chances of La Niña setting in at 69% between July and September.

The FAO said global milled rice production is expected to increase 0.9% to 534.9 MMT.

“A combination of area expansions and yield improvements are expected to sustain this growth, as attractive paddy prices at the onset of the season could keep plantings at the record extension attained in 2023/24,” the FAO said.

It added that improved growing conditions following the dissipation of El Niño may revive yield growth.

“Asia is expected to account for much of the production expansion envisaged for 2024-25,” it added. —  
**Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/06/17/602133/phl-milled-rice-production-seen-at-13-3-million-mt-by-2025-fao/>

**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# From northwest to east China, parched and baking regions grapple with drought

June 17, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

BEIJING — Weeks of scarce rainfall in parts of China, coupled with sweltering heat, has brought drought to several provinces, prompting alerts and actions from authorities to minimize impacts on agriculture, and water and energy supplies.

Temperatures this week are forecast to scale record highs in parts of China as countries across Asia brace themselves for another summer of extreme weather.

China's Water Resources Ministry this week launched emergency responses to manage drought on in Gansu, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan and Shandong provinces, indicating various regions in the country spanning the northwest to the east are facing parched and scorching conditions.

With dwindling precipitation since May in areas around the Yellow River Basin, in combination with the onset of searing temperatures this month, drought is threatening cultivated land that were being prepared to be sown as well as sown crops, Xinhua reported.

The harsh weather conditions will feature until the end of this week, with drought expected to worsen, the official media said.

In some parts of Hebei, Henan and Shandong provinces, temperatures could reach 44 degrees Celsius (111.2 degrees Fahrenheit), potentially breaking historical records for the month of June, state broadcaster CCTV said.

Surface temperatures could hit 70 degrees Celsius in some localities including in Shanxi and Shaanxi, it added. The emergency management ministry has alerted affected regions including northwestern Shaanxi, northern Hebei and Shanxi, eastern Anhui and Shandong as well as central Henan to protect water and food production.

China's national forecaster predicted continuous heat wave conditions and warned about the need to prepare for emergency power supplies as well as fire prevention in forest areas, the *People's Daily* reported.

Electricity demand typically soars in high temperatures as people crank up the air-conditioning to stay cool.

Rain, not heat, is the threat in southern China. Coastal Fujian's provincial observatory raised a warning for wet weather and potential disasters after forecasting heavy rainfall until Saturday. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/06/17/602132/from-northwest-to-east-china-parched-and-baking-regions-grapple-with-drought/>



**BUSINESS WORLD:**

# G7 leaders launch initiative for global food security

June 17, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

BARI, Italy — Group of Seven (G7) leaders have pledged to step up efforts against global malnutrition, according to a draft statement on Friday that noted Russia’s invasion of Ukraine had “aggravated” the world’s food problems.

The G7 Apulia Food Systems Initiative (AFSI) — named after the Southern Italian region hosting the leaders’ summit — will aim to “overcome structural barriers to food security and nutrition,” according to the draft.

The initiative will focus on low-income countries and support projects in Africa, one of the top priorities under Italy’s rotating G7 presidency this year.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni announced a flagship Italian plan to help Africa earlier this year and has repeatedly said that support for the continent is essential to address the root cause of illegal migration to Europe.

The Western powers also committed to work together to “improve the fiscal space for food security” including by reducing borrowing costs for poorer nations via mechanisms such as debt swaps.

Debt-for-nature swaps are financial instruments through which a developing country’s debt is cut in return for protecting vital ecosystems.

The AFSI initiative, whose details will be agreed by G7 development ministers in the coming months, drew criticism from African agricultural groups who said they had not been consulted.

“It is missing family farmers organizations that have not been involved even though small-scale producers will be key to its success,” according to Ibrahima Coulibaly, President of the West African Network of Peasants and Agricultural Producers.

“And it’s missing a plan to ensure that the finance raised gets to family farmers and supports a shift to more diverse and nature friendly approaches which are key to adaptation. The G7 urgently needs to fill these gaps,” he added. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/06/17/602131/g7-leaders-launch-initiative-for-global-food-security/>

# *Taking a long view on rice*

By Lito Banayo

June 17, 2024, 12:10 am

*“The immutable law of supply and demand tells us that when supply is low, and demand is high, prices will increase”*

## **(Part 1)**

Our previous economic managers convinced Congress that rice tariffication instead of quantitative import restrictions was the way to go.

They took advantage of a not-too-serious rice price crisis in 2018 brought about by inventory mismanagement by the then NFA administration, which was at loggerheads with the presidential adviser under whom supervision of the rice regulatory agency was kept.

So Congress passed RA 11203, which President Duterte signed into law on Valentine’s Day, 2019, which aimed to lower the price of rice for consumers, while providing funds from tariff collections to improve farm productivity.

The removal of quantitative restrictions on rice importation was long advocated by previous economic managers along with free trade champions in the business community.

The WTO which we joined in 1995 also frowned on quantitative restrictions. We were thrice granted extensions by the WTO, the last till 2017.

Then COVID 19 came a year after, and, aside from lockdowns which distorted the free movement of goods and even people, both production and distribution suffered.

The situation was exacerbated by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine which resulted in the cost of oil, grains and fertilizers, along with logistics to spike upwards.

Then NEDA director-general Karl Kendrick Chua claimed RTL was successful in taming rice prices while palay production increased in 2021 to 20 million tons, 3.5 percent higher compared to 2020.

But 2020 was the height of COVID-19 and the lockdowns, so we must treat the comparison with some grains of salt. In 2021, rice imports rose to 2.9 million tons.

Palay farmers complain that RTL, which was met with a massive flood of private sector imports, resulted in very low farm-gate prices, at P15 to P17 per kilo.

When the new administration took over mid-2022, it was met with a flurry of price increases in many commodities, from sugar to rice, to even onions, the price of which got housewives and cooks to cry a river each time they sliced the aromatic.

Rice prices kept creeping up since, and ballooned when India, the world's biggest exporter, banned exports of non-basmati rice to protect the domestic market.

Since 2021, we have become the world's largest rice importer.

I dispute this appellation though, because China with its 1.4 billion people does not quite report actual import volumes, especially the usual cross-border trade between Vietnam and the provinces of Guangxi, Guangdong and Nanning.

Still, our import volumes defy all incremental palay production gains.

In 2010 when I took over the NFA, I was shocked to note that government, both by its account and that of privately-financed zero-tariff imports, had 2.25 million tons for that year, 10 percent over the previous year, almost all from Vietnam.

NFA calculated the per person consumption of rice at 132 kilos per year, thus requiring national consumption at 12.5 million tons with 94.6 million population then.

After a review by the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (before it was subsumed into the PSA and NEDA), we brought down the estimated per capita consumption to 120 kilos, 10 percent lower, which meant an equivalent lower demand for importation.

Since palay production then amounted to some 18 million tons, the equivalent local rice was at 10.8 million tons, more or less.

The shortfall was 1.7 million, but accounting for our over-importation in 2010, where we inherited 59 days inventory (as against the regulatory 15 to 30 days), along with 178 billion in sovereign debt, we reduced NFA imports to 200,000 tons, and allowed the private sector to import 660,000 tons.

We had no shortage nor price spikes in 2011 despite reduced importation, and in place of zero tariffs, NFA bidded out the import permits to earn some income that the BoC

forfeited, where before these were merely awarded on a questionable first-come, first-served basis.

The immutable law of supply and demand tells us that when supply is low, and demand is high, prices will increase.

So clearly, we have to look at the rice problem first by determining what really is the country's consumption versus what its palay farmers produce.

Why did NFA during the last three years of PGMA peg consumption at 132 per capita?

Was that the product of correct number-crunching, or was it a political decision?

One has to reckon that in this and other countries, staples like rice are subject to the economics as well as the politics of rice.

And often, the political considerations trump economic sense, because a rice shortage and high rice prices bring down approval ratings, and impact on electoral chances. **(To be continued)**

<https://manilastandard.net/opinion/columns/so-i-see-by-lito-banayo/314460302/taking-a-long-view-on-rice.html>

**MANILA STANDARD**

# *NFA exceeds rice procurement target in first six months of 2024*

By Othel V. Campos

June 16, 2024, 7:40 pm

The National Food Authority (NFA) said over the weekend it surpassed its revised palay (unmilled rice) procurement target in the first half of 2024 after procuring 3.37 million 50-kilogram bags.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. attributed the program's success to the policy changes implemented by the NFA.

“We are very pleased with the outcome of the NFA Council's decision to raise palay procurement price. We will continue with this program to ensure our rice farmers enjoy the fruits of their hard work,” he said.

Based on the latest report, palay bought by the NFA from farmers exceeded the upgraded target of 3.37 million bags by 0.3 percent, or about 168,262 metric tons.

This volume is sufficient to cover four days of national rice consumption in case of emergencies.

NFA acting administrator Larry Lacson said the agency is committed to continuing palay procurement at prices exceeding market rates.

“We continue to scour the countryside for additional palay that we could buy to bolster the national buffer stock,” he said.

Despite the high purchases at increased prices, the NFA still has around P12 billion remaining from its total P17-billion budget allocated for rice procurement this year, including funds carried over from the previous year.

The funds ensure continued buying activity in the second half.

The NFA Council made a crucial decision in mid-April to raise the buying price for palay to P30 per kilogram (kg) from P23, while the base price for wet palay rose from P16/kg to P17/kg.

The DA provides additional support through various programs, including those funded by the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund established under the Rice Tariffication Law.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/csr-mining/314460225/nfa-exceeds-rice-procurement-target-in-first-six-months-of-2024.html>

**MANILA STANDARD**

# ***Rubber research facilities, propagation nursery to rise in Zamboanga Sibugay***



By Manila Standard Business

June 16, 2024, 7:50 pm

The Philippine Rubber Research Institute (PRRI) will establish research and development buildings, experimental station and propagation nursery in a seven-hectare lot within Integrated Zamboanga Sibugay Research and Extension Services (IZRES) in Region IX.

This followed the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the Department of Agriculture and the PRRI on June 13, 2024.

The soon-to-rise facilities in Zamboanga Sibugay—which gained reputation as the “Rubber Capital of the Philippines” for its 80,000-hectare rubber production—will serve as important facets of the DA-PRRI’s research, development and extension functions and the implementation of its initiatives for the Philippine rubber industry.

“Through collaborative efforts, as attested by the execution of this landmark agreement, we shall attain the goal of Masaganang Bagong Pilipinas. With this endowment, PRRI stands poised to establish a sanctuary of development for rubber growers, ensuring that no one is left behind,” DA-PRRI executive director Cheryl Eusala said.

The DA-PRRI was created by Republic Act No. 10089 mainly to propagate and promote Philippine rubber trees to produce latex and raw materials, capacitate local rubber farmers and processors for increased productivity and profitability and kick-start research and development (R&D) projects on rubber, among others.



The agency has been addressing the threats posed by the occurrence of rubber tree pests and diseases, ensuring the steady increase in rubber prices and encouraging more Filipinos to engage in rubber farming and processing through the provision of technical support and the promotion of modern technologies and facilities for a more efficient rubber production in the country.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. acknowledged the DA-PRRI as a vital institution in the advancement of the Philippine rubber industry and in supporting the livelihood of over 700,000 rubber growers in the country.

“The Department of Agriculture pledges to continue to collaborate to bring forth a robust rubber industry. We renew our commitment to ensure the delivery of accurate, efficient, and effective public service in the agriculture industry,” he said.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314460255/rubber-research-facilities-propagation-nursery-to-rise-in-zamboanga-sibugay.html>

# *House, Senate okay of RTL bill seen*

By Rio N. Araja

June 17, 2024, 12:45 am

## *Speaker sets eyes on 2025 budget approval*

The House of Representatives and the Senate are close to an agreement on the amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law, following Speaker Martin Romualdez's first official meeting with Senate President Francis Escudero.

"It looks like the House and the Senate are coming to an agreement and it looks like it's close. We will have a good resolution," Romualdez said at the sidelines of the Agriculture Convergence Event in Tiaong town, Quezon.

He also said the House of Representatives will prioritize the approval of the P6.2 trillion national budget after the 19th Congress opens its third and last regular session,

"After the SONA (State of the Nation Address) of the President, we will focus on the budget for 2025," Romualdez said.

The event last Friday afternoon marked the district launch of the Farmers Assistance for Recovery and Modernization program and the payout of assistance under the Tulong Panghanapbuhay Para sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers program of the Department of Labor and Employment.

As guest of honor and keynote speaker during the event organized by Quezon Rep. David Suarez, Romualdez cited the ongoing efforts to amend the RTL to provide further support to farmers and relief to consumers grappling from high rice prices.

He emphasized the chamber's support for the National Food Authority and its initiative to sell rice purchased directly from farmers to the public.

"We still have many partners in the aspiration to grow our agricultural sector. There is the NFA that we are helping in the House of Representatives to resell the rice they bought from you directly to our countrymen," he said.

He underscored that the efforts, including the proposed amendments to the RTL, reflected the unwavering commitment to support President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s vision of revitalizing the agricultural sector and uplifting the lives of Filipino farmers.

“Amending the Rice Tariffication Law is a crucial step towards ensuring food security and economic stability for our farmers,” he said.

“We are committed to making quality rice affordable for all Filipinos while boosting the livelihoods of our local farmers,” he added.

Romualdez said Congress would continue to fund the workers’ assistance program.

The suggested changes in the law seek to reinstate the palay-buying and rice-selling mandate of the National Food Authority so the agency could influence rice prices in the retail market.

Speaker Romualdez has said the recent decision of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to reduce rice import tariff from 35 percent to 15 percent and direct rice sales to consumers would significantly bring down the price of the staple.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/314460402/house-senate-okay-of-rtl-bill.html>

THE MANILA TIMES

# ***BROKEN FARMLAND DEVELOPMENT***

June 17, 2024



ONE OF THE REASONS THE PHILIPPINES IS THE NUMBER ONE RICE IMPORTER

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/17/opinion/editorial-cartoon/broken-farmland-development/1951774>

# *Senate, House nearing deal on rice tariff law*

[By Ma. Reina Leanne Tolentino](#)

June 17, 2024

HOUSE Speaker Martin Romualdez said the House of Representatives and the Senate were nearing an agreement on changes to the Rice Tarrification Law (RTL).

Romualdez issued the statement after meeting with Senate President Francis Escudero last Thursday, their first official discussion since the latter became Senate chief in May.

"Our discussion is ongoing, and it seems that both Houses are moving closer to an agreement," Romualdez told reporters on Friday on the sidelines of the Agriculture Convergence Event in Tiaong, Quezon, wherein he was guest of honor and keynote speaker.

On May 21, 2024, House Bill 10381, which seeks to amend the RTL, hurdled third and final reading, with about 230 House lawmakers voting for its passage, three against, and one abstained.

Under the bill, the National Food Authority (NFA) is empowered to require all grain warehouses to be registered, and inspect warehouses "to ensure compliance with standards related to rice quality and supply."

Also, the bill provides the conditions to declare a food security emergency — specifically rice supply shortage, "sustained increase in the price of rice," or "extraordinary increase in the price of rice."

In these cases, the bill allows the NFA to use inventory primarily meant for buffer stocking, supply places where extraordinary price

increases or acute supply shortages occurred, and replenish the inventory used from available local sources. It also allows the NFA to resort to importation if there are no available local sources, upon written concurrence by the secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA), and to maintain a buffer fund up to half of the allocation meant for calamities "to be availed of and utilized only to replace the volume of rice inventory utilized for the purpose."

Moreover, the bill states that the NFA could source rice buffer stocks from farmers' organizations/associations/cooperatives in connection with its mandate to maintain sufficient rice buffer stocks.

It further states that the NFA shall be authorized to buy locally milled rice as needed to fulfill its mandate.

"In case the alternative supply arrangements are not sufficient to address the minimum buffer stock requirements or in case of extraordinary circumstances, the NFA shall, upon written concurrence of the [DA secretary], be given the option to purchase up to a maximum of thirty percent (30%) of rice brought in by an accredited importer at the cost, insurance, and freight landed price declared by the importer based on customs documents," the bills states.

"As a final recourse, once all domestic sources have been exhausted, the NFA shall be granted the authority to directly import rice, subject to the explicit" written concurrence and authorization from the DA secretary, it added.

This authority to directly import rice "is to be exercised solely in circumstances where domestic supply deficits necessitate such imports to stabilize the national rice supply and maintain the optimal buffer stock," the bill states.

The bill also seeks to extend the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund for another six years and to increase its annual

appropriation to P15 billion from P10 billion with changes in the fund's distribution.

Under the bill, the president, "through the recommendation of the [DA chief], after the recommendation of the" program steering committee, is allowed to reallocate the P15 billion "within the core components" if needed.

"Likewise, the excess tariff revenues may be reallocated to the core components and the other programs to be funded," the bill states.

A press release from the House speaker's office states that the "discussion on RTL amendments was a focal point in the June 13 meeting of Romualdez and Escudero at the Aguado Residence in Malacañang.

"Amending the Rice Tariffication Law is a crucial step towards ensuring food security and economic stability for our farmers," Romualdez told reporters after the meeting.

"We are committed to making quality rice affordable for all Filipinos while boosting the livelihoods of our local farmers," he had added.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/17/news/national/senate-house-nearing-deal-on-rice-tariff-law/1951827>

# *FAO: PH to import more meat this year due to lower tariffs*

[By Janine Alexis Miguel](#)

June 17, 2024

**(UPDATES)** PHILIPPINE meat imports are expected to rise this year due to the extension of reduced import tariffs and amid an expansion in the global meat trade, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said.

In its latest food and market review, the FAO said the Philippines could be likely to bring in 1.09 million metric tons (MT) of meat and other meat products in 2024, slightly higher than 1.04 million MT recorded a year earlier.

"The extension of reduced tariffs on pig meat until the end of 2024 and increased demand for poultry and bovine meats will likely cause imports to grow in the Philippines," it said.

Global imports of meat, meanwhile, were forecast to reach 39.8 million MT, with China remaining the top importer at 8.17 million MT.

In terms of production, the FAO said that Philippine output could hit 3.0 million MT this year, up from last year's overall production of 2.9 million MT.

The forecast expansion of global production is likely to be led by poultry meat, which is seen to increase by 1.1 million MT to 146 million MT.

The increase in output will be driven by strong consumer demand for affordable poultry meat and low feed costs despite risks from



avian influenza and high operational costs in leading producers, the UN agency said.

Much of the import demand for poultry meat is expected from the United States, Malaysia, Iraq, the Philippines, the European Union, and South Africa due to increasing domestic demand and affordability of poultry meat compared to other meats.

The report also showed that bovine and ovine meat production is likely to expand further in 2024, underpinned by ample supplies of slaughter-ready cattle.

"However, constrained consumer purchasing power due to subdued economic growth and relatively high bovine meat prices will likely limit demand and impact production growth prospects," the UN agency said.

Global pig meat production, meanwhile, was estimated to fall by about 1.2 million MT or 0.9 percent from 2023 and hit 123.3 million MT this year.

The FAO attributed this to an anticipated decline in China following government's efforts to contain oversupply and sustain domestic price stability by reducing breeding sow numbers and adjusting the national swine stock target.

In the case of the Philippines, pig meat production is projected to hit 1.28 million MT. As for imports, these were forecast to hit 393,000 MT this year.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/17/business/top-business/fao-ph-to-import-more-meat-this-year-due-to-lower-tariffs/1951717>

# *Kanlaon leaves P151M agri damage in Negros*

[By Eugene Y. Adiong](#)

June 17, 2024

**BACOLOD CITY** — The Kanlaon Volcano eruption in Negros Island has left P151 million worth of damage to the local agriculture sector, data from the Department of Agriculture (DA) showed.

A total of 2,341 farmers from both Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental were affected, with a possible production loss of 5,583 metric tons.

At least 1,061 plantations were destroyed while 534 hectares were affected by ashfall and lahar.



**ASSISTANCE FOR KANLAON VICTIMS** Some of the residents of La Castellana, Negros Occidental displaced by the eruption of Mount Kanlaon receive cash assistance of P10,000 each and relief goods from the Department of Social Welfare and Development on June 15, 2024. First lady Liza Araneta-Marcos and Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian led the turnover of assistance to 1,579 affected families in Bago City and La Castellana. PNA PHOTO

Losses in Negros Oriental were estimated at P139.6 million and P11.3 million in Negros Occidental.

Damage to high-value crops was recorded at P101.2 million; rice, P47 million; livestock and poultry, P2.2 million; and corn, P562,312, data showed.

The DA said its regional field offices are evaluating the impact of Kanlaon Volcano's uneasiness on the agriculture and fisheries sectors in the island.

### **More aid to displaced residents**

A total of 1,600 families affected by Mount Kanlaon in Negros Occidental over the weekend received additional cash assistance and relief goods from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

First lady Liza Araneta-Marcos and Social Welfare Secretary Rex Gatchalian led the turnover of P17 million worth of assistance in Bago City and La Castellana town on Saturday.

A total of 1,386 families in La Castellana and 193 in Bago City received P10,000 each or a total of P15.79 million under the DSWD Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations program.

Also distributed were 288 hygiene kits, 97 sleeping kits, 193 family kits and 194 family food packs worth P1.201 million.

In a statement, Mayor Rhummyla Nicor-Mangilimutan of La Castellana, the hardest hit locality by the eruption of Mount Kanlaon on June 3, thanked the national government for assisting her affected constituents.

Figures from the municipal government showed that nearly 800 families, whose homes are situated within the four-kilometer permanent danger zone of Mount Kanlaon, are still staying in

evacuation centers, according to data from La Castellana local government unit.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/06/17/regions/kanlaon-leaves-p151m-agri-damage-in-negros/1951818>

# *NFA surpasses target for palay purchase*

By Jed Macapagal

June 17, 2024



More income for farmers. The NFA has around P12 billion for palay procurement in the second half of the year despite significant purchases at higher prices in recent weeks. (DA Photo)

The National Food Authority (NFA) surpassed its upgraded palay procurement target in the first half of the year due to higher buying prices.

As of June 13, NFA's palay procurement reached nearly 3.37 million 50-kilo bags, slightly exceeding the upgraded target of 3.36 million bags.

Total palay inventory has reached 168,262 metric tons, sufficient to cover four days of national consumption in case of emergencies or disasters.

"We continue to scour the countryside for additional palay that we could buy to bolster the national buffer stock," said Larry Lacson, NFA acting administrator, in a statement.

The NFA has a total budget of P17 billion this year for rice procurement. Including rollover funds from the previous year, the NFA has around P12 billion for palay procurement in the second half of the year despite significant purchases at higher prices in recent weeks.

In mid-April, the NFA Council raised the buying price to a maximum of P30 per kilo from the previous ceiling price of P23 per kilo, while also increasing the base price to P17 per kilo from P16.

In addition to the increased NFA procurement prices, the Department of Agriculture offers various assistance programs to enhance rice production, including support from the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund under the Rice Tariffication Law.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_business/nfa-surpasses-target-for-palay-purchase](https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/nfa-surpasses-target-for-palay-purchase)

## *House to prioritize okay of '25 budget*

By Wendell Vigilia

June 17, 2024

THE House of Representatives will focus on approving the proposed national budget for 2025 during the third and last regular session of the 19th Congress, Speaker Martin Romualdez said yesterday.

“Syempre naman ‘yung budget, kasi pagkatapos ng SONA (State of the Nation Address), isusumite na naman ‘yung budget sa 2025 (Of course, the budget is the most important [piece of legislation] because after the President’s SONA next month, the proposed budget for 2025 will be submitted to the House),” Romualdez said. “‘Yun ang pinakamabigat at pinakamalaking legislation (That’s the most crucial and the biggest piece of legislation).”

The Marcos administration is reportedly set to propose a record-high P6.2 trillion national budget for next year from this year’s P5.768 trillion outlay.

The 19th Congress opens its third and last session on July 22, the same day that President Marcos Jr. is set to deliver his third SONA.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) has said the 2025 national budget is equivalent to 21.4 percent of GDP and higher by 7.5 percent compared to the 2024 national budget.

National Economic and Development Authority chief Arsenio Balisacan has said the budget shall support the Marcos administration’s Build Better More Program “to stay on course and maintain infrastructure spending between five to six percent of GDP from 2024 to 2028.”

Balisacan has also announced that the DBCC had to revise its target economic growth for 2024 following the Philippines’ performance in 2023, when growth fell short of government expectations. The target economic growth is now 6 to 7 percent from 6.5 to 7.5 percent.

Romualdez said Congress will also continue to fund the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)’s financial aid under the agency’s workers’ assistance program, the Tulong Panghanapbuhay para sa ating Disadvantaged at Displaced Workers or TUPAD.

As for the proposed amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), the House leader said the House and the Senate are close to agreeing on the proposals.

The suggested changes in the law seek to reinstate the palay-buying and rice-selling mandate of the National Food Authority (NFA) so the agency could influence rice prices in the retail market.

### ***RTL***

Romualdez said the two houses of Congress are close to reaching an agreement on the proposed amendments to the RTL following the first official meeting between him and Senate President Francis Escudero last Thursday.

“Ongoing po at mukhang nagkakasunduan na ang House at ang Senate at mukhang malapit na. Matatapos din at magkakaroon tayo ng magandang resolusyon (The discussions are ongoing and it seems that the House and the Senate are seeing eye to eye and close to agreeing. It will be done and we’ll have a resolution),” Romualdez told reporters in an interview on the sidelines of the Agriculture Convergence Event in Tiaong town, Quezon province.

The event marked the district launch of the Farmers Assistance for Recovery and Modernization (FARM) program and the payout of assistance under the DOLE’s TUPAD program.

Romualdez has said he expects Sen. Cynthia Villar, who is opposed to the House’s proposal to restore the power of the NFA to directly import and sell rice, to file her version of the bill seeking amendments to the RTL.

As guest of honor and keynote speaker during the event organized by Deputy Speaker David “Jay-jay” Suarez of Quezon, the Speaker cited ongoing efforts to amend the RTL to provide further support to farmers and relief to consumers grappling from high rice prices.

The Speaker also emphasized the chamber’s support for the NFA and its initiative to sell rice purchased directly from farmers to the public.

The discussion on RTL amendments was a focal point of Romualdez’s meeting with Escudero at the Aguado Residence in Malacañang last Thursday.

Last May 21, the House approved on third and final reading the amendments to the RTL under House Bill (HB) No. 10381, which seeks to lower the price of rice to less than P30 from the current retail prices of between P40 to more than 50 per kilo.

The bill seeks to enhance the government’s buffer stocking capabilities and authorize market interventions to stabilize rice prices during emergency situations, ultimately easing the burden on consumers.

Under the bill, the NFA is tasked with registering and monitoring all grain warehouses, ensuring compliance with rice quality and supply standards, and maintaining a national database.



The NFA is also mandated to maintain sufficient buffer stock requirements sourced from local farmers or farmer organizations.

If necessary, the NFA can purchase local milled rice or import rice with explicit authorization from the secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The DA secretary can declare a food security emergency due to factors such as shortage in rice supply or sustained increase in rice prices.

The bill also strengthens the regulatory powers of the Bureau of Plant Industry, allowing inspection of warehouses to ensure compliance with sanitary, phytosanitary, and food safety standards.

The measure will also see the validity period of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) extended for six years, with an increased annual allocation from P10 billion to P15 billion to boost support to a range of initiatives, including farm mechanization, seed development, credit assistance, extension services, and soil health improvement.

A Rice Industry Development Program Management Office will be established to oversee the effective implementation of the government's rice programs.

[https://malaya.com.ph/news\\_news/house-to-prioritize-okay-of-25-budget](https://malaya.com.ph/news_news/house-to-prioritize-okay-of-25-budget)

# *Govt ramps up calamity fund release, May payouts up 73%*

Reine Juvierre S. Alberto

June 17, 2024

THE government ramped up the release of calamity funds in May 2024, with funds given out rising by 73.45 percent year-on-year, according to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

Latest data on the status of National Disaster Risk Reduction Management (NDRRM) fund showed the DBM disbursed P8.508 billion from January to May this year to earmark various calamity-related operations.

The P8.5 billion amount is higher by 73.45 percent, or P3.598 billion, than the P4.905 billion in calamity funds recorded in the same period a year ago. The bulk of the fund was allotted to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), or P4.697 billion as of end-May.

Of the amount, P97.338 million was released in May to cover the implementation of calamity-related projects in Cagayan damaged by Typhoon Egay in 2023, and P861.269 billion for various slope protection structures in Tarlac damaged by Typhoon Dodong in 2023.

Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) was allocated P2.885 billion in calamity funds as of end-May.

The Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) was also allotted P374.970 million for the five-month period.

DBM released a total of P272.070 million in May to provide financial assistance for 25,649 households in Abra and Mountain Province, for houses partially and totally damaged by the Northwestern Luzon Earthquake in 2022.

Moreover, the Department of National Defense (DND) was allotted P100 million to replenish the Office of Civil Defense's Quick Response Fund, a stand-by fund used to cover relief and rehabilitation in case of disasters and calamities.

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) was given P450 million as a government subsidy for the major rehabilitation and improvement of the Mahayag Dam Salug River Irrigation System (Saris), which was damaged by heavy flooding in 2022.

For the month of May, the DBM released P1.781 billion in calamity funds, lower by 44.63 percent than the P3.217 billion distributed in the same month in 2023. The DBM is yet to release P14.227 billion in calamity funds out of the P22.753 billion in calamity funds for 2024.

The NDRRM fund shall be utilized for aid, relief, and rehabilitation services to communities and areas. It may also be used for the repair, rehabilitation and reconstruction work related to the occurrence of natural or human-induced calamities in the current or two preceding years, subject to the President's approval.

The fund also serves as another funding source for agencies whose budgets include provisions for QRF when the balance has reached 50 percent, subject to DBM's approval.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/17/govt-ramps-up-calamity-fund-release-may-payouts-up-73/>

# ***GRAIN EXPECTATIONS***

BusinessMirror

June 17, 2024



Different varieties of rice are displayed with price tags at the Baguio Public Market.

The Philippines, the world's top rice importer, plans to cut tariffs on rice from 35 percent to 15 percent through 2028 to combat inflation.

Analysts are concerned this move might benefit foreign producers while leaving Filipino farmers struggling to compete.

NONIE REYES

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/06/17/grain-expectations/>

**ABANTE TONITE**

## ***PBBM inawat sa 15% tapyas-taripa ng bigas: P22B tax kada taon mawawala***

June 16, 2024

Nanawagan ang Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) kay Pangulong Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. na huwag pirmahan ang executive order na magpapatupad ng 15% tapyas-taripa sa bigas.

Iginiit ng FFF na maghanap pa ng ibang paraan sa halip ay maghanap ng mga paraan upang bumaba ang presyo ng bigas na hindi apektado ang kabuhayan ng mga magsasaka.

Ayon sa FFF, bukod sa walang katiyakan na bababa ang presyo ng bigas kapag binawasan ang taripa nito, mababawasan pa ang koleksyon sa buwis ng pamahalaan ng P22 bilyon kada taon.

Dagdag pa ng grupo na mababawasan din ang pondo para sa suporta sa mga magsasaka.

Pinasinungalingan din ng FFF ang pahayag ni National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan na nagkaroon ng malawakan at malalimang konsultasyon na naging basehan ng rekomendasyon ng ahensiya para bawasan ang taripa sa bigas o gawing 15% mula sa 35% at gawin itong epektibo hanggang 2028.

Dagdag nila, nang maglabas ng Notice of Conduct of Comprehensive Review ang Tariff Commission (TC) noong Marso 2023, hiningan lamang nito ng input ang mga interesadong partido at hindi naman ikinalat ang mga komento ng iba’t ibang stakeholder, at wala ring suhestyon o komento na inihain tungkol sa taripa sa bigas.

Huling nagsagawa umano ng pagdinig ang TC tungkol sa taripa noong Setyembre 2023 ngunit hiwalay ito sa comprehensive tariff review at ang pinag-usapan lamang ay ang pagpantay ng taripa ng bigas na manggagaling sa labas ng Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) sa 35% mula sa 50%.

Base na rin umano sa Executive Order No. 50 na nagbaba ng taripa sa bigas ng 35% sa labas ng ASEAN, kailangang repasuhin ito bawat semester simula Hulyo 2024.

“We do not know where the plan to slash tariffs to 15%, much less extend the reduction all the way to 2028 came from The TC never mentioned such a proposal in its hearings nor did it seek comments from stakeholders on the matter,” sabi ni FFF National Manager Raul Montemayor.

Ayon kay Montemayor, tila siningit lamang ang pagtapyas ng taripa sa bigas sa agenda ng NEDA Board noong Hunyo 3 at Comprehensive Tariff Review ang ginamit nitong dahilan. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://tonite.abante.com.ph/2024/06/16/pbbm-inawat-sa-15-tapvas-taripa-ng-bigas-p22b-tax-kada-taon-mawawala>

**REMATE:**

# Seaweed production palalakasin ng Arteche, Eastern Samar

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MANILA, Philippines – Palalakasin ng munisipalidad ng Arteche, Eastern Samar ang seaweed production trading nito sa Samar Island.

Ayon kay Mayor Roland Boie Evardone, nasa kabuuang P16 milyong halaga ng proyekto ang opisyal na itinurn-over nitong Biyernes, Hunyo 14 para sa Eastern Samar Seaweeds Production and Trading Enterprise (ESSPATE) ng Department of Agriculture-8 at pamahalaang panlalawigan.

Ang proyekto ay pinondohan ng Philippine Rural Development Program (PRDP).

Nakatanggap ito ng 20 percent counterpart mula sa provincial government, kasama ang kontribusyon na P3 milyon mula sa Catumsan Crab Growers Association.

“We are expecting to increase the production of seaweeds to provide an alternative source of income for the fisherfolk,” ani Evardone.

Dagdag pa niya, magsisilbing consolidator ng lahat ng seaweeds ang Arteche para sa lahat ng maipo-produce ng sub-proponent groups.

Ang Arteche ay matatagpuan sa pinakadulong hilaga ng Eastern Samar. Matatagpuan dito ang pinakamalaking mangrove forest sa probinsya at may umuusbong na industriya ng seaweeds. *RNT/JGC*

<https://remate.ph/seaweed-production-palalakasin-ng-arteche-eastern-samar/>