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MANILA BULLETIN:

Bulacan gets P19-M check from PBBM

BY

Jul 15, 2024 08:25 AM



President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. and Governor Daniel R. Fernando hold the ceremonial cheque worth P19,660,000 for the Province of Bulacan as part of the Presidential Assistance to Farmers, Fisherfolk and Families (PAFFF) during the distribution of PAFFF in Region III at Bren Z. Guiao Convention Center in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga last July 12, 2024. Also in photo are (from left) Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., former President, Pampanga 2nd District Representative Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and Pampanga Governor Dennis Pineda (seated on the right side). (PPAO)

President Marcos handed over a check for P19,660,000 to Governor Daniel R. Fernando for the Province of Bulacan during the distribution of the Presidential Assistance to Farmers, Fisherfolk and Families (PAFFF) in Region III at the Bren Z. Guiao Convention Center in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga last July 12.

Marcos led the distribution of various assistance to farmers, fisherfolk, and families affected by the El Nino crisis. The Office of the President provided cash assistance of P10,000 each to the chosen 60 beneficiaries from Region III.

Aside from the province of Bulacan, the President also extended support to the Provincial Governments of Pampanga, Bataan, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, and Zambales. The overall monetary support totaled P105 million.

To ensure sustainable recovery for farmers and fisherfolk in the region, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and its attached agencies have been providing agri-fishery equipment, seeds, fuel assistance cards, and other inputs to beneficiaries to support their ongoing operations.

The President was assisted by former President and now Congresswoman Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr., House Speaker Martin Romualdez, and officials from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

They distributed cash assistance, started toolkits, training funds, scholarship allocation certificates, and packs of five kilos of rice.

They said this collaborative effort aims to bring much-needed aid to those affected by the crisis.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/15/bulacan-gets-p19-m-check-from-pbbm>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

DA to stop ASF vaccine trial if problem arises

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

July 15, 2024 | 12:00am



Arnel de Mesa, spokesman for the DA, made the assurance after former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor advised the agency to go slow in conducting trials for ASF vaccine.

BusinessWorld / File

MANILA, Philippines — An official of the Department of Agriculture has given assurance that DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. would stop the trial of African swine fever (ASF) should problems arise.

Arnel de Mesa, spokesman for the DA, made the assurance after former agriculture secretary Leonardo Montemayor advised the agency to go slow in conducting trials for ASF vaccine.

Montemayor's advice came after the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) warned countries against using substandard ASF vaccines to contain the disease.

“We can determine that (efficacy of the ASF vaccine) during the result of the controlled vaccination... so it will undergo the correct process. The secretary (Tiu Laurel) is strict on this. If he sees a problem and there is a need to stop, (he will order it),” De Mesa said over the weekend.

Tiu Laurel earlier said the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) would approve this month the country’s first vaccine against ASF for commercial distribution.

He said that after the approval, the DA would conduct a mass trial of the vaccine.

“We are not yet in the commercial (release of the ASF vaccine). There is still no approval from the FDA. We are still in the trial period,” De Mesa said.

He said the DA and the FDA would implement a controlled vaccination during the vaccine trial.

“Laboratory trials conducted on the vaccine showed a high efficacy level,” he said.

The WOAHA warned veterinary experts and the hog industry of risks from the use of substandard vaccines.

It said the spread of ASF is a global concern for the industry as no region is left unaffected.

The research community has been working to develop an effective vaccine, the WOAHA aid.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/07/15/2370304/da-stop-asf-vaccine-trial-if-problem-arises>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

USDA hikes rice import forecast for Philippines

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

July 15, 2024 | 12:00am



Tons of imported rice are hauled at a port in Manila.

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines is now projected by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to import 4.7 million metric tons (MT) of rice this year after the country saw a surge in its import volume in the first half.

The USDA revised upward its rice import forecast for the Philippines by 100,000 MT from an earlier estimate of 4.6 million MT, following “large volumes of rice imports in the first half.”

Government data showed that the country’s rice imports from January to June rose by almost a fifth to 2.319 million MT from 1.863 million MT recorded in the same period last year.

“Due to rising global prices and tighter exportable supplies in Vietnam, the Philippines has shifted some purchases to other suppliers,” the USDA said in its recent global grains market report.

“Imports have exceeded 430,000 [metric] tons collectively from Thailand, Myanmar and Pakistan so far in 2024,” the USDA added.

The USDA noted that the increased volume of imports by the Philippines resulted in “closer” connectivity between international and local rice prices.

The Philippines, which is now considered as the world’s biggest importer of rice, also felt the impact of export restriction imposed by India on its non-Basmati rice products through elevated prices of exports from Vietnam and Thailand.

“Buyers in the Philippines chose to pay these elevated prices from Southeast Asian suppliers, which resulted in higher retail prices in the Philippines,” the USDA said.

The international agency said the decision of the government to slash rice tariffs to 15 percent is “expected” to pull down landed prices of imported rice, thus “easing inflationary pressures while spurring additional Filipino rice consumption.”

Other international agencies have taken notice of the recent developments in the Philippines’ rice trade regime, particularly the reduction in tariffs.

For one, the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said local rice traders and importers held off on their purchases until the lower rice tariffs take effect.

This, the FAO pointed out, contributed to the softening of Vietnamese rice export prices in June.

“Additional downward pressure stemmed from the retreat of Filipino buyers from the market, as they held off purchases until clarity on tariff changes in the Philippines emerged toward the end of the month,” it said in its July Rice Price Update report.

The average export price for five percent broken Vietnamese rice fell by three percent in June to \$549 per MT from \$568 per MT recorded in May, based on latest FAO data.

Meanwhile, the USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service unit (USDA-FAS) in Manila noted that there might be “some motivation” for rice traders and importers to sell their current stocks to prevent losses from the arrival of “lower priced” supplies as a result of the tariff reduction.

“But industry sources report that traders are holding steady on stocks, particularly as they bought at a higher price and are still hoping for better margins,” the USDA-FAS Manila said in a report.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/07/15/2370154/usda-hikes-rice-import-forecast-philippines>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

P29/kilo rice at 23 Kadiwa outlets by August

[Bella Cariaso](#) - The Philippine Star

July 15, 2024 | 12:00am



A vendor sells rice at Trabajo public market along Dela Fuente street in Sampaloc, Manila yesterday.

Edd Gumban

MANILA, Philippines — Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said that P29 per kilo rice will be available in 23 Kadiwa outlets by Aug. 1, including in three provincial areas outside Luzon.

“This week we’re already up to 13 Kadiwa outlets. By August 1, hopefully we will have 23 stores plus three provincial areas. We will have one in Cebu, maybe Maguindanao. Then as we go along, we will widen the coverage and may even try to lessen (the price) of the P29 rice in Kadiwa stores nationwide, hopefully by the first quarter of next year,” Tiu Laurel said.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) increased the Kadiwa stores selling P29 per kilo rice to 13 outlets, from the original 10 centers, starting last Friday during its second week of implementation.

Tiu Laurel said that the P29 per kilo rice will continue to be sourced from the aging stocks of the National Food Authority (NFA).

The 13 Kadiwa outlets sell P29 per kilo rice every Friday, Saturday and Sunday to vulnerable households that include members of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), solo parents, senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

According to the DA, the rice produced under the National Irrigation Administration's contract-growing arrangement with rice farmers will eventually supplement supply from NFA to sustain the P29 rice program.

Tiu Laurel said that the P29 rice program aims to provide for around 6.9 million vulnerable households, equal to around 34 million Filipinos.

The 13 Kadiwa stores include the ones at Bureau of Plant Industry compound in Manila; Bureau of Animal Industry and National Irrigation Administration in Quezon City; Food Terminal Inc. in Taguig; Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority in Las Piñas; Barangay 167 in Caloocan; Brgy. Fortune and BFCT in Marikina; Nangka, Marikina; Disiplina Village in Valenzuela, Malabon Navotas; and Minuyan proper in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa has maintained that the sale of P29 per kilo rice is not a political move, ahead of the State of the Nation Address of President Marcos on July 22.

Farmers' group Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. president Danilo Fausto has said that the DA is giving false hope to the poor by selling rice at P29 per kilo in Kadiwa outlets.

Fausto added that the move is not sustainable since the DA's subsidy is pegged at P20 per kilo or at P220 million per day.

De Mesa added that the Rice-for-All will be available to the Kadiwa stores where general consumers can buy well-milled rice between P45 and P48 per kilo, lower than prevailing market prices.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/07/15/2370209/p29kilo-rice-23-kadiwa-outlets-august>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Drilon lauds Jalaur's completion

By: [Faith Argosino](#) - Reporter / [@FArgosinoINQ](#)

INQUIRER.net / 11:06 PM July 14, 2024



Former Senate President Franklin Drilon —file photo/Senate PRIB

MANILA, Philippines — The completion of the Jalaur River Multi-Purpose Project (JRMP II), which could benefit 25,000 farmers, is due to the vital contributions of both the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and former chief executive Benigno Aquino III.

“Give credit where it is due,” said former Senate President Franklin Drilon in a statement issued on Sunday.

Citing the National Irrigation Administration Region VI, Drilon said the Jalaur’s three major dams are set to be inaugurated on July 16, ahead of Marcos’ third State of the Nation Address (Sona).

“The Aquino administration, under the late President Noynoy Aquino, moved heaven and earth to secure funding for the project’s second phase, decades after its initial conceptualization in the 1960s,” Drilon said.

“In 2023, President Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos Jr. approved the release of additional funds necessary for the project’s completion, continuing the project first initiated by his father,” he added.

Moreover, the National Economic and Development Authority board meeting in July last year resulted in approval of the loan restructuring worth P8.48 billion to complete JRMP II.

Its first phase was completed in 1983. The project began in the 1960s after the fourth Congress passed Republic Act 2651, mandating the construction of the Jalaur River Multi-Purpose Project.

During his time, Drilon said, “The administration obtained crucial funding from the Korean Exim Bank, which extended a \$207 million loan to the Philippines, considered to be the largest Official Development Assistance project from South Korea to the Philippines. The loan carried a very low interest rate of 0.15 percent per annum. China’s interest rate.”

He added that “one of the project’s primary benefits is its potential to significantly boost rice production, thus stabilizing rice prices—a major inflation driver in the country.”

According to the former senator, the JRMP II is set to provide year-round irrigation to about 31,840 hectares of farmland in Iloilo, which could benefit 25,000 farmers.

Once operational, the project will lead to a 71.54 percent increase in rice production in the province, or 197,545 to 338,874 metric tons annually.

Citing the Department of Agriculture, Drilon added that one of the 194 identified priority infrastructure projects under the ‘Build Better More’ program will also benefit about 4,500 indigenous people in Iloilo province.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1961043/drilon-lauds-jalaur-completion>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Michigan bird flu response sparks COVID-style worries

July 15, 2024 | 12:02 am



REUTERS

MARTIN, Michigan — Some dairy farmers are resisting Michigan's nation-leading efforts to stop the spread of bird flu for fear their incomes will suffer from added costs and hurt rural America.

The government's restrictions, which include tracking who comes and goes from farms, are rekindling unwanted memories of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Martin and other small towns in central Michigan.

The state has two of the four known cases in humans, all dairy workers, since federal authorities confirmed the world's first case in US cattle in late March. The state has tested more people than any of the 12 states with confirmed cases in cows, according to a Reuters survey of state health departments.

Testing policies vary by state. Public health experts fear the disease has the potential to turn into another pandemic just a few years after COVID-19.

As those worries mount, the acceptance and success or failure of Michigan's proactive response is being watched by other states looking for a roadmap that goes beyond federal containment recommendations.

More than a dozen interviews with Michigan producers, state health officials, researchers and industry groups, along with preliminary data, so far show limited dairy farmer participation in efforts to stem and study the virus.

In some cases, calls from local health officials go unanswered, money for dairy farm research is left unclaimed, and workers still milk cows without extra protective gear.

Brian DeMann, a dairy farmer from Martin, Michigan, said the outbreak and state's response recalls COVID-19. The 37-year-old believes Michigan's rules to contain bird flu would be more widely accepted if they came as recommendations rather than requirements for farmers.

"Nobody knows if these things that we're being told to do are going to stop it," said Mr. DeMann, who echoed an uncertain view shared by other farmers. "Just like 2020, people didn't like to be told what to do."

This spring many US dairy owners did not heed federal recommendations to offer more protective equipment to employees, according to farmers and workers.

Mr. DeMann said he did not invest in new protective gear, such as masks, for his workers because it is unclear how the virus is spreading.

About 900 permitted dairy farms dot Michigan's countryside, with cows in open-air barns and piles of feed covered with protective tarps and old tires used as weights.

Tim Boring, Michigan's agriculture director, said social stigma and economic concerns around infections have discouraged farmers from testing cows for bird flu in the nation's sixth biggest milk producer.

"There's a lot of factors that go into the concerns about farms coming forward with positive operations," he said. "We know this has been a challenge in Michigan."

The state last reported an infected dairy herd on July 9, its 26th to test positive. Five other states have also confirmed cases in the past month, and about 140 herds have been infected nationally since March, according to US Department of Agriculture (USDA) data. Michigan is offering farms up to \$28,000 to entice those with infected herds to participate in research. More than a dozen farms have so far expressed interest, the state said.

Separately, the federal government is offering financial assistance. Twelve of 21 herds enrolled in financial support from USDA are from Michigan, according to the agency.

To boost testing, the USDA launched a voluntary program in which US farmers can test tanks of milk weekly for bird flu. Six farmers in six states have enrolled one herd each, but a Michigan farmer is not among them yet.

"I really would like to see that in every single herd," said Zelmar Rodriguez, a Michigan State University dairy veterinarian studying infections.

Michigan's Agriculture department said it has up to 200 people responding to bird flu cases in poultry and cattle, including coordinating with USDA on outbreak investigations.

Veterinarians in other states said they tracked Michigan's cases to assess the risks for transmission.

"Michigan is doing a good job with their diagnostics and trying to identify where the disease is," said Mike Martin, North Carolina's state veterinarian.

Michigan's outbreak in cows began after an infected Texas farm shipped cattle to Michigan in March before the virus was detected, according to USDA.

Weeks later, a Michigan poultry farm also reported symptoms and tested positive. Whole genome sequencing suggested the virus spilled over from the dairy farm to the poultry flock.

USDA now thinks the virus has spread indirectly through people and vehicles moving on and off infected farms.

Chickens owned by Michigan's largest egg producer, Herbruck's Poultry Ranch, were infected because the virus spread from cattle, said Nancy Barr, executive director of Michigan Allied Poultry Industries, an industry group.

Reuters was first to report the link to Herbruck's from dairy cow transmission. "It's a new threat to us," Ms. Barr said.

Herbruck's told the state in May it was laying off about 400 workers after bird flu decimated flocks in Ionia County. The company said in a public notice it planned to rehire employees as it rebuilds its flocks, a process that can take six months.

As of late June, Ionia County poultry farmers received \$73.2 million in indemnity payments from the US government for bird-flu losses, the most of any county in the country that had to cull infected flocks since February 2022, according to data Reuters obtained from the USDA.

The layoffs struck fear in Ionia, a city of about 13,000 people in central Michigan with a brick-paved Main Street and mural of the Mona Lisa. Business owners said unemployed workers have less money to spend at time when local stores already struggle to compete with Walmart and Meijer.

"I just thought, 'Oh great, here goes the store,'" said Jennifer Loudenbeck, owner of the Downtown Vintage Resale shop. Alex Hanulcik, who owns a fresh fruit stand, said he knows a Herbruck's employee who left town to find work in the southern US after being terminated.

"I really feel for the employees," Mr. Hanulcik said. "They were blindsided." Herbruck's declined to comment.

Dairy farmers said they are constantly worrying their cows may be the next to become infected, yet they are unsure exactly how to protect them. Doug Chapin, a dairy farmer in Remus, Michigan, said he held meetings with employees to inform them of the risks of the virus. He is trying to make workers wear protective eye gear, though they objected in the past because glasses must be cleaned if milk sprays on them.

"You're thinking about it all the time," he said about the virus.

Michigan has plans to test dairy workers for signs of prior infections with first-in-the-nation blood testing. The state has already monitored thousands of people for bird flu symptoms using a complex contact tracing system that texts them three times daily, said Chad Shaw, health officer for the Ionia County Health Department.

Some farmers remain reluctant to engage with local health authorities, though. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency began reaching out to farms generally to offer medical care for seasonal workers because of bird flu cases, said health officer Rebecca Burns. There has been little interest, she said. "These guys aren't used to us calling them," Ms. Burns said.

Michigan has detected the third most infected dairy herds of any state, after Idaho and Colorado, and lost 6.5 million chickens in April alone from outbreaks on poultry farms, USDA data show.

The Biden administration in late April began requiring lactating cows to test negative before being shipped over state lines. Michigan went further and in May started requiring farms to keep logs of visitors, disinfect delivery trucks that could carry the virus, and take other safety steps.

The state this month began requiring negative tests for non-lactating cows to be shown at fairs. Colorado reported the nation's fourth human case on July 3.

The US government awarded \$176 million to Moderna to advance development of its bird flu vaccine for humans. Two dozen companies are working on a vaccine for cattle, US Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said, as about 140 herds nationally have tested positive.

"Michigan's been the forefront on providing information, providing access to information that really is helpful," Mr. Vilsack told Reuters. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/15/607941/michigan-bird-flu-response-sparks-covid-style-worries/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Contamination of cooking oil raises fresh food-safety worries in China

July 15, 2024 | 12:01 am



REUTERS

BEIJING — China’s food safety commission will investigate the alleged use of fuel tanker trucks to transport cooking oil, state media reported, amid fears of possible food contamination.

The Beijing News last week reported that state stockpiler Sinograin’s fuel tankers were found transporting food products like cooking oil, soybean oil and syrup, without cleaning the tankers in between.

The food safety commission will hold a special meeting with state planning agency the National Development and Reform Commission, the State Administration of Grain and Reserves, and other ministries to discuss and investigate the allegations, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

“Illegal enterprises and relevant responsible persons will be severely punished in accordance with the law and will not be tolerated,” CCTV said.

Chinese food products have come under scrutiny domestically and globally after a series of scandals, especially the lethal milk scandal in 2008 where infant formula was found containing the industrial chemical melamine.

Beijing has sought to step up food safety controls and assure importers that its products are safe, while some Chinese consumers have turned to foreign brands that are deemed more reputable.

Beijing News last week said the cooking oil issue was an “open secret” in the transport industry, and CCTV called it “tantamount to poisoning,” even after Sinograin released a statement saying it had ordered an investigation into whether transportation carriers leaving and entering its warehouses were compliant with food safety regulations. — **Reuters**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/15/607943/contamination-of-cooking-oil-raises-fresh-food-safety-worries-in-china/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Vanilla pilot farm planned using Israeli technology

July 15, 2024 | 12:03 am



REUTERS

THE Department of Agriculture said that it is planning to set up a vanilla pilot project in partnership with an Israeli agri-technology company.

The project will involve training for interested farmer cooperatives, Undersecretary Jerome V. Oliveros told *BusinessWorld*.

He identified the Israeli partner as LR Group, which runs a vanilla farm in Papua New Guinea.

“The LR Group has a very ambitious and productive vanilla project in Papua New Guinea,” he said.

“We can bring (the technology) here, and we can probably provide our farmers this technology, subsidize part of it, and then tap the private sector,” he said.

He added that LR Group has managed to shorten the growing time for vanilla to three years from the normal five years.

“We have to (evaluate) the return on investment on that technology also, because, at the end of the day, you have to make a profit... that’s what the farmers need to see,” he said.

Mr. Oliveros added that the department will also provide interested cooperatives with technical support should they seek to join the vanilla project.

“Their best practices there, I think we can adopt,” he said.

He added that vanilla producers here typically grow their crop alongside cacao. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/agribusiness/2024/07/15/607942/vanilla-pilot-farm-planned-using-israeli-technology/>

ABANTE:

‘Pinas kapos sa suplay ng manok, baboy

- Abante News
- July 14, 2024



Daan-daang libong tonelada ang shortage ng karne ng baboy at manok sa bansa ngayong taon, ayon sa pagtaya ng United States Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA FAS) ngayong Hulyo.

Inilagay ng USDA FAS ang shortage ng karne ng baboy sa bansa ngayong taon sa 543,000 tonelada samantalang 458,000 tonelada naman ang shortage sa karne ng manok.

Sa Livestock and Poultry: World Markets and Trade report ng USDA FAS, ang domestic consumption ng karne ng baboy sa Pilipinas ngayong taon ay nasa 1.59 milyong tonelada samantalang ang produksyon ay nasa 1.05 milyong tonelada lamang.

Inaasahan ng USDA FAS na dadami ang iaangkat ng Pilipinas na baboy sa 500,000 tonelada ngayong taon, mas malaki kaysa sa 448,000 toneladang inimport nito nu'ng 2023.

Inilagay naman ng USDA FAS ang konsumo ng karne ng manok sa bansa ngayong taon sa 1.998 milyong tonelada samantalang ang produksyon ay 1.54 milyong tonelada lamang. Inaasahan ng USDA FAS na aabot sa 465,000 tonelada ang iaangkat ng Pilipinas na karne ng manok ngayong taon.

Kapag may shortage, mas madami ang pangangailangan kaysa sa produksyon na dahilan kung bakit tumataas ang presyo ng isang produkto.

Sa price monitoring ng Department of Agriculture nu'ng July 11, nasa P185-P220 na ang kilo ng manok samantalang nasa P300-P380 ang kilo ng kasim at P360-P410 naman ang kilo ng liempo sa Metro Manila. (Eileen Mencias)

<https://www.abante.com.ph/2024/07/14/pinas-kapos-sa-suplay-ng-manok-baboy/>

MANILA STANDARD

President set to inaugurate critical irrigation project in Iloilo



President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

By Manila Standard

July 14, 2024, 11:20 pm

ILOILO – President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. is set to lead the inauguration of the Jalaur Multi-purpose Project in Calinog on July 16, marking a significant milestone in the region’s development.

Top government officials, including Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr., National Irrigation Administration (NIA) Administrator Eduardo Eddie Guillen, Special Assistant to the President Secretary Antonio Lagdameo, Jr., Presidential Communication Office Secretary Cheloy Velicaria-Gerafil, and Iloilo Governor Arthur Defensor, Jr., are also expected to attend, alongside other provincial and local officials.

NIA Western Visayas Focal Person Steve Cordero announced that the project’s physical completion has reached 75.51%, with three major dams—the Jalaur High Dam, Jalaur Afterbay Dam, and Alibunan Catchment Dam—already finished. Cordero further mentioned that the Jalaur Dam has accumulated enough water to meet minimum operational requirements.

The construction of the irrigation components, including the canals, is ongoing to ensure the Mega Dam's full functionality.

The Jalaur River Multi-purpose Project Phase II (JRMP II) is anticipated to be fully operational by 2025.

According to NIA Western Visayas, JRMP II will boost rice production in Iloilo Province by 71.54%, translating to an annual increase of 338,874 metric tons. The project will benefit 25,000 farmers across 23 municipalities in the province.

Additionally, JRMP II will support the water supply needs of Iloilo City and the province through its hydroelectric power components, which can provide one cubic meter per second or 86,400 liters of water per day and generate 6.6 megawatts of clean renewable energy. The Jalaur River Multi-purpose Project is the largest dam constructed outside Luzon.

Meanwhile, the NIA has ensured that the Indigenous People (IPs) affected by the project are well taken care of.

A total of 32 housing units have been built in Sitio Agburi, Barangay Cahigon, Calinog, Iloilo. Each unit, valued at P500,000, includes a 35-square-meter floor area and a 150-square-meter lot. The success of the housing project is attributed to the assistance of the National Housing Authority (NHA).

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314471610/president-set-to-inaugurate-critical-irrigation-project-in-iloilo.html>

PH ramps up rice imports to fill supply gap



By Othel V. Campos

July 15, 2024, 12:35 am

The Philippines has ramped up rice imports in the first five months of 2024, reaching 2.3 million tons, according to data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

The surge in imports comes alongside a strategic shift in sourcing, with the Philippines looking for other sources other than the traditional supplier, Vietnam.

While Vietnam remains the country's largest supplier with 1.8 million metric tons (MT), Thailand, Myanmar, and Pakistan have collectively contributed over 430,000 tons of rice to the Philippines' import total, so far, this year.

The USDA forecasts rice imports for the entire marketing year (2024/25) to remain flat at around 4 million MT, with continued diversification expected.

FAS noted that the diversification of sources offers a proactive approach to ensuring food security amidst rising global food prices.

The shift comes as Vietnam, the country's traditional top supplier, faces rising prices and tighter rice export quotas.

Rising global food prices and potential supply chain disruptions have prompted Vietnam to implement stricter export controls, leading to higher prices for the Philippines.

The USDA report also covers other key grains for the Philippines. Corn production is expected to decline slightly to 8.4 million MT due to recent typhoons and the presence of the fall armyworm pest.

The shortfall will likely be addressed through increased imports, with forecasts reaching 1 million MT for corn in MY 2024/25. Wheat imports are expected to remain steady at around 5.9 million MT.

The USDA report highlighted Philippines government efforts to boost domestic production through increased spending on inputs and machinery.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/national/314471679/ph-ramps-up-rice-imports-to-fill-supply-gap.html>

MANILA STANDARD

DTI, DA monitor rice prices amid tariff reduction impact

By Othel V. Campos

July 14, 2024, 7:45 pm

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) jointly launched a rice price monitoring effort to assess the potential impact of tariff reduction on imported rice under Executive Order (EO) 62.

“Recognizing rice as a staple in the Filipino diet, the DTI is steadfast in monitoring and analyzing rice price fluctuations. These data-driven reports will inform policymakers’ decisions to ensure stable rice supply, distribution, and pricing,” said DTI Secretary Alfredo Pascual, who also chairs the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC).

The DTI will lead the price monitoring initiative that will cover supermarkets, hypermarkets, grocery stores and wet markets nationwide.

It builds upon similar efforts implemented after the lifting of temporary price ceilings under EO 39.

The NPCC is a crucial government body composed of representatives from various sectors. It plays a key role in coordinating national efforts to stabilize prices of essential goods, including rice.

Pascual commended Congress for its unwavering support in maintaining price stability and food security.

He recognized House Speaker Martin Romualdez, Representatives Ferjanel Biron, Mark Enverga and Erwin Tulfo for their dedication to protecting consumer interests and combating hoarding, profiteering, and smuggling.

“We at the DTI deeply appreciate the tireless work of these legislators in holding price manipulators and violators accountable. Their actions align perfectly with our mission to empower and care for consumers while fostering fair competition for legitimate businesses,” Pascual said.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314471602/dti-da-monitor-rice-prices-amid-tariff-reduction-impact.html>

Policy shifts to boost PH rice imports, says USDA

July 15, 2024

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecasts higher rice imports for the Philippines due to domestic policy changes and market challenges arising from global factors.

The country's rice imports are forecast to reach 4.7 million metric tons (MT) this year, up from the 4.6 million MT previously projected by the agency. This is a 20-percent increase from the 3.9 million MT imported in 2023, making the Philippines potentially the top rice importer in the world.

The USDA cited Republic Act (RA) 11203, which liberalizes rice imports and Executive Order 62 that reduced tariffs on rice imports to 15 percent, as the policies that favored importation of the staple.

According to the July monthly report of the agency, total global imports of the staple are projected to rise to 54.29 million MT this year due to shipment increases to the Philippines, Malaysia and Cote d'Ivoire.

Global rice production, meanwhile, is seen reaching 528.17 million MT, driven by increased production in Pakistan.

The agency noted that the Philippines was a major consumer of rice and had become the largest rice importer due to the policy changes.

It cited the passage of RA 11203, or the Rice Tariffication Law, in February 2019, which allows unrestricted importation of the staple by the private sector. The agency said that consumers had benefited from unrestricted rice importation as more low-priced rice was made available locally.

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The measure also resulted in the increased consumption of rice from 14.4 million MT in 2019 to 2020 to a forecast of 17.5 million MT in 2024 to 2025.

"Imports have grown from 10 percent of consumption in 2017 to 2018 to now more than a quarter of consumption as the [Philippine government] policy priorities facilitate the growth of imports," the USDA said.

"This increased level of imports has resulted in closer connectivity between international and Philippine rice prices," it added.

From January to June, the Philippines imported roughly 2.3 million MT of rice, data from the Bureau of Plant and Industry showed.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/07/15/business/top-business/policy-shifts-to-boost-ph-rice-imports-says-usda/1957324>

DA program to sell rice at below P29/kg

By **Jed Macapagal**

July 15, 2024

The Department of Agriculture (DA) targets to sell rice at below P29 per kilogram (kg) to the marginalized sector by early next year when global prices of rice shall have declined.

DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said global prices should start to go down as the El Niño weather phenomenon ends.

Tiu Laurel said this could ease demand from importing countries and eventually increase global production.

Tiu Laurel said the lifting of India's ban on the export of non-basmati rice will also help ease global demand pressure.

For now, the DA is focused on expanding the coverage of the P29 per kg rice program to areas outside Luzon by next month.

The program is being implemented in 13 areas through Kadiwa centers. By August 1, the DA eyes to have 23 stores plus three provincial areas like Cebu and Maguindanao.

"Then, as we go along, we will widen the coverage and may even try to lessen (the price) of the P29 rice in Kadiwa stores nationwide, hopefully by the first quarter of next year," Tiu Laurel added.

The P29 per kg rice is sourced from aging stocks of the National Food Authority and is sold to beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino program, solo parents, senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

To sustain the program, the DA will tap rice produced under the National Irrigation Administration's contract-growing arrangement with rice farmers.

The program aims to provide around 6.9 million vulnerable households, equivalent to around 34 million Filipinos, including indigenous people with low-priced but good quality rice.

The DA will also roll out the Rice-for-All program meant to provide general consumers access to well-milled and fancy rice at lower prices than those prevailing in public markets.

Based on the DA's monitoring of public markets in the National Capital Region on Friday, the price of local well-milled rice is between P48 and P55 per kg and regular milled is at P45 P50 per kg.

Imported well-milled rice is at P51 to P55 per kg, while the price range of imported regular milled rice is at P46 to P51 per kg.

Imported rice ranges from P55 to P65 for the special variety and P52 to P60 for premium.

For local rice, the special variety costs P57 to P65 per kg and premium, P50 to P58 per kg.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/da-program-to-sell-rice-at-below-p29-kg/

DA chief: ‘Bigas 29’ extended beyond Luzon by August

Ada Pelonia

July 15, 2024

AGRICULTURE Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the government will expand its cheaper rice program to areas outside Luzon by August.

Laurel said the P29 launch aims to collect comprehensive data on rice supply, consumer demand, and the logistics needed to mount such a program across the country.

“This week we’re already up to 13 Kadiwa outlets. By August 1, hopefully we will have 23 stores plus three provincial areas. We will have one in Cebu, maybe Maguindanao,” the DA chief was quoted in the statement as saying.

“Then as we go along, we will widen the coverage and may even try to lessen [the price] of the P29 rice in Kadiwa stores nationwide, hopefully by the first quarter of next year,” he added.

The DA recently launched its P29 program in 10 Kadiwa centers in Metro Manila and Bulacan wherein P29 per kilo of rice would be sold to beneficiaries, such as senior citizens, single parents, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and beneficiaries of the government’s 4Ps program every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 8 am to 5 pm.

The department estimated that full implementation of the P29 program will require approximately 69,000 metric tons (MT) of rice. This will provide 10 kilos of rice per month at P29 per kilo to the targeted 6.9 million vulnerable households.

It added that the large-scale trial was initially scheduled to run for a month in 10 Kadiwa centers before it is expanded to other areas due to supply and logistics considerations.

The DA said it is also set to launch Rice-for-All program which is meant to provide general consumers access to well-milled and fancy rice at lower prices than those prevailing in public markets.

Laurel said global prices should start to go down with the end of El Niño which could ease demand from importing countries and eventually increase global production.

He also cited the expected lifting of India's ban on the export of non-basmati rice as a factor that could ease supply pressures.

Laurel expressed confidence that by early next year, when global rice prices are expected to fall, rice sold at Kadiwa centers will also be priced lower.

Meanwhile, the DA chief said that the department has gradually managed to bring down the price of basic agricultural goods like sugar, eggs, chicken, and fish compared to their year-ago levels. He expects prices of pork and rice to ease in the coming months.

Laurel also said the eventual rollout of the African swine fever (ASF) vaccine, albeit on a controlled basis, would eventually allow greater movement of hogs to ease supply constraints.

“It should help lower the price of pork in the near future,” he said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/15/da-chief-bigas-29-extended-beyond-luzon-by-august/>

House to prioritize passage of '25 national govt budget–Romualdez

Jovee Marie N. de la Cruz; July 15, 2024

SPEAKER Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez gave assurances on Sunday that the House of Representatives will prioritize the passage of the 2025 national budget, which is expected to be submitted to Congress by the Department of Budget and Management on July 29.

Besides the budget, Romualdez also vowed to pass the remaining Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac) priority bills and consider additional key measures highlighted in the State of the Nation Address.

“The House is ready to take swift and decisive action to ensure that these legislative priorities are met, paving the way for sustained development and progress under the administration of President Marcos,” Romualdez said.

He emphasized that the House awaits the Executive Branch’s proposed P6.352 trillion National Expenditure Program (NEP), which will form the basis for the 2025 General Appropriations bill (GAB), aiming to pass it before the end of September.

“The 2025 national budget is essential for sustaining the nation’s growth and addressing the immediate needs of our citizens, and the House is ready to ensure its swift approval to support our development and progress,” the Speaker said.

“We are ready and determined to work hard to pass the 2025 GAB before we go on break at the end of September. We will ensure the timely transmission of the spending bill to the Senate for their consideration as well,” he added.

The DBM said the 2025 NEP is equivalent to 22 percent of GDP and is 10.1 percent higher than the FY 2024 budget of P5.768 trillion.

The Department of Budget and Management is expected to submit the 2025 NEP to Congress on July 29, following its review by the full Cabinet.

Under the 1987 Constitution, the NEP must be submitted to Congress within 30 days after the Sona. Once approved, it becomes the GAB and then the General Appropriations Act when signed into law by the President.

In addition to the 2025 national budget, Romualdez confirmed that the House is ready to pass all of the President's priority measures during the remaining session days of the 19th Congress.

“We are fully committed to passing all the bills that President Marcos will possibly outline in his Sona. The House is ready and determined to work diligently to ensure these critical measures are enacted swiftly to support our nation's progress and development,” the Speaker said.

In his coming Sona, Marcos is expected to outline key legislative measures aimed at addressing the country's most urgent issues and driving its growth agenda.

“These Sona measures are crucial for addressing our nation's immediate needs and promoting sustainable development,” the House chief said. “We will work closely with the executive branch to ensure their swift and successful passage.”

Romualdez said the bigger chamber is also dedicated to passing all remaining Leduc priority bills.

“We are committed to completing the legislative agenda by passing these crucial measures. They are vital for our nation's progress and prosperity, and we will ensure they are enacted swiftly and effectively,” he said.

“The House has diligently prioritized Leduc bills, leading to substantial progress, with over 12,000 measures filed and 75 bills enacted into law,” the Speaker said.

Romualdez reaffirmed the House's commitment to passing the remaining three of the 28 Leduc bills targeted for approval before the end of the 19th Congress: amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira), the Agrarian Reform Law, and the Foreign Investors' Long-Term Lease Act.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/15/house-to-prioritize-passage-of-25-national-govt-budget-romualdez/>

PHL rice imports seen touching new record despite high prices

Ada Pelonia

July 15, 2024

The country's rice imports will reach a new record this year despite the spike in international quotations, according to a report published by the United States Department of Agriculture (DA).

The USDA said in its latest report that the Philippines's imported rice purchases will hit 4.7 million metric tons (MMT) or 1 MMT higher than the 3.61 MMT it imported last year.

The agency had adjusted upwards its rice imports forecast for the Philippines this year from the initial 4.6 MMT.

"Total imports are estimated higher on increases for Malaysia, the Philippines, and Cameroon," the USDA report read.

It also noted that the Philippines imported some 2.3 MMT of rice in the first five months of the year.

"Vietnam, the largest supplier historically, has exported 1.8 million tons during this period. Due to rising global prices and tighter exportable supplies in Vietnam, the Philippines has shifted some purchases to other suppliers."

Meanwhile, the report said the country's increased level of imports resulted in "closer connectivity" between international and Philippine rice prices.

"Although the Philippines does not import from India, India's ban on regular milled rice exports last year had secondary impacts."

The USDA noted that as India's exports of this type of rice diminished, demand shifted to other suppliers, such as Vietnam and Thailand, pushing up their export prices.

“Buyers in the Philippines chose to pay these elevated prices from Southeast Asian suppliers, which resulted in higher retail prices in the Philippines.”

Data from the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) revealed that the country's imported rice arrivals breached 2.3 MMT in the first semester, 24 percent higher than last year's 1.86 MMT.

Lower output

Based on the Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) survey of standing crops, the country's paddy rice output likely dropped by 8.6 percent to 3.88 MMT in the second quarter from the previous year's actual output of 4.25 MMT, as El Niño wreaked havoc on farmlands.

The latest figure is also 0.6 percent lower than the PSA's initial estimate of 3.91 MMT.

As of June 1, the agency said the total palay harvest area during the period likely shrank by 7.2 percent to 891,770 hectares (ha) from the 960,870 ha recorded in the same period last year.

The PSA also said that palay yield may have fallen by 1.4 percent to 4.36 metric tons (MT) per hectare from the previous year's 4.42 MT.

“As of 01 June 2024, about 771,900 hectares or 86.6 percent of the 891,770 hectares updated harvest area of standing crop have been harvested. This translates to palay output of 3.16 million metric tons,” the PSA said in the report published recently.

“Of the total area of 119,870 hectares of standing palay yet to be harvested as of 01 June 2024, 1.4 percent were at the reproductive stage and 98.6 percent were at the maturing stage.”

Meanwhile, the PSA said corn output in the second quarter likely fell by 19.3 percent to 1.19 MMT from last year's 1.47 MMT. This showed a 0.8 percent decline from its earlier projection of 1.2 MMT.

The harvest area during the period was expected to contract by 15 percent to 347,470 ha from the 408,930 ha recorded in the previous year while yield per hectare may have declined by 5 percent to 3.42 MT from 3.60 MT.

The PSA said about 85.8 percent of the updated standing crop of 347,470 ha of corn during the quarter has been harvested, translating to 1.05 MMT of corn output.

“Of the total area of 49,280 hectares of standing corn yet to be harvested as of 01 June 2024, about 3.7 percent were at the reproductive stage, and 96.3 percent were at the maturing stage.”

The Department of Agriculture (DA) reported that the volume of production losses for agricultural and fishery areas reached 441,801 MT, with palay and corn bearing the brunt of the weather phenomenon.

The DA said the production losses are equivalent to P4.75 billion for rice and P3.37 billion for corn.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2024/07/15/phl-rice-imports-seen-touching-new-record-despite-high-prices/>