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MANILA BULLETIN:

Laurel eyes setting up of Philippines' first line of defense vs entry of agricultural diseases, pests by early 2025

BY AARON RECUENCO

Jul 2, 2024 03:54 PM

Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr vowed to fully operationalize the country's "first border" control measures for food safety by early next year amid the series of threats in food security, the recent was the Philippines' first Q fever case linked to imported goats from the United States.

Laurel said the border control measures will not only secure the country from diseases from outside the Philippines but also ensure that local farmers are protected from persistent agricultural smuggling. "The 'first border' control measures to ensure food safety and prevent the entry of plant pests and economically significant terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases," said Laurel. He explained that the first of five Cold Examination Facility for Agriculture (CEFA)—a sanitary/phytosanitary inspection facility for imported animal, fish, plant and agricultural products—will start operations by early next year. The efforts, Laurel said, are done with the help of private contractors that are currently constructing a CEFA in Angat, Bulacan with equipment procurement underway to meet the operational timeline: "We expect the Angat CEFA to be operational by January or February next year."

He said plans are also underway to open four additional CEFAs by September 2025 in Manila, Subic, Davao and General Santos City.

While the CEFAs in Angat and General Santos City will only have DA-funded laboratories, comprehensive facilities are planned for major ports and fish ports including the Manila International Container Terminal, Subic Bay International Corporation, Davao International Container Terminal, Manila South Harbor, New Cebu International Container Port, Batangas International Port, Navotas Fish Port, Iloilo International Container Port and Misamis Oriental. Funding for the CEFA project was originally pegged at P2.3 billion last year but was reduced to P1.2 billion for the current year due to the offer of International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) to host most of the facilities at local ports which the listed company operates. Laurel said before the CEFAs commence operations, the DA will implement pre-shipment inspections in ports of origin.

"Before these facilities become operational, we will issue an administrative order on pre-shipment inspection, pending approval from the Department of Finance," Laurel explained. He said pre-shipment inspections could be enforced within three months to bolster food safety measures and curb smuggling activities detrimental to local farmers and public health: "The initiative underscores government's commitment to fortify border controls amid emerging health and economic challenges posed by imported agricultural products."

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/2/laurel-eyes-setting-up-of-philippines-first-line-of-defense-vs-entry-of-agricultural-diseases-pests-by-early-2025>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Marcos OKs proposed P6.352-trillion national budget for 2025

BY BETHEENA UNITE

Jul 2, 2024 03:26 PM

President Marcos has approved the proposed P6.352-trillion national expenditure program (NEP) for 2025, Malacañang announced.



President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. presides over the 17th Cabinet meeting at the Malacañan Palace on July 2, 2024. (Photo courtesy of PPA/KJ Rosales)

Marcos said next year's national budget shall prioritize food security, social protection, healthcare, housing, disaster resilience, infrastructure, digital connectivity, and energization.

The President made the approval during the Cabinet meeting at the Malacañan Palace on Tuesday, July 2.

“You see a really good thing,” Marcos said during the Cabinet meeting where Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman presented the proposed national budget for 2025.

“Since I’ve seen it before on the macro level, I think the priorities in terms of our proposed appropriations, upon addressing it, weighted our priorities properly in terms of appropriations,” he added.

Under the approved NEP, the agencies getting the lion's share of government appropriations include the departments of Education, Public Works, Health, Interior and Local Government, and Defense.

The government's top priorities also include social welfare, agriculture, agrarian reform, transportation, the judiciary, and justice departments.

In terms of expense class, getting the largest chunk are maintenance and other operating expenses followed by personnel services, capital outlays, and financial expenses.

Among the factors considered by the government in evaluating the fiscal year 2025 budget proposals were availability of fiscal space, implementation and readiness of Program/Activity/Projects (PAPs), agency's absorptive capacity, alignment with Budget Priorities Framework and PDP 2023-2028.

The Public Investment Program (PIP), Three-Year Infrastructure Program (TRIP), Information Systems Strategic Plan (ISSP), and Program Convergence were also key factors.

The Pillar 1 of the PDP 2023-2028 involves the development and protection of the capabilities of individuals and families. It also involves the promotion of human and social development, reducing vulnerabilities and protecting people's purchasing power, as well as increasing their income-earning ability.

Under the plan's Pillar 2, the government aims to transform production of the nation's sectors to generate more quality jobs and competitive products. This includes modernizing agriculture and agri-business, revitalizing the industry, and reinvigorating services.

Pillar 3, on the other hand, focuses on creating an enabling bureaucratic environment. It involves practicing good governance and improving bureaucratic efficiency, ensuring macroeconomic stability and expanding inclusive and innovative finance, ensuring peace and security, and enhancing administration of justice.

Expanding and upgrading infrastructure, accelerating climate action and strengthening disaster resilience also fall under Pillar 3.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/2/marcos-o-ks-proposed-p6-352-trillion-national-budget-for-2025>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Solon links up with PhilHealth to make farmers, fishermen more aware of health benefits

BY ELLSON QUISMORIO

Jul 2, 2024 12:19 PM

AT A GLANCE

- AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert “Manoy” T. Lee has entered into a partnership with the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) in a bid to improve information dissemination about the health benefits for farmers, fisherfolk, and all Filipinos nationwide.



(MANILA BULLETIN)

AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert “Manoy” T. Lee has entered into a partnership with the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) in a bid to improve information dissemination about the health benefits for farmers, fisherfolk, and all Filipinos nationwide.

In a ceremony held in Taguig City on Monday, July 1, Lee signed the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with PhilHealth to strengthen collaboration in providing more access to health services and benefits provided by the state health insurer for agricultural workers and all Filipinos.

“As I always say, ‘Filipinos deserve better, and we should demand better.’ Today we elevate our efforts to inform our countrymen about the health services and benefits available to them,” Lee, a neophyte in the 19th Congress, said during the program.

“The commitment outlined in our [MOU] boosts our information dissemination efforts through various platforms, programs and projects we have. We declare our unwavering dedication to equip our farmers, fisherfolk, agricultural workforce, and every Filipino with the right knowledge about the health benefits they are entitled to,” he added.

Also present was Emmanuel Ledesma, Jr., president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the state health insurer.

“I am pleased that PhilHealth is forging this partnership with AGRI Party-list at this opportune time as this will enable us to further strengthen our information dissemination campaign for all our members, especially those in the agriculture sector whose hardwork sustains our nation’s progress,” Ledesma said.

“The platform that will be provided by the AGRI Party-list will be one of the primary sources of information for our kababayans which will greatly help us in our efforts to circulate relevant and updated information on PhilHealth’s benefits and services through all possible avenues,” said the PhilHealth chief.

It can be recalled that Lee, a staunch health advocate, aggressively pushed for the 30 percent increase in PhilHealth benefits.

This, after it was revealed during the Department of Health (DOH) budget hearing last September 2023 that the state health insurer had P466 billion in investible funds and a P68.4-billion net income, aside from the more than P100 billion government subsidy every year.

The 30 percent increase in PhilHealth benefit packages took effect on Feb. 14.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/2/solon-links-up-with-phil-health-to-make-farmers-fishermen-more-aware-of-health-benefits>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Sandiganbayan convicts ex-public officials, private individuals in misuse of P65-M PDAF

BY CZARINA NICOLE ONG KI

Jul 2, 2024 05:15 PM

The Sandiganbayan has convicted several former public officials and private individuals involved in the misuse of the P65 million priority development assistance fund (PDAF) of then Misamis Occidental congresswoman Marina P. Clarete.

In its 195-page decision, the anti-graft court summarized its ruling as follows:

In SB-17-CRM-1510, former National Agribusiness Corporation (NABCOR) Director for Financial Services Rhodora B. Mendoza and Human Resources and Administrative Manager Encarnita Cristina P. Munsod were found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment. They were also slapped with perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law.

In SB-17-CRM-1511, Mendoza and Munsod were also found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment with perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law.

In SB-17-CRM-1512, Mendoza and former NABCOR Head of General Services Unit Romulo M. Relevo were found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment with perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law.

In SB-17-CRM-1513, Mendoza and Relevo were once again found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment with perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law.

In SB-17-CRM-1514, Mendoza and Munsod were found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment with perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law.

In SB-17-CRM-1515, Mendoza and Munsod were once again found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment with perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law.

In SB-17-CRM-1516 to 18, the anti-graft court acquitted former National Livelihood Development Corporation (NLDC) President Gondelina G. Amata, Accounts Servicing and Asset Management Group Director Emmanuel Alexis G. Sevidal, Division Chief III Gregoria G. Buenaventura, Chief Budget Specialist Ofelia E. Ordoñez, Chief Financial Analyst Sofia D. Cruz, and former Kabuhayan at Kalusugang Alay sa Masa Foundation Inc. (KKAMFI) official Florida A. Alberto of their graft charges due to the failure of the prosecution to prove their guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

In SB-17-CRM-1519, former Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC) Deputy Director General Dennis L. Cunanan, Group Manager Maria Rosalinda M. Lacsamana, Budget Officer IV Consuelo Lilian R. Espiritu, and Aaron Foundation Philippines Inc. (AFPI) official Pio Ronquillo were found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment. They were slapped with the penalty of perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law. Group Manager for Corporate Support Services Francisco B. Figura acquitted of the same charge.

In SB-17-CRM-1520, Lacsamana, Marivic V. Jover, Espiritu, and Ronquillo were found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment with the penalty of perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law. Figura was once again acquitted.

In SB-17-CRM-1521, the court acquitted Amata, Sevidal, NDLC Director Chita C. Jalandoni, Asset Management Division Chief Gregoria G. Buenaventura, Budget Officer IV Filipina T. Rodriguez, KKAMFI President Florida A. Alberto, and Chief Executive Officer Godofredo G. Roque of their graft charge.

In SB-17-CRM-1522 to 25, Amata, Sevidal, Jalandoni, Buenaventura, Ordonez, Cruz, Alberto were found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment with the penalty of perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law.

In SB-17-CRM-1526 and 27, Mendoza, NABCOR Paralegal Victor Roman C. Cacal, NABCOR Bookkeeper Maria Ninez P. Guanizo, and Alberto were found guilty of graft and sentenced to six to 10 years imprisonment with the penalty of perpetual disqualification from holding public office and loss of all retirement or gratuity benefits under the law.

In SB-17-CRM-1528, Mendoza and Munsod were found guilty of malversation through falsification and were sentenced to two years, four months and one day of prision correccional as minimum and six years and one day of prision mayor as maximum. They were each ordered to pay a fine of P436,500 and reimburse the government through the Bureau of Treasury the amount of P436,500.

In SB-17-CRM-1529, Mendoza and Relevo were found guilty of malversation through falsification and were sentenced to two years, four months and one day of prision correccional as minimum and six years and one day of prision mayor as maximum. They were each ordered to pay a fine P1,164,000 and reimburse the BOT the amount of P1,164,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1530, Mendoza and Munsod were found guilty of malversation through falsification and were sentenced to six years and one day of prision mayor as minimum to 10 years and one day of reclusion temporal as maximum. They were ordered to pay a fine of P1,261,000 and ordered to reimburse the BOT the amount of P1,261,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1531, Mendoza, Cacal, Guanizo, Alberto were found guilty of malversation through falsification and sentenced to 10 years and one day of prision mayor as minimum to 17 years and four months and one day of reclusion temporal as maximum. Each of them was ordered to pay a fine of P6,596,000 and reimburse jointly and severally the BOT with P6,596,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1532 to 34, Amata, Sevidal, Buenaventura, Ordonez, and Alberto were acquitted of their malversation through falsification charge due to the failure of the prosecution to prove their guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

In SB-17-CRM-1535, Amata, Sevidal, Jalandoni, Buenaventura, Ordonez, Cruz, and Alberto were found guilty of malversation through falsification and sentenced to 10 years and one day of prision mayor as minimum to seventeen years, four months, and one day of reclusion temporal. They were each ordered to pay a fine of P4,750,000 and to reimburse the BOT with P4,750,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1536, Amata, Sevidal, Jalandoni, Buenaventura, Ordonez, Cruz, and Alberto were found guilty of malversation through falsification and sentenced to two years, four months and one day of prision correccional as minimum to six years and one day of prision mayor as maximum. They were each fined with P950,000 and ordered to reimburse the BOT with P950,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1537, Amata, Sevidal, Jalandoni, Buenaventura, Ordonez, and Alberto were found guilty of malversation through falsification and sentenced to two years, four months and one day of prision correccional as minimum to six years and one day of prision mayor as maximum. They were fined with P950,000 and ordered to reimburse the BOT with the amount of P950,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1538, Lacsamana, Jover, Espiritu, and Ronquillo were found guilty of malversation through falsification and sentenced to two years, four months and one day of prision correccional as minimum to six years and one day of prision mayor as maximum. They were each fined with P600,000 and ordered to reimburse the BOT, jointly and severally, the amount of P600,000. Meanwhile, Figura was acquitted

In SB-17-CRM-1539, Mendoza and Munsod were found guilty of malversation and sentenced to 10 years and one day of prision mayor as minimum to 14 years, eight months and one day of reclusion temporal. They were fined with P3,928,500 and ordered to reimburse the BOT with P3,928,500.

In SB-17-CRM-1540, Mendoza and Relevo were found guilty of malversation and sentenced to 14 years, eight months and one day of reclusion temporal as minimum to 17 years, four months and one day of reclusion temporal as maximum. They were slapped with a fine of P10,476,000 and ordered to reimburse the BOT with P10,476,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1541, Mendoza and Munsod were found guilty of malversation and slapped with 14 years, eight months and one day of reclusion temporal as minimum to 17 years, four months and one day of reclusion temporal as maximum. They were each fined with P11,349,000 and ordered to reimburse the BOT with P11,349,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1542, the court acquitted Amata, Sevidal, Buenaventura, Cruz, and Alberto of malversation.

In SB-17-CRM-1543, Cunanan, Lacsamana, Espiritu, and Ronquillo were found guilty of malversation and sentenced to 10 years and one day of prision mayor as minimum to 17 years and four months and one day of reclusion temporal as maximum. They were slapped with a fine of P4,800,000 and ordered to reimburse the BOT with P4,800,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1544, Mendoza, Cacal, Guanizo, and Alberto were found guilty of malversation and slapped with two years, four months and one day of prision correccional as minimum to six years and one day of prision mayor as maximum. They were each fined with P1,164,000 and ordered to reimburse the BOT with P1,164,000.

In SB-17-CRM-1545, Amata, Sevidal, Jalandoni, Buenaventura, Ordonez, Cruz, and Alberto were found guilty of malversation and sentenced to 10 years and one day of prision mayor as minimum to 14 years eight months and one day of reclusion temporal as maximum. They were each ordered to pay a fine of P2,565,000 and reimburse the BOT with P2,565,000.

The case against former Department of Agriculture secretary and National Food Authority (NFA) administrator Arthur Cua Yap had already been dismissed.

Meanwhile, the court has not acquired jurisdiction over former Congresswoman Clarete, NABCOR President Alan A. Javellana, Marilou L. Antonio, Chief Accountant Ma. Julie Asor Villaralvo-Johnson, KKAMFI official Marilou C. Ferrer, NLDC official Evelyn B. Sugang, Supply Officer Maria Paz B. Vega, KKAMFI trustee Rodrigo V. Doria, TLRC Director General Antonio Y. Ortiz, and KKAMFI staff Ma. Nerizan Gador. The cases against them have been ordered archived.

"There can be no question that accused Munsod, Mendoza, Relevo, Sevidal, Ordonez, Cruz, Amata, Alberto, Buenaventura, Lacsamana, Espiritu, Ronquillo, Cunanan, Jover, Jalandoni, Cacal, and Guanizo, through their respective actions, although some appear to be innocent acts, summed up to collective efforts to achieve their common objective, which is to embezzle the government," the court ruled.

"In sum, a conspiracy among the above-mentioned accused has been proved beyond reasonable doubt by the prosecution," it added.

The was written by Associate Justice Ronald B. Moreno with the concurrence of Presiding Justice Amparo M. Cabotaje-Tang and Associate Justice Bernelito R. Fernandez.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/2/sandiganbayan-convicts-ex-public-officials-private-individuals-in-misuse-of-p65-m-pdaf>

MANILA BULLETIN:

Cotabato towns on alert vs ‘resurgent’ ASF

BY KEITH BACONGCO

Jul 2, 2024 05:01 PM

DAVAO CITY – The provincial government has tightened measures on movement of livestock products amid the resurgence of African Swine Fever (ASF) in some towns in Cotabato.



MENDOZA (PGO Cotabato)

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Confirmed ASF cases were recorded in Barangay Poblacion and Magsaysay in Antipas; in Barangay San Vicente in Makilala town, and Barangays Idaoman and Poblacion in President Roxas.

In a statement, Gov. Emmylou "Lala" Taliño-Mendoza urged her constituents to be vigilant and implement measures to stop ASF from spreading to other areas.

"Consider ASF a serious issue with significant implications for both our swine industry and the broader agricultural sector. We need to act immediately to address this crisis," Mendoza said.

She recently met town mayors and municipal agriculturists and representatives from the Department of Agriculture to discuss measures in preventing the spread of the virus that remains a threat to the swine industry.

The governor emphasized the collective roles of the Bureau of Animal Industry, Department of Agriculture, local government units, and most importantly, hog growers in the province.

She urged LGUs and law enforcers to tighten monitoring in areas of responsibilities.

Mendoza suggested the conduct of random blood testing on hogs across the province.

Based on the report of Office of the Provincial Veterinarian (OPVet) head Dr. Rufino Sorupia, seven blood samples were sent for laboratory examination to the Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (RADDL) in General Santos City on June 10.

These blood samples were from the Office of the Municipal Agriculturist of Antipas following a report from a farm owner at the town proper that some of his hogs died after showing symptoms of fever, reddening of the skin, and weakness.

Results released three days after the samples were submitted showed that the hogs tested positive for ASF. In response, the local government of Antipas declared a five-kilometer radius quarantine zone in the area.

The neighboring towns of Arakan, Magpet, Matalam, and President Roxas immediately conducted disinfection.

In Carmen town, which shares its borders with the province of Bukidnon, the local government ordered heightened measures against ASF. The local government of Carmen temporarily banned the entry of hogs and other pork products as part of its measures.

In the neighboring town of Kabacan, Mayor Evangeline Guzman issued an executive order banning the movement of all live pigs, pork, and pork-related products and by-products, whether fresh, frozen, processed, or cooked.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/2/cotabato-towns-on-alert-vs-resurgent-asf>

MANILA BULLETIN:

DSWD distributes P1.37-B aid to farmers, fisherfolk affected by El Niño

BY ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

Jul 2, 2024 02:16 PM

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has disbursed P1.37 billion in aid under the Presidential Assistance to Farmers, Fisherfolk and Families (PAFFF) program for those affected by El Niño.

The assistance was aimed at mitigating the impact of the climate phenomenon on agricultural communities across the country.

As of July 1, 137,333 beneficiaries in Cagayan Valley, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, Western Mindanao, Northern Mindanao, Davao Region, SOCCSKSARGEN (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, General Santos City), and Caraga Region have each received P10,000.

The PAFFF provides unconditional cash assistance to help farmers and fisherfolk recover from economic losses caused by El Niño.

DSWD Assistant Secretary for Disaster Response Management Group and Spokesperson Irene Dumlao said that the beneficiaries are those who may not have access to regular forms of assistance because they do not belong to the poorest population.

In addition to cash assistance, the DSWD is also providing food packs to families and individuals affected by El Niño.

Based on DSWD data, 1.6 million families, or 6.1 million individuals, have been affected by the climate phenomenon.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture reported that El Niño-related agricultural damage amounted to P9.89 billion, covering 170,469 hectares and affecting 173,455 farmers and fisherfolk across 12 regions as of June 10.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/2/dswd-distributes-p1-37-b-aid-to-farmers-fisherfolk-affected-by-el-nino>

Ensuring food security

BY EJ QUA HIANSEN

Jul 2, 2024 10:42 AM

Food is the most essential requirement for human sustenance, especially regarding nutrition. We have to have enough to eat and eat the right food to fuel our bodies. Unfortunately, food is inaccessible for many Filipinos, and eating the right food is a luxury when they do not have enough food. Natural disasters, other supply chain shocks, and lower adaptation of technology in agriculture have led to shortages of commonly used food items, thus driving up prices. It is no wonder that President Marcos has repeatedly promised to bring the cost of rice down to P20 per kg. Food costs can be reduced by increasing the food supply by improving yields and reducing waste.

Addressing the monumental challenge of food security in the Philippines is not a task the government can tackle alone. It demands a comprehensive, society-wide strategy. Recognizing this, PHINMA, in collaboration with the Stratbase ADR Institute and the Makati Business Club, organized a policy forum titled “Achieving Food Security: Advancing Investments for Agricultural Sustainability.” The forum brought together government and industry leaders to deliberate on strategies for enhancing food security and agricultural sustainability in the face of escalating climate change challenges.

The keynote address of the Department of Agriculture Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Regulations, Atty. Asis Perez, laid out the challenges for the audience while also providing welcome updates on the Department of Agriculture initiatives that the private sector can and should support. He shared two sector goals: boosting local production to ensure access to affordable and nutritious food and developing the industry so that it becomes profitable to all stakeholders in the value chain. He started his speech by showing how many tropical typhoons hit the Philippines between 1985 and 2005, emphasizing how much of our food production is lost due to natural calamities as a result of our geographic vulnerability. We further learned that experts estimate that about 30% of food loss and wastage occur during the supply chain process highlighting the inefficiencies in the supply chain. Addressing this can positively impact our food security and by extension, the lives of the Filipino people. Undersecretary Perez and Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa both underscored the lack of investment that has been made in the agricultural sector with lower mechanization rates compared to regional peers, encouraging the business community to play its part.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 44.7 percent of the Philippines population faces severe or moderate food insecurity while according to the Social Weather Station (SWS), 19 percent of families in Metro Manila reported involuntary hunger in the first quarter of 2024. According to SWS, even among families that do not typically consider themselves poor, involuntary hunger increased to 9.8 percent in the quarter from 5.9 percent in December 2023. Anecdotally, I am sure that many of us have had conversations about how the cost of groceries and eating out has gone up. The fundamentals of good business have always been addressing a societal need, and in the Philippines, growing hunger is a glaring need. Businesses can deploy their know-how and investment capital in search of innovative ways to ensure food security for all Filipinos.

Representing the business community, my colleague, Danielle del Rosario, put it best, saying, “We will seize this opportunity to support our agricultural sector, driving economic progress and paving the way for a more equitable, resilient, and prosperous Philippines.” Let us all work towards achieving food security for our nation.

EJ Qua Hiansen is the CFO of PHINMA Corp. and Chair of the Junior FINEX Committee of the FINEX Research & Development Foundation. The views and opinions expressed above are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of FINEX.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/7/2/ensuring-food-security-1>

Best choice



COMMONSENSE - Marichu A. Villanueva - The Philippine Star

July 3, 2024 | 12:00am

It is not easy to pick someone to head the Department of Education (DepEd), President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. (PBBM) admitted over the weekend. It would seem PBBM is obviously making sure his new Cabinet official can hit the ground running as his administration enters the middle of his six-year term of office.

After PBBM earlier delayed his decision, Malacañang finally yesterday announced Senator Juan Edgardo “Sonny” Angara was picked to become the new DepEd secretary. The resignation of VP Sara Duterte as DepEd secretary takes effect on July 19 yet.

Only then can Angara take over the biggest agency of the Philippine bureaucracy, where more than half a million public school teachers – from pre-school to elementary and secondary levels – are under DepEd’s employ. Angara succeeds VP Sara on July 20, or five days before he turns 52 years old.

Actually, PBBM and Sen. Sonny Angara worked together in the past. The first time was during their stint at the House of Representatives from 2007-2010. Angara was then congressman from Aurora while PBBM then represented his congressional district in Ilocos Norte. The two of them worked again together as senators from 2013-2016 when Angara was on his first term and PBBM was on his second and last term at the Senate.

PBBM initially announced he would be able to name the new DepEd secretary before the end of last week. “So I am fast-tracking everything. I said give me several names... Do we need an educator? Do we need an administrator? Do we need an

accountant? What do we need? And that is what we are trying to determine right now,” PBBM explained afterwards.

So PBBM got a better politician cum professor of law like Angara who authored many education laws of the land.

In short, the President got a DepEd secretary who met his specifications as someone who can “manage the agency properly” and help “bring up the test scores” of our Filipino school children in education ratings by global bodies. One such indicator of the country’s state of basic education is the performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). In its latest survey, it showed the dismal bottom ranking of the Philippines – 78/78 in 2018 and 77/81 in 2022.

In fairness to VP Sara, the country’s latest PISA rating, however, was based on the survey done way before she took over as DepEd secretary. A mother of three children, a lawyer by profession and a former mayor of Davao City, PBBM cited these attributes as among the reasons he offered the DepEd post to VP Sara. She did not mention the reasons for her resignation from the Marcos Cabinet. She originally wished to serve concurrently as the secretary of the Department of National Defense (DND). After all, she is a reserved colonel of the Philippine Army.

It was quite a feat for PBBM to keep short his period of filling the latest vacancy in his Cabinet. It took a year before PBBM named Gilberto “Gibo” Teodoro as his defense secretary. Gibo, along with Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa, were appointed on the same day on June 5, 2023, or almost one year after PBBM took office at Malacañang Palace. It took almost 17 months before businessman Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. was appointed as agriculture secretary, a Cabinet post that PBBM held in concurrent capacity from day one of his administration.

With Angara as the new DepEd secretary, the senator, who is on his second and last term ending on June 30 next year, is expected to breeze through the confirmation process by the Commission of Appointments (CA). He is the namesake son of the late Senate president Edgardo J. Angara, who once served as president of the University of the Philippines.

Since the 19th Congress is in recess, Angara is taking over as “acting” DepEd secretary.

The CA is currently chaired by Senate President Francis Escudero. Himself newly installed as Senate chief, Escudero was among Angara’s fellow senators who strongly endorsed him to become the new DepEd secretary. With Angara joining the Marcos Cabinet, the so-called “Solid Seven” of ousted Senate chief Juan Miguel Zubiri is reduced to six. Angara was among the senators who did not sign the Senate resolution on the loss of confidence vote against Zubiri.

Another Marcos Cabinet official, Department of Migrant Workers Secretary Has Leo Cacdac, has yet to hurdle the CA after he suffered a “technical by-pass,” or due to lack of time. Incidentally, this will be the third and last regular session of the present members of Congress, many of whom are running as candidates in the coming May 2025 elections. The powerful 25-man CA will convene after the 19th Congress resumes session starting July 22 this year.

PBBM described the DepEd as “arguably the most important department” that receives the highest allocation from the national budget every year as required by our country’s 1987 Constitution.

The Development Budget Coordinating Council (DBCC) announced last week having set at P6.352 trillion the proposed budget for the year 2025. According to Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman, this is 10.1 percent higher than the Congress-approved P5.768-trillion General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2024. Under the DBCC proposal, DepEd along with its attached agencies will get P793.17 billion of the proposed 2025 NEP, compared to the P762.09 billion under the 2024 GAA.

The proposed 2025 national expenditure program (NEP) was approved by the President and the Cabinet during their weekly meeting yesterday at Malacañang. With this approval, Pangandaman disclosed the DBM will submit it to Congress on July 29, or one week after the third State of the Nation Address (SONA) of PBBM.

Despite the DepEd getting the lion’s share of the government’s annual budget to support and fund key programs and projects, Philippine education is bugged by the “learning crisis” among Filipino schoolchildren who have been faring low compared to their counterparts from other countries.

Thus, the appointment of Angara is the best choice to face this challenge.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/07/03/2367249/best-choice>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

Marcos OKs P6.35 trillion national budget for 2025

[Alexis Romero](#) - The Philippine Star

July 3, 2024 | 12:00am



President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. presides over the 17th Cabinet meeting at the State Dining Room in Malacañang July 2, 2024.

STAR / KJ Rosales

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos yesterday approved the proposed P6.352-trillion national budget for next year, designed to keep the country on track toward sustainable and inclusive growth.

With the President's approval, the budget program is now ready for submission to Congress following his third State of the Nation Address on July 22.

The spending program supports the government's priority areas, namely food security, social protection, health care, housing, disaster resilience, infrastructure, digital connectivity and energization and the key pillars of the administration's Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028.

Among the sectors and agencies with the biggest allocations are education, which covers the Department of Education, state universities and colleges and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority; Department of Public Works and Highways; health, which covers Department of Health and the Philippine Health Insurance Corp.; Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of National Defense.

Other government priorities under the expenditure program are the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Agriculture and attached corporations, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Transportation, the judiciary and justice.

The proposed 2025 national budget was presented by Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman during the 17th Cabinet meeting yesterday at Malacañang,

“Since I’ve seen it before on the macro level, I think the priorities in terms of our proposed appropriations, upon addressing it, weighted our priorities properly in terms of appropriations,” Marcos was quoted in a Palace statement as saying.

The proposed budget for 2025 is 10.1 percent higher than this year’s outlay of P5.768 trillion. It is also equivalent to 22 percent of the gross domestic product, as determined during last week’s Development Budget Coordination Committee meeting.

Carrying the theme “Agenda for prosperity: Fulfilling the needs and aspirations of the Filipino people,” the proposed outlay aims “to continue fostering economic and social transformation for a prosperous, inclusive and resilient future,” the budget department said.

“We have crafted this carefully and meticulously to ensure that we stay on track with our economic growth targets while ensuring no one is left behind,” Pangandaman said in a statement.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/07/03/2367322/marcos-oks-p635-trillion-national-budget-2025>

THE PHILIPPINE STAR:

First border control facilities for imported agri products set for early 2025

[Gabriell Christel Galang](#) - Philstar.com

July 2, 2024 | 7:09pm



Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. on November 6, 2023.

STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Agriculture (DA) announced on Tuesday its plan to launch its first border control facilities for imported animal and plant products by early 2025, aiming to prevent the entry of diseases into the country such as Q fever.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said that the Cold Examination Facility for Agriculture (CEFA) would not only avoid any food contamination outbreaks but also reduce smuggling activities that could harm the livelihood of local farmers.

The CEFA project, valued at P1.2 billion and in partnership with International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI), will manage the cold storage facilities.

The first five CEFA will also begin its sanitary and phytosanitary inspection of animal, fish, plant and other agricultural outputs by early next year.

Tiu Laurel said that private contractors are currently constructing a CEFA in Angat, Bulacan with equipment procurement underway to meet the operational timeline.

“Plans are also underway for four additional facilities by September 2025 in Manila, Subic, Davao and General Santos City,” he said.

Comprehensive facilities are slated for major ports and fish ports, including the Manila International Container Terminal, Subic Bay International Corp., Davao International Container Terminal, Manila South Harbor, New Cebu International Container Port, Batangas International Port, Navotas Fish Port, Iloilo International Container Port, and Misamis Oriental.

Meanwhile, CEFAs in Angat and General Santos City will be equipped with DA-funded laboratories.

Furthermore, the Tiu Laurel said that they will implement pre-shipment inspections in ports of origin to ensure firm border control on agricultural imports.

“Before these facilities become operational, we will issue an administrative order on pre-shipment inspection, pending approval from the Department of Finance,” he said.

These inspections will be imposed within the next three months.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/07/02/2367204/first-border-control-facilities-imported-agri-products-set-early-2025>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

PH to require pre-shipment inspection of farm products

By: [Jordeene B. Lagare](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 02:07 AM July 03, 2024

Starting October, the Department of Agriculture (DA) expects to enforce pre-shipment inspections at ports of origin to curtail the proliferation of smuggled goods and animal diseases in the country.

This is while waiting for the completion of the country's first border inspection facility by next year.

“Before these facilities become operational, we will issue an administrative order on pre-shipment inspection, pending approval from the Department of Finance,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said.

Tiu Laurel said earlier the initial inspection of agricultural products for delivery to the Philippines would be conducted in certain countries.

“The country's first Q fever case linked to imported goats from the US and persistent agricultural smuggling have highlighted the need to operationalize ‘first border’ control measures to ensure food safety and prevent the entry of plant pests and economically significant terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases,” it said.

The DA said the initial budget to build cold examination facility in agriculture (CEFA) in various parts of the Philippines was P2.3 billion in 2023 but the allocation was reduced to P1.2 billion this year as International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) offered to host most of the facilities at its local ports.

CEFA is a sanitary/phytosanitary inspection facility for imported animal, fish, plant and agricultural products. Equipped with state-of-the-art testing laboratories, it thoroughly checks all imported animals, fish, plants, and other agricultural commodities.

Private contractors are now constructing the examination facility in Angat, Bulacan, with target to start operations by January or February 2025. INQ

<https://business.inquirer.net/466805/ph-to-require-pre-shipment-inspection-of-farm-goods>

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:

Marcos OKs P6.352 trillion National Expenditure Program for 2025

By: [Zacarian Sarao](#) - Reporter / [@zacariansINO](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:03 PM July 02, 2024

MANILA. Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. approved the proposed P6.352 trillion National Expenditure Program (NEP) for Fiscal Year 2025, said the Palace on Tuesday.

According to the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) in a statement, Marcos approved the 2025 NEP during a Cabinet meeting at the Malacañan Palace where Budget Sec. Amenah Pangandaman presented the proposed national budget for 2025.

Marcos' directives and policy guidance for the NEP include prioritizing food security, social protection, healthcare, housing, disaster resilience, infrastructure, digital connectivity, and energization.

“You see a really good thing,” Marcos was quoted by the PCO as saying in the meeting.

“Since I’ve seen it before on the macro level, I think the priorities in terms of our proposed appropriations, upon addressing it, weighted our priorities properly in terms of appropriations,” he added.



Under the approved NEP, the agencies getting the lion's share of government appropriations included education, public works, health, interior and local government, and defense.

Other top priorities also included social welfare, agriculture, transportation, the judiciary, and justice.

Regarding expense class, the PCO said maintenance and other operating expenses are getting the largest share followed by personnel services, capital outlays, and financial expenses.

Meanwhile, the PCO said the 2025 budget was based on the availability of fiscal space, implementation and readiness of Program/Activity/Projects or PAPs, the agency's absorptive capacity, alignment with the Budget Priorities Framework and Philippine Development Plan 2023 to 2028.

"The Public Investment Program, Three-Year Infrastructure Program, Information Systems Strategic Plan, and Program Convergence were also key factors," said the PCO.

With Marcos' approval, the NEP is set to be submitted to Congress to be deliberated by the Senate and the House of Representatives.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1957200/marcos-oks-p6-352-trillion-national-expenditure-program-for-2025>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Onion production gains push DA to weigh longer import ban

July 2, 2024 | 8:35 pm



PHILSTAR

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is considering prolonging the freeze on onion imports to shield domestic producers from price declines just as they are achieving production gains.

“*Pag pumasok ’yung imported na mas mura* (When cheap imports come in), it will drive down the price even lower. We need to also consider the onion farmers,” Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Arnel V. de

Mesa told reporters on Tuesd

The freeze on imports is currently in effect until the end of July.

According to DA price monitors deployed to Metro Manila markets, as of July 1 a kilogram of red onions cost between P80 and P150 per kilo.

Mr. De Mesa said that the current volume of onions is sufficient to meet demand for about eight months, or until February.

“But of course, we need to take into consideration the shrinkage give or take about 10% to 20% of the total volume so most the stocks would most likely last between seven to eight months,” he added.

According to DA data, the national inventory of red onions was at 161,973.73 metric tons (MT), with yellow onions at 11,569.07 MT.

During the first quarter, onion production was 201.25 thousand MT, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority, up 36.8% from a year earlier.

The DA attributed the production gains to a 40% increase in the land planted to onion.

He said that the department could also opt to import only yellow onions due to the lower inventories of “about 2.5 to three months.”

Separately, Mr. De Mesa said that an increase of tomato prices may have been caused by a delay in the harvest.

“We expect that in two weeks, as per industry players, the bulk of the tomato harvest will arrive,” he added.

He said tomato prices ranged between P120 and P180 per kilo, against the P80 per kilo the department reported in June. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/07/02/605706/onion-production-gains-push-da-to-weigh-longer-import-ban/>

BUSINESS WORLD:

Well-milled rice prices average P56.35 per kilogram

July 2, 2024 | 8:35 pm



Workers load sacks of flour in a delivery truck in Manila, July 11, 2022. — PHILIPPINE STAR/ MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

THE national average price of well-milled rice was P56.35 per kilogram as of mid-June, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The PSA said prices edged lower during the June 15 to 17 period, which it calls the second phase of June, from the average P56.50 per kilo reported on June 1 to 5, or the first phase.

The highest retail price in the first phase was reported in the Western Visayas, with an average price of P59.22 per kilo during the period.

At the low end during the period was Ilocos Region where rice prices averaged P52.47 per kilo.

The PSA reported that regular-milled rice averaged P51.14 per kilo, down from P51.33 per kilo during the first phase.

The highest price for regular-milled rice was recorded in the Central Visayas where a kilo of regular milled rice fetched P53.83 per kilo.

At the low end was the Cagayan Valley, where regular-milled rice averaged P45.95 per kilo.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has said that it would recommend a hike in rice tariff once rice prices fall to P42 to P45 per kilo.

Executive Order No. 62 formalized the reduction of rice tariffs to 15% from 35% until 2028, in an inflation-containment measure.

Additionally, the PSA said that national average retail price for tomato was P80.07 per kilo in the second phase of June, against the P71.47 per kilo during the first phase.

The DA had said a delayed harvest caused an increase in tomato prices. — **Adrian H. Halili**

<https://www.bworldonline.com/economy/2024/07/02/605704/well-milled-rice-prices-average-p56-35-per-kilogram/>

PBBM okays P6.352-T budget for 2025



By Charles Dantes

July 3, 2024, 12:30 am

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday approved the proposed P6.352-trillion budget for the 2025 National Expenditure Program (NEP).

During a cabinet meeting at Malacañan Palace, Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman presented the proposed national budget prioritizing food security, social protection, healthcare, housing, disaster resilience, infrastructure, digital connectivity, and energy.

“You see a really good thing... Since I’ve seen it before on the macro level, I think the priorities in terms of our proposed appropriations, upon addressing it, weighted our priorities properly in terms of appropriations,” Mr. Marcos said.

Major recipients of government appropriations include the Department of Education (DepEd), state universities and colleges (SUCs), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA),

Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and the health sector, including PhilHealth.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of National Defense (DND) will also receive significant funding.

The budget allocates the largest share to maintenance and operating expenses, followed by personnel services, capital outlays, and financial costs.

The government evaluated the 2025 budget proposals based on fiscal space, readiness of programs, agency capacity, and alignment with the Budget Priorities Framework and PDP 2023-2028. Key considerations included the Public Investment Program (PIP), Three-Year Infrastructure Program (TRIP), Information Systems Strategic Plan (ISSP), and Program Convergence.

Editor's Note: This is an updated article. Originally posted with the headline Marcos approves proposed P6.352-T national budget for 2025

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314466586/marcos-approves-proposed-p6-352-t-national-budget-for-2025.html>

Red tide persists, most areas safe



By Othel V. Campos

July 2, 2024, 8:35 pm

THE Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has updated its shellfish bulletin, revealing the presence of paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) or toxic red tide beyond the regulatory limit in several coastal areas.

Previously affected areas in Dauis and Tagbilaran City, Bohol; Dumanquillas Bay, Zamboanga del Sur; and San Benito, Surigao del Norte remain unsafe for shellfish harvesting, the BFAR said.

Meanwhile, Honda Bay in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, was included in the areas with red tide contamination.

The public is advised not to consume shellfish, including mussels, oysters, clams, and alamang, collected from these areas.

Fish, squid, shrimp, and crabs are still safe for consumption, but authorities recommend thoroughly washing them and removing internal organs before cooking.

BFAR reassures consumers that shellfish from other locations remain free of red tide toxins. These areas include Cavite, Manila Bay shorelines, Pangasinan, La Union,

Pampanga, and various locations in Quezon, Palawan, Masbate, Sorsogon, Iloilo, Capiz, Aklan, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Samar, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Biliran, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Norte, Misamis Occidental, Lanao del Norte, Camiguin, Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur, and Surigao del Sur.

Residents in these areas are advised to continue following BFAR advisories and to purchase shellfish only from accredited sources.

The Department of Health (DOH) echoed BFAR's warning and urged the public to be cautious when consuming shellfish.

Persons experiencing symptoms of red tide poisoning, such as numbness, dizziness, or difficult breathing, should seek immediate medical attention.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314466762/red-tide-persists-most-areas-safe.html>

Solon backs DA move vs. agri smugglers



Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan

By Maricel Cruz

July 2, 2024, 8:15 pm

A PARTY-list legislator has lauded a move by the Department of Agriculture (DA) to step up its campaign against agricultural smuggling by blacklisting importers of fish and other food products involved in this illicit trade.

Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan of Bicol Saro party-list group, chairman of the House Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources, said fish smuggling undermines the livelihood of small fisherfolk and imperils the safety of consumers.

While Yamsuan has commended the DA on its plan to blacklist suspected smugglers, he said this step should be followed by the filing of criminal cases against these unscrupulous traders.

“We will await the action of the Department of Agriculture on this matter. We are counting on Agriculture Secretary (Francisco Tiu) Laurel (Jr.) to make his move soon against these suspected smugglers,” Yamsuan said.

Yamsuan issued the statement in response to Laurel’s recent announcement of his plan to blacklist at least four importers suspected of acts classified as economic sabotage. Laurel said the suspects consisted of one rice importer, two fish traders and a sugar importer.

“Blacklisting erring agricultural importers should not be the DA’s only measure against them. If there is enough evidence, then criminal cases should be hurled against them in

court,” said Yamsuan, who is also a former assistant secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

The lawmaker said blacklisted companies may just resort to using dummy firms to continue their illegal activities.

Yamsuan pointed out that under the current law, large-scale fish smuggling is classified as economic sabotage if the amount of the goods subject of the crime is at least P1 million as valued by the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

The punishment for this crime under Republic Act 10845 is life imprisonment and a fine of twice the fair value of the smuggled fish products, along with the aggregate amount of the taxes, duties and other charges involved.

Yamsuan said a new measure—the proposed Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act—aims to strengthen RA 10845 by including hoarding, profiteering and cartel as acts of economic sabotage when the value of each agricultural and fishery product involved in these illegal activities amounts to at least P1 million.

Certified by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as an urgent measure, this proposed law also increases the fine for acts of economic sabotage to thrice the value of the goods that are subject of the crime.

The measure has already been approved by both the Senate and the House of Representatives and is awaiting the President’s signature.

“We hope that this will be signed by the President and enacted soon so that it could serve as a strong deterrent to agricultural smugglers,” Yamsuan said.

“Agricultural smugglers undermine our collective goal to attain food security and jeopardize the livelihood of our farmers and fisherfolk. They also place the safety of consumers at risk because smuggled food products do not undergo the necessary measures that are meant to ensure that these are fit and safe for human consumption,” he added.

<https://manilastandard.net/news/314466755/solon-backs-da-move-vs-agri-smugglers.html>

Customs duties, sea transport lift PH logistics costs



By Darwin G. Amojelar

July 2, 2024, 8:45 pm

Customs duties and maritime transportation are the biggest contributors to expensive logistics costs for both imported and locally-produced goods in the Philippines, according to a study by an international advisory services company.

“In both international and domestic logistics, port and terminal charges comprise the smallest portion of the total logistics cost, while the highest cost is represented by customs clearance and maritime transportation expenses,” Pablo Corralo Llorente, Bluefocus Infrastructure advisor said in a paper titled “Analysis of Logistics Costs for Imported and Domestic Containers in the Philippines” presented during a forum in Makati on Monday.

The study showed that fees for Customs clearance processes contribute to 35 percent to 60 percent of the total cost, followed by maritime transportation, which includes shipping line freight rates and surcharges at 20 percent to 40 percent.

“Maritime transportation is costlier in the Philippines than in neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, with destination charges playing a larger role,” Llorente said.

Meanwhile, inland logistics represent 10 percent to 25 percent of the total logistic costs due to trucking and warehousing charges. Port and terminal charges at destination contribute only 5 percent to 10 percent, mostly due to terminal handling rates.

All in all, the average logistics cost for an imported container in the Philippines is \$5,300 or around P311,372, representing a little over 10 percent of the stock value.

The same trend is seen in domestic logistics with maritime transportation and inland logistics costs at 45 percent to 50 percent, and port and terminal charges at only 6 percent to 8 percent.

Food-related products, such as processed goods and agricultural produce, make up the largest share (40 percent) of outbound containers from Manila. Other significant commodities include clothing and textiles, construction materials, and healthcare supplies, the study shows.

The study was commissioned by a large overseas manufacturer planning to invest in a high-volume production factory in the Philippines.

<https://manilastandard.net/business/314466855/customs-duties-sea-transport-lift-ph-logistics-costs.html>

Extension of onion import suspension eyed

By Janine Alexis Miguel

July 3, 2024

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is eyeing an extension of the suspension on onion importation due to a surplus of commodity, ensuring supply will last until February next year.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa said that the onion import ban, set to expire until end-July, can be possibly extended.

"[Extension of suspension] is possible due to the level of inventory that we have now," de Mesa said at a press briefing on Tuesday, adding that the department has not yet determined on how long it will be extended.

He added that the DA is also considering the issue of spoilage that could affect 10 to 20 percent of the total volume. "So most likely between seven to eight months, that's the total shelf life of the current stock level of onions."

A temporary halt on onion imports up to May was ordered in January and was extended until July. The DA earlier cited a supply glut and plunging prices as factors for implementing the measure.

Data from the department showed that supply of onions as of June 21 reached 173,542 metric tons (MT) and is enough to last over eight months. The total volume includes 161,973 MT of red onions and 11,569 MT of the yellow type.

According to de Mesa, the supply is more than enough to meet the demand of about 21,000 MT per month. He explained that the current

situation is still "very manageable" with prices ranging between P80 to P120 per kilo.

The situation is markedly different than in late 2022, when a supply shortage saw onion prices surge to over P700 per kilo.

Temporarily stopping onion importation will prevent the drop in prices of the bulb, the DA official said. However, de Mesa noted that there could be a possible provision to allow entry of yellow onions. Based on the data, supply of yellow onions could last for up to three months.

He attributed the surplus of onions to its favorable prices, encouraging farmers to plant more. There was also a 40-percent increase in the land area dedicated to onion cultivation.

On price monitoring, de Mesa said that the department does not intend to issue a suggested retail price (SRP) or any form of price control.

"It's counterproductive if we issue an SRP or any price control. Looking at the good volume, the prices are not bad either," he added.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/07/03/business/top-business/extension-of-onion-import-suspension-eyed/1954800>

Duties, not port charges, drive logistics expenses

By Myla Iglesias

-

July 3, 2024



A study shows Port and terminal charges at destination contribute only five percent to 10 percent, mostly due to terminal handling rates. (PNA Photo)

Customs duties and maritime transportation costs not port and terminal charges are what drive up the logistics expenses for imported and domestic containers in the Philippines, according to a study by an international advisory services company.

In a paper titled “Analysis of Logistics Costs for Imported and Domestic Containers in the Philippines,” Pablo Corralo Llorente, partner at Bluefocus Infrastructure Advisors, said port and terminal charges comprise the smallest portion of the total logistics cost in both international and domestic logistics.

Llorente’s study said the highest cost is represented by customs clearance and maritime transportation expenses.

Llorente presented the results of the study at a food security forum by the Makati Business Club last June 24.

The study showed fees for Customs clearance processes contribute to 35 percent to 60 percent of the total cost, followed by maritime transportation, which includes shipping line freight rates and surcharges at 20 percent to 40 percent.

“Maritime transportation is costlier in the Philippines than in neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, with destination charges playing a larger role,” Llorente said.

Inland logistics represent 10 percent to 25 percent of the total logistic costs due to trucking and warehousing charges. Port and terminal charges at destination contribute only five percent to 10 percent, mostly due to terminal handling rates.

All in all, the average logistics cost for an imported container in the Philippines is \$5,300 or around P311,372, representing a little over 10 percent of the stock value.

The same trend is seen in domestic logistics with maritime transportation and inland logistics costs at 45 percent to 50 percent, and port and terminal charges at only six to eight percent.

Food-related products, such as processed goods and agricultural produce, make up the largest share (40 percent) of outbound containers from Manila. Other significant commodities include clothing and textiles, construction materials, and healthcare supplies, the study showed.

Llorente said the study was commissioned by a large overseas manufacturer planning to invest in a high-volume production factory in the Philippines, noting that the cost and efficiency of container logistics operations were crucial for the investment decision.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/duties-not-port-charges-drive-logistics-expenses/

Agri imports to undergo pre-shipment inspection

By **Jed Macapagal**

July 3, 2024

The government will implement pre-shipment inspection on agriculture products in ports of origins ahead of the rollout of the country's first cold examination facility for agriculture (CEFA) by next year.

Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said pre-shipment inspection could be enforced within three months.

The plan is awaiting approval by the Department of Finance.

Tiu Laurel said pre-shipment inspection will bolster food safety measures and curb smuggling activities detrimental to local farmers and public health. It is expected to improve border controls amid emerging health and economic challenges posed by imported agricultural products.

The DA said the country's first Q fever case linked to imported goats from the US and persistent agricultural smuggling have highlighted the need to operationalize first border control measures to ensure food safety and prevent the entry of plant pests and economically significant terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases.

Tiu Laurel said the first of five CEFAs that will serve as sanitary and phytosanitary inspection facilities for imported animal, fish, plant and agricultural products will start operations by early next year in Angat, Bulacan. Plans are underway to open four additional CEFAs by September 2025 in Manila, Subic, Davao and General Santos City.

While the CEFAs in Angat and General Santos City will only have DA-funded laboratories, comprehensive facilities are planned for major ports and fish ports including the Manila International Container Terminal, Subic Bay International Corp., Davao International Container Terminal, Manila South Harbor, New Cebu International Container Port, Batangas International Port, Navotas Fish Port, Iloilo International Container Port and Misamis Oriental.

The DA said funding for the CEFA project was originally pegged at P2.3 billion last year but this was reduced to P1.2 billion for the current year following the offer of International Container Terminal Services Inc. to host most of the facilities at local ports it operates.

https://malaya.com.ph/news_business/agri-imports-to-undergo-pre-shipment-inspection/

Revitalizing agriculture: Embracing innovation and modern farming methods

BusinessMirror Editorial

July 3, 2024

A popular folk song composed by Felipe de Leon many decades ago is still relevant today. “Magtanim Ay ‘Di Biro” depicted the hardships faced by Filipino farmers. Some scholars said the lyrics of the Tagalog song referred to rice cultivation, with farmers bending over and being submerged in flooded fields for hours to plant their crop.

While technology has grown by leaps and bounds, the Philippines remains unable to maximize the advantages presented by these developments to significantly raise agricultural output. Based on official government data, the sector’s contribution to gross domestic output—the sum of all goods and services produced within a country’s borders—has been shrinking in recent years. From double digits a decade ago, the contribution of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to GDP has fallen to a single digit and reached only 8.6 percent in the first quarter, based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority.

This may have been in the minds of policymakers, particularly those in the Department of Agriculture, which recently declared that it will embrace “innovative farming methods.” The business-as-usual scenario is no longer feasible and will not help the cause of the administration to increase food production and enable the country to achieve food security. It is only with the help of technology and other scientific advancements that the Marcos administration can deliver on its promise to make food affordable for all Filipinos.

Policymakers must hasten efforts to modernize the sector considering that our farmers are aging fast (See, “DA to embrace innovative farming methods,” in the BusinessMirror, July 1, 2024). The average age of Filipino farmers is pegged at 56 years old, which means droves of young planters must go into farming to revitalize the sector. Encouraging them to go into agriculture, however, would require more than emotional appeals and rhetoric about the

need to feed more than 110 million Filipinos three times a day, which would translate to around 330 million meals per day.

Apart from investing in mechanization, farm-to-market road and other postharvest facilities, the state should consider looking into other initiatives that would change the perception about agriculture that it entails backbreaking labor for little remuneration. Malaysia, which has been plagued by labor shortages in recent years, is currently tinkering with automation and robots (See, “Robots are stepping into one of Asia’s dirtiest farm jobs,” in the BusinessMirror, July 1, 2024). Top palm growers in Malaysia understand that perfecting the robots and deploying them at a commercially viable scale will take years, but they are pressing ahead, according to a Bloomberg report.

Malaysian firm SD Guthrie has started using machines to take over non-harvesting jobs like spraying pesticide or monitoring fruit and yields. Another plus for its automation push is that women were encouraged to join a traditionally male-dominated workforce, as the robots help with backbreaking tasks like lifting 30-kilogram fruit bunches and loading them into trucks. There are other best practices that our policymakers can adopt to make farming profitable and finally change the perception about agriculture and inspire the youth and the next generation of farmers to sing a different tune.

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